

Derailing for Dummies

*A Guide to Making
Discrimination Easier!*

Found at:

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If you're fortunate, the marginalized person will have internalized insulting perceptions of group, and actually feel torturously flattered. We all like to feel the sun on our faces after all! And so, in this case, you also get to reinforce the internalized stigma they may carry.

Finally, you can invoke the rage of the marginalized people who you have sweepingly and summarily dismissed and degraded. A conflicting swirl of emotions is very useful tool to work with!

And finally, of course, you once again imply it is your right as a Privileged Person® to pass judgment or cast approval of them. However be warned if you're using this tactic to try and halt the conversation before it goes any further: the marginalized person may very well be further provoked into confronting you with your ignorance. Use it with caution.

You're As Bad As They Are!

This is one of the last tactics you should bring out. It's a good choice if you're finding that the marginalized person is simply relentless and you are running out of options. This one is an outright insult. By now they have probably ripped all your prejudices apart and harshly criticized both your attitudes and the privileged system you reside within. You are probably taking it very personally because it's shaking the foundations of your beliefs and making you confront aspects of your own behavior and nature that you would rather not. That's when you say to them: "You are just as bad as the people who oppress you!"

Because they're angry about the treatment they undergo and because they are aggressive and persistent in wanting to see change happen, you can target this behavior (remembering that it is unseemly for marginalized people – they're supposed to set an example at all times by being humble and long-suffering) by suggesting it puts them on a par with the people and systems that stigmatize, ostracize, and target them every second of every day of their lives. This also suggests that reacting to such discrimination is totally unreasonable and out of proportion (they should just take their knocks!) and that has the benefit of indicating your ignorance to just how pervasive and constant this discrimination truly is.

This one is important if you really want to demonstrate what a scumbag you are so do be careful to whip it out at precisely the right moment. Used correctly and it can be something of a slam-dunk!

drop this bomb: call into question their marginalized status. This allows you to once more diminish their experience by disbelieving it, as well as reinforcing that “othering” we’ve already discussed.

If you’re in a situation with a person from a non-English speaking country who speaks, reads, and writes in fluid English (particularly if you initially assumed them to be native English speakers) you must insist this means they received a special sort of education (probably in an English-speaking country) that is denied to their country folk. This means they’re simply not qualified to talk about life in their home country – they’re too Privileged® to really understand.

Or if you’re talking to a person with disabilities, you must derisively claim they can’t be all “that” disabled because, if they were, they simply wouldn’t be able to communicate so well with you. Or, you know, think at all.

It’s great to whip this one out on sex workers too – if a sex worker is making the claim that sex work can be a positive and empowering choice or the issue isn’t the work but the stigma leveled at it, you absolutely must say they are obviously a very privileged sex worker because “real” sex workers are always degraded, hate their jobs, and are forced into it.

The really important thing is to establish some sort of false marginalization hierarchy where the person you’re speaking to couldn’t possibly experience anywhere near the sort of stigma and discrimination everyone else from their group does. This way you can force them to provide “evidence” of what they’ve dealt with which you can just disregard and further dismiss as more “proof” they are actually really privileged, and therefore have no right at all to be speaking.

Do be sure you strike a careful balance though – whilst you must make it clear you consider this marginalized person to be privileged you must be sure you nonetheless indicate they still are Less Than You, so be as disdainful and contemptuous as possible.

This step is just outright sleazy, which is what makes it so fantastic to use: it will have an effect rather like a punch to the gut on the marginalized person, causing them to sharply inhale as they reel from your sheer arrogance and cruelty. Denying their experience must never be underestimated as a strategy – remember: being dehumanized is exhausting and this will increase your capacity to win!

But You’re Different Than The Others

Backhanded insults are a fantastic way to trip up and flummox a marginalized person. This step is often used when you’ve said something discriminatory and targeting in the presence of a marginalized person. Either because you were oblivious, or you forgot they were there.

They will be offended of course, and that’s when you try to mollify them by reassuring them that they’re “different” than the others. “Oh, you’re not like all those other bitchy women,” perhaps, or maybe: “Yes, but you’re an attractive fat man!” Other suggestions include: “I wasn’t talking about you when I was saying most trans women are ugly. You pass pretty well!” or “Yes, but you’re not like those other Latino people who won’t better themselves. You’re very educated!” Maybe even: “It’s so good that you stay away from drugs, unlike those other sex workers.” Perhaps even: “Sure, but most mentally ill people are very selfish and self-obsessed. You’re a really nice person!”

Not only do you get to reinforce commonly held stereotypes about various marginalized groups, revealing that you truly believe them, you get to deliver a double-edged compliment to the marginalized person involved. By using this tactic you’re hoping to play on their emotions, connect with their common experiences of marginalization, and turn it around by “flattering” them for being “different” from “the others” because they’re “special” and (almost) worthy.

INTRODUCTION: A GUIDE TO DERAILING CONVERSATIONS

You know how it is. You’re enjoying yourself, kicking back and relaxing at the pub or maybe at the library. Or maybe you’re in class, or just casually surfing the internet and indulging in a little conversation. The topic of the conversation is about a pertinent contemporary issue, probably something to do with a group of people who fall outside of your realm of experience and identity. They’re also probably fairly heavily discriminated against – *or so they claim*.

The thing is, you’re having a good time sharing your knowledge about these people and their issues. This knowledge is incontrovertible – it’s been backed up in media representations, books, research, and lots and lots of historical events. And, of course, there’s also your own unassailable sense of being right.

Yet all of a sudden something happens to put a dampener on your sharing of your enviable intellect and incomparable capacity to fully perceive and understand *All Things*. It’s someone who belongs to the group of people you’re discussing, and they’re Not Very Happy with you. Apparently, they claim, you’ve got it all wrong and they’re offended about that. They might be a person of color or a queer person. Maybe they’re a woman, or a person with disabilities. They could even be a trans person or a sex worker. The point is that they’re trying to tell you that they know better than you do about their issues and you know that’s just plain wrong. How could you be wrong?

Don’t worry though! There IS something you can do to nip this potentially awkward and embarrassing situation in the bud. By simply derailing the conversation, dismissing their opinion as false, and ridiculing their experience, you can be sure that they continue to be marginalized and unheard. You can continue to look like the expert you know you really are, deep down inside!

CONGRATULATIONS, YOU HAVE PRIVILEGE!

Just follow this step-by-step guide and in no time at all you will have a foolproof method of derailing every challenging conversation you may get into, thus reaping the full benefits of every privilege you have.

The best part is, you don’t even have to be a white, heterosexual, cisgender, upper class man to enjoy the full benefits of derailing conversations! Nope! Despite being a member of one or several marginalized groups yourself, you can utilize these tactics to leverage the privileges that you do have, thus exerting power over other marginalized groups! You don’t have to heed their experiences, either!

