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Stories of people who have faced racism

The Impact of Colonialism on Indigenous Communities

The rise of Islamophobia and its impact on racist movements

KATRIN HRISTOVA

Understand your privilege

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Editor's Note

We are proud to present the second issue of our journal, which delves into the complex and pervasive issue of racism. Racism has been a long-standing problem that has affected individuals, communities, and societies across the globe. It has taken many forms, including institutional racism, systemic discrimination, and individual prejudice, and has caused immeasurable harm to marginalized groups.

In this issue, we have brought together a diverse range of perspectives and voices to explore the many facets of racism. Our contributors have examined the historical roots of racism, the impact of racism on mental health, the role of education in dismantling racism, and much more. They have also shared personal experiences of racism, highlighting the need for ongoing dialogue and action to combat this issue.

We hope that this issue will spark important conversations about racism and inspire readers to take action in their own communities. We believe that it is only through collective effort that we can create a more just and equitable world, free from the damaging effects of racism.

Dana Koptleuova
Editor-in-Chief

THE CATALYST

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Uncovering Racism: Exploring Its Roots and Impact on Society

Through a collection of thought-provoking articles, we aim to shed light on the complex nature of racism and encourage critical reflection and meaningful dialogue on this important topic.

By Emily Hamburger

Black Women and Their Navigation of the Healthcare System

The healthcare system in the United States is frustrating, scary, and expensive for most people in this first-world country. The U.S. prides itself in the fabrication that they're the land of opportunity. In times of hardship, their citizens can pick themselves up by their bootstraps and get stuff done. But contrary to popular belief, many citizens in the United States don't have access to a healthcare provider. In segregated New York City, Black and Brown people have less access to public schools, parks, healthy foods, and healthcare. Systems like institutional racism have driven many neighborhoods in New York City to be detrimentally affected by certain diseases. This can be due to Black and Brown neighborhoods' exposure to more pollution and toxins. Many Black and Brown people were disproportionately affected during the pandemic - in hospitalizations and deaths.

Black women in the healthcare system are not always believed by doctors about their pain. This isn't an uncommon occurrence in the healthcare system. The doctors in practice that choose not to advocate for Black women allow these women to be un or misdiagnosed. This includes blood disorders, cardiovascular disease, and maternal mortality. The discrimination and dangerous care Black women receive from healthcare professionals is more profound. Many of the findings that affected Black women today may be because of the United States's history with the slave trade and Jim Crow. Jim Crow laws and segregation started in 1870 and ended in the 1960s. It has ingrained itself next to slavery in the U.S., becoming commonplace for Black women to experience higher mortality and morbidity. The healthcare system will continue to treat Black women as unreliable advocates. Even Black women with medical degrees, such as Shalon Irving, aren't taken. She passed away three weeks after giving birth to her daughter, even when all her symptoms were dangerous. These symptoms were life and death.

It is not a mistake that Black women are three times more likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth than any other race. Even as a public health instructor, a hospital repeatedly turned away Black women. Even though she insisted that she wasn't feeling well and that something was wrong, nothing was done. The woman was knowledgeable and could advocate for herself, but the hospital's resistance stopped her expression of autonomy. This ultimately could have cost her her life. The hospital didn't listen to her concerns until the baby's heart rate dropped, forcing the staff to perform an emergency c-section. She wasn't due for months, learning that she had an undiagnosed case of sepsis. Black women are more likely to suffer from complications during and after pregnancy that are entirely preventable. Black babies are born prematurely and are more likely to die during childbirth. Unsurprisingly, Black women also tend to have higher rates of PPD (postpartum depression) than any other race.

With the rise of COVID-19, the racial gap grew larger. Thus making it clear that the healthcare system's racist bias has caused many Black women to lose their own or their baby's life. The statistics that show how often Black women die from childbirth are striking. Considering that other first-world, wealthy nations do not seem to have this alarming problem. 84% of pregnancy deaths could have been prevented, which makes the statistic even more stomach-turning. With inadequate healthcare and unplanned pregnancies, many women don't receive access to prenatal care until their second trimester. Black women tend to receive prenatal access in their third trimester or not at all. This can lead to Black children being born prematurely or with complications. These complications include birth defects, preterm birth and low birth weight, maternal pregnancy complications, sudden infant death syndrome, and injuries. Diving deeper into the lack of healthcare that Black Americans receive while family planning illuminates the significant discrepancies between white Americans and Black Americans.

As Black women age, they become more likely to die during childbirth. At the same age as white women, they are still four times as likely to die during childbirth. Even Black women with an education, or lack thereof, were dying disproportionately higher rates than white women. During the pandemic, birth mortality in Black women grew even higher in 2020 and 2021. Those years had the most significant increase. The pandemic showcased a lack of resources in Black and Brown communities that would assist them against COVID-19. But it also highlighted the horrific treatment of Black mothers in the healthcare system.

Another Black woman, Shalon Irving, had died because of racism after childbirth. Patients are expected to be actual physicians, but those trained don't seem to be breaking down their racial bias. It is clear that even those studying to be doctors were riddled with bias: many thought Black women had thicker skin or fewer nerve endings. These biases can be dangerous for the survival of Black women in our society.

Additionally, there may have been links between Jim Crow Laws (or their abolition) and the formation of breast cancer in Black women. Many Black women tend to be diagnosed with an ER-negative tumor. These tumors tend to not respond to hormone treatments or chemotherapy the same way that ER-positive tumors would. Most women with ER-positive tumors are white and affluent. When we look at these disproportionate stats, it's not hard to understand that there is a lack of advocacy for Black women. As a country, our innate racism has ceased systems from taking the proper steps to care for and protect Black women.

The journey for Black women to navigate the healthcare system does not have a map. Unraveling the segregation and lack of resources in Black and Brown communities cultivates the bigger picture. Without breaking down the racism in our country, large institutions, such as the healthcare system, the education system, and politics, Black women will be at the hands of unchecked racism and bias. In a world where autonomy has been stolen from women, especially women of color, Black women must be encouraged to advocate for themselves. And that bystanders use their privilege to advocate for those less privileged than themselves.

Embracing My True Identity: Triumphing over Racism in an Indian Middle School

As a dark-skinned Indian growing up, I had to confront the unfortunate reality of racism, even within my own community. While racism is commonly associated with interactions between different races, it is crucial to recognize that it can also manifest within the same racial group. In this narrative, I will share my personal journey of how I faced racism in my Indian middle school and transformed those experiences into catalysts for personal growth.

