

# Citizenship Privilege

Sometimes we are asked to consider our male, white, class, etc. privilege, but rarely are we asked to consider what it means to have the privilege of U.S. citizenship. Here are a few advantages to consider- though they extend far beyond what is listed here. These privileges may resonate with you to various degrees depending on your identities life experiences, and where you hold societal power.

1. Most if not all of the time I am able to surround myself with people who share a common or collective history, who understand the norms of U.S. society, who speak the same language that I do, and who understand my culture.
2. I am not worried on a daily basis about being “discovered” and deported along with, or away from my family.\*
3. I don’t have to worry that a small mis-step could lead to my deportation, even if I currently have legal papers to be in the U.S.
4. I can apply for a passport that will allow me to travel back and forth to most countries in the world.
5. I can think nothing of crossing the border to visit Tijuana, Mexico, for a day of shopping and sightseeing, while Mexican citizens must qualify economically to obtain even a tourist visa to enter the U.S., and there are a great many who do not qualify.
6. If I want to get a driver’s license, it’s a simple matter of bringing along my birth certificate, social security card, insurance card, and taking the test. There’s no need to worry about whether I have the proper documents to get a driver’s license. Usually, a long line is all I have to worry about.
7. If I apply for a job, I do not have to worry about what to write under “Social Security Number.”
8. When Social Security and Medicare are taken out of my paycheck, I have a reasonable hope that someday either my dependents or I will receive the benefit of those taxes.
9. I can go into any bank and set up a checking account without fear of discrimination, thus knowing my money is safer than on my person or elsewhere.
10. If a police officer pulls me over, I can be sure I haven’t been singled out because of my *perceived* immigration status.
11. I can be reasonably sure that if I need legal, medical advice, or help, my citizenship status will not be a consideration.
12. I can vote in any election on policies or for people who will make laws affecting my way of life and my community.
13. I may consider running for political office to serve my community.
14. I, or a member of my family,\* can apply for scholarship aid to the institutions of higher education that are supported by my family’s tax dollars.
15. I have not been forced to ask myself what would compel me to risk my life to enter the U.S. Whether crossing a barren desert for days without food or water, traveling over seas in the hull of ship, or any other dangerous form of transport, I have not been forced to leave my family,\* my home, and my roots behind me to enter a country that not only feels hostile to me, but is also difficult to understand at times.
16. If am treated violently or inappropriately by a federal entity, I have some hope of legal recourse.
17. I can choose whether or not I take part in discussions surrounding how my lifestyle or the actions of my government have impacted the lives of those in other countries.
18. If I decide to organize politically or speak out about my country’s unjust policies, I am likely to be addressing systems that I was raised around and understand. Also, those in power are more likely to listen to me and credit my arguments than a non-citizen.