

Accident of Birth

by Dustin Dandliker

I was born with white skin that doesn't burn in the sun and dark hair that brightens to shocking white by the end of summer. My dad and sister have hazel eyes while my mom's and mine are brown. Through a simple accident of birth, I am Swiss and Oglala Sioux.

That same accident of birth has rendered me male and middle class, heterosexual and mostly Christian, although many friends would disagree with both my choice of words and identity. Some would say gender is fluid and not binary and I would agree. Others would say I'm not a true Christian, and I would disagree. All of them are still my friends.

I've been thinking about binary meanings of the word "privilege" and the tension of their duality; the tension they hold me in now. On one hand, privilege represents the accident of birth I mentioned before. Through no effort of my own, I have been privileged (or granted by virtue of birth) the right to walk alone at night without fear of being raped. Also, rarely have I felt conscious of my own culture or how I may be viewed as a stereotype. No one ever told me, "God hates you," because of whom I choose to love.

Then there's another meaning of privilege; as in, "It's a privilege to introduce you to 'god,' as seen by Carl Sagan." I have had the privilege of meeting people from many walks of life. I've had the privilege of reading the wisdom of many faiths – even faith in science and human endeavor. So, privilege has also meant for me the benefit of an open mind and a deepening soul.

In the end, I envision a world where the next generation has the privilege—both the birth right and conscious decision—to grow and learn free of abuse based on their race, class and gender. Kids should never think, "I am less than another." So, I sincerely hope – and diligently plan – for a life peopled with, simply, "people."

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