

4 ways you as a white person can reduce your complicity in white supremacy

Because if you're not fighting white supremacy as a white person, you're supporting it

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When people think of white supremacy, they think of Nazis, of white guys with shaved heads and combat boots, or of white men under hoods burning crosses and calling themselves 5th level supreme grand wizard dragons or whatever fantasy nonsense they call themselves. They are part of white supremacy, but they're not what keeps it alive and well. The complacent attitude of good white people is what really keeps white supremacy going.

People tend to treat racism like it's something that will solve itself. Either it will die out or be snuffed out by the changing times. But that's not how it works. White supremacy is a cultural system that benefits whiteness. As such, unless you actively fight against it as a white person, you're complicit in it.

This may not seem fair. After all, you, white reader, probably aren't burning crosses or ripping off hijabs (at least I hope not). However, if you aren't working against the much smaller and more subtle things that lead to such outright violence, you are helping to create an environment where other people feel comfortable committing such acts.

White silence *is* violence when you don't speak up after a heinous event. Your silence paved the way for that to happen, and if you want to stop it, if you want to stem the tides of white supremacy, then you must change how you interact with the world and address the small ways in which white supremacy controls and impacts your life and the world around you.

1) Address Your Bias

This is the first step to addressing the issue of white supremacy and how it colors our view of the world. As the saying goes, fish in a pond don't know they're wet. White supremacy is your pond, and in order to fight it, you must first remove yourself from it.

The good news is that you are not a fish, and you don't need to swim in toxic waters to survive. The bad news is that confronting the toxic behaviors and beliefs that you are used to is going to be uncomfortable. It will be uncomfortable, but it will not kill you. However, those same toxic beliefs that are so comfortable for you may actually get someone with a darker complexion killed, so it's worth the work.

Your internal bias influences your outer world in many ways. It tells you who to find more trustworthy, more deserving of compassion or reward, or more altruistic. You may not think that these things are important, especially if you are not in a position of power, but these biases allow you to be more complicit in a society that oppresses people of color (POC) because it lowers the chances of you speaking out against it.

It's no accident that most people are quick to accept that a Black man killed by police was a criminal. It's not because they viscerally hate Black people; it's simply internal bias at work.

If you accept or fail to examine that bias in yourself, then you play a role in upholding white supremacy.

2) Accept That You Are Not the Authority on Racism

Because you are not a POC, you have no idea what it is like to be a POC or how minor events play out on a larger scale in our lives. You have no capacity to tell a POC what is or isn't racist because you literally have no idea what you're talking about.

I repeat. You cannot tell a POC what is and isn't racist. You don't know what you're talking about.

If you are white, you benefit from the things that oppress POC, and you have been conditioned to see these things, save for the most heinous acts of violence, as normal. You probably wouldn't paint "nigger" on someone's door, but you probably wouldn't care or find it strange that all the ethnic hair care products are under lock and key at Target. In fact, you might find ways to excuse it. That's white supremacy.

This makes you a poor candidate to understand issues of racism beyond just the basics. If someone of color says that something is racist, listen to them. If you don't understand why,

give it a Google and educate yourself. Do not try to explain why the person directly affected by the racist words or actions is wrong. If someone slaps you across the face, they don't get to decide whether they hurt you or not.

By taking a back seat in these discussions and listening to what POC have to say, you will learn and be better able to spot these racist pitfalls before you jump into them headfirst.

3) Take It to the Streets

The first two parts of this are about working on yourself. Next, you need to take that out into the world. It's important to deal with the white supremacy that shows up in your life. This is more than just telling your grandma she's racist for being afraid of that new brown family that moved in next door.

White supremacy is pervasive. It creeps and lurks in the most benign things. Don't ignore these things because they're familiar.

You can take small steps to be a better ally and help remove pre-existing issues. For example, read over the dress code policy for your place of work. Pay attention to the language that is used. If you see something that can be used unfairly against POC, address that with HR or the administration staff. Don't wait for them to tell your Black coworkers that they need to do something with their hair.

Check out the books offered at your child's school. If they lack diversity, say something or, better yet, donate more diverse books and material.

Identify how the charitable organizations you are already involved with can better serve communities of color.

As cliché and trite as this line is, being the change you want to see in the world is apt here. People of color have been telling white people what the problems are and where they are falling short for years. By now, it's clear how to take small actionable steps. But in order for progress to be made, you must put that knowledge into action.

4) Do Not Normalize White Supremacy

Thus far, white supremacy has been normalized. Biased hiring practices, coded language, and the like are business as usual for most people, and soon, the "alt-right" and the

appointment of white supremacist leaders will be too. This means the normalization of the white supremacist policies that we're still trying to wipe from the ledgers of the last century.

It is so important that the recent developments in our government and the rise of hate crimes across the nation are not accepted as normal, beyond our control, or, even worse, something that is none of your business.

That lack of concern and hopelessness is exactly how white supremacy continues to flourish. It is not something that only affects other people—it affects all of us. The difference is that the parts that are violent and harmful are happening to POC, and even if you are not okay with the violence and fear perpetrated by Nazis, skinheads, and the KKK, you, dear white person, are still benefitting from the culture they are creating.

Don't accept it. Support groups that lobby against hate and support POC who are in the crosshairs of the coming presidency. Call out the casual racism of your friends and families. More than that, though, more than anything else, be aware of it and refuse to accept it. This is not the time to hide your head in the sand and hope that someone else comes along to help.

White supremacy is counting on your complicity to win. Let it down hard.



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Donyae Coles is a freelance writer who is just really into people being decent to one another and cats. When she's not taking on the Patriarchy and White Supremacy she likes to crochet and paint. You can follow her on her blog, [Free Nights and Weekends](#), on [Facebook](#), and Twitter [@okokno](#).

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