Read on, and learn, and remember... you don’t have to use these in any particular order! In fact, mixing them up can really keep those types of people on their toes! After all, they’re pretty used to hearing this stuff, so you don’t want to get too predictable or they’ll get lazy!

DERAIL USING EDUCATION

If You Won't Educate Me How Can I Learn?

Whilst seemingly simple on the surface, there is some intertwining subtext embedded within this one. First of all, you're placing responsibility for your education back onto the marginalized person. As they are obviously engaged with these issues, and care about them, they are hopeful that Privileged People® may one day start listening and taking on board what they have to say. By placing the responsibility to educate in their hands, you tug at this yearning. You may even successfully make many people question themselves and their selfish expectations that you utilize the hundreds upon hundreds of resources on the subject available to you as a Privileged Person®! After all, anyone who expects you to be able to research a topic by yourself also clearly expects a far higher level of adult functionality than you're demonstrating! By insisting that you can only learn if they right-then-and-there sacrifice further hours of time going over the same ground they've so often covered in the past, you may also make them give up and go away altogether, enabling you to win by default. But further, you give the impression that you really want to learn, but that they're holding you back! That's right, using this tactic you can suggest that full understanding is what you crave – you want to be a better, more connected and compassionate person! It's not your fault! Nobody ever gave you the education! And now that someone is here who is so obviously qualified, they're denying you your privilege given right to have everything you want handed to you on a platter! Which brings us to another key component of this argument – it is very important, in conversations with marginalized people, to constantly remind them that you are, indeed, privileged. By demonstrating your belief that marginalized people should immediately gratify your every whim, you remind them of their place in society. After all, they're not there to live lives free of discrimination and in happy, independent, and fulfilling ways! Please! Marginalized people exist for your curiosity and to make you generally feel better about your place in society. Don't let them forget it! Point one to you!

If You Cared About These Matters You'd Be Willing To Educate Me

This is the natural follow-up to the above argument, although it can also be used independently. You see, often in these discussions a marginalized person will tell you it's not their responsibility to educate you. This is because marginalized people believe that they have other priorities in life, like working, studying, and being with their families for example. Clearly, they are laboring under a misconception – as a Privileged Person® you have far more right to their time than they do, and besides, don't they want to make the world a better place? Isn't that why they alerted you to the fact you were being offensive in the first place? Well, now clearly your education is their responsibility!

By placing this burden of responsibility onto them you remind them of just how daunting a task that is and how their lives are constantly being monopolized by the privileged, even in something that should be empowering to them, like deconstructing discrimination. You trivialize their lives, needs, interests, and obligations by suggesting that they should spend all of their time and energy engaging with clueless Privileged People®, putting in hours and hours of effort in repeating the exact same thing they've already said three thousand times to three thousand other Privileged People® in the past. And furthermore, you remind them that, if they really cared about their own issues, they'd willingly take that task on! Surely it's a small price to pay to change peoples' minds, right? While we secretly know that most of these conversations with Privileged People® have limited impact and make marginalized people feel like they're beating their heads repeatedly against a brick wall embedded with rusty spikes, we also know that this is entirely the point! Keep them worn out and exhausted and maybe they'll just go away!

DERAIL USING PERSONAL ATTACKS

You Just Enjoy Being Offended

Closely related to the above point, it's another critical element of a successful derailing You really need to make sure the marginalized person knows you consider their issues to be completely trivial. It's insensitive in the extreme, and it also exemplifies your lack of awareness and empathy. By demonstrating that you have absolutely no concept of what a particular issue or point may mean, you get to show off just how cocooned and protected in privilege you really are! Remember how maddening this is for a marginalized person – it's a privilege they do not share in this identity, and probably never will. So, to witness it being so blithely owned and used to diminish their experience is bound to get their blood pumping. But absolutely best of all, you are being obnoxious and hurtful enough to tell them outright that they enjoy facing discrimination and prejudice. Enjoy it so much, in fact, that they "look" for reasons to be hurt and offended! Wow. This one is almost breathtakingly perfect as a derailment tactic. It lacks any sort of conceivable humility or empathy and goes right to smug and vicious. The very idea that anyone enjoys being hurt and discriminated against as a daily practice is so preposterous it could only be believed by a Privileged Person® who's never really experienced or known what it's like!

The fact is, many marginalized people go out of their way to avoid these sorts of debates and confrontations because it's such a painful and unpleasant experience. Those you encounter in this circumstance have likely made a conscious choice to do so, even knowing it will probably go badly. For you to spit in the face of them putting themselves on the line by suggesting it's all fun and games just adds a particularly piquant insult to injury.

Being Offended Is Great For You!

A follow-up on You Just Enjoy Being Offended, this one has a particularly nasty flavor sure to make any marginalized person recoil in horror. This tactic is specifically for marginalized people working at agencies and organizations that serve their community. Remember that if they work in this kind of position, they are actively trying to effect change that will benefit their marginalized group. This means that they are obliged to deal with work-related discrimination and opposition from Privileged People® whilst maintaining "professionalism." They probably also face deep resistance to their efforts to eliminate oppression. This process is extremely exhausting and even depressing. Keep all of that in mind, because this tactic is especially sleazy. You want to be able to appreciate the derailment on all levels. Suggest that these people must go crazy with ecstasy every time a new hate-crime is reported, or another example of discrimination is brought to attention, because – get ready for it – it justifies their existence.

Yup. Because obviously, all the marginalized service providers care about is staying in business and keeping their jobs. There's no way there could possibly be a personal imperative involved, or that they could be adversely affected by consistently dealing with acts of violence or oppression against them and their group members. So, clearly, they must thrive on being "offended".

Even when being "offended" means having been bashed to within an inch of their life. Well. Done. You.

I Don't Think You're As Marginalized As You Claim

This tactic is related to Your Experience Is Not Representative Of Everyone but is a far more hurtful, and therefore effective, weapon. If the marginalized person is gaining steam in the conversation, beginning to persuade others to their point of view, even getting a few Privileged People® around you to apologize and concede their "mistakes,"

Who Wins Gold in the Oppression Olympics?

Following on from this, if you are a member of other marginalized groups, you can also exploit it to indicate to the marginalized person how absolutely disdainful you are of their concerns and issues by portraying yours as far more important and imperative. You can even suggest that your issues are more valuable than theirs, implying a hierarchy of oppression in which you always win. You see, as a marginalized person yourself, it is all the more infuriating to another marginalized person that you're exercising the exact same prejudices and discrimination that Privileged People® exercise against you! The marginalized person will be tearing their hair out at your obliviousness and lack of perception, and this will weaken their defenses.

