

***White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality in America.* By Khyati Y. Joshi. New York: New York University Press. 277 pp. ISBN. 9781479836468.**

By the time you have finished reading Khyati Joshi's first chapter of *White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality in America*, in which she defines such things as "separation of Church and State" and "secularization" as optical illusions to mask the overwhelming dominance of Christianity in American culture, you wonder if you might have stumbled upon a gem. By the time you are finished, you might find yourself wondering if you've finished a new classic. From beginning to end, Joshi dismantles the privilege and the justifications that have upheld injustices as old as the United States Constitution itself. Her carefully worded and well researched narrative offers a timely response that will sit alongside works like that of *The End of White Christian America* (2017) and *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity* (2020)—both by Robert P. Jones, on a growing shelf of anti-racist and decolonizing works from the religious, secular, and spiritual lens. And that is why the book is simply a must read for anyone focused on dismantling systemic and structural racism.

As previously mentioned, Joshi begins her exploration by sizing up the secularization movement as an act of Christian privilege, one which hides and distorts the current realities that plague religious minorities in America. The sheer idea that the free exercise clause of the First Amendment has been equally applied is all but shredded. Dr. Joshi's appeal to her readers is of an individual who has worked throughout her life and career to see the biases "baked" into the systems of the United States and is continuously in a fight to dismantle it. Her early appeal is not so much of an invitation to action, but rather a scathing indictment of those who refuse to take it seriously.

On the intersections of racism and white Christian privilege and supremacy, Joshi repeatedly draws readers to the sophisticated ways in which white Christian institutions have attempted repeatedly to withhold the rights of Blacks and Chinese, as well as Jews, Catholics, Mormons, and now Muslims. Building in the careful understanding that the debate over everything from the Fifteenth Amendment to any policies that governed the rights of Native Americans where white Christian played antagonist, Joshi offers important historical information which should give pause when compared to the current state of white evangelical Christian culture.

Particularly in the chapter entitled "Everyday Christian Privilege," (p. 126–160) Joshi highlights America's Christian dominance. Examples such as the use of "special" (p. 133) in describing dietary menu options and religious holiday observations, as well as "entitlements" (p. 132) of timing for a holiday party demonstrates overt Christian privileges as being "socially dominant...common sense...and normal" (p. 153).

As a professor, Dr. Joshi's account of white Christian privilege shows up in examples of the campus, where she lays out clear parameters through which institutions have continuously failed to address long standing issues of minoritization of the religious, secular, and spiritual communities. Citing the use of "separation of church and state" as rational for why higher ed administrators are failing to support student needs, Joshi offers a damning account of one of the most influential institutions in America, and in doing so creates a stark account of how the biases of America are structural and systemic.

Joshi provides a strong example in the book of scholarship over a lifetime, providing personal examples and historical moments, including carefully inserting timely scholarship from other authors to help readers to experience the changes of religious exclusion over time. As well, Joshi's use of case law further reinforces her arguments, a further example of her expertise and the depth to which the book is well researched and well-founded.

Joshi's account of "voices of Christian privilege" shows the rootedness within the everyday experience of the white Christian supremacy. While the chapter is effective in its overall purpose, it feels slightly more cumbersome than the other chapters. Still, several very effective points are made, especially a particular moment in which Joshi reminds the reader of the use of "conscious collaboration" in which minorities will "avoid asking for things, such as holidays off from work..." as an illustration of the complicity that has been built into the marginalization and supremacy culture. In this chapter, however, what should leave readers wondering is the depth and degree to which these voices are often overshadowed and how Joshi crafts her social justice lens to the problem of white Christian supremacy.

In the final chapter of the volume, Joshi lays out a "five-element framework" which suggests change is possible. Her approach: change the language, change the questions, change the focus, change foundational assumptions, and change the paradigm (p. 213). This is where the book shines as a permanent installation on the shelf. Joshi's historical account is one thing, but her ability to bring the reader into her more than two decades of scholarship and practice, offering solutions to long standing issues and concerns within society is some of the most important methodology of the last decade or more. Overall, the book is refreshing, challenging, and timely. The reader should be prepared to experience this book all the way from beginning to end.

Joshi's book is necessary reading for anyone wishing to serve in allyship or solidarity with the movement to support religious minorities in America. In the few months since the book has come out, Joshi has appeared on major news networks, in conversation with elected leaders like Cory Booker, and the book is seeing wide use in literature. Here experience personally and professionally should compel anyone working in higher education to consider this as a common read amongst staff, faculty, and even students.

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