

A Personal Reflection on Tema Okun's, '*White Supremacy Culture*'

<https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info>

When completing the requirements for the annotated bibliography assignment last semester, my mentor sent articles highlighting what the class would be learning about. While all of these articles and forms of media were very insightful and educational, there was one text that had more of a profound impact on my learning development than any other article. Tema Okun's '*White Supremacy Culture*' website is a resource that has helped me understand myself better than anything. To begin, I feel I've always been looking for some sort of answer to everything and all of my problems. Throughout my life, I've always struggled to understand the world around me. I've struggled to understand other people, myself, and the way we interact with each other as a whole. But I feel that this website offers a lot of clarity into better understanding of how to live my life in a positive way. This website lists characteristics that cause distress and negativity inside of us and teaches us how to live a healthier life by offering alternative ways to act. I feel healthier mentally and emotionally now than I ever have, and I owe a lot of that to the perspective this article allowed me to see the world. This website teaches you certain qualities associated with the perpetuation of capitalism and white supremacy and gives real examples of how we can act to combat these ideologies.

To begin, it's important to define what white supremacy culture is. When the early settlers of the continental U.S arrived, they identified with their ethnic, national, and religious roots, not by the color of their skin. They aimed to create a society where people like them could prosper, but these elitist families were far outnumbered by Indigenous peoples whose lands they stole and occupied as well as African peoples they kidnapped and enslaved. To combat this, the ruling class people created a larger category of color, specifically designed to separate Christian, European, land-owning men from black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). Based on this, Christian, European, land-owning men were seen as superior to all other peoples, and society

was designed in the name of Capitalism to help these people build their wealth and power in this country.

The highlight of this website is the in-depth analysis of all the characteristics Okun believes directly perpetuate white supremacy culture. An important thing to note when reading about these characteristics is that these characteristics are not only experienced in one group and that we are not at fault for adhering to these characteristics. Instead, we need to understand that these qualities perpetuate a standard of white supremacy, and to combat these characteristics is to combat the standards of capitalism and white supremacy itself. I don't want to summarize these qualities, as I feel it would be much easier to just read the original document. Rather, I'd like to share how I've changed since I've been able to fully read and digest the content of this article.

I no longer hold myself to a perfectionist standard I didn't have any part in creating. I now know that my mistakes don't represent me as a person. I don't take criticism personally, and I understand that people give advice based on their own perceived reality, which can often drastically differ from my own. I am more confrontational, and I don't view open conflict as a negative interaction, but rather a constructive one. I try and sit with my discomfort and understand that learning and growing aren't always supposed to be comfortable. I know that there is no right way to do things and that my perspective and ideas do not hold any more weight than someone else's ideas. I recognize that hate is a product of fear, specifically out of a fear that there is something wrong with us. To sum it up, I feel like I live a more honest and positive life.

All of these changes may seem very obvious to some people. But I truly did not live by these standards until I read this article. I let the ideals perpetuated by the described White supremacy culture consume me without truly being able to name them. By Okun listing out examples of each characteristic and alternative ways to act, I've really been able to change the perspective I have of myself and the world to live a healthier life. I'm very grateful to have read and learned from this article, and I would recommend it to everyone.