DERAIL USING ANGER

You're Being Hostile

This is a great one to pop out if it seems like they're going to push the matter. After all, nobody wants to be "hostile", do they? In a culture rigidly defined by social protocols invariably designed to favor the privileged, people are very concerned about "getting along with others." Especially marginalized people! Know why? Well, since they're marginalized, they experience discrimination in various ways throughout their daily lives. It's not at all unusual, therefore, for marginalized people to be accustomed to being very, very cautious about the way they engage with Privileged People®. This is because discrimination may mean they routinely encounter violence, silencing, oppression or just good old-fashioned ridicule and diminishment. That can make life stressful and exhausting, so many marginalized people develop complex strategies to avoid hostile engagements with Privileged People®. Further, marginalized people are forced into certain social behaviors – also termed "appropriate behavior" by Privileged People®. After all, there are different rules for marginalized people and Privileged People®! And there should be.

Training in "appropriate behavior" usually begins when marginalized people are very young, so it's well ingrained. By accusing them of hostility, you will successfully enliven their sense of caution and anxiety around this matter. You may also provoke a feeling of guilt that they are not "behaving" the way they have been trained to. But even better – by accusing them of hostility, you pass the blame back to them, rather than considering what you might have said that was so offensive and hurtful that it caused this much-touted "hostility"! This will definitely work in your favor, because it will further insult and enrage them. You're making progress...

You've Lost Your Temper So I Don't Have To Listen To You Anymore

This one is particularly effective because it really pushes home a sense of futility and hopelessness to the marginalized people. Remember they should never get the impression that they can win one of these arguments, because you should be consistently implying that there was never anything to argue over to begin with!

If you've been following the steps correctly so far, any reasonable person is going to be feeling pretty angry at this point. This anger could lead to them to be more aggressive and abrasive. The marginalized person may have even decided that you're simply too obnoxious to waste patience on, and may be venting their sense of frustration. This is when you whip this step out! You can use it to disregard everything they've said to you and just not deal with the issue at all. Entirely ignore any of your prior behavior that may have led to their anger.

Conventions of social conduct hold "civil discourse" as the ideal at all times. When people get angry, it gives you a convenient "out" without having to concede to any of their objections or acknowledge their pain. Furthermore, with this one you can make it seem as though you were ready and willing to listen, but then they ruined it. This way you can leave them with the sense that if only they'd been a good little marginalized person and towed the line, then they may have won someone over to the cause! It just adds a particular distaste to the whole affair that no derailing should be without!

You Are Damaging Your Cause By Being Angry

By now their feelings are probably deeply hurt and they're very angry. Don't forget that they encounter this kind of discrimination in subtle ways every single day of their life, so they're bound to be emotional about it – even resentful. You can take advantage of this weakness to emerge the victor! After all, everyone knows the marginalized have an obligation to conduct themselves with quiet dignity in the face of infuriating tribulation. If

your quarry begins to get angry and “aggressive”, then you’ve won! Why? Well, it’s very simple – just hold them as the representative for their entire group! You could try saying something like, “You realize you’re making all X look bad?” or “Well, congratulations for backing up the stereotype of X as being angry, irrational, and oversensitive!”

Maybe you can even say, “Well, I was about to say I was willing to listen to you, but then you got insulting – so now I don’t have to!” Don’t worry about silly things like their feelings – c’mon, they’re grownups, aren’t they?! The only thing that matters is that you defend your discrimination as completely fair and avoid examining your prejudiced arguments in ways that may actually challenge them. You could even drop this little bomb: “You are damaging your cause by being angry. Real understanding can only happen if all sides are respectful and patient.” Throw in a reference to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, or the Dalai Lama for added effect!

Not only do you come across as a smug, self-righteous asshat (though you may prefer the term “bigger person”) you can also manage to subtly make them feel guilty about their anger, as though it’s undeserved! Everybody wins! Well, except them of course.

when white history is so prominently covered in every aspect of culture from film, to books, to education, to monuments, it’s a great way to once again make the dialogue center around Privileged People® and their perceived ill treatment, imaginary though this may be. This way you manage to keep the focus off the topic at hand and on your own sense of wounded comfort – a lovely way to remind marginalized people that their issues are thoroughly devalued. Naturally, it is of extreme frustration to marginalized people to have their attempts to address and draw attention to the oppression characterized as a calculated attack on the “rights” of Privileged People®. You can further underscore and intensify this frustration by accusing them of a conspiracy, the ultimate objective of which is to make your life as a Privileged Person® a living hell! Go so far as to suggest that they intend to turn the tables. That if given an inch, they will take one hundred thousand miles and leave – in the blink of an eye – Privileged People® overthrown and powerless! After all, how dare they think they are entitled to the same human rights you automatically enjoy by virtue of your privilege?!

Anything You Can Do

If a marginalized person should remark that many marginalized people report overwhelmingly similar experiences of discrimination and silencing from Privileged People®, do not despair: this is a unique opportunity to turn one of their own arguments back on them! Tell them that they are making “generalizations.” Salt and pepper with the word “unwarranted” as necessary, and if you can work “stereotyping” in there too (playing on that guilt that THEY may be doing what they accuse others of), you’re golden. You have still managed to entirely undermine their voice as well as insinuate they’re hypocrites – all the while presenting yourself as being blissfully unaware that stereotypes of Privileged People® are rarely, if ever, actually a disadvantage to them in life. They’ll inevitably retreat to examples of “lived experience” (don’t forget, as discussed in *You’re Arguing With Opinions Not Fact*, this is worthless) at which point you can tell them that their information is “anecdotal” and proves nothing. Slam dunk. BOOYAH!

But I’m Not Like That – Stop Stereotyping!

Personalizing anything the marginalized person may say is a great way of distracting attention from the issue at hand, forcing the marginalized person to soothe your wounded feelings or sense of indignation rather than concentrating on the argument they were making. Rather than simply listening to criticism of a group of Privileged People® with respect and consideration for the marginalized person, you must immediately take offence and leap in to defend yourself. For example, when queer people are criticizing the tendencies of some straight people, jump in and say something like: “Not all of us are like that – you’re prejudiced against straight people! You’re judging straight people the same way that they judge you, and it’s hateful! We need to not categorize people and make assumptions about them based on their identity! I resent feeling like I’m part of a group that oppresses you!” – even though the criticism was very explicitly leveled at a specified behavior. (i.e. “I don’t like straight people who do _____.”)

But of course, this can work in many different situations where privileged behavior is being deconstructed or criticized. Privilege gains its resonance in its lack of acknowledgement of the balance of power by suggesting that reasonable criticism of oppressive or discriminatory behavior is equivalent to the oppressive and discriminatory behavior itself. Remember that while the marginalized person’s criticism can never adversely affect your life in significant ways, you must rank the discrimination they face – which does significantly affect them – as equal to the discomfort of your wounded feelings. This will demonstrate how highly you rank yourself and how lowly you rank them.

DERAIL USING EMOTION

But If It's Okay For Marginalized People To Use Those Words, Why Can't I?