The Journey Begins:
In my Indian middle school, where fairer skin tones were more prevalent, my darker complexion became a target for unwarranted comments and social stigma. Hurtful nicknames and discreet remarks about my skin color were directed towards me and even others who shared a similar tone. These incidents often challenged my self-confidence and made me question my worthiness and sense of belonging within my own cultural identity.

Discovering Inner Resilience:
Rather than allowing these experiences to define me or erode my self-esteem, I chose a different path. Instead, I focused on nurturing my talents, skills, and academic pursuits as sources of validation and self-worth. Through this mindset shift, I began to appreciate the value of celebrating what made me unique while recognizing the strength that lay within embracing my true identity.

Recognizing Education's Power:
Education played an indispensable role in cultivating resilience and empowering myself. I realized that knowledge could serve as a powerful tool to challenge prejudiced ideas and stereotypes. Actively seeking opportunities to showcase my academic prowess through participation in debate competitions, quiz contests, and school events allowed me to shine regardless of societal biases based on skin color.

Building Strong Support Networks:
Facing racism can be isolating; however, I discovered that solidarity exists among others who have encountered similar struggles. By reaching out to friends who had shared comparable experiences, we established a support system that encouraged each other to remain resolute and positive. By cultivating empathy and understanding within our group, we found comfort and inspiration in one another's stories, propelling us forward on our collective journeys to overcome racial discrimination.

Challenging Social Norms:
Rather than passively accepting racist comments or taunts, I chose to confront such behavior head-on. Engaging classmates and teachers in enlightening discussions about the damaging consequences of racism and advocating for inclusion became my mission. By shedding light on the detrimental impacts of discrimination, I aimed to foster a safer and more embracing environment within my school community.

Celebrating Diversity:
Over time, I had a transformative realization - true beauty lies in diversity. I started appreciating the wide range of skin tones, cultural backgrounds, and experiences that exist not only within our school but also throughout society. Actively participating in cultural events allowed me to showcase the richness of our Indian heritage while promoting unity through embracing our differences.

Thriving Amidst Adversity:
With unwavering determination and belief in myself, I managed to transcend the limitations imposed by racism. In many ways, these negative experiences became stepping stones towards personal growth and character development. By wholeheartedly embracing my dark complexion, acknowledging my heritage, and pursuing my passions relentlessly, I reached new heights beyond the confines of prejudice - refusing to let those hurtful encounters define me.

Conquering racism as a dark-skinned individual within an Indian middle school as undoubtedly arduous; however, I transformed these experiences into opportunities for personal growth and empowerment. By staying true to myself, prioritizing education as a means of challenge, cultivating strong support networks, challenging societal norms head-on, and championing diversity at every turn –I emerged from adversity stronger than ever before – embodying resilience while radiating positivity. My story serves as a testament to the indomitable spirit that resides within us all – reminding everyone that we possess the innate ability to shine brightly even when confronted with the darkest of circumstances.

By Sathya Mitiran Jayaprakash Suwithaa

By Asfandiyar

The rise of Islamophobia and its impact on racist movements

Islamophobia, which is defined as hostility toward Islam or Muslims, has been on the rise recently throughout the world. Increasing anti-Muslim attitudes have given rise to xenophobic and racist movements in numerous nations. Although Islamophobia has long-standing historical roots, some recent international events have made it worse. Islamophobia is on the rise, and its effects on racist groups are complicated issues that call for a deep study of sociopolitical processes, historical context, and psychological processes.

The rising Islamophobia

We must define Islamophobia before we can comprehend its rise. Islam, the second-largest religion in the world, and the Greek word Phobos, which means fear or dread, are the roots of the word "Islamophobia." It describes the intense prejudice, fear, or hostility toward Islam and its adherents, which frequently leads to unfair discrimination, generalizations, and stereotypes.

Islamophobia is not a recent issue; its origins can be seen in the Middle Ages, when Christians perceived Islam as a threat. Christians and Jews started to see Islam negatively after Muslim conquests of the Middle East and parts of Europe in the 7th and 8th centuries. Muslims were stereotyped as being violent, intolerable, and fanatic. Orientalist images of Muslims as backward, barbaric, and authoritarian originated after Europe's "Age of Discovery" got underway in the 15th century and Westerners encountered Muslim empires. The ideological foundation for European colonialism in Muslim societies was provided by these caricatures. During the battles that took place between the Ottoman and Russian empires in the 19th century, the idea of a "Muslim threat" first surfaced. Islam was once portrayed by Europeans as a religion that was "warlike and aggressive" by nature. These opinions aided in creating the negative perception of Islam that still exists today.

But in the twenty-first century, both the breadth and depth of Islamophobia have greatly increased. In the growth of Islamophobia, the tragic events of September 11, 2001, served as a turning point. An enormous increase in anti-Muslim prejudice was caused by the terrorist attacks, which were blamed on Islamic radicals, both in the United States and elsewhere. This pattern was made worse by how these events were reported by the media, which frequently linked Islam to terrorism.

Islamophobia has gotten worse in the years since 9/11 as a result of the immigration crisis, continuous Middle Eastern conflicts, and terrorist assaults in Europe. This spike has been exacerbated by the growth of far-right political movements and nationalist rhetoric, particularly in Europe and the US.

Islamophobia
Chris Allen

Racist movements and Islamophobia

Racist movements are a complicated phenomenon that is stoked by a variety of things, such as social injustice, economic instability, and fear of the "other." These movements are fundamentally influenced by Islamophobia, which gives them a target and justification for their acts.

Islamophobia is frequently used by racist movements as a recruiting tactic. They establish a shared enemy that unites their supporters by spreading the notion that Islam is a danger to Western civilization. Racist movements are given a veneer of legitimacy by Islamophobia because they may position themselves as protectors of their culture and way of life against an "Islamic invasion."

Islamophobia's Effect on Racist Movements

In recent years, the rise of Islamophobia has fueled far-right populist and racist movements. These organizations use anti-Muslim sentiment and terror to advance their political agenda. They base their anti-Muslim rhetoric on the following ideas: · The notion that Islam is incompatible with "Western values" and that Muslims cannot fit into Western communities

Disseminating erroneous claims that Muslims want to impose the laws of Sharia and create a "global caliphate"

Averting the purported "Eurabia" scheme, which states that due to increased birth rates, Muslims will eventually outweigh Europeans

The spread of rumors of "no-go zones" under Sharia rule in significant European towns. Far-right organizations like the English Defense League, PEGIDA, and the AfD in Germany have used such language to gain support.

