Interrupting the Cycle of Oppression:  
*The Role of Allies as Agents of Change*  
The Rev. Dr. Andrea Ayvazian

Many of us feel overwhelmed when we consider the many forms of systemic oppression that are so pervasive in American society today. We become immobilized, uncertain about what actions we can take to interrupt the cycles of oppression and violence that intrude on our everyday lives. One way to overcome this sense of immobilization is to assume the role of an ally. Learning about this role—one that each and every one of us is capable of assuming—can offer us new ways of behaving and a new source of hope.

Through the years, experience has taught us that isolated and episodic actions - even dramatic, media-grabbing events - rarely produce more than a temporary blip on the screen. What does seem to create real and lasting change is highly-motivated individuals - usually only a handful at first- who are so clear and consistent on an issue that they serve as a heartbeat in a community, steadily sending out waves that touch and change those in their path. These change agents or allies have such a powerful impact because their actions embody the values they profess: their behavior and beliefs are congruent.

**What Is an Ally?**  
An ally is a member of a dominant group in our society who works to dismantle any form of oppression from which she or he receives the benefit. Allied behavior means taking personal responsibility for the changes we know are needed in our society, and so often ignore or leave to others to deal with. Allied behavior is intentional, overt, consistent activity that challenges prevailing patterns of oppression, makes privileges that are so often invisible visible, and facilitates the empowerment of persons targeted by oppression.

**Making a Difference**  
I use the term "oppression" to describe the combination of prejudice plus access to social, political, and economic power on the part of a dominant group. Racism, a core component of oppression, has been defined by David Wellman as a system of advantage based on race. Wellman's definition can be altered slightly to describe every other form of oppression. Hence we can say that sexism is a system of advantage based on gender, that heterosexism is a system of advantage based on sexual orientation, and so on. In each form of oppression there is a dominant group -the one that receives the unearned advantage, benefit, or privilege -and a targeted group -the one that is denied that advantage, benefit, or privilege. We know the litany of dominants: white people, males, Christians, heterosexuals, able-bodied people, those in their middle years, and those who are middle or upper class.

We also know that everyone has multiple social identities. We are all dominant and targeted simultaneously. I, for instance, am simultaneously dominant as a white person and targeted as a woman. A white able-bodied man may be dominant in those categories, but targeted as a Jew or Muslim or as a gay person. Some people are, at some point in their lives, entirely dominant-, but if they are, they won't be forever. Even a white, able-bodied, heterosexual, Christian male will literally grow out of his total dominance if he reaches old age.
When we consider the different manifestations of systematic oppression and find ourselves in any of the categories where we are dominant—and I therefore receive the unearned advantages that accrue to that position of advantage—we have the potential to be remarkably powerful agents of change as allies. Allies are whites who identify as anti-racists, men who work to dismantle sexism, able-bodied people who are active in the disability rights movement, Christians who combat anti-Semitism and other forms of religious prejudice. Allied behavior usually involves talking to other dominants about their behavior: whites confronting other whites on issues of racism, men organizing with other men to combat sexism, and so on. Allied behavior is clear action aimed at dismantling the oppression of others in areas where you yourself benefit—it is proactive, intentional, and often involves taking a risk.

To tether these principles to everyday reality, just think of the group Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) as the perfect example of allied behavior. PFLAG is an organization of (mainly) heterosexuals who organize support groups and engage in advocacy and education among other heterosexuals around issues of gay and lesbian liberation. PFLAG speakers can be heard in houses of worship, schools, and civic organizations discussing their own commitment to securing gay and lesbian civil rights. Because they are heterosexuals speaking (usually) to other heterosexuals, they often have a significant impact.

The anti-racism trainer Kenneth Jones, an African-American, refers to allied behavior as "being at my back." He has said to me, "Andrea, I know you are at my back on the issue of race equity—you're talking to white people who cannot hear me on this topic, you're out there raising these issues repeatedly, you're organizing with other whites to stand up to racism. And I'm at your back. I'm raising issues of gender equity with men, I am talking to men who cannot hear you; I've made a commitment to combat sexism."

Available to each one of us in the categories where we are dominant is the proud and honorable role of ally: the opportunity to raise hell with others like us and to interrupt the cycle of oppression. Because of our very privilege, we have the potential to stir up good trouble, to challenge the status quo, and to inspire real and lasting change. William Strickland, an aide to Jesse Jackson, once said: "When a critical mass of white people join together, rise up, and shout a thunderous 'No' to racism, we will actually alter the course of history."