As a Privileged Person®, it is natural that you would feel excluded and frustrated by the recent spate of marginalized people “reclaiming” historically negative words to refer to themselves. Not only do these marginalized people kick up a great big ole stink by making it “politically incorrect” for Privileged People® to use these words – even going so far as to have some of them defined under ‘hate crime’ legislation! – they take the insult one step further and use them freely among themselves! This is very perplexing and annoying for Privileged People®, who can only stand on the outside, gazing wistfully in, wishing it were a simpler time when it was totally okay for everyone to call women whores, Mexicans spics, trans folk trannies, gay men faggots, and people of African descent the n-word. After all, who do those marginalized people think they are, taking ownership of language traditionally used to oppress them! That just isn't playing fair! But take heart, because there is a way you can worm around this one – where there's privilege, there's always a way!

First of all, you must feign utter cluelessness about the ins & outs of reclamation and behave as though you were under the impression that in these ‘post race/sex/sexuality/gender/etc times’ that we had all evolved into a new era where ‘words don't mean anything’ and it's totally okay for everyone to use offensive slurs and then... well: use them.

When a marginalized person calls you out on it, become indignant. Express confusion. Demand an explanation. Say that you just don't understand – “If you people use those words to refer to each other, why can't I!”

You see, you're implying that they're being hypocritical. That if they are going to use abusive & oppressive language amongst each other, they simply have to accept that they're employing a ‘double standard’ by preventing Privileged People® from using them.

What this enables you to ignore is the reality of the power dynamics involved. Language reclamation is often a means by which marginalized people gain back some power they are traditionally denied by taking control of words used to demean and discriminate against them. When these words come from Privileged People®, there is a long and very serious negative history behind them that cannot be divorced from the words themselves. Thus, when Privileged People® employ these words, they are perpetuating that history and the psychology behind the word. They are exercising the oppressive power that have become inherent to those words – a power marginalized people often seek to subvert and/or dismantle when they use them.

Pretend not to understand this. Just continue to imply hypocrisy and pout that it isn't fair. It also ignores the fact that, from within marginalized groups, discourses around abusive language are actually not simple and there are many divided and varied opinions on the subject. Treating marginalized people like a hive mind is always a great way to further subtly insult them and since the point of this entire debacle is to come out with as many notches on your belt as possible, you want to make sure you slip in as many knocks below their belt as you can manage.

“It's A Conspiracy!”

Rather than dealing with the actual issues on the table, or stopping to listen and take into consideration what the marginalized person is saying, just whip this out instead! Claim that any endeavor by marginalized people to improve their societal standing or treatment is actually a “conspiracy” being “used against” Privileged People® – the ultimate objective of which is actually to oppress the privileged! Fearsome indeed (after all, Privileged People® often believe that any efforts to achieve equity actually undermine them and compromise their lives)!

It is a very unique and special trait to personalize something like Black History Month, for example, as being an effort to make the history and accomplishments of white people invisible. Although this is obviously ridiculous

You're Being Overemotional

It is very likely that the whole reason the marginalized person in question is debating with you is because they've made a conscious decision to speak out about these issues, despite the pain and heartache it can often cause them. Therefore, the You're Being Hostile bomb can often lead to an increase of anger and/or hurt. Sometimes it just leads to greater emphasis and exasperation in the argument. It really doesn't matter, because you can still use it against them by accusing them of being overemotional. You may wish to use the word “hysterical” instead. “Hysterical” is also a word laden with negative connotations, so it's particularly effective. Using this one in discussions with women is highly advisable, as the opinions and feelings of women have historically been denied as mere “hysteria.” But it works against almost anyone. Another great one to use with women is to ask them if they're “PMSing.” Yes, it's an oldie but a classic.

If you need more variety, some more handy argument winners involving speculating as to people's neurotypical status: ask them if they're “neurotic” or “psycho” for example. Implying people have mental health issues is a great way to dismiss their concerns; it's also insensitive to people with actual mental health issues!

After all, proper “intellectual” discussions always involve detachment and rationality. What is “rationality”? It's a way of approaching emotional matters devoid of sentiment. This is particularly prized by Privileged People® as it enables a continuing inequity of power that favors them: after all, if they aren't emotionally attached to the topic by way of lived experience, it is easier for them to be “rational.” Voila!

You're Just Oversensitive

Once again, though very similar to You're Being Overemotional, this one has a slightly different nuance. What you're implying is that the marginalized person is looking for offence where none exists. Once again, you're disowning your own responsibility, and this is absolutely the crux of any derailment – you just can't repeat or reinforce it often enough. No matter what, none of this is your fault – nothing you said that was hurtful, offensive, bigoted, or discriminatory is really to blame here because you said it in all innocence! After all, what reason have you ever had to examine your ingrained prejudices? Why should you start now? So you want the marginalized person to know this is how you feel and that you really believe the responsibility is all theirs. If they weren't looking so hard for offence, everything would be a lot more pleasant!

You're Taking Things Too Personally

Similar to You're Being Overemotional and yet with particular uses of its own. You see, when you say, “You're taking things too personally,” you demonstrate your ignorance that these issues ARE personal for them! That's highly insulting and is sure to rub anyone the wrong way. The fact that you're already refusing to consider their reality is giving them a pretty good indication of how the conversation is going to progress. Yet, the natural human need for understanding will probably compel them to try and reason with you, or at least to point you in the direction of some educational resources that will help you gain insight into their experiences. This can enable you to once again make a demand for them to personally educate you instead (reference: Derail Using Education).

By denying the conversation is personal for them, you also reveal your own detachment: there's really nothing at stake for you in getting into this argument, you're just doing it for kicks. They will be all too aware of this, and it will begin to work on their emotions, preparing them nicely for the next steps you will take them through.

DERAIL USING DISTRACTION

Aren't You Treating Each Other Worse Anyway?

This one is great – it's the Derailing for Dummies below-the-belt sucker-punch! By using this one you both distract from the topic at hand while also confirming just the sort of bigotry you really, truly believe (like they didn't already know!). Additionally, it demonstrates the height of your privilege – that you are so distanced from reality that you are incapable of perceiving how marginalization, objectification, and social ostracization may have contributed to the internal issues that marginalized groups struggle with (particularly things that people use to get by in a world that treats them like property or aberrations). When the marginalized person is talking about the sort of discrimination they face from Privileged People®, and it's beginning to make you feel a little uncomfortable, it's a great opportunity to trot out, say, stats about “black-on-black” violence to dismiss police brutality. Or perhaps talk about how women are all really mean and criticize one another's bodies (try to throw in the term “bitchy” or “bitch” where you can). Blatantly disregard any influencing factors, such as societal pressure regarding weight or body image. You could even talk about gay men and their wild, unprotected sex orgies being entirely responsible for the spread of AIDS. Again, work to diminish gay bashing and homophobia. After all, if a good, straight man has to fear catching “the AIDS” from any gay man that may be strolling past, beating him to a pulp with a fire hydrant is totally reasonable! But best of all, it suggests that marginalized people are entirely responsible for all the trial and tribulation that they face – it's not about a discriminatory society, no way, no how! It's their incapacity to treat each other respectfully or get ahead. Because they're, you know, less human/developed than “other people” (read: Privileged People®). Only the most degraded and depraved souls would be so rotten to their own group! Right? As the marginalized person steadily realizes that this is your attitude, they will be overwhelmed (with horror or other feelings) and, with any luck, they will lose track of their argument. Or maybe the conversation will just grind to a halt, enabling you to sit back smugly and rack up another point to your score.

