

Learning about Power, Privilege and Oppression

Colonialism and White Saviorism

Colonialism. Colonialism is a practice or policy of control by one people or power over other people or areas, often by establishing colonies and generally with economic dominance.

In colonization, colonizers may impose their religion, language, economics, and other cultural practices on native and indigenous peoples. The foreign administrators rule the territory to pursue their interests, seeking to benefit from the colonized region's people and resources. With colonization came the misuse of power. Colonization imposed fear-based power and control techniques, including warfare, genocide, the threat of death, male gender and economic power, and the idea of the superiority of some and inferiority of others. Racism and colonization are two factors informing health disparities.

White-saviorism. The term white savior, sometimes combined with savior complex to write white savior complex, refers to a white person who provides help to non-white people in a self-serving manner. Due to the history of colonization and slavery, Damian Zane of BBC News said, Africans find the "white savior" attitude to help them "deeply patronizing and offensive". Zane said, "Some argue that aid can be counter-productive, as it means African countries will continue to rely on outside help.

Additional reading and resources:

- [“Neocolonialism: the Last Stage of Imperialism”](#) by Kwame Nkrumah
- [“How Europe Underdeveloped Africa”](#) by Walter Rodney
- Toni Paz, The Borgen Project “Three Common Misconceptions of Poverty in Africa”
<https://borgenproject.org/misconceptions-poverty-in-africa/>
- Damian Zane, BBC News “Barbie Challenges the White Savior Complex”
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36132482>

For more resource and reading, see our [Anti-Oppression Reading and Discussion Resource List](#).