Part 1:

One of the biggest challenges of privilege is that those who have it often don't fully realize its power or significance. Privilege can be like the water we're swimming in. However, recognizing our privilege and our positionality can be a major step in making meaningful change in the world. I and my fellow Brown students have great privilege, and in order to best help communities in Providence, I think that the first step is realizing the extent of our privilege by listening to the stories of people who don't have them. The stories highlight differences, which breed greater appreciation and understanding between student and community, and also highlights similarities, speaking to universal qualities of human experience. Thus, I think that both our similarities and differences can be harnessed for community engagement.

I, for example, grew up poor, and that is something that brings me closer to the poorer communities in Providence. I understand what it's like to worry about affording basic expenses, feeling pangs of guilt every time I buy something, and feeling rushes of undefinable emotion when I see overt displays of wealth. But I also grew up in a household with art, with music, and with a culture of empowerment. My parents tried not to let financial stress burden me, and despite the challenges, they always told me I could succeed. This culture of empowerment is one of my greatest privileges, and one that I most want to share with others. It allowed me to experiment, try new things, and face adversity. When I got to Brown, it gave me the confidence to take a computer science class, something that I had never considered before, and now computer science is my concentration. I think that both my adversities and my privileges can aid in community engagement. The shame and insecurity I faced growing up poor brings me closer to those of similar background, while my successes give me confidence that these adversities can be overcome.

Part 2:

I think that education is extremely important. Both school and work experience have reinforced my love of teaching others. I worked as a resident leader in high school, which involved leading study sessions and teaching kids better "meta skills" of self control and grit, as well as helping with specific coursework. Additionally, my work as a dining hall manager involved teaching a rotating staff the ins and outs of working in a dining hall. These teaching roles were very rewarding because I could see my actions take effect—as I developed better teaching techniques, kids overcame their emotional hurdles, and the dining hall transformed from a chaos to order. I would be very excited to bring some of these skills I developed to an educational organization in Providence, especially when coupled with computer science, either to help teaching organizations broaden their reach, or to directly teach the principles of computer science.

Additionally, I wouldn't be at Brown if it weren't for my exposure to art. Learning to play music gave me a sense of power. It taught me the fruits of consistent practice and effort, and also opened me up to new communities. Monthly Irish music sessions at the AS220 are one of my strongest links to the communities of Providence. Through them I've met many Providence-based musicians with whom I've become good friends. I would love to help promote music and art in Providence to help what is already a rich artistic scene reach new heights and and further bring different communities together. Like with education, I could use my background in computer science to great effect in organization and promotion of events, or in the direct fusion of art and computation.

In iProv, I will be able to harness both my difficulties, my privileges, my passions, and my skills to foster community engagement. My difficulties growing up will allow me to better hear others' stories, while my privileges will help me understand what it's like to overcome those difficulties. Meanwhile my passions for art and education coupled with my skills in computer science and leadership will give me both the power and the methodology to engage with Providence communities. While so doing, iProv will allow me to pursue my overarching goals of using computer science to empower, teach, and create. I hope you will consider my application, and please reach out if you have any questions.