

Free Radicals (transcript)

Will: Privilege – kind of a touchy subject to talk about nowadays. In the past few years we've seen examples of privileges used across places like the common street to the world stage. Some of these instances include police brutality, racism, and workplace inequality and in this podcast we will try explore these relationships the best we can as we approach any sort of consensus of what privilege might mean to a group and whether it might be good or bad. My name is Will and in this podcast I will be joined by Conrad, Nadiya, Shan and Kate as we dissect and examine some examples of these privileges happening to ourselves, friends and co-workers.

Beep sound.

Clip of Dang rapping: Dark n**, go figure, I'll try to steal the glow, don't worry, I know. What's it all about, more self-love, no more self-doubt to spout. Sorry I didn't pay the water bill. Fill up my half assed cup full of confidence instead. It ain't that much bread, all it takes is a common sense strong enough for you to pick up the scent in which sense can be enough to pay. Let me slow it down for y'all okay? All it takes is a common sense strong enough for you to pick up the scent in which sense can be enough to pay. Why stay? The rain in August deserves some clarity. My oh my how dare he? He stole his ego back, and you say he's an enemy? Never see cuz it's something a black should never lack. More time means more life. Sit back, relax, listen to some hip-hop, R and B, Phife, carry on the legacy left behind from the greats; for heavy is the crown on my head. Better than anyone else around cuz he takes no breaks.

Will: You were listening to Calgary poet Dang and his experience being a black man in Calgary. Dang also provided a rationale to his poem, but for the sake of time we will only mention parts of it in our discussion, which is coming up next.

Music playing.

Nadiya: umm

Will: So pretty opinionated guy?

Nadiya: Uh, yea, I mean obviously. But um but you know based on what he's gone through, he's gone through a lot, but I think things that like resonate or like stand out the most to me, um, is his one line about because of the colour of their skin there is a layer of light that has been forgotten, or rather, intentionally removed. I think that's super like powerful, um, and I think it's important, like when we like as a minority say something about white privilege like we're not trying to insult anyone, it's not like a personal attack, but I feel like the response is always, comes as a like, 'aww man'. It's like a - you know? And I think the number one reason I was very uncomfortable with like sharing the experience I had with the one friend I had in philosophy, like in philosophy class, is because it's like I don't want to offend anyone and like I don't really talk about anything like I don't want to like explain myself. But, but, you know? Yea.

Conrad: I know what you mean. Those two points really stood out for me: the forgotten or intentionally removed and then the 'don't take it personally' and like you know whiteness is not a part of you unless you let it be a part of you, right? Like you can identify with it and I think that's where the ego gets tripped. You know, when you have those conversations?

Nadiya: mhm

Conrad: And it's difficult to navigate around.

Nadiya: Yea.

Conrad: Or even to feel like you have to navigate around it.

Nadiya: Yea, you have to like justify it but I don't know, but

Conrad: I meet with so many like, so many of these smart guys, quote, unquote that like (sighs) just want to debate this stuff.

Nadiya: mhm

Conrad: And I don't know, they... it, it, it's like you're talking different languages with them. I don't know what it is, it's not an easy thing to have to like formally argue for cuz it – yea. I, uh, was talking to one of these quote, unquote smart guys, uh, just last night and I think he was really picking up on that. And he tried to argue that he should be allowed to say the n word. Uh.

Nadiya: Oh my god (whispered in background)

Conrad: And he compared it to like, well I'm not going to Voldemort this thing, we have to say it to take away its power. It's like hmm, there's no way I can explain this to you and i (laughs) I've been kinda mad at him since.

Nadiya: Yea.

Conrad: Yea.

Nadiya: I would just, man...

Conrad: I had to stand up and walk away, we were like sitting at a bar together and I was like, dude, I can't have this conversation with you, like I asked him, you don't need to say the word, it's okay. (laughs)

Nadiya: Yea.

Conrad: like, no I need to say the word

Nadiya: Like it's so unnecessary, you know? It's like why? Why do you need – why do you feel the need to be allowed to – like why –

Conrad: Because it's something he's told that he can't do (laughs)

Nadiya: It's so –

Conrad: And nothing more – and nothings more, uh, attractive than forbidden fruit, right? Like you're told you can't say that and now you have a whole group of people like, whatya mean I can't say that? I want to say that. I've been saying that my entire life, why – why can't I say that right now?

Will: Pink elephants, right?

Conrad: (laughs)

Nadiya: I think like the problem also comes with what you said before, Oh, like it's – I don't say it normally, but when it comes up in songs, like it's okay then because it's a song lyric, but still, uh, don't say it. If you're not black, don't do it.

Conrad: Did you guys ever see 'Dear White People'?