Reducing Violence
When I ponder the tremendous change a national network of allies can make in this country, I think not only of issues of equity and empowerment, but also of how our work could lead to diminishing levels of violence in our society. Let us consider for a moment the critical connection between oppression and violence on one hand, and the potential role of allied behavior in combating violence on the other.

A major source of violence in our society is the persistent inequity between dominant and targeted groups. Recall that oppression is kept in place by two factors:

1. Ideology, or the propagation of doctrines that purport to legitimize inequality; and
2. Violence (or the threat of violence) by the dominant group against the targeted group.
The violence associated with each form of systemic oppression noticeably decreases when allies (or dominants) rise up and shout a thunderous "No" to the perpetuation of these inequities. Because members of the dominant group are conferred with considerable social power and privilege, they carry significant authority when confronting perpetrators of violence in their own group—when whites deter other whites from using violence against people of color, when heterosexuals act to prevent gay bashing, and so on.

Research studies have confirmed what observers and allies have been saying for years: that when a woman is the victim of ongoing, violent domestic abuse, it makes no difference to her chances of survival if she has counseling, takes out a restraining order, or learns to fight back. According to the studies, the only factor that statistically increases a woman's chances of survival is if the victimizer himself is exposed to direct and ongoing anti-battering intervention.

These studies have inspired the creation of model mentoring programs in places like Quincy, Massachusetts, Duluth, Minnesota, and New York City—programs in which men prone to violence against women work with other men through a series of organized interventions. The success of these programs has demonstrated that it is actually possible to interrupt and stop the cycle of violence among batterers. In 1992, for instance, the model program in Quincy helped cut the incidence of domestic homicide to zero. The Batterers Anonymous groups, in which men who are former perpetrators work with men who are current batterers, have also had remarkable success in breaking the habit of violence. These groups are allied behavior made manifest—their success in reducing the incidence of violence against women is now statistically proven.

In our society, oppression and violence are woven together: one leads to the other, one justifies the other. Furthermore, members of the dominant group who are not perpetrators of violence often collude, through their silence and inactivity, with those who are. Allied behavior is an effective way of interrupting the cycle of violence by breaking the silence that reinforces the cycle, and by promoting a new set of behavior through modeling and mentoring.

Providing Positive Role Models
Not only does allied behavior contribute to an increase in equity and a decrease in violence, but allies provide positive role models that are sorely needed by today's young people. The role of ally offers young people who are white, male, and in other dominant categories a positive, proactive, and proud identity. Rather than feeling guilty, shameful, and immobilized as the "oppressor," whites and other dominants can assume the important and useful role of social change agent. There have been proud allies and change agents throughout the history of this nation, and there are many alive today who can inspire us with their important work.

I often speak in high school classes and assemblies, and in recent years I have taken to doing a little informal survey from the podium. I ask the students if they can name a famous living white racist. Can they? Yes. They often name David Duke—he ran for President in their lifetime; or they sometimes name Senator Jesse Helms. And when I was in the mid-west, they named Marge Schott, the owner of the Cincinnati Reds. It does not take long before a hand shoots up, or someone just calls out one of those names.

Following that little exercise, I ask the students, "Can you name a famous living white anti-racist (or civil rights worker, or someone who fights racism)?" Can they? Not very often. Sometimes there is a
whisper or two, but generally the room is very quiet. So, recently, I have been saying: forget the famous part. Just name for me any white person you know in your community, or someone you have heard of, who has taken a stand against racism. Can they? Sometimes. Occasionally someone says "my mom," or "my dad." I have also heard "my rabbi, my teacher, my minister." But not often enough. I believe that it is difficult for young people to grow up and become something they have never heard of. It is hard for a girl to grow up and become a commercial airline pilot if it has never occurred to her that woman can and do fly jet planes. Similarly, it is hard for young people to grow up and fight racism if they have never met anyone who does.

