

Living in a Christian Dominant Culture Exercise

Please stand silently if:

1. you have ever attended church regularly.
2. you ever attended Sunday school as a child, or attended church periodically, e.g. during Christian holidays.
3. you ever attended a Christian-based recreational organization as a young person, such as the YMCA or YWCA, or church-based summer camp, or participated in a program of a non-religious youth organization which was based in Christian beliefs such as the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts.
4. you were ever told or instructed by a Christian or by a Christian authority figure that things that you do with your body, sex with others, or sex by yourself was sinful or unclean.
5. you were ever told by a Christian or Christian authority figure that sexual acts other than intercourse between a man and a woman, or sexual orientations other than heterosexual, are sinful or unclean.
6. you were ever told or instructed by a Christian or Christian authority figure that women are unclean, that women are the source of temptation, or that they are the source of sin or evil.
7. you have ever heard heaven and good described as light or white and hell and evil described as dark or black.
8. you have ever been told something you did was sinful or evil, or that you were sinful or evil.
9. you have ever noticed that a Christian theological either/or framework of good/evil, black/white, sinner/saved is used by you, people around you, or is prominent in mainstream culture.
10. you have ever been approached by family members, friends, or strangers trying to convince you to become Christian, or a Christian of a particular kind?
11. you have ever been rejected in any way by family or community members because you were not Christian, or were not Christian enough?
12. you have ever found that, in your community, the church is a major center of social life that influences those around you and is difficult to avoid.
13. you have ever taken Christian holidays such as Christmas or Easter off, whether you practice them as Christian holidays or not, or have taken Sunday off or think of it, in any way, as a day of rest.
14. you have ever been given a school vacation or paid holiday related to Christmas or Easter when school vacations or paid holidays for non-Christian religious celebrations such as Ramadan or the Jewish High Holidays were not observed.
15. the public institutions you use, such as offices, buildings, banks, parking meters, the post office, libraries, and stores, are open on Fridays and Saturdays but closed on Sundays.
16. you write the date using a division of time marked by the birth of Jesus; one before his birth and one after it.



17. you have ever seen a public institution in your community, such as a school, hospital, or city hall, decorated with Christian symbols, e.g. Christmas trees, wreathes, Jesus, nativity scenes, or crosses.
18. if you wanted to you could easily find Christian music, TV shows, movies, and places of worship.
19. you can easily access Christmas- or Easter-related music, stories, greeting cards, films, and TV shows at the appropriate times of the year.
20. you have ever received public services—medical care, family planning, food, shelter, or substance abuse treatment from a Christian based organization or that were marked by Christian beliefs and practices, e.g. Alcoholics Anonymous or other 12-step programs, pro-life family planning, the Salvation Army, hospitals, etc.
21. you daily use currency which includes Christian words or symbols such as the phrase “in God we trust”.
22. You have ever received an educational, job training, job, housing, or other opportunity where Jews, Muslims, Buddhists or other non-Christians were screened out or discriminated against.
23. You have ever been told that a war or invasion, historical or current, was justified because those who were attacked were heathens, infidels, unbelievers, pagans, terrorists, evil, sinners, or fundamentalists of a non-Christian religion.
24. your foreparents or ancestors were ever subject to invasion, forced conversion, or the use of missionaries as part of a colonization process either in the U.S. or in another part of the world.
25. in your community or metropolitan area, there have been hate crimes against Jews, Muslims, gays, people who are transgender, women, or others based on the perpetrator’s Christian beliefs.
26. you have ever attended public non-religious functions, such as civic or governmental meetings, which were convened with Christian blessings, references, or prayers.
27. you have ever been asked or commanded to sing or recite, in public, material which had Christian references such as the Pledge of Allegiance, “God Bless America”, or “America, the Beautiful”.
28. you have ever heard the U.S. referred to as a Christian or god-fearing country.
29. As a young person you were ever read or told to read Christian themed stories that were not identified as such for example, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Little House on the Prairie*, or *Dr. Doolittle*.
30. you have even viewed Christian themed movies that were not identified as such for example, *Star Wars*, *The Matrix*, *The Lion*, *The Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Avatar*, or the *Twilight* series.
31. you have ever thought of yourself as non-Christian or not religious, but when you think about it have had a Christian upbringing or have been influenced by Christian rituals and values.
32. you have any feelings of reluctance, fear, or shame in talking about the major impact Christianity has had on each of us and on our society.



Living in a Christian Dominant Culture is not a stand alone exercise. It should only be conducted in the context of a workshop or talk on racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, imperialism and/or Christian hegemony and power, violence, and safety which allows the group to process the feelings, thoughts, and issues which arise from participating in the exercise.

For further information on these issues see *Living in the Shadow of the Cross: Understanding and Resisting the Power and Privilege of Christian Hegemony* by Paul Kivel and *Helping Teens Stop Violence, Build Community and Stand for Justice* by Allan Creighton and Paul Kivel.

For information about books and other training and curricular materials or for feedback or questions about this exercise contact Paul Kivel at paul@paulkivel.com, or visit www.christianhegemony.org.



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