Nadiya: oh, like, yea! Loved it. Binged that, I'm like yes, aw yea. It's great. It's awesome.

Will: No, I haven't. Explain it a little bit to me.

Conrad: well, uh, the scene I was thinking of there is when the white guy –

Nadiya: Yea, um, okay.

Conrad: there at the house party and there's a white guy who's like singing along to the song and he's just ploughing right through it and one of the characters says to him, he's like, hey man, don't say that work, okay?

Will: (laughs)

Conrad: And it escalates. To make a long story short, to that character getting arrested by the campus police.

Will: (ooof sound)

Conrad: Like yea, he was assaulted by them. The white guy who insisted on saying it just got off scott free.

Will: Police interactions can be nerve wracking to say the least, but as Conrad explained from the plot of 'Dear White People', police have had a history of treating groups differently. In this next clip, we hear from a Native American woman, interviewed by our team member Shan, who had to face these biases head on. For context, this woman was dealing with police after a violent encounter left her friend injured. Because of the lack of care taken by police, she felt compelled to tell her story.

Music Playing.

Krishna: Well it was weird because the cop that talked to me when I went to my witness statement thing, he was also native and I think he purposefully –

Jaye: What's his name?

Krishna: Damien, I think.

Shan: Did they do that on purpose? Because like the people who were dealing with you before were like young white guys, right?

Krishna: I think they did it on purpose because, um, I think they did it so he would understand us, coming from us, I guess.

Shan: mhm

Krishna: (Jaye in background: Damien...) and like he made an example too, he's like, yea, I'm native too so I know that when we drink we get angry sometimes, blah, blah. And I was like, well yea, but I was angry for a reason (laughs) I don't know, I wasn't drunk angry for like no reason. I was drunk angry because no one was helping Devhon or whatever kind of thing.

Shan: Yea, she was bleeding and they wouldn't call the medics and all of that.

Krishna: Right.

Shan: Yea.

Krishna: So I don't know. It's like they just took it, I don't even know because. It's – it's weird. Because the other people that were involved, like on the other side, I don't know if they were native or not. Like I know Elaina is, but the other friend she had, like her little side kick or whatever, she looked white but could have been native so I don't know. I can't even like, I don't know, I have no idea, so like –

Shan: That, like, I don't know, that doesn't – so like wait, the cop that you gave the statement about like the, the crap experience you had had -

Krishna: mhm

Shan: -with the cops that you felt was like racial. And that you guys weren't treated fair enough, that came and talked to you about it afterwards said like, I understand natives get angry when we drink?

Krishna: Yea.

Shan: That seems incredibly inappropriate.

Krishna: I know, but I guess he was just trying to like take our side I guess.

Jaye: That's another way of discriminating like First Nations People.

Shan: That's horrible.

Will: So from that interview I find it very interesting that there's a native police officer, uh, basically like, not even, not trashing his race, but like just going, I get it. I'm native. We get drunk and we get angry. It's like, uh, there's a stereotype there. You know? And –

Conrad: That he's kind of reinforcing on her.

Will: yea, that he's reinforcing.

Conrad: Or like trying to ease out of her so he can take that back into, yea.

Nadiya: To calm things down for everyone's sake.

Will: Yea he's, but it's still like he's putting it as if it's like, uh, it's like, it's like our peoples fault that we are like this.

Conrad: I wonder if that police officer is, uh, entered the force with that train of thought or was given that train of thought from being in the force.

Nadiya: And like his job is on the line too, right.

Will: Yea, from his, well from just being a product of his environment, you know.

Conrad: I think that it's bigger than that. It's like growing up in Canada and having to like listen to that discourse of the drunken First Native People – First Nations People.

Will: mhm.

Conrad: They, you know, have to, hear that from like birth and they're raised by people who have been living with that for generations. I don't know, it's more than just joining the police force right. It's a part of living in Canada.

Will: Yea.

Nadiya: Mhm. Um well stereotypes don't come from nowhere but it's just, it's just, it's not a, like it shouldn't be treated like as a whole entire picture. You know? Like that's a fact and it's just like it sucks that he like believes in it and then in this situation he actually, I don't know. It's just kind of sad. But the main part is like she didn't get medical attention, like I, even if, to me, it's like okay fine like. Believe what you want to believe even if it's –

Conrad: Be a shitty person.

Nadiya: Uh, yea! (laughs) but it's like, but you see someone, a human being, bleeding.

Conrad: In pain.

Nadiya: Regardless if they're drunk or not, or if they're a female or not or if they're like a –

Conrad: It shouldn't matter.

Nadiya: It shouldn't matter! But like this girl is bleeding and it's like how could you deny her that help? That's what I can't get past.