And there are many remarkable role models whom we can claim with pride, and model ourselves after. People like Laura Haviland, who was a conductor on the Underground Railroad and performed unbelievably brave acts while the slave-catchers were right on her trail; Virginia Foster Durr, a southern belle raised with great wealth and privilege who, as an adult, tirelessly drove black workers to and from their jobs during the Montgomery bus boycott; the Rev. James Reeb, who went south during the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964 to organize and march; Hodding Carter, Jr., editor and publisher of a newspaper in the Mississippi Delta who used his paper to battle for racial equity and who took considerable heat for his actions. And more: the Grimke sisters, Lucretia Mott, William Lloyd Garrison, John Brown, Viola Liuzzo.

There are also many contemporary anti-racists like Morris Dees, who gave up a lucrative law practice to start the Southern Poverty Law Center and Klan Watch in Alabama and bring white supremacists to trial; Anne Braden, active for decades in the civil rights struggle in Kentucky; Rev. Joseph Barndt, working within the religious community to make individual churches and entire denominations proclaim themselves as anti-racist institutions. And Peggy McIntosh, Judith Katz, and Myles Horton. And so many others. Why don't our young people know these names? If young people knew more about these dedicated allies, perhaps they would be inspired to engage in more anti-racist activities themselves.

Choosing Our Own Roles

We also need to consider our role as allies. In our own communities, would young people, if asked the same questions, call out our names as anti-racists? In areas where we are dominant, is our struggle for equity and justice evident? When we think about our potential role as allies, we need to recall a Quaker expression: "Let your life be your teaching." The Quakers understand that our words carry only so much weight, that it is our actions, our daily behaviors that tell the true story.

In my own life I struggle with what actions to take, how to make my beliefs and my behaviors congruent. One small step that has had interesting repercussions over the last decade is the fact that my partner (who is male) and I have chosen not to be legally married until gay and lesbian couples can be married and receive the same benefits and legal protection that married heterosexual couples enjoy. A small step, but it has allowed us to talk with folks at the YMCA about their definition of "family" when deciding who qualifies for their "family plan"; to challenge people at Amtrak about why some "family units" receive discounts when traveling together and others do not; and to raise questions in the religious community about who can receive formal sanction for their loving unions and who cannot. These are not earth-shattering steps in the larger picture, but we believe that small steps taken by thousands of people will eventually change the character of our communities.
When we stop colluding and speak out about the unearned privileges we enjoy as members of a dominant group - privileges we have been taught for so long to deny or ignore - we have the potential to undergo and inspire stunning transformation. Consider the words of Gandhi: "As human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world, as in being able to remake ourselves."

In my own community, I have been impressed by the efforts of three middle-aged males who have remade themselves into staunch allies for women. Steven Botkin established the Men's Resource Center in Amherst, Massachusetts twelve years ago and put a commitment to eliminating sexism in its very first mission statement. Another Amherst resident, Michael Burkart, travels nationwide and works with top executives in Fortune 500 companies on the issue of gender equity in their corporations. And Geoff Lobenstine, a social worker who identifies as an anti-sexist male, brings these issues to his work in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

Charlie Parker once said this about music: "Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn." I think the same is true about us in our role as allies - it is our own experience, our thoughts, our wisdom. If we don't live it, it won't come out of our horn.

Preparing for the Long Haul
Now I would be the first to admit that personally and professionally the role of ally is often exhausting. I know that it involves challenges - being an ally is difficult work, and it can often be lonely. We must remember to take care of ourselves along this journey, to sustain our energy and our zest for those ongoing challenges.

We must also remember that it is hard to go it alone: allies need allies. As with any other struggle in our lives, we need supportive people around us to help us to persevere. Other allies will help us take the small, daily steps that will, in time alter the character of our communities. We know that allied behavior usually consists of small steps and unglamorous work. As Mother Teresa once said: "I don't do any great things. I do small things with great love."

Finally two additional points about us in our role as allies: First, we don’t always see the results of our efforts. Sometimes we do, but often we touch and change lives without ever knowing it. Consequently, we cannot measure our success in quantitative terms. Like waves upon the shore, we are altering the landscape - but exactly how, may be hard to discern.

Doubts inevitably creep up about our effectiveness, about our approach, and the positions we assume or the actions we take. But we move forward, ignoring the doubts, the uncertainty, and often the lack of visible results. In our office we have a famous William James quote on the wall to sustain us: "I will act as if what I do makes a difference." And, speaking personally, although I may sometimes be rattled, I try to act as though what I do does make a difference.

