

Privilege

Elsie, Year 6, 2024

Before I begin this speech, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this country who took care of this land for over 65,000 years, always was always will be Aboriginal land.

On any given night in Australia there are more than 122,000 people experiencing homelessness. Globally 828 million people suffer from undernourishment. But each one of these people are not just a number. They are a person just like any of us who have people they love and dreams. Today I'd like to talk about privilege.

As a northern and central European girl with no disabilities, living in a home where a full stomach is always guaranteed I am extremely privileged - but not all are so fortunate. Many will say that it is inevitable, that inequality, famine, privilege are simply a part of the human condition. I disagree. Every year we produce more than enough to feed our entire population, yet many suffer from hunger. There are millions of vacant homes, yet the homeless population is only rising.

Inequality, privilege is not just how things are. It is a conscious decision made by governments, corporations, and by extension society as a whole by refusing to resist. This may all seem pretty depressing, and it is, however it is also important to not to fall into a pit of despair and self-hatred. This would make things better for no one. Instead, we need to use our advantages to uplift others and force systemic change.

Have you ever walked past someone living on the street, perhaps with a sign asking for help and averted your eyes, quickening your pace not wanting to think about it? Let's be honest, we all have. We right off the homeless as druggies, lazy, faulting them for their poverty, and while some do commit substance abuse and are unable to find jobs this is no great moral failing. The number one cause of homelessness in Australia is domestic violence and 1 in 7 homeless people are children under 12. Is this simply a result of a lack of house and resources to build them? No. In Australia there are over 13 million vacant bedrooms, more than the homeless population. Everyone, everyone deserves a place where they can feel safe. Let's start actually valuing shelter as a basic human right.

We live in a world where millions starve to death every year but in the background super markets, fast food chains and restaurants waste tonnes and tonnes of food. Woolworths wasted 184,260 of edible food in 2022. Meanwhile around 828 million people suffer from hunger, many of them children. Imagine going to bed

hungry, not knowing when your next meal will be. Having access to nutritious food should not be a privilege, but in our society it is. If people are hungry, feed them.

Imagine waking up one day and your home being stolen, your friends sick with a new disease that you had never heard of. This is what life would have been like for first nation Australians after the first fleet landed in this country. The effects of colonisation still affects and underprivileged aboriginal Australians as a community and will continue to do so unless something is changed. We must acknowledge the wrongs that have and are being committed. We must listen and learn from indigenous voices. We can make a society in which aboriginal sovereignty is recognised, where the oldest continuing culture on this planet is celebrated and where no one is underprivileged on the basis of race.

It is incredibly important to discuss issues like wealth inequality, indigenous discrimination, starvation and homelessness and how they must and can be changed. So, what can we do? The average person cannot make a difference by cutting their carbon footprint, or donating money to charity. What really needs to happen is systematic change. We need to try to understand and empathise with people whose lives are different from our own. We need to recognize our own privilege. The fact is, we the people are the most powerful force in the world. We can protest, force our governments to create better, more humane welfare systems, and give aid to those who need it. We can change our world completely into a system that values human life more than profits. Do your own research, learn about solutions like universal basic income. Together we are stronger. Thank you for listening.