

# On becoming white

The screenshot shows the EssayPro website homepage. At the top left is the EssayPro logo and navigation links: "How To Order", "Reviews", "About Us", and "Write My Essay". At the top right are links for "DBA: EPRO", "Log In", and "Sign Up". The main banner features a student sleeping at a desk with a pen holder. The text on the banner reads: "WRITING SERVICE AT YOUR CONVENIENCE", "You - Send us your homework", "We - Do it all for you", and "Grab your original paper for just \$10 per page with a free plagiarism report included". A "Write My Essay!" button is present. A "Calculate the price" calculator is overlaid on the right, showing options for "Writing", "Rewriting", and "Editing", with "Writing" selected. It also shows "Essay (any type)", "College", "2 weeks", "1 page / 275 words", "Double spaces" (selected), and "Single spaces", resulting in a price of "\$11.4" with a fire icon. A "Write My Paper" button is at the bottom of the calculator. Below the banner, there are three rating sections: "EssayPro Reviews" with a 4.9 rating, "ResellerRatings" with a 4.9 rating, and "Sitejabber" with a 4.8 rating.

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On becoming whiteAs a European immigrant in the USA, I have encountered many new cultural phenomena in the last 4 \_ years that have challenged me to perceive who I am differently. This experience has been even more polarized by the fact that I have lived most of that time in Los Angeles, a melting pot to be reckoned with. Coming to America, I expected these adaptations to my Irish self but the intensity of becoming cognizant of my label of 'whiteness' has mocked the limitations of my anticipations. This cognizance really ensued when I first started work as an educational therapist in a residential placement for severely emotionally disturbed teenage girls. Being in such a arbitrary position of power was difficult enough with people who have issues with control and lack of respect from elders but I also happened to be the only male ever in this position at the facility and a "white guy" to boot. Ninety percent of my clients happened to be Latina or African American. This ethnic flash point did not initially bother me because of my lack of awareness of its existence and my naive determination that it was not important for my therapeutic and educational goals. However, of course I had not really considered at that time what being 'white' really entails in this society. Consideration of one's identity is obviously key to successful educational and therapeutic interventions but it took the actual experience of being what I call "white-washed" to make me realize that skin color may actually have something important to do with one's perceived identity. The incident actually

occurred in my home in a banal everyday interaction with a plumber who was fixing our shower. Firstly, the plumber who was Caucasian continually bombarded his younger, Latino assistant with racial insults mostly to the tune of "you stupid Mexican". When he realized that we were staring at his comments he explained that his assistant "gets it from his mother's side". This young man was in fact the plumber's son! He then went onto talking about how America is today, and how being a fellow American, I should understand that. Of course I immediately responded with: "I'm not American," to which he countered: "Oh! I thought you were white!.....I mean American." I think that this slip by the plumber reveals something of great importance about attitudes, assumptions and beliefs about ethnic identity that is very open to semiotic analysis.

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