I'm Just Saying What Other People Believe. I Never Said I Agree.

This technique is a great little duck-and-dodge if you're feeling slightly set upon. Often times in these conversations (and their backlash) you can begin to feel a little uncomfy in your bigoted conviction. This is not a nice thing for a Privileged Person® to experience. After all, it's really important that everyone everywhere ever thinks you're totally wonderful. Popularity is a very important thing to have in this modern world – it proves things about you. Proves that you're popular. And, you don't really want everyone to think you're a total ass, not even a hostile, whiney marginalized person whose opinions and feelings don't really count. No, the most important thing is that, even as you rattle off a bunch of offensive, demeaning opinions, you are still able to convince people that you're really a very wonderful person. The problem with rattling off a bunch of offensive, demeaning opinions is that somebody somewhere – usually a person from the group who is the target of your expressed sentiments – is not going to be fooled by your magical privilege wondercoat. They might even be able to identify some of your scumbagginess. And they're going to object. And this may slightly rock your perception of reality.

That's when you can pretend – oh no, no, no – it wasn't that you were stating your opinion, you were just repeating what ‘other people’ believe. Hey you could even throw in a little indignant outrage here: “How DARE you imply that I agree with them!”

With this tactic you can bait and switch at almost any point in “the Game.” It's an easy out. Did you make some ignorant comment about how it's a natural biological urge (or divine mandate) for all women to have children? Naaaah. That's just how most people feel! Did you state some incredibly nasty belief that all trans women have a ‘mannish’ cast about them? It's not that you agree, it's just that you've heard so many other people say it! Or how about something brimming with hate? Like how ‘in general,’ black folks would ‘rather’ get a free handout than work? That's not your opinion, it's just a commonly held belief!

DERAIL USING ENTITLEMENT

But That Happens To Me Too!

In attempting to communicate with you, the marginalized person may bring up examples of the sorts of daily manifestations of discrimination they face. Many of these examples seem trivial to Privileged People® but clearly reflect the way the marginalized person has been “othered” by society. “Othering” is a system of social markers that defines “us” and “them,” neatly and conveniently categorizing people into their appropriate places within society. It's a way of defining a secured and positive position in the world by stigmatizing “others.” In other words, it's the process of dehumanizing anyone different to the Chosen Privileged. The marginalized person you're dealing with has been subjected to this “othering.” This means that their body is viewed as public property and the personal, intricate details of their lives are perceived as free information. You must nod patiently as the marginalized person tries to gain your understanding of the many complicated and subtle ways this othering impacts their lives until they come across a point that seems particularly grating for them. Then you must say: “Oh, but I experience that too!” For example, people of African descent often express outrage and irritation at the fact that many white people believe they can freely touch their hair. This invasion of their personal space is dressed up as flattery – “Oh, what beautiful hair you have!” and permission is not sought or granted before the action is taken. “That happens to everyone!” you must exclaim. “My child has beautiful white-blonde hair and people are always touching it!”

Sex workers, as another example, often endure highly intimate questions regarding all aspects of their lives, sexual habits and client interactions. When they gripe about how invasive this is, you must equate it to your own work: “Oh, I know, I'm a lawyer and people always want to know what goes on in court!” “Totally, I'm a doctor and people are always asking about gross conditions I see!”

With a trans person who is transitioning, many people expect that they should have access to all of the details, including details regarding how they “transform.” When they talk about how frustrating this is, you must commiserate: “Yeah, don't you hate the way men always want you to explain the mysteries of make-up and skin care!”

If you are speaking to a fat person who is complaining about the lack of fashion-forward and beautiful clothing made in their size, try something like: “The fashion industry sucks! They just do not make clothes for real bodies – I mean, just because I am a size four doesn't mean I'm short! Jeans are always too short on me!”

Without a doubt, one of the most powerful tactics to use here is comparing male circumcision to female genital mutilation. In any discussion around FGM, make sure you quickly leap in and say: “But why is it OK for little boys to be mutilated? Why isn't anyone talking about that?” Because the removal of a tiny flap of skin is entirely comparable to the crippling mutilation many young girls are subjected to.

What this demonstrates is your total lack of understanding of what “othering” means in a practical sense. You're ignoring the way your life is otherwise entirely immersed in a state of absolute privilege and revealing the fact that you fail to comprehend the processes of objectification and marginalization they go through all the time. When you are privileged, “similar” experiences simply do not happen on an equal footing because they do not otherwise reflect marginalization. This obliviousness is highly insensitive and trivializing and will definitely cause them to grind their teeth!

But it's also an important step in affirming your privilege: Privileged People® are accustomed, after all, to it being “all about them.” Not used to simply sitting back and listening to marginalized people's issues, Privileged People® like to be the center of attention at all times. It reminds them that they are important. By doing this, you will feel good about yourself and send a crucial message to the marginalized person: “Yes, I really can diminish your experience by making it all about me, all the time!”

DERAIL USING HUMOR

It's Only The Internet

Ah yes, never forget this little gem! You see, the internet isn't "real life" and therefore nothing that happens on the internet could ever have an actual impact on real people. OH no, anything that happens on the internet is, by virtue of simply happening on the internet: "A Joke!" Never mind that real people are really behind the really real words they're typing "on the Internet" and that those words actually do reflect real world opinions, beliefs, prejudices and discrimination that really do affect really real people from marginalized group and they already have to deal with that stuff on a daily basis – so what! It's "the Internet". Nothing is "real" on "the Internet." You can simply say to them: If you take anything on "the Internet" to heart, you're taking it "too seriously" and probably just need to log off for awhile... and go out into the "real world" where they will... experience the exact same type of discrimination and prejudice.

You see, this tactic conveniently ignores that there is no genuine respite for marginalized people when it comes to encountering bigotry characteristic to their group, not even through a supposed entertainment medium, like "the Internet."

Since nothing on "the Internet" happens face to face, you as a Privileged Person® can easily persuade yourself nothing that happens on "the Internet" really matters. You can then communicate your contempt for the marginalized person's experience by dismissing and trivializing any hurtful or outright hateful things either you or other Privileged People® have said, simply because it was on "the Internet" and since they can't see you and you can't see them, how can they even prove the words even mean anything, nyah nyah neh nyah nyah!