In addition to fueling hate crimes, Islamophobia has also contributed to institutional racism. This form of racism, which is embedded in laws, policies, and practices, can result in systemic discrimination against Muslims. Its most prominent examples include the 'Hijab Ban in various European countries, the widespread surveillance of Muslim communities, and the abuse of Muslims in India because of their religious affiliation. In recent years, the rise of Islamophobia has fueled far-right populist and racist movements. These organizations prey on people's fears. Far-right populist figures like Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders, and Donald Trump have become well-known for their anti-Muslim rhetoric. Their nationalist agendas are supported by anti-Islamic prejudice.

Additionally, contributing to the spread of anti-immigrant and anti-refugee legislation is the rise of Islamophobia. For instance, the Trump administration has claimed Islamophobia as justification for its travel restrictions on nationals of numerous nations with a majority of Muslims. This restriction has made it more challenging for Muslims to visit the United States and has helped Islamophobia gain ground.

Finally, the rise of far-right political movements might also be attributed to Islamophobia. These movements have significantly increased their political strength by taking advantage of anti-Muslim sentiment, especially in Israel and India. These movements' electoral success has further legitimized Islamophobia, creating a vicious circle of violence, hatred, and fear.

Combating Islamophobia and Racism

Humanity currently resides in a globalized era. Every area of life has seen breakthroughs thanks to them. Religious leaders, community members, and interfaith groups must come together for productive dialogues that dispel preconceptions and misconceptions in order to make the globe a safer place and our communities harmonious. It will facilitate communication between Muslim communities and the larger community.

Furthermore, correct knowledge regarding Islamic history, teachings, and beliefs must be widely disseminated. Emphasize the variety of Islam and the shared ideals it shares with other religions. Expose the politicized and twisted interpretations that extremists are spreading.

Every stakeholder at different levels opposes statements that are Islamophobic made by politicians, media figures, and others in public debate. Dispel unfounded claims, wild conjectures, and stereotypes about Muslims. Make the transmission of bigotry politically and socially undesirable.

The effectiveness of the current anti-discrimination and hate crime laws must be ensured. Apply them impartially in order to defend religious minorities, such as Muslims. Show that discriminating behavior won't be allowed.

It is stated that the most effective means of bringing about global change is education. A curriculum that promotes social inclusion and harmony needs to be introduced.

The Bottom Line

Islamophobia is a nuanced expression of long-standing hostility toward Islam and Muslims. The growth of Islamist extremism and recent terrorist incidents have made people more antagonistic. However, far-right and nationalist movements have used Islamophobia the most successfully for political benefit through divisive rhetoric and anti-Muslim policies. It will be necessary to face the prejudice, misconceptions, and stereotypes that underlie Islamophobia in order to eradicate it. Maintaining the values of religious diversity, social justice, and universal human dignity is ultimately necessary for thwarting extremism and fostering societal cohesiveness.

Finally, it's critical to keep in mind that Islamophobia is a human problem, not just one that affects Muslims. It has an impact on all of us, whether directly or indirectly, by inciting violence, division, and hatred. By combating Islamophobia, we are promoting an inclusive, tolerant, and peaceful global community.

Silent Cry

By Roz Wang

"**Xiao tu zi gui, gui, ba men kai, kai...**"

Veronica swung her legs on the swing, humming to herself. The song had been stuck in her head for days - a child's song that everyone in her Sunday school was taught. She kept her head bowed, gaze averted from the overcrowded playground, admiring her shoes. They were new. Mama had bought them for her only a few days before they moved, and it featured one of her favorite characters - Xi Yang Yang.

Someone cleared their throat in front of her. Veronica looked up, blowing too-long bangs out of her face as the boy in front of her studied her like an animal in the zoo.

He was about her age, maybe a little older - curly blonde hair, big, curious eyes, fair skin sprayed with freckles. She beamed up at him, though he didn't return the smile. "Hi," she said.

"Hi," the boy said bluntly. "I'm Jamie."

"Veronica." Ducking her head in a brief bow, she said, "Do you want to swing with me?" She kicked her legs again, making the swing wobble beneath her and the cold chains in her fist twist wildly. "It's fun."

"That's not how you do it," he said, a frown turning the corners of his lips downward. "Where are you from?"

The question came so suddenly, thrown out without care, that it took Veronica a moment to process. "What?"

"I said," Jame said slowly, as if he was speaking to a toddler - Veronica was already in second grade, she thought with a pout - "where. Are. You. From?"

"I - oh!" Her face brightened. That was a question she could answer. That was an easy one. "Trenton."

He didn't like that answer, Veronica could tell. She could see it in the way his brows furrowed together, his mouth pinched, his arms folded across his scrawny chest. "No. Where are you from?" he asked.

Tipping up a shoulder, Veronica said, "Trenton. New Jersey. It's close to New York -"

"That's not what I mean."

"Oh..." Her smile faded. "What do you mean?"

"I mean -" He waved his hands in the air in frustration. "Are you Korean? Japanese?"

She stared at him. "No?"

"Then where are you from?"

"I don't - I just told you," Veronica said, taken aback. "New Jersey."

"Chinese, then. You're Chinese."

"What does that have to do with -"

He stalked forward until he was nearly nose to nose with Veronica. Despite everything Mama told her about bullies, she felt herself shrink into the swing like she could curl up into a ball and disappear. If she was being honest with herself, she hadn't really believed the bit about the bullies. Everyone at Trenton was nice enough. Why would Indiana be any different?

"Are you Chinese," he said, "or not?"

She cringed away from him as his hot breath brushed against her cheek. "Leave me alone," she said in a voice so small she could hardly hear herself.

His sneer cut through her like a knife. "Fine. Be like that."

Tiny music peeped from the speakers around the store, some pop song that Veronica kept hearing on the radio but never bothered to learn the name. Humming under her breath with the tune, she crouched down, scanning the rows of movies.

T... T... T... Where were the T's?

"Excuse me?"