Second, there is no such thing as a perfect ally. Perfection is not our goal. When I asked my colleague Kenneth Jones what stood out for him as the most important characteristic of a strong ally, he said simply: "being consistently conscious." He didn't say, "Never stumbling," or "Never making mistakes." He said, "Being consistently conscious." And so we do our best: taking risks, being smart, making errors, feeling foolish. doing what we believe is right, based on our best judgment at the time. We are imperfect, but we are steady. We are courageous but not faultless. As Lani Guinier said, "It is
better to be vaguely right than precisely wrong." If we obsess about looking good instead of doing good, we will get caught in a spiral of ineffective action. Let's not get side-tracked or defeated because we are trying to be perfect.

And so we move ahead, pushing ourselves forward on our growing edge. We know that although none of us are beginners in dealing with issues of oppression and empowerment—none of us are experts either. These issues are too complex, too painful, and too pervasive for us to achieve a state of clarity and closure once and for all. The best we can hope for is to strive each day to be our strongest and clearest selves, transforming the world one individual at a time, one family at a time, one community at a time. May we summon the wisdom to be devoted allies today. May we walk the walk, living as though equity, justice and freedom for all have already arrived.

Like most activists, I carry a dream inside me. As I travel nationwide for my work, I can actually see signs of it becoming true. The dream is that we will create in this country a nonviolent army of allies that will challenge and break the cycle of oppression and usher in a new era of liberation, empowerment, and equity for persons historically targeted by systemic oppression. Within each individual is the potential to effect enormous change. May we move forward, claiming with pride our identities as allies interrupting the cycle of oppression, and modeling a new way of behaving and believing.

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Privilege Worksheet

Please read the list and make a tick mark on a piece of paper for the privileges that apply to you.

1. I can turn on the TV or pick up the newspaper and see people just like me widely represented.
2. I can assume that national heroes and success models held up for general admiration will be assumed to be my gender/sexual orientation.
3. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that show families just like mine.
4. I can put a picture of me and my significant-other together at my workplace without worrying that I might lose my job because of it.
5. In the workplace, my being hired, fired or promoted will have nothing to do with my gender/sexual orientation.
6. I can freely talk about my family life and important relationships to colleagues at work, school, etc.
7. I can be pretty sure that if I ask to speak to the "person in charge," I will be facing someone of my own gender and sexual orientation.
8. I can marry whomever I choose.
9. I am never asked to speak for all people like me in the country.
10. I can walk into a classroom and be sure that I will not be the only person of my sexual orientation there.
11. I can kiss my date in public if I want to.
12. I can worry about gay rights and issues without being seen as self-interested or self-serving.
13. My partner and I can go shopping together, pretty well assured that we will not be harassed.
14. I can use a gender specific public bathroom without any fear of harassment or intimidation from others.
15. I can kiss my partner farewell at the airport, confident that onlookers will either ignore us or smile understandingly.
16. If I talk to my doctor about sex/safe sex, s/he provides information relevant to my sexual practices without my explicitly revealing my orientation.
17. I can access medical treatment without fear of revealing a biological sex that does not match my gender presentation.
18. I can be pretty sure that our neighbors where we live will be friendly, or at least neutral.
19. Our families or church communities are delighted to celebrate with myself and my partner the gift of love and commitment.
20. I can walk into any bookstore, sure that I will find books relevant to my experience of romantic relationships.
21. When my partner is seriously ill, I know I will be welcomed to the intensive care unit to visit her/him.
22. I can enter a clothing store and find gender appropriate clothing for me that fits, without fear of harassment from sales clerks.
23. I can find appropriate cards for my partner to celebrate special occasions with relative ease.
24. I grew up thinking that my gender presentation, loves and friendships were healthy and normal.
25. If I experience violence on the street, it will not be because I am holding hands with my partner or because I am wearing clothing not associated with my biological sex.
26. My partner and I can choose accommodation when we travel without having to worry about being accepted as a couple.
27. When one of us dies, the other can be confident of the support and understanding of family, colleagues, church community or friends.
28. If I am married, I can say 'my wife' or 'my husband' without causing surprise or shock.
29. I am never reduced to a single aspect of my life like gender/sexual orientation but am always viewed and treated as a complex human being who just happens to be my gender/sexual orientation.
30. My sexual orientation/gender will never be held against be to undermine my achievements or power.