Using this tactic, you're also subtly characterizing 'the Internet' as an autonomous being – it's not people being offensive, it's "the Internet", thus allowing you to further shirk responsibility.

Surprise! I Was Playing "Devil's Advocate" All Along!

It can happen: you may reach the point where, in spite of expertly using all of these tactics, you're suddenly struck by the discomfiting notion that maybe the marginalized people, uh, have a point. This doesn't feel very good for any Privileged Person®. It's highly uncomfortable for a start-off, the sensation you may be wrong about something. But even worse, it may mean you have to endure the humiliation of admitting that!! But never fear, for all is not lost! You can still worm your way out of this one! Simply say: "It was all a social experiment!"

This makes it okay, you see! Not only does it imply to the marginalized people you're really not the ignorant, obnoxious bigot you might be beginning to realize you are, you successfully communicate to them that you are so insensitive and arrogant that you can take very real and serious issues affecting their lives and treat them as nothing more than a theoretical discussion for your own detached amusement!

In this way you cover your arse whilst affirming your privilege!

This tactic pretty much gives you a free pass to say whatever venomous, hateful, bigoted opinion you can think of – because when called on it, you can just deny, deny, deny.

I Said SOME Marginalized People Do That, Not ALL

A variation on the previous tactic, this approach also allows you to dodge accusations that you are making offensive and incorrect generalizations, or treating marginalized people like a hive-mind. It's convenient because it doesn't require that you do the unthinkable and actually admit that you were wrong and/or acting like a total jerk. Instead, it gives the impression that you are making a concession of some sort. Even though you are, in fact, simply defending your prejudiced viewpoint through apparently subtler means. For example, use this in situations where you have claimed that: women prefer to work with 'people' in power from behind the scenes rather than working on their own careers/holding power themselves; fat people are simply lazy, unmotivated, and always looking for a quick fix; people diagnosed with mental health issues are usually just playing the system and looking for charity whilst exaggerating their conditions.

Don't forget that when you are called out on your generalization, shift to a semantics argument: "Now, now, I never said ALL marginalized people act that way, just that SOME do. So it can't really be called a generalization can it?" Example: "I never said that ALL people on food stamps are buying lobster and champagne! Just that some are! Are you saying NO ONE cheats the system?"

Keep in mind, however, that while you can expect other Privileged People® to be fooled by this clever move, the marginalized person may not be. They may become increasingly irritated by the prospect that you honestly believe they could be persuaded by such obvious and underhanded dodge tactics.

*Remember, however, that getting them angry is ultimately a good thing. While it may result in temporary discomfort for you, it will also enable you and your supporters to further dismiss their words on the grounds that they 'can't be civil' (refer to Derail Using Anger). Don't forget that you don't have to deal with their anger for very long before you can sufficiently undermine them and return to your cushiony world of unchallenged privilege. So, it's worth it in the long run!

A In B Situation Is Not Equivalent To X In Y Situation

The marginalized person may put in a last-ditch effort to be patient and reasonable by using an analogy. If you, yourself are a member of a marginalized group and are exercising privilege over another group, the person you're targeting may use an example of discrimination towards your group and then draw parallels with their own. This will be an attempt to appeal to your basic humanity and provide you with an experience you can relate to, hoping that this will also evoke compassion. Don't worry! You can still get out of this one! Simply become indignant and be very sure to emphasize that your experience is absolutely and one hundred per cent unique and there are no similarities whatsoever between the two forms of discrimination. Be sure that you are very derisive of their experience, thereby indicating you believe it unworthy of consideration. You must also behave as though you are insulted, so as to indicate their issues are so worthless that it's deeply offensive to be compared to them! Of course, the marginalized person was not trying to equate the two, simply trying to provide grounds for commonality. It's very important not to give an inch, however, so feign utter ignorance of this at all costs. Remember: you want them to feel as diminished as possible. This weakens their position, which is important if you want to win.

DERAIL USING RETALIATION

Don't You Have More Important Issues To Think About?

When you're beginning to feel backed into a corner, you could do worse than trot this one out. As with the best of these techniques, this step operates on several levels. First of all, it communicates to the marginalized person that you think the entire debate is trivial and below anyone's consideration (this has the added benefit of indicating your complete disregard for their feelings). Secondly, you disown responsibility for your part in the debate and anything that you've said that may have been discriminatory or offensive. Finally, you reinforce your privilege by suggesting that it is Privileged People's® job to set the agenda for the marginalized group. After all, how could they possibly know what issues they should prioritize for themselves? They're far too inferior and stupid! You, with your objective, rational, privileged perspective, on the other hand, know exactly what's most important! And, it's definitely not confronting you with your own bigotry and ignorance!

Your Experience Is Not Representative Of Everyone

Of course, straw man arguments are critical to any successful derailing of conversation. It's very important to discount the marginalized person's experience at every available opportunity. Apart from being outright hurtful and demeaning, it also forces them into a constant position of defensiveness.

If a marginalized person gives you a personal testament, then you must immediately assume that they are speaking on behalf of their entire group. Be very quick to point out that it's wrong for them to do this. This is a diversionary tactic designed to focus them on denying your accusation rather than arguing their point. You will find that something very important to many marginalized people is stressing the fact that not everyone in their group is the same. This is because Privileged People® have routinely lumped them all together as one, great big monolithic group that looks the same, acts the same, thinks the same, speaks the same, dresses the same, eats the same, feels the same – you get the idea. And, of course, all of those monolithic behaviors are understood to be “other” (othering, by the way, is a process that permits Privileged People® to consider marginalized people as less than human, thereby justifying discrimination and stigmatizing their behaviors). So naturally, marginalized people often find it imperative to make it understood that their group is as diverse in expression and experience as groups of Privileged People®.

This technique allows you to play on this concern by alarming and insulting them with the accusation that they are homogenizing their own group! It also works to suggest to them that their experience is worthless because it doesn't align with everyone else's – particularly those that you've decided to favor (that is, the experiences that, to your mind, back up your prejudices). This is belittling and offensive in the extreme as you are essentially denying their reality. People's personal experiences are important to them, so it's likely that they will, whilst getting increasingly hurt and upset, continue to try and defend and “prove” them to your exacting measures while you can bask in the satisfaction of knowing you have caused them distress. You are well on your way to winning!