Glancing up, Veronica was met with the sight of a positively tiny old lady. She was old enough to be Veronica's grandmother, if the wrinkles around her mouth and the white shock of hair on her head was any indication. A pair of equally small classes perched on her nose, a chain connected to the temples and looping all the way around her neck. She was so pale Veronica could practically see the blue veins beneath her skin.

"Hello," the woman continued in a croaking words, like she hadn't used her voice in years. "I'm looking for - for a movie?"

"Um... okay?" Veronica said slowly, knitting her brows together. "That's... great."

"It's called Dead Poets Society," the woman continued, oblivious to her confusion. "I was wondering if you could show me where it was?"

"Right." Veronica pulled herself to her feet again and gestured down the aisle. "D's are down there."

"Oh, I looked," she said. "Can't see a thing with these eyes. Don't go around staring at screens all day." She wagged a reprimanding finger at Veronica. "I'm telling you, you'll miss having a teenager's eyesight."

"I'm sure I will, miss," Veronica said, craning her neck to look around her. "You said you wanted Dead Poets Society?"

"How can I help you two?" someone said, around Veronica's shoulder. She turned. A young man with a vest emblazoned with the store's name smiled cheerfully at them.

Gesturing at the woman, Veronica said, "She's looking for the Dead Poets Society and I'm looking for The Breakfast Club."

Recognition sparked in his eyes. "Of course! I can help you two out, no problem."

The woman beside Veronica frowned, looking between Veronica, then the young man, then Veronica again. In a moment, her face cleared. "Oh!" She laughed. "Oh, how silly of me. I'm terribly sorry, my dear."

Laying a hand on Veronica's arm, the woman continued, "I thought you were a worker here! Because of how you look, and all that."

Veronica's smile turned brittle as she looked down at her shirt - bright red, in contrast to the man's navy blue. "I don't understand," she said as lightly as she could, but even she could hear the edge in her voice. The man's eyes flicked up to hers in concern.

"Oh, you know," the woman said, flipping a hand in the air casually. "People like you."

Something inside her went cold - icy, freezing cold. The man was saying something, but she could hardly hear anything past the thundering in her ears. "People like me," she repeated, and now there was a definite steel to her voice, a merciless slash. "What exactly does that mean?"

She didn't stick around to hear the woman's answer.

She didn't really need that movie, anyway.

"Okay, so, apples?"

"Yeah," came Ethan's voice, distant, as if he'd set down the phone. Something cracked in the background like hot oil. "I think Mama wants the red ones?"

"Just go ask her."

"Don't feel like it."

"Oh, my god." Veronica pinched the phone between her shoulder and her cheek, fishing through the display of apples. They were all bruised. "You're insufferable. How many?"

"Dunno. How many can you eat?"

She hung up without answering.

The lines were long, as per usual. Drumming her fingers on the handle of the cart, Veronica let her eyes wander. The cheerful smiley-face balloons bouncing gently against the ceiling, bobbing with the breeze of the AC. The wilting flowers dunked in water, petals dyed a borderline offensive pink. The rows of cigarettes behind a counter run by an old man, back bent with age, flicking a lighter on and off with his thumb.

The man behind her cleared his throat pointedly. She snapped her eyes back to the front of the line - the family in front of her was packing up their groceries already, more than five feet in front of her. Flashing an apologetic smile at the man, she unloaded her groceries.

"Evening," said the woman at the counter in a bored voice. "How're you doing?"

"Great, thanks," Veronica said distractedly, tossing a pack of garlic onto the conveyor belt. "You?"

"Just fine," said the woman without looking up. "Now, cash or -"

She stopped mid sentence. Veronica glanced up from where she was counting out the sheer number of oranges to make sure she got exactly as many as Mama wanted - fourteen - only to see the woman not-so-subtly pull up her mask from her chin.

Her heart dropped to her stomach. Don't react, she told herself, even as her fingers curled into fists. Don't react, she told herself, even as the woman shot her a disgusted look. Don't react, she told herself, even as her head reeled and her heartbeat pounded in her ears and why were people like this hardly anyone even carried around masks anymore and for God's sake why was it such a hard concept to grasp that she was just a person going on her daily business -

"Hey, move it," said the man behind her, disgruntled.

Veronica jerked herself out of her thoughts. "Right," she said through a gritted smile. "Sorry."

And she slid her card into the reader, and dumped all her bagged groceries into the back of her car, and she slid into the driver's seat, and screamed into the steering wheel with the windows rolled up.

Because people.

Because life.

The Impact of Colonialism on Indigenous Communities

By Yezir Hasan

Colonialism is the practice of domination, whereby one nation or people forcibly occupies another and asserts control over its land and resources. This process has had a devastating impact on indigenous communities around the world, leading to the loss of land, culture, and even life.

In many cases, colonialism has been accompanied by violence and oppression. Indigenous people have been forced to abandon their traditional ways of life and adopt European customs. They have also been subjected to discrimination and racism, and their rights have been denied.

The effects of colonialism are still being felt today. Indigenous people are disproportionately represented in poverty, unemployment, and incarceration. They also face higher rates of health problems, such as substance abuse and suicide.

The legacy of colonialism is a complex and multifaceted one. It is important to understand the history of colonialism and its impact on indigenous communities to work towards a more just and equitable future.

Here are some specific examples of the impacts of colonialism on indigenous communities:

Land dispossession: Indigenous people have been dispossessed of their land through a variety of means, including war, treaty violations, and the creation of reserves. This has had a devastating impact on their ability to maintain their traditional way of life and access traditional resources.

For example, the Lakota people of North America were forcibly removed from their land in the 1800s and placed on reservations. This land was their traditional homeland, and it was essential for their way of life. The removal from their land led to a decline in their culture, their economy, and their health.

Cultural assimilation: Indigenous people have been forcibly assimilated into European culture through a variety of means, including residential schools, the banning of traditional languages and practices, and the suppression of traditional knowledge. This has led to the loss of many indigenous cultures and languages.

The Maya people of Central America were conquered by the Spanish in the 16th century. They were forced to convert to Christianity and adopt Spanish customs. Their land was also taken from them, and they were subjected to forced labor. This led to the loss of their traditional way of life and their language.

Health problems: Indigenous people are disproportionately affected by several health problems, including substance abuse, suicide, and chronic diseases. These health problems are often linked to the legacy of colonialism, such as the disruption of traditional ways of life and the exposure to violence and discrimination.

