**White Men Have Nothing to Complain About**

**By** [**Renée Graham**](http://www.bostonglobe.com/contributors/rgraham) GLOBE COLUMNIST  JULY 07, 2017

In his classic stand-up routine that toes the line between hilarious and uncomfortable, comedian Louis C.K. extolls the joys of being a white man.

“If you’re white, and you don’t admit that it’s great, you’re an [expletive]. And I’m a man — how many advantages can one person have? I’m a white man. You can’t even hurt my feelings.” He goes on to explain how white men, with the aid of a time machine, can travel to any period in history, and still be just fine. Women and people of color need not apply.

Louis C.K.’s message is clear — white men have nothing to complain about. Don’t buy into all this “endangered white male” nonsense, or that their accustomed position in the center of everything is being threatened by all those annoying women and people of color still demanding nothing more than a level playing field. Donald Trump fostered and [rode this myth into the White House](https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2016/11/15/normalizing-hatred-already-normalized-trump/fqMGI8JAEcjq4uXbpD2O0K/story.html). Every time he said “Make America Great Again,” [we knew what he meant](https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2017/03/13/trump-lifts-mask-off-gop/h8zk1pmvuj0jW5GDcf4I6J/story.html) and who would most benefit, as if America hasn’t always been great for white men.

Despite what a contributing columnist in this newspaper recently stated, white men do not need defending. (Not surprisingly, it has been one of the most viewed pieces on the Globe site this week.)

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[White males earn more](https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2016/04/03/fix-wage-gap-with-transparency/pvu2adZwDbv4lKnl3JjJpL/story.html) than women or people of color doing the same job. They’re CEOs at most Fortune 500 companies. They control social and traditional media giants. As hosts and guests, their political opinions dominate the Sunday talk shows. They’re Hollywood’s dream demographic. They occupy the majority of seats in the House of Representatives and Senate, are governors in more than 40 of the 50 states, and comprise most managers and head coaches in all four major sports, not to mention the billionaires who own the teams. Oh, and most white men will never experience that unsettling feeling of otherness that comes from being “the only one” in their workplace.



Yet it’s as if centuries spent shaping the world in their own image has brought white men insecurity and fragility.

No one has ever implied that white men have not done great things. Still, what they’ve achieved is always given more weight than what they inflict on this nation and the world. Even Roland Merullo, who penned the column, “[In Defense of the White Male](http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2017/07/02/defense-white-male/Me9UoUrcPbcljxRkPFlXAP/story.html),” admits white men have done “more harm in history — from the keeping of slaves to the genocide of Native Americans, and a thousand other examples — than any other single group.”



Yet he also maintains that white men have also “done more good.” If that’s true, it doesn’t change the fact that white men not only stacked the deck in their favor, they created the cards, and still limit who gets to play with them. In the name of progress, they passed and enforced terrible laws that impeded real progress. They denied others the right to vote (which is, alarmingly, [again at risk](https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2017/03/10/jeff-sessions-dept-injustice/ajngS2BNc9jxCKwT8Lzh8J/story.html)), reduced their educational opportunities, and still keep qualified women and people of color at token levels of representation.

White men want to be judged by more than the sum of their sullied history and sins — which is what various groups they’ve long treated with suspicion and disdain have always wanted and are still denied. I agree with Merullo that no entire group should be condemned to a single reductive label, though that’s long been the pattern for those white men who subjugated others, accumulated power, and protected their status. It’s telling that they now deride this fallacy, fearing that the venom they created to infect others is poisoning white men as well.

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