I believe DiAngelo’s value-add comes from decoupling explicit and implicit bias to reveal connotations of morality, and thus decoupling explicit and implicit racism. While this seems not quite profound at first, especially to a self-proclaimed “open-minded, liberal” in Cinnamon College (myself), I realized it beautifully encapsulates the response of the American right to the calls for systemic change in police force after the killings in Minnesota and Kenosha.  Confident in their moral, almost Biblical, uprightness, the American right  denies the existence of systemic racism because they equate it with explicit bias and moral failing. This is evidenced by several commentators’ use of the stale phrase “a few bad apples is not systemic racism.” This tactic is amazing – it simultaneously Others black people as well as the vague image of a “rogue police officer,” thus reinforcing in white men a strong sense of “I’m not them”. The American right seem either blind or willfully ignorant of DiAngelo’s realization that racism is implicit, spontaneous, subconscious and embedded in society. This explains the tendencies of white police officers to equate African-Americans with being “sketchy” and shooting them with relatively less restraint and cause than white men.

DiAngelo also hints at how racism is also embedded in language. She shows that terms such as “good and bad” schools or neighbourhoods encode the reality that societal structures, government policies and legislation have resulted in a African-American populace locked as a economically, educationally and socially disadvantaged class. The recent Republican National Convention used this “good/bad neighbourhood” language to stoke fear of a “loss of the suburb” (perceived as White) due to “low-income housing” (perceived as Black) to stoke fears among white voters. This strategy is employed because it achieves its goal of fear-mongering while not branding the fear as explicitly racist or biased, and chooses instead to place implicit racism upon DiAngelo’s “pier” of superficiality.

Personally, the most remarkable realization I came to on account of the video was its idea that the dominant, or privileged race is seen by itself to be the “default” and thus beyond race. Moving from a native in a caste-sensitive to a foreigner in a race-sensitive society in Singapore, I realized that this could be applied to the hereditary caste system prevalent in India as well. Upper caste agitations against constitutional guarantees of lower-caste representation in India often  brand themselves as a “fight against merit” or the popular “Save Merit, Save Nation.” These campaigns encode “merit” as a monopoly of the upper caste, and plaster over the privileged reality that upper caste persons in India live in – their supposedly superior “merit” is a function of their privilege.

Aside: While I emphatically agree that race is embedded in society, culture and language, I take issue with my classmate’s characterizations of race as having some founding in our genetic make-up. Nothing could be farther from the truth (although a young German writing a novel about his *Kampf* in 1920s Germany would agree). Racism, not race, has founding in genetics, and in in exploiting 0.1% differences in genomes to its advantage. Anecdotally, I consider race to be a social construct that found favour with European colonialists as a tool in their doctrine of divide-and-conquer and value-hierarchy of races. In a society that prints