Unless You Can Prove Your Experience Is Widespread I Won't Believe It

You've successfully gotten them into a catch-22. You will have already established that experience is not a monolith. Just because people come from the same marginalized group does not mean that they will all have the same thoughts and feelings and experiences. But, adding this one into the mix has the benefit of making it an essential proviso of your agreement that they have to PROVE what they're claiming is definitively representative of a majority of their group of people. What's really awesome about this is that if, by this point, you have them so upset and frustrated that they're not carefully disclaiming their language, you can distort their words to accuse them

You're Interrogating From The Wrong Perspective

This is a very special tactic but that doesn't mean it shouldn't be freely or liberally used. If anything, it means you should use it as often and as widely as you can. You see, in this one you get to insult their intelligence and perceptiveness but in a very subtle and underhanded way! This one is very useful in discussions about literature and other media or academia.

The gist of it is this: there's nothing offensive in there, you just don't get it (because you are too stupid)! For example – you might want to impress your belief that context is irrelevant (there's no racist parallels in a mythological planet where beautiful white elves keep horrible, animalistic orcs as slaves – it's completely detached from earth's history!), or that they're just reading it wrong (well sure, you could take that attitude if you approach it from that perspective, but that's not the perspective it was meant to be read with so your argument is just flawed!).

Once again (and truly a fundamental aspect of derailing) you demonstrate your lack of awareness of their issues but you also get to tell them that they're wrong because you (and all the other Privileged People®) simply know better. Try it out and just wait and see what you get back.

Burn, baby, burn!

You're Arguing With Opinions Not Fact

If you really want to excel as a Privileged Person® you need to learn to value data, statistics, research studies and empirical evidence above all things, but especially above personal experiences. You can pretend you are oblivious to the fact most studies have been carried out by Privileged People® and therefore carry inherent biases, and insist that the marginalized person produce “Evidence” of what they're claiming. Their experience does not count as evidence, for it is subjective and therefore worthless.

This is very important because it works in two ways: 1) it communicates to the marginalized person that their personal testament is disbelieved and of no value, causing them great hurt; and 2) it once again reinforces your privilege.

You see, the very capacity to conduct studies, collect data, and write detached “fact-based” reports on it is an inherently privileged activity. The ability to widely access this material and research it exhaustively is also inherently privileged. Privileged People® find it easier to pursue these avenues than marginalized people and so once again you are reminding them you possess this privilege and reinforcing that the world at large values a system of analysis that excludes them, and values it over what their actual personal experience has been.

The process of valuing “fact” over “opinion” is one very much rooted in preserving privilege. Through this methodology, the continued pain and othering of millions of people can be ignored because it's supported by “opinion” (emotion) and not “fact” (rationality).

It is also important because it calls on the marginalized person to do something that is simply impossible, and that is to summarize the entirety of their group's experiences into a definitive example. It is important that you establish this precedent for the next couple of steps.

DERAIL USING INTELLECTUALISM

You're Not Being Intellectual Enough/You're Being Overly Intellectual

These two steps are always best exercised when married together. They can definitely be used individually, but you will further dismay and infuriate the marginalized person in question if you use them together. The key here is maintaining a careful blend of disdain and dismissal no matter what the marginalized person throws at you.

It is important, as a Privileged Person®, to constantly hedge the marginalized person between your class expectations and your other expectations of them. Even though the conversation taking place is reflective of or about real life circumstances and situations for human beings, you must be careful to first insist on placing it within an academic framework. If the marginalized person involved is speaking in vernacular and placing too much emphasis on personal experience, you must swiftly impress that you cannot consider it a proper “debate” unless theory and philosophy play a key component, complete with big words normally not found outside of academic papers. This is another way of pressing home your own privilege by demanding the conversation take place on terms the marginalized person may not be intimate with. After all, academia has little to do with reality, but pretending that it does is sure to undermine your opponent.

It's a good opportunity also to subtly insult the marginalized person's intelligence, by suggesting they simply aren't educated, or well educated enough, to really be participating in these conversations.

However should the marginalized person suddenly reveal that they are well-versed in academia, or other marginalized person who are join in, or if the whole thing began on an academic footing, you can swiftly take the other tack and dress them down for being “too intellectual”. Remember, marginalized person who conform to the standard perception of “intellectual” are getting above themselves and so deserve nothing but your derision.

You can talk about how they are alienating people, speaking above them and behaving in a very condescending manner. You really want to think about your language here, to truly communicate just how much disdain you have for their education/manner. “Uppity” is a particularly bristling word to People of Color particularly African-Americans, as they have routinely been called “uppity” when they have been “getting out of place”. “Hoity-toity”, “highhanded” and “snobbish” are also excellent words. It suggests that the marginalized persons are entertaining lofty notions of themselves that are undeserved when all they are doing is communicating in the manner you would insist on had they not. We all have places in life and the preferred place for marginalized person is under your shoe.

The important thing is to really drive home that you consider their intelligence and education – whether formal or self-gained – to be sub par and that they are demeaning/ostracizing others by utilizing it. You want them to feel ashamed of it, or at the least reminded that Privileged People® think they have no rights to it.

It's a really good idea to get a friend involved in this one – one of you can take the path of “intellectualism”, whilst the other can be derisive of the same. This is especially useful if more than one marginalized person is involved in the conversation. Keep battering at them from all sides and things will swiftly deteriorate.

It's also really awesome to utilize the tactic of correcting grammar and/or spelling mistakes and criticizing comments on form rather than content to further distract from the issues. You want people for whom the language being used is second, third or fourth, or people with less formal education to really be aware of their shortcomings and you want others for whom it is a first language and who have formal education to feel chastised by their mistakes (even though in heated conversations and general internet discourse such mistakes are common and not reflective at all of someone's capacity). This tactic covers ALL angles in this regard and is sure to incur feelings of shame and diminished.

of speaking “on behalf” of all people from their group (and without the appropriate evidence!)! This will back you up to Your Experience Is Not Representative of Everyone, and you can start all over again, toggling back and forth between the two. You can repeat these two as many times as you'd like! In fact, this is highly recommended as it will increase feelings of anger and frustration on their part, and then you can throw You're Taking Things Too Personally or You're Getting Hostile at them!

But It's True

Simply trivialize your opponent's argument by pointing out to them that whatever offensive/bigoted/ignorant/stereotyped thing you said or did is a bona fide reality. For instance: “But it's true!” This is a one-size-fits-all retort that is very effective in redirecting any argument into a never-ending, circular loop. You don't have to take on any of the points the marginalized person may raise, nor do you have to concede offence and apologize – you can disavow all responsibility by simply repeating, over and over, to any counter-claim or attempted correction: “But it's true!” More examples: “But it's true! Asian people DO talk funny!” “But it's true! Black men are all criminals! They're arrested more than anybody else!” “But it's true! Women are irrational during their periods because of their hormones! It's a scientific fact.” Keep on keepin' on with, “But it's true! But it's true! But it's true!”

You can even go so far as to appear exasperated with the marginalized person for denying the ‘truth’ of the situation, pretending obliviousness as to why anything you have said could possibly be hurtful when, actually, “it's true!”

