Rick Privilege: Advantages I benefit from

RICK BRIMEYER

Brimeyer, LLC

He is the president of Brimeyer LLC and author of "Working Great!: Lean Leadership Lessons for Guiding Your Organization to Excellence."

Occasionally I hear people scoff at the mention of white privilege. I suppose fish don't see the water in which they swim. Rather than judge or debate their circumstances, let me share some of the advantages from which I benefit. I call them Rick Privilege.

Rick Privilege started more than 100 years before I was born with my ancestors arriving from Germany and Luxembourg. They arrived with virtually nothing, without shackles. From that generation onward, our toils first as farmers, my father as a meatpacker and finally me as an engineer benefited our respective families and the next generation.

Rick Privilege is, today, being able to visit their marked gravesites scattered across northeast Iowa and feel a connectedness, a sense of belonging. Even the progression of grave markers, from the crudest rusty cross to a highly polished stone, display clear economic advancement.

Rick Privilege is feeling a sense of awe and pride when pondering those ancestors who "crossed over" for a better life. Their perseverance and sense of adventure are in my DNA, providing not only confidence but also a sense of obligation to one's heritage.

All these privileges pre-date my existence. By the time I arrived, I hit the ground with what the business world calls traction. Inertia was working in my favor.

Rick Privilege is growing up in a place and time where every adult you know is able to find full employment with reasonable wages that allow them to support a family. Despite the fact that most had little formal education, degrees from the School of Hard Knocks were valued, and many grew with their companies or even ventured off to start small businesses.

Rick Privilege is growing up with good schools — both private and public — within walking distance of my home. It's being the first in my nuclear family to attend high school and the first grandchild on both sides to attend college, without ever questioning whether I'm good enough or belong because I look like everyone else.

Rick Privilege is attending college at a time when Iowa subsidized a significant part of my education. Through summer jobs, part-time jobs during the school year, scholarships and help from parents, my wife and I graduated with a net worth of roughly $0.00, but with absolutely no debt. We had a clear runway for take-off. History shows that was a sound financial investment by Iowa.

Rick Privilege is living in three cities and never remembering being afraid to go somewhere alone within their city limits. It means that "the talk" with our kids was limited to sex and not other realities and risks.

Rick Privilege is getting pulled over by police three times in my life and getting off with a warning twice — including making a new friend. It's being fortunate enough to live in a town where, from all indications, the police department is well managed and officers truly want to serve the community.

Rick Privilege is being relatively confident that any application I ever completed — scholarships, colleges, jobs and loans — was evaluated solely on the merit of its content and not sorted out based on the name at the top.

Rick Privilege is living at nine different addresses over the course of my life and typically having new neighbors welcome me, or at least not seem to care ... never being met with apprehension.

Rick Privilege is being mentored early and often in my career by several wonderful leaders, all of whom shared many characteristics with me. They provided opportunities that, although I worked hard to take advantage of, simply weren't available to all.

Those are the tailwinds that I'm aware of. I'm sure there are plenty of others that I'm too privileged to see.

Silence is complicity.

> **RICK SAYS**
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