

Exploring the Potential of White Male Students at Historically White Institutions using their 'Whiteness' and 'Privilege' Positioning to Show up as Racial Equity and Social Justice Allies on the Campus and Beyond

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Abstract

Race-related incidents on Higher Education (HE) campuses have become one of the biggest social and educational challenges globally. It is no different within the South African context, especially on the historically white campus of Stellenbosch University. In this regard, the literature suggests that Allies are integral to the global pursuit of addressing inequalities and striving toward racial equity and social justice in HE settings. This paper therefore argues that with the appropriate support, guidance, and mentorship, White male students at HWIs can leverage their privilege and whiteness to act as Allies in this quest. This stance aligns with literature suggesting white males often exhibit and grant less support for issues around inclusion and social justice compared to their less privileged peers and white women. Furthermore, this paper ties into the significant absence in the literature of the White male voice and perspective on race-related issues and social justice, even though they continuously hold a disproportionate amount of societal power relative to white women and Black people. Foregrounding the white male voice while anchoring it within the theoretical framework of social justice and restorative practices can contribute to creating equitable and inclusive HE environments that foster healing, empathy, and trust. This paper therefore aims to contribute to a more nuanced insight and understanding of how White male students can contribute to the global solution, by exploring their potential role as allies challenging existing racial paradigms and challenges. This can furthermore contribute to a shift from exploring race-related challenges through a deficit lens to a lens of trust and compassion.

Keywords

Transformation in Higher Education, Allyship, Whiteness, Social Justice, Racial Equity, Restorative Practices, Compassion, Trust.