

An Election to Save White Heterosexual Male Privilege

White heterosexual male privilege (WHMP) fought for and won the election of 2016. WHMP is buttressed by racism, but is not racism. Racism and ethnoviolence are longstanding tools for maintaining WHMP, but in this election era, misogyny and anti-femininity, Islamophobia, homophobia, and Antisemitism became additional tools—but they too are not WHMP.

Heterosexual manhood is a privileged status that men enjoy because they are born male rather than female. The power to control society's resources (which include women) and determine the rules for competing for them is considered to be men's birthright. In the US, all people are socialized within this belief system. Most social institutions are implicitly set up to maintain this normative belief system and most men, regardless of socioeconomic status or race, attempt to protect their privileged status unless they make a conscious decision to do otherwise.

White heterosexual men have won a rigged competition whose rules their white forefathers determined and passed on to subsequent generations to maintain and enhance. Most people who are not white heterosexual men have no power or control that white heterosexual men have not accorded them. Most national leaders are white men—it is still an anomaly when a woman runs for President or even the Senate; women earn less than men for the same work; most police officers are white men with sanctioned guns; and it is a most egregious wrong worthy of media attention when the “white male working class” is out of work or changing work environments threaten white men's capacity to satisfy the provider role in the ways that historically have been available to them primarily.

For especially white men who rigidly adhere to the principles of entitled male privilege, threats to their abilities to protect their status may result in feelings of distress, such as depression, anxiety, and poor self-esteem, feelings which make men feel unsafe. Many men do not permit themselves to have such soft feelings and, therefore, often express them through dominating and hostile behaviors toward others. During this election period, Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton was a major threat to men's status because of the possibility that she might feminize leadership at the highest level; so too were Muslims, all of whom were presumed to be terrorists; undocumented immigrants, mistakenly construed as predominantly Mexicans; people with disabilities, veterans and their families, and so on.

President-elect Donald Trump is the privileged white male personified. He ostensibly is a successful business man who has his way with women, extolls competing and winning as long as there are no costs to him in doing so, has a third wife who walks behind him at public events, and allegedly requires everyone in his environment to call him “Mr. Trump” presumably an acknowledgement of his control and power. Moreover, his angry promises to “Make America Great Again,” based on scapegoating of his political adversaries and longstanding victims of government policies, made white heterosexual men and the WHMP-benefiting women feel safe again. In this context, Clinton deserved to be locked up for the crime of being a threat to WHMP, a warning to other women contemplating seeking power in ways that threaten WHMP. Before Clinton was the chief villain against whom white men railed, there was U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) who likely will return to her former villainous status.

“Never-Trump” Republican political leaders, who would not say his name or appear in public with him before his election because of his racist positions, became supplicants at his trough of conferred power. Leaders who could not “face their daughters,” if they voted for Trump following his sexually assaultive language and alleged behavior against girls and women, must be walking backwards these days. The reward for these leaders’ immorality was greater access to WHMP through government offices, the plum of which is appointments of more Supreme Court justices. The previous court’s gutting of the Voting Rights Act and support for voter suppression in black and Latino communities bodes well for the survival of WHMP.

Other societal institutions joined the WHMP revival movement as well. White evangelical Christians readily set aside their moral beliefs in family values, charity, and truth for their share of WHMP, subordination of women. If women cannot control when or whether they will have children, they are less likely to be threats to male workers. The national media engaged in WHMP protectionism by treating Trump’s falsehoods as events so important and entertaining that his whole speeches needed to be covered so that the listener could hear his next outrage firsthand, whereas Clinton’s full speeches were treated as too boring to cover. Consequently, her warnings against the rise of White nationalism were met with criticisms of her use of the word “deplorables” rather than substantive analyses. The national media failed in its responsibility to provide the public with equivalent examination of the two candidates, perhaps because the national media is dominated by white men purposefully committed to maintaining WHMP or unable to recognize when they are doing so.

Commentaries subsequent to the election to the effect that the white working-class voted for economic change rather than racism have not acknowledged the evidence indicating that Trump supporters were on average better off economically than Clinton supporters. For instance, the *New York Times* exit poll revealed that a larger percentage of voters annually earning \$50,000 or more voted for Trump than for Clinton, whereas a greater percentage of Clinton voters earned less than \$50,000. If any voters should have been entitled to angry voting stimulated by fear of economic deprivation, it is Clinton voters, predominantly people of color, for whom unfettered access to the benefits of WHMP has been only a dream.

Racism and ethnoviolence are symptoms of WHMP that camouflage it. Racism is a system of oppression that protects WHMP by attributing inferiority to racial groups of color to deny them equity, justice, and access to society’s resources. Ethnoviolence is aggression and intimidation directed towards members of ethnic cultural groups because their unwillingness to acculturate is perceived as threatening to WHMP. Both racism and ethnoviolence can occur at multiple levels, which include systemic (build a wall, Muslim registries, suppress the African American vote) and interpersonal (racial and ethnic stereotyping of non-White communities, forcing Muslim women to remove their hijabs).

Many people believe that if they do not actively engage in overtly racist or ethnoviolent practices themselves, then it is acceptable to vote for a candidate who does. Others believe that actively engaging in such practices is acceptable because it strengthens WHMP. Another set—perhaps Clinton supporters—believe that every effort should be made to end racism and ethnoviolence.

Yet racism did not cost Clinton the presidency. The Electoral College, founded to protect WHMP, did. Racism is a set of symptoms, but WHMP is the disease.

It cannot be denied that WHMP has benefited many white men and their women, and attaining its benefits is an ongoing goal for others. But rigid endorsement of WHMP as one's earned legacy is related to domestic violence and impulsive and reckless behavior. Trump voters unleashed extremist WHMP on the country and the world—and many of us scapegoats are afraid.

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