

Checking Our Privilege

by *Miguelle Légère, Executive Staff Officer, Professional Learning*

Are any of these statements true for you?

- I can go shopping alone most of the time, assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- When I am told about our national history, I am shown that people of my colour made it what it is.
- I can arrange to protect my children most of the time from people who might not like them.
- I am never asked to speak for all the people of my racial group.
- I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my race.
- I can participate in most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling included and valued, rather than isolated, out-of-place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
- I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of race.
- I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person of my ethnicity.
- I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my ethnicity will not work against me.

The above questions are taken from Peggy McIntosh's 1989 seminal work titled, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*. The statements in her article are a good starting point to begin thinking about the unearned privilege white people often do not know they have. Over 30 years later, the question of white privilege is still relevant and has become a more common topic in mainstream society, politics, and education.

As conversations around systemic racism and white privilege become more common in education circles, the NSTU continues to create opportunities for these discussions. This year, the NSTU Equity Committee is proud to host its biennial conference. Although building relationships face-to-face is a clear benefit of committee conferences, there are some unanticipated advantages to COVID-19 making us go virtual: There are fewer costs to a virtual conference. **As a result, for this year only, it will be offered to the entire NSTU membership.** The title of the conference is *Systemic Racism and White Privilege: A Conversation for Educators*.

The guest presenters for this NSTU Equity Conference are Megan Neaves and DeRico Symonds, well known advocates based in Halifax. The content of the conference will touch on the historical context of racism locally and nationally, how we got to where we

are now, how race has been socially constructed, systemic racism, white privilege, and finally, tangible ways we can all support the work of anti-racism.

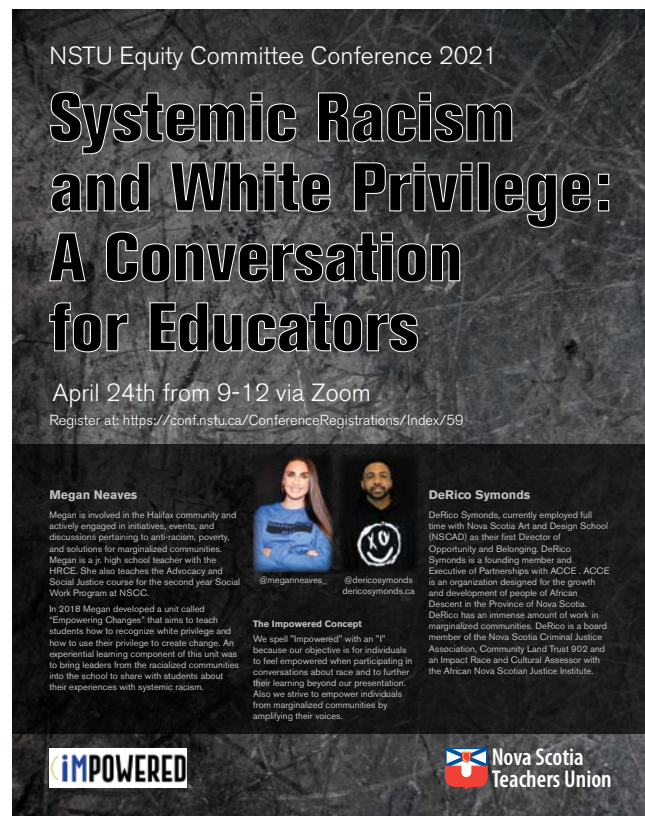
In October 2020, I concluded the Pathways to Learning article with these words:

"This article, these resources, these collaborations and these conversations are small but tangible steps towards the elimination of systemic racism in the education system. What steps will you take and what steps can we take together to address systemic racism in our communities?"

As we start winding down our school year, it is a good time to reflect on the steps we have taken individually and as a collective. What tangible actions have we taken, how have we educated ourselves on systemic racism and white privilege, and what will be our actions moving forward?

<https://conf.nstu.ca/ConferenceRegistrations/Index/59>

Peggy McIntosh reference: <https://nationalseedproject.org/Key-SEED-Texts/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>



NSTU Equity Committee Conference 2021

Systemic Racism and White Privilege: A Conversation for Educators

April 24th from 9-12 via Zoom
Register at: <https://conf.nstu.ca/ConferenceRegistrations/Index/59>

Megan Neaves

Megan is involved in the Halifax community and actively engaged in initiatives, events, and discussions pertaining to anti-racism, poverty, and solutions for marginalized communities. Megan is a jr. high school teacher with the HRCE. She also teaches the Advocacy and Social Justice course for the second year Social Work Program at NSCC.

In 2018 Megan developed a unit called "Empowering Changes" that aims to teach students how to recognize white privilege and how to use their privilege to create change. An experiential learning component of this unit was to bring leaders from the racialized communities into the school to share with students about their experiences with systemic racism.

@meganneaves_

DeRico Symonds

DeRico Symonds, currently employed full time with Nova Scotia Art and Design School (NSCAD) as their first Director of Opportunity and Belonging, DeRico Symonds is a founding member and Executive of Partnerships with ACCE - ACCE is an organization designed for the growth and development of people of African Descent in the Province of Nova Scotia. DeRico has an immense amount of work in marginalized communities. DeRico is a board member of the Nova Scotia Criminal Justice Association, Community Land Trust 502 and an Impact Race and Cultural Assessor with the African Nova Scotian Justice Institute.

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The Impoverished Concept

We spell "Impoverished" with an "I" because our objective is for individuals to feel empowered when participating in conversations about race and to further their learning beyond our presentation. Also we strive to empower individuals from marginalized communities by amplifying their voices.

IMPOWERED

Nova Scotia Teachers Union