

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/in-brief/put-purpose-to-privilege/>

How can people who come from privilege contribute to racial justice and a more equitable society? Stockton mayor Michael Tubbs encourages students from privileged backgrounds to leverage that privilege, and use it as a tool to bring people from other backgrounds to the table. By reading, learning, and listening, he finds, anyone can contribute to positive change. The most crucial step is creating positions of authority for traditionally marginalized groups, which often means stepping back and listening rather than driving.



Transcript

Tina Seelig So there are a lot of people 00:00:05,445 who are pointing out and this is very critically important that we are living in a very unusual and very special moment in time where the nation is grappling with, you know, racism and inequality.. And, you know, in your position as mayor, what do you recommend to aspiring students who really want to help build systems that are actively anti racist, and foster more and more equitable society? Michael Tubbs Yeah, well, I think first of all, 00:00:35,983 is understanding that this is a marathon, not a sprint.. I mean, that we're talking about 400 years of a history that we're confronted with.. It doesn't mean we have to become holistic and it doesn't even have to be we don't need to push in the neck but it does mean we need to be holistic and understand that this we have to take care of ourselves and have a strategy for the next 50 60 70 hope 100 years.. Number two, I think what it stands for comes immense privilege.. I tell people all the time, don't apologize for your privilege but put purpose to it.. In a big way to purpose to it is to allow other people who may have more experience who may actually be better equipped to work on issues you want to work on a seat next to you at the table.. I think one of the things I'm conscious of as mayor is making sure I bring as many people in with me to the table, because I know that I'm able to get there because I went to Stanford, I'm the mayor.. And they may not although they're more impacted, but what happens is decision to now be because my privilege insulates me from a lot of the insidious impacts of bad policy often at times.. And number three, I would say be educated..

Read, read, read, learn, listen, so you're equipped.. And number four, understand that no matter where you go, because what we're talking about in terms of racism, white supremacy, it is ubiquitous.. Meaning that it's not just in politics it's not just in policing.. It's in every institution in our country, which means when you're in the tech boardroom, where you're creating your startup, when you're like, no matter what you're doing, you have to actually make sure you're fighting against not perpetuating the system.. If you want to change, then we also asked for some of us, there's real benefit to the current system.. And to understand that and change the system, you may be giving yourself less privilege, maybe give yourself less a thought, maybe give yourself less opportunity to drive the agenda and be comfortable with that, because that's part of this process.. It's understanding that so many folks have been excluded, marginalized, meetings can bring more people in, you might not have as large a slice of the pie, as you may be used to to enjoy it, which isn't a bad thing.. But I just want to be really realistic about this what we're talking about.. We're talking about bringing more people in expanding opportunity and giving the ability to lead the ability to be part of the conversation to folks who have traditionally been left out in much life which means some of us have to shut up.. Some of us have to be quiet, some of us have to listen and we live that way...