The Inuit people of the Arctic were displaced from their traditional lands by European settlers in the 19th and 20th centuries. This led to a decline in their diet and their access to traditional healthcare. As a result, they are more likely to suffer from chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.

Economic inequality: Indigenous people are disproportionately represented in poverty and unemployment. This is due to several factors, including the loss of land, the lack of access to education and employment opportunities, and the discrimination they face.

The Aborigines of Australia were dispossessed of their land by British settlers in the 18th and 19th centuries. This led to a decline in their economy and their access to resources. As a result, they are more likely to live in poverty and unemployment.

The legacy of colonialism is a long and complex one. It is important to remember the history of colonialism and its impact on indigenous communities to work towards a more just and equitable future.

Here are some things that can be done to address the legacy of colonialism:

Reconciliation: Indigenous people and governments need to work together to reconcile the past and build a better future. This includes recognizing the harms of colonialism, providing reparations, and creating opportunities for indigenous people to participate in decision-making.

Land restitution: Indigenous people need to have their land returned to them or compensated for its loss. This would help to restore their connection to the land and their traditional way of life.

Cultural revitalization: Indigenous people need to be supported in revitalizing their cultures and languages. This includes providing access to traditional knowledge and practices and creating opportunities for indigenous people to share their culture with others.

Economic development: Indigenous people need to have access to economic opportunities that will allow them to thrive. This includes providing access to education and training and creating jobs in indigenous communities.

The legacy of colonialism is a heavy one, but it is not insurmountable. By working together, we can create a more just and equitable future for all indigenous people.

I hope this blog post has been informative and engaging. Thank you for reading

The Catalyst

Rethinking Education&Literature

Explore the importance of diversity and representation in education and literature, while delving into the challenges of reading XX century literature and the need to discover contemporary voices.

By Katrin Hristova

The Literature you read in the classroom: an apology to 21stcentury readers

Depending on where you are from, you always somewhat know what literature you will study at school next year.

On the one hand, this has the benefit of preparedness. You know what lies ahead of you, you can read the books throughout the summer break, you can watch films if they are available, you can check for summaries that can help you understand the main points, the characters, and so on.

On the other hand, however, the litratu––re of the XX century is tainted with a lot of history. Although any other word could have been selected instead, "tainted" refers to the challenges of the format, the wars, and the political doctrines that influenced it. Firstly, the format. Technology has been a challenge to literature in many aspects. Although the newest form – social media – had not been invented, humanity did get in touch with radio, film and TV. These formats host a wider accessibility rate, a higher amount of content in less time, and lastly, they require not-too-much attention. This "ease" influences the decrease in literature and the shift in the format. Storytelling sits in the back now.

Secondly, the wars. Fortunately, we have inherited books that explore what it was to be physically, mentally and emotionally present during these periods.

There are many literary waves born due to this landscape of violence, trauma and despair. The existentialist movement, a child of WWII, talks about the meaninglessness behind these wars. How old do you have to be when you read such books? How old in age and in emotional intelligence? Thirdly, I am so sorry to say that you also need to be aware of the political doctrines during these periods. Just taking a book off of the shelf and exploring it doesn't work when the writers have been limited, in multiple ways, if not censored altogether.

The literature of the XX century is not a light read, nor does it have to be read lightly.

Lastly, you are most probably robbed of the opportunity to read contemporary authors. The humans, who are trying to discuss the oh-so-ignored topics of race, gender, and class are not even discussed at school.

Ironically, although we do not follow many of the XX-century doctrines, authors remain silenced.

You need to un-silence them yourself.

By Katrin Hristova

Understand your privilege

Privilege (Noun)
priv·i·lege ˈpriv-lij
a right or immunity granted as a peculiar benefit, advantage, or favour: prerogative
such a right or immunity attached specifically to a position or an office
privilege (Verb)
: to grant a privilege to
: to accord a higher value or superior position to
Your Privilege
yər priv·i·lege
: something to be aware of
: something to use for more than your (subconscious) advantage
: something to use for a social, conscious advantage
: something to use to help others
The Definition
Your Social Identity — the way society sees you — can be to your advantage or disadvantage.
In 1979, Henry Tajfel illustrates his social identity theory which corresponds with one's sense of who they are based on their experience within the social collective. On one hand, he talks about the importance of this 'sense of belonging to the social world' as a source of pride and self-esteem. On the other, he dives into the separation that comes from it — the "us" and "them" division of the world. Corresponding it to cognitive processes, he touches upon stereotyping — the way our brain categorises a certain part of our social identity to the image of the group altogether.

Your (possible) privilege list:
race,
country of origin,
gender,
sexuality,
religion,
economic status,
social status,
ability status,
age
and/or educational level.

An essay from 1988 titled White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack — Peggy McIntosh's account on white privilege — is still being explored by social justice activists. The main aim is to highlight that although race and gender are the most popularly discussed forms of privilege, that is not the end of it.
I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group.
The aforementioned list, however, is just the beginning. In the essay, Peggy McIntosh claims that looking at these factors as separate notions is helpful but not enough. There are dynamics of power and interconnectedness that subsequently give birth to hierarchies attached to all facets of life.
In order to befriend your privilege, to be able to communicate about it and, as a result, make a change, you need to be compassionate with yourself as well.
Acknowledge that befriending your privilege will be a life-long mission and learning how to use it, is a whole different task on your shoulders.
Being privileged in any way does not mean that you have had it easy.

Let's find our Subconscious Friend, Privilege.
I: THE OBSERVATION
How does the society you live in view each of these components?
What is normalized? Why?
What happens to the un-normalized?
What happens to you?
To help you a little, sit down and listen to this story.
Once upon a time, in an English class, a teacher learns the most valuable lesson about being able-bodied.
Starting in the morning, I connect to have yet another mindful discussion with my usual Friday student. Apart from being a hilarious and insightful individual, he is a hard worker and a dedicated father.
We dive into the topic of education — we discuss school books, the communist past and the democratic present, the social perspective of education and we reach the facilities. He brings up the architecture of schools.
A little note here is that I mostly go with the flow when it comes to students. Since I look at them as my friends more than my 'students', I prepare a topic and several points to discuss. The rest is on them, their flow, their thoughts. I haven't thought of the school's architecture so I ask him to elaborate.
His 10-year-old daughter is completely dependent on him and his wife for accessing her school. As she is getting older, she is primarily relying on him.
For physically accessing the school.
Let that sink in.
She is a beautiful individual — a pure child — full of thoughts and emotions who cannot get into the building where she is supposedly going to be supported in her learning. She cannot reach even the front door of the building since there are stairs…
Her wheelchair is not thought of.
She is not thought of.
How can she climb the stairs of learning, of life, if she is denied access to the building(s) offering that?
I have an able-bodied privilege.
I have a physical able-bodied privilege.
I have an ability status privilege.
This is my lesson today.
This is the lesson I have carried and thought about for the last 2 years now.
This was the beginning of the end — the privileged beginning of the unprivileged end.
I sit down.
I research privilege.
I write adjectives.
I understand myself better.
I understand my privilege better.
I am grateful.
I am terrified.
I was unaware.
I am aware.
I get myself together and the main question is:
How my Social Identity — as an Eastern European, Caucasian, Orthodox Christian, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied, 26-year-old woman — has influenced the path I have taken?

