

500 Word Response

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Picture yourself as a fish who is swimming through water. As you swim, you are moving through the water, however the water is also moving around you (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017) You are looking for shelter as you feel uncertain and hesitant by other fish and aquatic animals that surround you. You try to seek refuge as quickly as possible however the current is moving against you instead of with you. It takes an enormous amount of effort and you are physically spent and feel depleted by the time you reach your destination. Even though you gave it your all and tried to adapt to your rugged and choppy conditions, you feel discouraged from having to have had to face this obstacle. However, you realize that your efforts were not what were failing you, no, it was the current you were in. This analogy puts into perspective what people who are not conceived as “normal” face on a daily basis. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) argue that “privilege is like having this powerful current propelling you forward throughout your whole life”. (p.81) This privilege is being used to propel members of dominant groups forward, while leaving the oppressed struggling by continuing to make them swim upstream.

As someone who has not faced discrimination and isolation from society because of a disability or impairment, I am ashamed to admit that I have not recognized the privilege that I have over others. Able-bodied people, such as myself, take for granted basic rights such as being able to hop on the bus or entering your favourite coffee shop to treat yourself. Now you might be saying, “well if that was me, I would just turn around and swim with the current like all the other fish”. If you caught yourself saying that or something along those lines, it is most likely because you have not faced discrimination or oppression, and as a result have been excluded. Dominant

groups have constructed norms of what it is to be normal or not-normal and have placed these external and structural barriers on people with impairment. They have done this by providing what they believe are basic rights for able-bodied people and not taken into consideration the needs of others that fall under their standards of “normal”. Even worse, some believe that people’s success is solely based on a person’s effort and merit. It is our society that is disabling impaired people time and time again because our privilege is making us blind. However, “certain dominant group members believe that people are no longer prejudiced” (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017, p. 86) and that these social injustices are in the past and that everyone has the same equal opportunities. If that was not enough, some seek to eliminate the problems of impaired people by medical prevention, cures and rehabilitation (Davis, 2016). These notions are not helpful, they are detrimental to the self-esteem and self-confidence of the people who are simply trying to participate and live their lives to the fullest. We need to become more informed and educate ourselves. Ask questions, be vulnerable, and listen to others to make a change to benefit everyone. It is straightforward, simple and basic rights should be afforded to everyone so that all can engage alongside each other within society.

## References

Sensoy, O., & DiAngelo, R. (2017). *Is everyone really equal?: An introduction to key concepts in social justice education*. Teachers College Press. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/lib/west/reader.action?docID=4988008>

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