

## When White Women Cry: How White Women's Tears Oppress Women of Color

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*This article focuses on the tension that arises as the result of the intersection of social identities, namely gender and race. Through examination of a case study, I consider the ways in which White women benefit from White privilege through their interactions with Women of Color using the Privileged Identity Exploration Model as the tool for analysis.*

Institutions of higher education in the United States emblematically represent privilege. Whether it be race, gender, sexual orientation, class, abilities, religion, and so on, universities have historically served White, Christian, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied, male-dominated identities (Anzaldúa & Moraga, 2002; Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002; Lorde, 1984; hooks, 1981). If our institutions are rivers flowing in a specific direction, then the current of the river shaped by geography which enables the flow of the river and it represent the system of privilege. Consider a fish that must swim upstream versus a fish that swims with the current, arguably both fish could survive, but under what circumstances? Would one fish benefit from the flow of the current? As student affairs practitioners, it is our job to understand not only context for survival, but also the circumstances.

The notion of privilege is complex, especially whether we have privileged or we do not have privilege positions us to act in conflicting manners regarding oppression. This phenomenon is noticeable when Women of Color and White women dialogue about race and racism. While White women are members of an oppressed group based on gender, they still experience privilege based on race. This dual oppressor/oppressed identity often becomes a root of tension when White women are challenged to consider their White privilege by Women of Color.

The goal of this article is to highlight complexities that arise with the intersection of race and gender, using the Privilege Identity Exploration (PIE) Model (Watt, 2007). I begin the article by contextualizing how race and gender identities interact with one another and how these interactions shape our

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