II: THE CONTEXT

I will have to write a book to tell you all I found about myself and my privilege. However, I wanted to share with you the ambivalent nature of privilege.

Context gives privilege.

Context takes privilege away.

Storytime.

Once upon a time, I moved away from home.

My pearl-white skin is acceptable. The blue eyes are reliable to many.

Until I answer to "where are you from", I am safe.

I pronounce my country's name, Western Europe builds a picture of me — the hard workers of the Balkans that take our jobs away. My Self Identity becomes a collective identity of all the people — from my country and its neighbours — who are known to the person who holds my answer.

Point A. I have white privilege.

Point B. As an Eastern European, a Balkan, I am either attractive for modern-day labour, or not at all — seen as that I am a job thief. I left my country for a better future, yet two words — Eastern. European. — and the person in front of me already 'knows' me.

This is a nationality privilege being taken away.

This is my Identity being a construct of many before me.

CUT.

"II: THE CONTEXT"

TAKE 2.

Once upon a time, I move away from home.

My pearl-white skin is acceptable. The blue eyes are reliable to many.

My little red passport, with golden letters, holds power.

The golden letters spell a European country. The golden letters say that I follow the requirements for Europeans.

Country II offers me power over people whose passport isn't as 'good' as mine.

Point A. I have white privilege.

Point B.

I have the privilege to live here.

This is a national privilege.

Point C, D, ...:

A little red notebook says it is okay for me to:

· not overpay taxes — this is an economic privilege,

· to work with a mere registration in a police office — this is a labour privilege.

· The aforementioned are interconnected with additional forms of privilege.

So, what is your story?

What is 'normal' in the society you live in?

What do you accept as 'normal'?

I accepted — and took for granted — my mobility, the physical stairs I can take, and in turn, the metaphoric stairs I climb due to that.

III: Empathise.

While writing Knowledge is Power Until It Makes You Powerless, I had a personal breakthrough:

Empathy

thy

Your.

You.

If you, dear reader, are on the privileged bank of the river, how do you think the other bank feels?

You need to show empathy to yourself for the hardships you endured despite being 'normal(ised)' and to others, who wave to you from the opposite bank.

Both banks have hardships.

It reminds me of the 'Be careful what you wish you because it may come true' notion.

See, being on the green-coloured, blossoming bank of the river, still comes with challenges. There are still survival techniques we need to utilize in order to survive there — we still need to hunt, eat, stay safe, commit to ourselves daily. That alone requires so much effort! The density of the forest remains, although the sun — or the privilige — reaches us. So many individuals get defensive when their privilege has been highlighted.

THE CATALYST

Instead of protecting the hardships we have had to face by putting on the face of Defensiveness, we should address:

The question: Having described white privilege, what will I do to end it",

That is the question to answer for yourself, for the sake of others:

How can I use my privilege to help others?

Understanding my privilege, I understand myself better.

Understanding my privilege, I carry myself with more awareness in the world.

Understanding my privilege, how I can use it to help others?

Most importantly, when we talk about privilege we aren't — or we shouldn't — point fingers at one another.

With the risk of repeating my previous writing again, Mark Twain said:

"If you first catch 100 red fire ants and 100 large black ants, and put them in a jar, nothing will happen. However, if you violently shake the jar and dump them back on the ground, the ants will fight until they eventually kill each other. The thing is, the red ants think the black ants are the enemy and vice versa. When in reality, the real enemy is the person who shook the jar. This is exactly what's happening in society today".

So, who shook the jar?

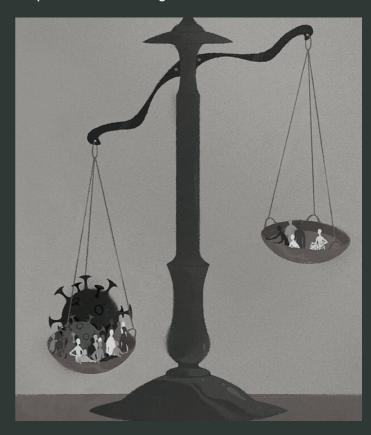And Peggy McIntosh herself says,

It is an open question whether we will choose to use unearned advantage to weaken hidden systems of advantage, and whether we will use any of our arbitraily awarded power to try and reconstruct power systems on a broader base.

This is to point.

To unearthen the advantage.

To understand the advantage.

To provide this advantage to all.

SUBJECTS OR CITIZENS: National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

By Katrin Hristova

Read the title again: National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month

Do you see a problem?

As a linguist, I couldn't help noticing the gap the following illustrates:

NATIONAL

Do we even narrow the scope of the event that reminds us of the gaps in the system?

Do we put a gap where a gap is attempted to be removed?

Do we shrink geographically even Mental Health Awareness for Minorities?

Do we neglect the rest of the minority groups?

Setting the scene

Bebe Moore Campbell lives in the United States.

In her role as a mother, she has a hard time providing her daughter with the help that her mental illness requires. Bebe becomes aware of the obstacles in the system. The thorough motherly dedication creates a safe space for Black people to discuss mental health concerns-National Alliance on Mental Illness-Inglewood, based in a predominantly Black neighbourhood.

She finds a gap in the system and fills it with safety, compassion and empathy.

In 2005, Bebe Moore Campbell is an author. The author of 72 Hour Hold, an account of a mother's search for assistance for her daughter who suffers from bipolar disorder. In this semi-autobiographic account, she dives into the bureaucracy of mental health, her experience, her African-American roots, her past and her child's future.

