

Title: Guilt and Privilege
From: "Jia Li"<jli01@bmc >
To: "Bryn Mawr Community" <everybody@brynmawr.edu>
Cc: the serendip virtual group <welcome ;)>

Dear all,

I see no connection between "privilege" and "guilt" previously. When we invited speaker Marian (a young white women of wealth) to come to our class, she talked about class and education. I was so confused during that time about her assumption: "I am rich so I feel guilty; I need to do something." After struggling with those ideas for a couple of days, I think it's time to give them off and to let others have a hard thinking time!

Best,

Jia

How I started to convince myself: This is how I start my DEEP thinking. And now I am writing something about it, thus to think about my previous thinking, a really interesting process!

I took an insight of myself and us since I'm one member of the Bryn Mawr community. I thought I apply a method similar with "formal analysis" (the way to analyze most of the art crafts) or "close reading" (a detailed objective perception of literature and critical interpretation.) Then, I decide to do it by asking and answering several questions to clarify and interpret our identity and characters:

✧ Who are we?

There are more than 1300 undergraduate students in Bryn Mawr College and students are coming from 45 states and 62 countries, while you are one of those. Meanwhile, 44% of student body is made up of international students and student of color. It's really hard for me to explain what kind of people are we and psychologist called this phenomenon "in-group Diversity."

✧ What is Bryn Mawr College?

A private institution, with a student-to-faculty ratio of 8 to 1, ranks among top ten liberal-arts colleges on the Wall Street Journal's list of feeder schools to the nation's law, medical and business schools. It also ranks top ten colleges and universities in percentage of graduates going on to earn a Ph.D. Volumes in the college's libraries: more than 1 million Size of the Bryn Mawr campus in acres: 135

✧ Facts about \$\$\$

Percentage of student body receiving some kind of financial aid: 69

Percentage of student body receiving grant aid: 65

Amount of grant aid awarded to Bryn Mawr students in 2010-11, in dollars 24.7 million

While some people might argue that those data don't make any sense because not all of us are from wealthy family. I should calm them down and say: Oh, don't worry! You are already on the right track! Why? Because it's liberal arts education! In other words, we might take for granted of the fact that most girls graduate here and become elites in their own field in the future. Because that's the way the school wanted. We need to analyze the purpose of liberal arts education in order to explain the expected consequence. It could be a long and entangled story.

Till this point, liberal arts education sounds good. Yes and no: sorry, but I'd like to argue that I think it's classist to some extent since we have so many privileges here and some of them could be a waste of resources! Even though Bryn Mawr no longer only accepts students of higher class, those connotations stick with the school around us:

1. *Remember that the Honor Code we live by is not a right but a privilege. We have SGA and we govern ourselves and trust each other*
2. *Behold the building: it's a privilege to sleep inside a place like palace.*



3. *Tri-co is a privilege: not only for all of those available fancy courses, but also all of those clubs on campus.*



4. *Having the chance experience liberal arts education is a privilege. While the current public education system was designed and conceived for the purpose of taking our place to the 21st century economy, liberal arts college provided more possibilities for students! So it works in a way that people who are in charge of the economic and intellectual are all the judgments we should change. But this model has caused chaos. Education should not be modeled on the interest of industrialization and the image on is what Bryn Mawr believes! Education is not about standardization.*
5. *Little words about thinking: why I pointed that out? Because the education and those privileges decided the way I think, which is so invisible but fundamentally true: maybe the fact that we are more likely to be a better thinker is "most privileged."*
6. *I used to feel so good with I relate myself with words like "leadership" or "elite." Now, I feel ashamed of it because I realized those words indicate that certain people occupy too many valuable resources. I can't stop questioning myself. My professor is great but only the 13*

students inside the classroom can hear her voice. Would it be nice if more people can benefit from it? I feel bad when I can have a chance to study aboard for a whole semester while other people don't have such a chance. So I have a guilty face as Marian did.

Maybe we should just become college dropouts right now!

Nope, I know the answer is: Privilege means more responsibility. Many of us are coming from well-off families and many of us are at least on the right track but we should be considerate and be responsible of those privileges we have and fully utilize it. The reason is fairly simple: because we are more likely to be people who can change our society significantly those people who still have trouble meet their needs. So we are more likely to de-classifying our social configuration successfully. It would be so easy and boring to live an easy life while trying to make a positive change to our community and even the society.

Martyrs: Challenge yourselves!

Reference:

✧ <http://www.brynmawr.edu/institutionalresearch/cds.html>