"Privilege is the belief and attitude of an individual who was born on third base and thinks he hit a triple…"
--Cactus Pryor

[Privilege] gives some people the freedom to be thoughtless at best, and murderous at worst."  –Alison Bailey.

"A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both."  --Dwight D. Eisenhower

"No democracy can long survive which does not accept as fundamental to its very existence the recognition of the rights of its minorities."  --Franklin D. Roosevelt
Male privilege checklist

This list is based on Peggy McIntosh’s article on white privilege. These dynamics are but a few examples of the privilege which male people have.

On a daily basis as a male person…

1. My odds of being hired for a job, when competing against female applicants, are probably skewed in my favor. The more prestigious the job, the larger the odds are skewed.

2. If I fail in my job or career, I can feel sure this won’t be seen as a black mark against my entire sex’s capabilities.

3. I am far less likely to face sexual harassment at work than my female co-workers are.

4. If I do the same task as a woman, and if the measurement is at all subjective, chances are people will think I did a better job.

5. If I choose not to have children, my masculinity will not be called into question.

6. If I have children and a career, no one will think I’m selfish for not staying at home.

7. My elected representatives are mostly people of my own sex. The more prestigious and powerful the elected position, the more this is true.

8. When I ask to see “the person in charge,” odds are I will face a person of my own sex. The higher-up in the organization the person is, the surer I can be.

9. As a child, chances are I was encouraged to be more active and outgoing than my sisters.

10. As a child, chances are I got more teacher attention than girls who raised their hands just as often.

11. If I’m careless with my financial affairs it won’t be attributed to my sex.

12. If I’m careless with my driving it won’t be attributed to my sex.

13. Even if I sleep with a lot of women, there is no chance that I will be seriously labeled a “slut,” nor is there any male counterpart to “slut-bashing.”

14. I do not have to worry about the message my wardrobe sends about my sexual availability or my gender conformity.
15. My clothing is typically less expensive and better-constructed than women’s clothing for the same social status. While I have fewer options, my clothes will probably fit better than a woman’s without tailoring.

16. The grooming regimen expected of me is relatively cheap and consumes little time.

17. If I’m not conventionally attractive, the disadvantages are relatively small and easy to ignore.

18. I can be loud with no fear of being called a shrew. I can be aggressive with no fear of being called a bitch.

19. I can be confident that the ordinary language of day-to-day existence will always include my sex. “All men are created equal,” mailman, chairman, freshman, etc.

20. My ability to make important decisions and my capability in general will never be questioned depending on what time of the month it is.

21. I will never be expected to change my name upon marriage or questioned if I don’t change my name.

22. The decision to hire me will never be based on assumptions about whether or not I might choose to have a family sometime soon.

23. If I have a wife or live-in girlfriend, chances are we’ll divide up household chores so that she does most of the labor, and in particular the most repetitive and unrewarding tasks.

24. If I have children with a wife or girlfriend, chances are she’ll do most of the childrearing, and in particular the most dirty, repetitive and unrewarding parts of childrearing.

25. If I have children with a wife or girlfriend, and it turns out that one of us needs to make career sacrifices to raise the kids, chances are we’ll both assume the career sacrificed should be hers.

26. Magazines, billboards, television, movies, pornography, and virtually all of media are filled with images of scantily-clad women intended to appeal to me sexually. Such images of men exist, but are rarer.

27. In general, I am under much less pressure to be thin than my female counterparts are. If I am fat, I probably suffer fewer social and economic consequences for being fat than fat women do.
28. On average, I am not interrupted by women as often as women are interrupted by men.

29. I have the privilege of being unaware of my male privilege.
Social Class privilege checklist

This list is based on Peggy McIntosh’s article on white privilege. These dynamics are but a few examples of the privilege which people from upper social classes have.

On a daily basis as an upper social class person…

1. I don’t need to worry about learning the social customs of others.

2. The ‘better people’ are in my social group.

3. It is likely that my career and financial success will be attributed to my hard work.

4. People appear to pay attention to my social class.

5. When I am shopping, people usually call me “Sir” or “Ma’am”.

6. When making a purchase with a check or credit card, my appearance doesn’t create problems.

7. When I, or my children, are taught about history, people from my social class are represented in the books.

8. I can easily speak with my attorney or physician.

9. There are neighborhoods I can move to where I feel ‘at home’.

10. There are places where I can be among those exclusively from my social class.

11. I can deny Social Class Privilege by asserting that all social classes are essentially the same.

12. Experts appearing on mass media are from my social class.

13. There are stores that market especially to people from my social class.

14. I can protect myself and my children from people who may not like us based on my social class.

15. Law enforcement officials will likely assume I am a non-threatening person once they see me and hear me.
16. Disclosure of my work and education may actually help law enforcement officials perceive me as being “in the right” or “unbiased.”