Becoming a New York Times Bestseller, the novel gives the mother a voice, transforming her into a mental health spokesperson. Her book tour turns up the volume of her voice. Her dedication expands her mission on a national scope when Bebe decides that National Minority Mental Health Month must exist. Despite the doubts, she contacts a former classmate- now congressman, to sponsor the bill. She then asks Diane Watson to co-sponsor the bill.

We need a national campaign to destigmatize mental illness, especially one targeted toward African Americans. The message must go on billboards and in radio and TV public service announcements. It must be preached from pulpits and discussed in community focus. It is not shameful to have a mental illness. Get treatment. Recovery is possible.

Bebe Moore Campbell

Bebe Moore Campbell passes away in 2006.

The bill still continues to be in the open.

On June 2nd, 2008, the United States House of Representatives accepts the bill.

Instead of National Minority Mental Health Month, the Representatives proclaim that July is to be viewed as Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month. It is a month for the acknowledgement and exploration of mental health concerns and their correlation to minority communities. It is a month for a discussion on substance use disorders, destigmatization of mental illness, and public awareness of affected minority groups across America, of the underrepresented in regard to mental illness.

Mental Illnesses do not discriminate, and so we shouldn't.

In honour of this beautiful and much-needed reminder, I want to ask:

Does every continent need a Bebe Moore Campbell in order for its minorities to be represented?

The Scope: The Unrepresented Humans of the World

The National comes from the fact that the Minority Mental Health Month of Awareness is for North America.

On European territory alone, Panikos Panayi identifies three different types of minority groupings. In his book Outsiders: A History of European Minorities, he discussed the dispersed groups, the localised groupings and post-war immigrants-an offspring of the mass migration after WWII. The former group is represented by the Jewish and the Roma people -human beings, united by religion or way of life, who move into and across Europe and who have always been considered or have considered themselves, as minorities. The localized minorities are individuals whose roots lie outside Europe and who would remain "largely anonymous" until the growth of national states in the XIX and XX centuries.

The rise of migration means a rise in "outsiders", minorities, and underrepresented. Appearance, religion and language serve as distinctive features in these imagined groups, "controlled both by the nation states which wish them to conform and by leaders within these minorities".

Yes, Jews and Roma people are the obvious victims-the eternal outsiders of European history, before and after the years of the nation-state. However, looking at history on a national scope highlights many of the unknown faces of discrimination-

Who is to represent these groups in Europe?

Who is to consider at least the generational trauma, resulting from legislative exclusion-a byproduct of the age of nationalism-and the violence?

With Russia's expansion into Asia, we even merge the continental layers of trauma. Oh, wait. We already merged the geography of 'belonging' thanks to the rise in migration.

In the largest continent, stretching from the eastern Mediterranean Sea to the western Pacific Ocean, the Asia Research Institute-National University of Singapore dedicates a special issue to ethnic minorities in Asia.

On a white sheet of paper, as if pleading for our attention, it is written:

SUBJECTS OR CITIZENS

Large indigenous minority populations,

non-indigenous minorities,

ever-growing legal and illegal migrant flows,

the meaning of citizenship in Asian contexts,

state models of accommodation,

constructions and representations of identity and belonging,

post-colonial legacies,

nation-building,

the legitimacy of minority rights claims,

questions of human security

- the heterogeneous and divided Asian society was discussed 11 years ago.

The minorities within Asia.

What about the Asian minorities outside Asia?

What happens when we add the COVID-19 pandemic into the mix?

The notion is really similar in discussions on Latin America and Africa:

'Outsiders inside'-the minorities on the territory of the continent,

-and 'the insiders who are outside'-the communities that formed outside the country/continent.

The 'outsiders inside'-oppressed majorities, ethnic minorities and indigenous people- in Latin America and their political mobilizations "improve the quality of democracy by placing new issues and values-justice, equality, tolerance of difference-on the political agenda", as stated in Building Inclusive Democracies, 2005.

The birth point of alternative forms of inter-ethnic governance.

Today, most Latin American countries are constitutionally self-declared as "multiculturalist".

Yet, skin colour discrimination, class discrimination, labour discrimination and socio-economic status keep playing a role in healthcare access.

How many years will it take to address ethnoracial inequality?

Edward E. Telles calls these discrepancies PIGMENTOCRACIES.

In Africa, the minority/majority issues deepen. The most known act-coined by Desmond Tutu as the "Rainbow Nation" in South Africa, and spread throughout the presidency of Nelson Mandela-is an eye-opening, heartwarming concept aiming to highlight that the country is multifaceted in its nation and roots. Nevertheless, the domestic problems of racism and the related crime rate remain.

History again is to be blamed. In 1997, Francis M. Deng writes:

In the process of colonial state formation, groups were divided or brought together with little or no regard for their common characteristics or distinctive attributes. They were placed in new administrative frameworks, governed by new values, new institutions, and new operational principles and techniques. The autonomous local outlook of the old order was replaced by the control mechanisms of the state, in which the ultimate authority was an outsider, a foreigner. This mechanism functioned through the centralization of power, which ultimately rested on police and military force, the tools of authoritarian rule. This crude force was, however, softened by making use of traditional leaders as extended arms of state control over the tribes or the local communities, giving this externally imposed system a semblance of legitimacy for the masses. Adding to this appearance of legitimacy was the introduction of a welfare system by which the state provided meager social services and limited development opportunities to privileged sectors. National resources were otherwise extracted and exported as raw materials to feed the metropolitan industries of the colonial masters.

Today, virtually every African conflict has some ethno-regional dimension to it. Even those conflicts that may appear to be free of ethnic concerns involve factions and alliances built around ethnic loyalties. Analysts have tended to have one of two views of the role of ethnicity in these conflicts. Some see ethnicity as a source of conflict; others see it as a tool used by political entrepreneurs to promote their ambitions. In reality, it is both.

What trauma is fostered due to this mass violation of human rights?

What mental health illnesses are a result of the assumed-due-to-appearance ancestors of the colonialists?

What effect on the self does the rejection of one's past have?

What vicarious trauma will our children inherit?

Conclusion

The 'us' and the 'them' have to become 'we'.

History has made us the villains and the victims. All of us.

This article was supposed to question National Minority Health Awareness Month. When I found out about it, I thought to myself, "Hey, we need that in Europe, too!". By diving into the topic, and expanding my research on the minorities of other continents, I found it impossible to track down all the shifts and movements.

