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*What challenges appear further down “The Matrix of Domination”?*

As we mature, we gradually learn about and assimilate to the social norms and customs behind what makes each person different from one another. As young children, we are completely innocent and oblivious; we do not treat anyone we interact with differently based on how they look. Then comes a point in time where we have to learn about the past before us, while observing this sociological paradigm we've created known as “the matrix of domination” in the present. The matrix of domination refers to a model that breaks down the issues of oppression concerning race, class, and gender (which can be divided further sections as religion, sexuality, ability, and even language). The dominant figures in this matrix would consist of straight, white, high class men that speak English as their native language. Clearly, the world is too diverse for said differences *not* to exist. Here, I would like to discuss the fact that certain challenges concerning education *increase* for an individual the further down the matrix society has placed them, as well as how much a person's opportunity for success varies based on the category they're placed in

Personally, I feel as if I have a decent comprehension of the matrix in general, considering the fact that I fall into a lower place on the hierarchy. I've paid close attention to how it affects me in and out of school throughout my life, or at least until I was old enough to conceptualize this topic. During high school, my parents would take the time to explain to me the importance of taking higher level classes, and why—besides going to a majority white

would always question why I felt out of place in an AP class for example, and it took some time for me to comprehend that situation as a whole. Some teachers I've had in the past made me feel as if I wasn't capable of handling the workload, which made it increasingly difficult to persuade me to go further. Once I had finally decided to take higher level classes, again, I felt as if I didn't belong there. This was an inevitable conundrum that I had to accept and move past. People have said things to me such as, "you're the whitest black person I've ever met," after I had expressed my desire to challenge myself. While that phrase will stick with me forever, I now understand where that mindset stems from. History states that the further you are down this matrix, the less likely you are to receive a full education, or an education at all. It always took a white, wealthy, and ideally Christian man to inquire about an education for the doors to open up. It took years of effort, yet eventually the Common School Movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century began, which gave women the right to an education. It took even longer for the same to apply for people of color. Learning about these concepts aided in the broadening of my perspective, thus enabling me to recognize the value of encouraging black students to excel in school.

Then the topic of social class comes to light. Statistically, those with a better social class background are more likely to experience greater educational achievement and opportunity. The schools I went to are placed in an upper middle class area of town. We had greater access to technology and resources such as iPads and personal laptops that other schools—within the same district may I add—did not. In reality, being further down the matrix in this situation doesn't help their case at all. Fortunately times are changing, but this doesn't mean that obstacles for people within these categories don't still exist. This gives rise to educational inequality as it continues to socially exclude specific communities.

We cannot forget the fact that different classes can intertwine with one another, which increases the variability exponentially. This concept is known as “intersectionality.” It’s important to note that in order to understand the matrix (no matter where you fall), you must realize that oppression stems from one’s worth by privilege, and that even the oppressed have some privilege over other classifications. If you’re missing one aspect of the most dominant group in America, you’ve already lost privilege in one area of your life. For example, one could be a heterosexual white male, *without* an education. This fact alone decreases his chances of being financially stable or what we could consider to be “well-off.” The matrix of domination covers the organization of power across society as a whole, while intersectionality focuses the lens on each individual expression of identity. Both are used in tandem to help us better understand the systems of oppression in society. These groups in the matrix are also the product of constant racialization, which is the process of assigning a “racial character” to someone; marginalization.

For example, African American women are often stereotyped as uneducated, loud, and improper. Through racialization, if a woman of African descent immigrated to the United States, people will attribute these stereotypes to her based on her appearance alone. In the recent past, this could create limitations around job opportunities, higher education, and even in social settings. In addition to being an African American woman, that person could fit into other sections such as being homosexual, and/or Muslim. I’ve had friends that fit into one or more of these categories, and they tell me about their experiences. One person that I had met during my first year of high school described all of the threats and slurs directed towards her in particular,

recognize it as such, you cannot be oblivious to the level of privilege that you have.

Social dominance is rooted within society, which is the reason that this matrix exists. The further away you are from the dominant group, the more ignorant and arrogant people you will be faced with, the more difficult life will be to navigate through, and the harder you have to struggle to overcome these challenges. The further If you're a straight, white, educated, English-speaking, able, Christian man who falls into the upper middle to high class category, you are at the top. As soon as one of these variables is taken away, a facet of that person's privilege disappears along with it. If they aren't straight, they may face the fact that certain rights could be taken away (before 2023), if they aren't white, racism becomes an issue. Those who cannot or struggle to speak English will have certain limitations in this country specifically, which is why we stress studying foreign languages in school. Those who follow Islam may be subject to bigotry from those higher up the matrix. Disparities even appear when two people aren't of the same social class, which only keeps everyone in their place (leaving little room for flexibility). All of this is stated to shed light on the fact that nothing good stems from the matrix itself, and in order to remove it from our ways of perceiving others, we need to recognize its existence.