17. I can easily speak to my child’s college professors.

18. My citizenship and immigration status will likely not be questioned, and my background will likely not be investigated, because of my social class.

19. I can be sure that my social class will be an advantage when seeking medical or legal help.

20. If I wish to my children to private schools, I have a variety of options.

21. I can find colleges that have many people from my social class as students and that welcome me or my child.

22. If I apply for a prestige job competing with people of a lower class, my social class will be to my advantage.

23. The decision to hire me will be related to my background and where I went to school.

24. When I watch TV or read the papers I can see people of my own class represented well.

25. The “Newsmakers” are like me.

26. I deserve my status because of my accomplishments.

27. If I get offered a job over someone with more experience, it is because I deserve it.

28. My elected representatives share a similar background with mine.

29. Chances the person in charge in any organization is like me or is sympathetic to my status.

30. My child is never ignored in school, and if there are problems, I am called by the teacher or principal.

31. People are usually careful with their language and grammar around me.
In Class Acts (a program exploring issues of spirituality, ethics and theology for women of wealth), we spent a significant amount of time looking at the relationship of racism to class elitism. We have used "The Invisibility of White Privilege," developed by Peggy MacIntosh as a resource for our work. In Class Acts II we decided to draw up a list of "invisible" class privileges, using the work on racism as a model. The following list is a group effort. We are aware that each point represents a pitfall for all members of our class and each point is more or less applicable to all of us.

- I can manage to know only people of similar class background by exclusively frequenting places where such people gather — neighborhoods, schools, clubs, workplaces, etc.
- I can avoid people of other classes and races if I choose.
- I evaluate others and recognize those of similar background because I was taught to do that kind of evaluation.
- I assume I will be able to meet my basic needs. I take having necessities for granted.
- I buy what I need/want without worry.
- I do not have to worry about how emergencies will impact my spending requirements.
- I am free of the burden of debt.
- I have the freedom to waste.
- I can hide family secrets and family failures behind the doors of my home.
- I am in control of how I spend my time.
- I have leisure if I want.
- I can see myself as being above doing housework.
- I can be charitable or not as I choose.
- I do not have to worry about health insurance.
- I can be as private as I choose to be.
- I can be charitable or not as I choose.
- I have the time, education, and opportunity to enhance my inner life and my personal growth, to go to therapy (without having to rely on insurance), and go to retreats and workshops as much as I like.
- I can sleep all day and still make money.
- I can often get things by being "charming," gracious, and restrained.
- I can live where I choose and can move where I choose.
- I can expect that I will be welcomed where I choose to live. (Exceptions might be for landlords/neighbors who distrust single women or lesbians.)
- When I am in the company of people of my class in any social situation I have little discomfort.
- I can join clubs that are unavailable to many others.
- I feel entitled to maintain the exclusivity of my clubs by banning others from membership based on criteria the club determines: race, gender, education, money, religion, etc.
- In my community I am trusted and not perceived as a threat.
- I am believed to be innocent by the criminal justice system at least until proven guilty.
- I have the opportunity to problem solve efficiently and quickly through access to powerbrokers.
- I can avoid spending time with people whom I have am trained or have learned to mistrust and who may have learned to mistrust my kind.
- I can buy items (art, antiques, rugs, jewelry, first designer clothing, cars, boats, multiple houses, etc.) that imply wealth and status.
- If I break or lose something I can replace it easily.
- I can shop where I choose, in areas and buildings where I feel safe, where I am not likely to be hassled by security guards or the public, where I don't have to stand in line, and where sales personnel will give me time and personal attention.
- I do not have to shop around for the best buy or wait for sales.
- I do not have to worry about what emergencies will impact my spending requirements.
- I have the time and financial resources to care for my body.
- I can live a less stressful life because I can afford costly short cuts.
- I can employ people to help with the tasks of daily living.
- I can afford good medical and hospital care.
- I can employ people to care for my children.
- I can assert that I deserve and am entitled to those privileges.
- I can give my children an inheritance so their road is easier.
- I can give lavish parties.
- I can feel entitled to maintain the exclusivity of my clubs by banning others from membership based on criteria the club determines: race, gender, education, money, religion, etc.
- I can frequent exclusive hotels, clubs, restaurants, and vacation locales that give luxurious service.
- I can take vacations when and where I want.
- I can take vacations when and where I want.
- I can afford good medical and hospital care.
- I can afford good mental health care in a setting which will insure my privacy.
- I can anticipate my retirement years without financial anxiety.
- I can assert that I deserve and am entitled to those privileges.
- I can give my children an inheritance so their road is easier.