We-humans- have demonstrated, for whatever reason, nomadic tendencies. We have moved for wealth-individual and collective, for curiousity, research, better futures, industrial development, greed, and so forth.

In doing so, we have forgotten about the people who are on the receiving end.

A victim or a villain?

We also forget something called Intergenerational trauma.

This is collective trauma that we all carry, passed down from one generation to the next. Where? In our DNA.

Being a human-a DNA carrier-says that we have at least one type of trauma to heal.

Fundamentally, Mental Health is essential for all age groups, regardless of the way we look, what is written next to our "Birthplace", where we are right now, what decisions we have made, and who our ancestors are.

The Girl Hated for Her Passion

Written by Koptleuova Dana
Art by Snowwdi

Imagine feeling completely isolated and ostracized in school, all because of your love for art and your favorite subjects to draw. Have you ever been so passionate about something, only to be ridiculed and criticized for it? What does it say about the people around you when they cannot appreciate and support your creative pursuits?

This is the story of Dina, a young girl with a beautiful talent, who was shunned by her peers for her love of drawing Korean idols. I had the opportunity to sit down with her and learn more about her experience, her passion, and her journey to acceptance and self-discovery.

Dina, or as her online followers know her, "Snowwdi," has always been an introverted and creative soul. From a young age, she found solace in the world of art. It was a place where she could express herself freely and escape the pressures and judgments of the outside world. But what set Dina apart from her classmates was her choice of subject matter.

As a die-hard fan of Korean pop music, or K-pop, Dina was captivated by the stunning visuals and intricate performances of her favorite idols. It was only natural for her to combine her love for drawing with her passion for K-pop. But little did she know that this decision would turn her entire world upside down.

But why were her classmates so quick to judge and dismiss her artwork? Were they genuinely concerned for her well-being, or were they simply projecting their own insecurities and prejudices onto her passion? And what does it say about the world we live in when someone is ridiculed for expressing themselves through art?
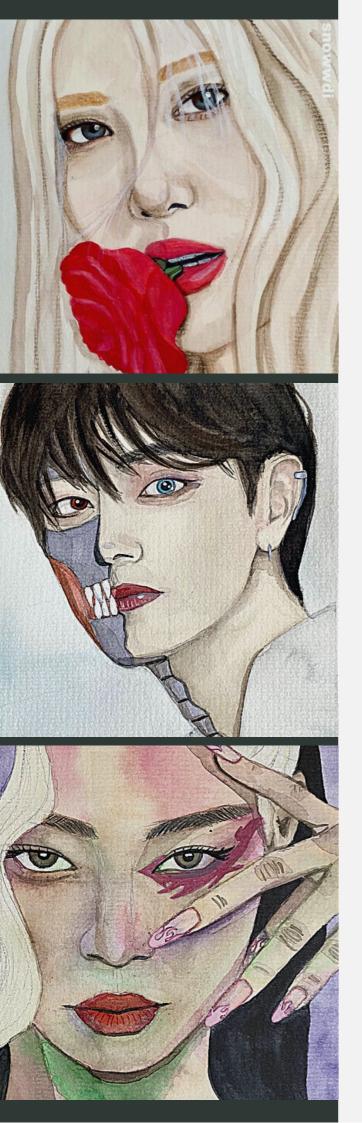
It's important to understand that Dina's love for drawing Korean idols was not just a passing whim or superficial obsession. It was a deep, emotional connection to a culture that resonated with her on a personal level. K-pop was more than just catchy tunes and flashy outfits; it was a form of self-expression and identity for Dina.

As she poured her heart and soul into her artwork, Dina began to develop a following online. Fans from all over the world admired her intricate and beautiful depictions of their favorite K-pop stars. They would shower her with praise and support, validating her talent and passion for art.

But this newfound success only seemed to fuel the resentment and animosity of her classmates. They would scoff at her online presence, saying things like, "You're only popular because you draw those stupid Korean guys." It was as if they couldn't accept the fact that someone they had deemed "weird" and "nerdy" was actually finding success and recognition for her talents.

But Dina was not one to back down from her passion. She refused to let the negativity of her classmates dictate her life and her art. As she continued to draw and share her work online, she began to realize something important: her true strength lay in her ability to persevere, even in the face of adversity.

It's a lesson we can all learn from Dina's story. When faced with criticism and ridicule, it's all too easy to give up on our passions and dreams. But if we dig deep and find the strength to push through, we can discover our true potential and achieve greatness.

So, what happened to Dina? How did she overcome the hatred and negativity that surrounded her?

Dina decided to take a stand. She began to share her story and experiences with her online followers, opening up about the bullying and judgment she faced in school. As her story spread, it touched the hearts of thousands of people who could relate to her struggle and empathize with her pain.

Her bravery and resilience inspired countless others to speak up about their own experiences with bullying and to support one another in their creative pursuits. In the face of adversity, Dina had managed to create a community of love, support, and understanding.

Today, Dina continues to draw and share her artwork with her growing fanbase. She has become a symbol of strength and perseverance for those who have faced bullying and judgment for their passions. And while her classmates may still not understand or appreciate her love for drawing Korean idols, Dina has found a global family who not only accepts her but celebrates and cherishes her unique talent.

In the end, Dina's story is one of hope and triumph. It serves as a powerful reminder that when we choose to embrace our passions and stay true to ourselves, we can overcome even the most daunting obstacles. And perhaps, more importantly, it shows us that the world is full of people who will appreciate and support us, even whenthose closest to us do not.

In conclusion, Dina's story is not just about a girl who was hated for her passion for drawing Korean idols. It's a testament to the power of perseverance, self-discovery, and the importance of finding your tribe. So, let us all take a page from Snowwdi's book and embrace our passions, stand up to judgment and ridicule, and celebrate the beauty of our unique talents and interests. And who knows? Maybe we'll find our own global family, just like Dina did.

SOCIAL

Social justice refers to the fair and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within society. It is concerned with promoting equal access to basic human rights, such as education, healthcare, and housing, regardless of a person's race, gender, religion, or socioeconomic status.

JUSTICE

Social justice also seeks to challenge and address systemic inequalities and discrimination that contribute to the marginalization of certain groups within society. It is a fundamental principle of a just and democratic society, and is often pursued through advocacy efforts.

THE CATALYST

fight for social justice

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2023