Conrad: Yea.

Nadiya: That's what's like, that to me is what's like surprising. Like the rest, I get it. You know, to me that's not too surprising, but like the not being able to receive medical attention, that's what's like, what the fuck.

Conrad: Yea, you know what, I think I agree with you because it's like, whatever, be a shitty person. Be racist, just – but when it starts like having those real-world implications, even just thinking it, letting yourself think it, has real-world implications. It like tears a strip away from your soul, forgotten or intentionally removed (laughs) but, (sighs) yea, no, that is a whole- I don't know, it's awful.

Nadiya: Another level of fucked up (laughs) but yea, and then like um I don't know if you guys like remember still kind of. Go back to the audio where she did post about it and like the response that she got and like some people being like, oh, like get over it and like the cop had to do what the cop had to do and it's just like, what, why, it just, and the thing is she didn't even like actually like say what happened, all she posted on the status was like oh like this is, this is one of the worst form of racism that I've ever gone through and the reaction she got was just awful. And she didn't even say what happened.

Conrad: Yea, who really wants to have to face that that happened so close to home.

Nadiya: mhm. But it's just, it's, I don't even know. If she, that, she just like, uh - get over it! I hate that comment so much. Like it's recent. It's still, if it, but maybe, I don't know. If it was like, oh, like if it was an experience that happened years ago and like your, you know, like, like it's like, oh I had a problem with a friend. And then it's, you know, and like you're over it, but like, the problem they're dealing with and like the pain that it's coming from, like it's still recent. It's still set in place, so it's like telling me to get over it, like it's (sighs) it's just –

Conrad: Plus, I mean frankly like not to belittle what happened here but this is bigger than her, this is not the only incident that a First Nations person has ever been abused by the police or the institutions around us.

Nadiya: And like she's probably like seen this in all the generations like of her family right. And I think you have to understand like for why this happened in the first, like not just the fact that, oh like they're just you know Native drunk, like just whatever. Like get a job, do something about your life maybe, you know? Like I feel like if (clears throat) like a white person and like if you had like a mental illness it'd be treated way differently versus like, oh like you know, like

this person has a mental illness that's probably why they're an alcoholic, like terrible family, negative environment, but as soon as it's **** review*** like a first nations person, it's like oh man, native drunk, they're not doing anything about their life, they get money from the government, uh, I hear that all the time.

Conrad: yea, but that, that, that mental illness thing is kind of the discourse around like American shooters right. He's a white guy – he has a mental illness.

Nadiya: Oh my god, don't get me started. I think –

Conrad: Not a white guy? Obvious terrorist.

Nadiya: Um yea, I think –

Conrad: It's disgusting.

Nadiya: I think it was Jimmy Kimmel and I think he meant this from like a good like intentions and you can see from the Las Vegas shooting right. Like I think he was like crying on stage and then it was live and he was just like really sad cuz that's where he comes from. But I think he meant, I – I understand it's coming from a good place, but even than I was like, you kinda messed up. He was just like describing, he was like, I don't understand if it's a bearded man were so quick to jump and like call him out but as soon as it's an American we don't say anything and I'm like, why did you have to say American and bearded man. Can a bearded man not be American?

Conrad: Yea it's kind of a weird way to code like racism, you know?

Nadiya: Yea, so it's like, okay. I mean you tried, you, good intentions, like you still could have (inaudible end of sentence).

Conrad: A for effort.

Nadiya: Yea. A for effort but you –

Conrad: but did not stick the landing.

Nadiya: Didn't really deliver it well. Yea, no, so, but yea. Um, and like a lot of people like, it's just, I mean I, it was sad like what happened. Like I'm not justifying it, but like it's like this is the most people that have been killed and then I think of like the like the terrible history and like, you know. And like with like black people and it's still on like, it's still ongoing and like how do you really not notice that? (laughs)

Music Playing.

Will: There is something of value when you get people in a room to talk about the issues.

Whether it be small issues or large, we have found that in our discussions it is dialogue where our own and others privileges lie. That has been our podcast. I hope you found something of interest, at least learned a little bit and find something of use.

Music playing.

End Podcast

Total time: 16:32

Resources:

Dear White people scene talked about:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=humbeFXA7gU&t=263s>

Warning, clip is of low quality.

Jimmy Kimmel live footage that was discussed in our podcast:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruYeBXudsds>

Existential orientation – fanon.

Opens up a lot of problems, messy, unorganized. Who can say what? Violence of stereotypes that we repeat over and over (makes me deeply uncomfortable also). Limits of recognition.

Irony and contradictions. Racism existing within our own podcast, reporting on it.

Contemporary phenomenon drawn into our philosophy class.