by Class Acts

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Dr. Joan Martin, while speaking at the Theological Opportunities Program at Harvard, made the point that we are identified with others of our class/race no matter how diligently we might have worked to enlarge our understanding and broaden our fields of awareness and action. With that in mind, each member of the group was asked to suggest class actions/attitudes with which we might be associated:

- My people have named our country a democracy, overlooking the definition of democracy and how it fails the life possibilities of many in our society.
- My people have the power to name the problems facing our society and to deny that problems that others in our society might name.
- My people determine what solutions will be made available to solve the problems they have named.
- My people determine if resources will be made available to solve problems others have named.
- My people understand ourselves as leaders — leaders of industry, politics, education, medicine, law, religion.
- As leaders, my people define what is normative and develop theory, policy, and standards to conform to our own definitions, including in the fields of developmental theory, behavior, manners, values, performance, theology (stressing the "redemptive value" of suffering), learning, testing, and ways of learning/knowing. These theories, definitions, behaviors, policies, and standards are presented as what is worthy and real; other definitions are minimized as not accurately naming reality.
- My people, as political executives, name self-protective politically expedient acts as acts of principle.
- My people, as executives and politicians, bend or break the law for self advantage and self protection.
- My people, as legislators, enact laws that benefit people like me.
- My people, as legislators, sell tax benefits.
- My people, as legislators, sell legal protection.
- My people, as consumers, buy tax and other advantage through contributions (financial and otherwise) to legislators.
- My people, as criminals, buy silence and legal protection.
- My people, as lawyers, sell legal protection.
- My people think we are entitled to preferential treatment, especially in relation to the law.
- My people, as physicians and health executives, control the allocation of medical and health resources.
- My people have wide networks of friends to whom we can turn for assistance in any number of situations — legal, business, employment, admission to exclusive clubs, etc.
- My people, because we have given favors to others, expect and receive favors in return.
- My people believe we are entitled to have and distribute social acceptance and that we control the "pecking order" in society.
- My people, as business executives, often do not pay adequate wages to employees, especially the working labor force.
- My people, as business executives, often exploit women and children workers.
- My people, as business executives, often do not design the society and to deny the problems that others in our society might name.
- My people, as business executives, often do not pay adequate wages to employees, especially the working labor force.
- My people, as business executives, sometimes move jobs/factories to new locations in anticipation of higher profits and/or to take advantage of tax breaks, cheaper labor, lower environmental standards, a "more favorable" working environment.
- My people, as business executives, often pay ourselves enormous salaries, bonuses, stock options, and other financial perks — club memberships, private car, plane, etc.
- My people, as business executives, are often given multimillion dollar severance packages when our employment is terminated because we have failed to fulfill the requirements of our position.
- My people, as business executives, often terminate the employment of workers with little notice and little to no "severance package."
- My people, as business executives, often name self-protective politically expedient acts as acts of principle.
- My people, as executives and politicians, bend or break the law for self advantage and self protection.
- My people, as legislators, sell tax benefits.
- My people, as lawyers, sell legal protection.
- My people, as criminals, buy silence and legal protection.
- My people, as lawyers, sell legal protection.
- My people think we are entitled to preferential treatment, especially in relation to the law.
- My people, as physicians and health executives, control the allocation of medical and health resources.
- My people have wide networks of friends to whom we can turn for assistance in any number of situations — legal, business, employment, admission to exclusive clubs, etc.
- My people, because we have given favors to others, expect and receive favors in return.

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Inclusiveness
(Short) Further Reading List

Anderson, S.K. & Middleton, V.A. *Explorations in privilege, oppression and Diversity*

W.W. Norton and Company