Well I Know Another Person From Your Group Who Disagrees!

This is a fantastic one to bring out if you feel at all backed into a corner! If, for example, the marginalized person is making sense and you're beginning to get the unpleasant feeling that you were wrong about something, just whip up your friend – your Native friend, or your trans friend, your Muslim friend, or your friend who is a sex worker, and vehemently express how they completely and stridently support your opinions on these issues. Of course, you must make out as though you are entirely oblivious to internalized stigma and how your friends may have been adversely affected by discrimination wielded by Privileged People®. And, as established by the prior steps, it is imperative that you discount different experiences whilst seeming to support them. After all, your friend is proof that there are different opinions among this marginalized group (assuming that you're representing their perspective accurately). The fact that they agree with you, however, means that you don't have to give even the least bit of credence to ideas other than your own. Certainly not to the marginalized person in question. Plus it gives you that handy progressive veneer – see, all their accusations of racism/sexism/ableism/etc. are totally groundless because you have friends who are representatives from that group. This shows how open-minded and awesomely cool you really are!

You know what the best part about this step is? The friend doesn't even have to exist! That's right, the friend can be nothing more than a figment of your imagination, conjured up to provide you with vicarious backup in your hour of need! How is the marginalized person going to prove it, after all! They can have their suspicions, but that's hardly hard evidence. You're definitely ahead in the game now!

You Have An Agenda

A close relative of the tactic used above, use this one in a similar fashion, implying that the marginalized person could never be speaking from a position of integrity or with pure intent because they have “an agenda.” It's particularly popular for use in discussions about homosexuality – “the gay agenda” for example. This is the claim that gay people's fight to be recognized is simply a desire to “recruit” people into the “gay lifestyle” and turn them “against” the “wholesomeness” of heterosexuality. But talking about agendas is versatile – apply it to women's

rights, groups advocating against religious oppression, and trans' rights activists! In this way you can both undermine them as a human beings and further subject them to discrimination through your unjustifiable fear and refusal to take them seriously. After all, if you can characterize their struggle for acceptance and equal rights as acts worthy of a comic book super-villain, you can diminish and demoralize them. This strengthens your position! Simply dismiss any and all of their points out of turn, no matter how valid, by proclaiming that they "have an Agenda"!

You're Just Suffering Privilege Envy

If you're at all concerned that you haven't been quite enough of an insensitive jackass by this point and are worried that your argument is suffering as a consequence, try this one on for size! Simply say to the marginalized person in question that: "It's plain to see you're just bitter and resentful because you're not white/male/heterosexual/cisgender/able bodied/thin/etc. You've got a chip on your shoulder, and you're taking it out on me because I am! Well, I'm very sorry, but that's not my fault. I can't help the way I was born and neither can you. There are some things we just have to accept in life and certain realities we have to learn to acknowledge – like the differences between me as white/male/heterosexual/cisgender/able bodied/thin/etc. person and you as a person of color/woman/queer/transgender/disabled/fat/etc. person. You just can't fight nature or the normal social order of things. Please stop blaming me for things that are out of my control!" Or, to summarize: "YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS!"

Not only do you get to once AGAIN avoid any personal responsibility for the oppressive and/or discriminatory things you have said or done, not only do you once AGAIN get to undermine their emotions, experiences and arguments and treat them as though they have no validity – you ram the insult even further home by basically saying the state of oppression they live in is the "natural order of things" rather than an artificial social construct based on fear and hatred!

You can now move forward in the argument assured that your jackassery is well and truly established beyond all doubt!

You Have A False Consciousness

In conversation, there are few things more degrading, enraging, and hurtful than telling someone that their experiences are false, or that their perception of them is.

The idea behind this one is usually that oppressed people are simply too oppressed to know that they're oppressed, meaning that Privileged People® have to share their wisdom and insight with them. This one crops up a lot in issues that affect women: women who enjoy dressing in conventionally feminine ways (they're ingrained in the patriarchal construct of femininity and therefore are incapable of making a choice), women who are kinky, regardless of the gender of their play partner (they're ingrained in the patriarchal construct of gender roles and therefore are incapable of making a choice), and women sex workers who claim to enjoy their work and/or practice it with autonomy (they're ingrained in the patriarchal construct of female sexuality and therefore are incapable of making a choice). But this also affects people with disabilities who are routinely told that they simply don't understand what is best for them and need a Privileged Person® to make decisions for them. People with disabilities are not able to make any decisions on their own behalf. Remember to stress that: *it's for your own protection.*

However, You Have a False Consciousness extends beyond this use. It can also take the form of Privileged People® reminding marginalized groups that they aren't actually oppressed – they're just imagining it!

For instance, in discussions with people of color, tell them that they're "seeing race where none exists." Emphasize that you, on the other hand, are "color blind," and recognize that we live in "post-racial" times. Everything about

race and their experience of racism in their daily lives is simply imagined – made up! If only they could let it go, the whole world would live in post-racial harmony!

Or, in your interactions with lesbians, gay men, bisexual, and queer people, be sure to stress that they're not really gay. Rather they understand themselves to be "sexual deviants" because they were molested as children or subjected to an "overbearing" mother or absentee father (experiences, by the way, that no heterosexual people have ever had). Remind them that with the right help – preferably therapy – they can be restored to their true and innate heterosexual nature. Also, it can't really be oppression when no one in the world is *actually* gay.

Ignore any claims the marginalized person may make about having done thorough research to deconstruct and unpack these issues. You also really want to deny their autonomy. There are few things so infuriating as infantilizing an adult and telling them they're delusional about their own reality. But they need to understand that, no matter what, you know better.

You're Not Being A Team Player

Shifting blame is very important in these matters. You don't ever want to have to own up to any responsibility for the hurt or distress you've caused and you most definitely do not want to admit your prejudice or bigotry. You also want that marginalized person to be continuously aware just how "on the fringes" they are, and always will be (providing you get your way – but that's what privilege is for, after all!). You can achieve both of these things by accusing the marginalized person of not playing fair, or of not playing with "the team" (i.e.: you and all the other Privileged People® backing you up). "C'mon," you say, "We're all doing our best to participate in a reasonable, impartial debate. You aren't joining in. You're trying to turn this into a fight. You're ruining it for everyone else!" In other words: "If you just did and said exactly what we Privileged People® demand of you, life would be so much easier. For me. For you, well, what gave you the impression I care about you?"

This tactic subtly combines several of the above points: You're Taking Things Too Personally, You're Arguing With Opinions Not Fact, and You Have A False Consciousness. Together, they really make the marginalized person feel ganged up on. It's great to gang-up on someone, particularly someone who faces othering every day of their lives. It reinforces their sense of isolation, which will distress and disorient them, weakening their stance. Deliver it in just the right condescending tone, too, and you'll really manage to unhinge them...