

# What My Bike Has Taught Me About White Privilege By Jeremy Dowsett

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A few years ago, Jeremy Dowsett, a Lansing, Michigan resident published an article, "What My Bike Has Taught Me About White Privilege". In the article, he tends to outline and compare being a minority to the concept of riding a bike, particularly in a busy city. The author wrote this article to explain the idea that is regularly discussed everywhere, "White Privilege," in a less aggressive manner, as seen from both sides. In most of his work, Dowsett puts a clearer image of the "White Privilege" in the social background. Riding a bicycle sometimes makes you feel marginalized. The agreeable point is the comparison of the "White Privilege" with bicycle riding, which is rationally correct as most white privileged people are car drivers on roads presenting my response as follows.

After reading Dowsett's writing, it was clear that Jeremy was a white man. He was a father to children of different races or cultures. Hence "white privilege" is an imperative subject for Dowsett to discuss because he witnessed the difference between both parties and he experienced what it is like to be on both sides when by himself and with his family as well. Knowing so, he chooses to compare riding a bike because he depends on his own bicycle as everyday transportation, and in his busy Lansing town of industrialism, riding a bike through the busy streets was not always an easy job. While relying on the bicycle, he had many unsafe encounters with drivers which caused him to trickster death many times. In the article, Jeremy claimed that he had his experience while riding his bike one day and his experience while riding the bike was not so different from the citizens who are minority citizens and are facing a society that is designed by keeping white individuals in mind and this thought clicked him as he took his bike on the busy street of the city that had many prioritized cars and trucks. He used the bike as his transportation in a system that gives privilege to the automobile, and minorities that are the majority victims of the violence caused by police, to make it in a terrestrial made for the white people.

The author, Dowsett uses examples from his life to help clarify the image of the subject. He focuses on the readers' awareness and helps them understand what "white privilege" means without displaying any wrong image of any class. After reading the writing, I believe he successfully brought the focus to when he intended to and that is white privilege. While elucidating the topic, it triggers or drags many white people in it who do not fall under the criteria or heading, that is, "White Privilege," discussed in the piece of writing by the author. However, while reading this article, I discovered a thoughtful and well-written paragraph where the author explains the overall idea of "White Privilege." He typically explores the inequalities or imbalances between white people and other people from different ethnic backgrounds from several angles. These included access, unintentional tendency, and road conditions among others. However, these are potentially the most damaging behaviors associated with what he calls "Privileged" motorists and unjust laws. In his article, he says, "But

privilege talk is not intended to make a moral assessment or claim about the privileged. It is about systematic imbalance. It is about the injustice arising because of the history of racism that birthed the way things are now” (Dowsett, 985).

In the article, Dowsett explains how car drivers tend to act aggressively, mainly when using the same lane and when he is on their bikes. In fact, he says, “Now sometimes it is dangerous for me because people in the car are just blatantly a-holes to me. If I am on the road -where I legally belong- people will yell at me to get on the sidewalk” (Dowsett, 986). Here it is crystal clear that most road users who own vehicles, specifically automobiles are the one who holds the entire road. He tries to convince the reader that road construction privileges those people who own only cars, but not some who ride bikes like him. He clarifies how even people he has never met become angry at him for using the bike on the road. In this response, he uses the bicyclist as the minority in the street, since most road rules and regulations have privileged the drivers. Adding to the response to the reading, political correctness is an incorrect concept that has been used to omit probably words that are abusive in nature, just to comfort people who possibly could get insulted by them. Even today, we are surviving or living in a world in which our daily routine lives are dictated by political correctness. In America, the biggest percentage of political correctness lies in the subject of one’s gender and color. Similarly, in some sentences, the author manages to show how he supports his audience or readers to understand and realize the concept of “white privilege” and that he explains in one of the sentences “what privilege means and they did realize they had been getting defensive because they were uncomfortable with having their privilege exposed.” People don’t really think the way same way. Adding to it, in another sentence, he uses the same subject and that is “And if this were what “white privilege” meant—which it is not— defensiveness and frustration would be the appropriate response.” This sentence depicts the fact that why some people understand that because according to some people, they say, “You don’t know because you’re white when they want to talk about racial”.

Another topic addressed in the article is the author’s entire experience on roads, compared to the cultural differences. However, I don’t think that the knowledge of Dowsett is detailed enough, even if it is terrible. In his analogy, he makes other poignant points about how the entire transportation infrastructure is constructed and designed only to accommodate cars. He tries to use the same concept to show how the American Society or else, the United States is meant for accommodating the white people only. However, his point is still wanting and historical. Through this discussion, the author manages to depict that it’s not just about the entire transportation infrastructure built in favor of cars. Still, it’s also about the law, which does not strongly obligate the car drivers when they hit cyclists. Comparing minorities with bike riding is not the best way to go through the concept of racism as well as privilege.

Therefore, in conclusion, there are many reasons for my justifications; first, bike lanes as the author admits, are relatively new to our society and road construction board. But both privilege and racism are not new in the society the author is living in. They have been around for many years and this epidemic has been right there since the beginning of America. In the same case, nobody was given the right that he/she can choose his/her skin color; it is something people are accompanied with from

birth and something that is something a person is blessed with before he/she comes into this world. And every day, they are treated differently due to their skin color. So, judging and treating someone based on their skin is no one's right because the person on the target hasn't made or chosen his/her color. On the other hand, most people choose to ride a bike and even if you eliminate those who do it for recreation, and check those who are using it as a mode of transportation, it is all a matter of their own choice. At the same time, the system is designed this way and needs to be altered to remove the difference being harbored in society.

## Reference:

Dowsett, J. (2014). *What My Bike Has Taught Me About White Privilege*. NFG. pp. 984-988