



WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM
WILPF Fresno, P.O. Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755

Graphic by Lincoln Cushing

UNPACKING RACISM AND UNDERSTANDING OUR BLIND SPOT: Part A

This article is in two parts. First, I want to speak to what it means to have a "blind spot(s)." The second part will appear in next month's Community Alliance and will address group behavior and the dynamics of unpacking racism.

What is meant by a blind spot? According to one source, "if a person has a blind spot about something, it means that they are unable to understand or to see the importance of something relevant to a situation because of their blind spot."

Our Fresno branch WILPF sisters thought it important enough to get together to try to unpack racism while discovering their own blind spot(s). It was equally important to create a "safe space" to do this work in solidarity, and so we created a monthly Zoom meeting. Fresno WILPF is to be commended on its willingness to do this type of exploration.

Unpacking racism is no easy task, and to understand one's blind spot equally is to challenge belief systems. Nonetheless, it is important for us to try to understand how racism can divide people into isolated groups, while attempting to form "solidarity" on certain causes.

For example, it might look strange to see "White folks" in support of Black Lives Matter (BLM) issues, while simultaneously experiencing White privilege, or White fragility, yet standing in solidarity over causes that impact people of color. Maybe you have asked yourself this same question, and I don't know that I have the right answer for you, but let me attempt to try to unpack this.

In our society, it's not unusual to discuss "racism," but what is unusual is to admit that we possibly have some personal blind spots that we don't quite see as a problem to manage. We've managed to cover them up, or we are working on them. The fact of the matter is that we are all "a work in progress." We know how to disguise unpleasant things. Can I get an Amen!

The other observation is that most groups that have a majority of Caucasian/White membership, in particular, can be seen or said to be a "White privilege" group, whether or not they see themselves as such.

They don't have to explain themselves, they don't have to silence their thoughts. They don't have to do any of the heavy lifting to unpack "racism" unless they have been challenged to do so.

Well in 2022, I am challenging our local Fresno WILPF branch and anyone else who wants to "unpack racism to take responsibility to understand their own blind spot(s)" to join us on this journey. If we are going to work in solidarity with each other, we will have to do this work sooner than later.

To be part of a group learning to listen to people of color tell how the system of White Supremacy has impacted them is no easy task, but how else will change come? A blind spot is a real deal. It's not just a figure of speech or cliché. It is very real.

So let me attempt to break it down. When we study the word blind, we understand this in reference to sight. In fact, when a person's view is obstructed, it can imply that their vision is impaired. We also experience something we call a "blind spot" when driving a car. By properly positioning the rearview mirror, it helps to identify blind spots on both sides of your car.

So then, because blind spots obstruct our vision, we could ask the question: Does unpacking racism help us to understand our own blindspots? What do you think?

Unfortunately, too many privileged people don't see themselves as being racist. They, in fact, have developed a "blindness" to their understanding of racism, and maybe don't even want to recognize it at this point of their lives. However, if you want to join us in this "2022 challenge," let's unpack this painful and horrific "dis-ease" called racism.

We will continue to meet the last Sunday evening of each month via Zoom. An invitation is extended to you my friend. Join us. Our 2022 motto is: Together we are better and stronger TOGETHER.

Contact me at 559-270-1023 or drjeankennedy@yahoo.com.



Dr. Jean Kennedy

JEMMY BLUESTEIN SPEAKS TRUTH TO POWER

Our own Ellie Bluestein, founder of the Fresno branch of WILPF, was honored with the Les Kimber Community Service Award, presented posthumously, by the MLK Committee to honor people who carry on Dr. King's work. This ceremony was the 38th commemorative event to honor the birthday of Dr. King. It took place on Jan. 14 at Fresno City Hall. WILPF is so proud of Ellie's tireless work. Her son, Jemmy, spoke of her efforts:

Knowing, acknowledging, the racist murderous origins and history of policing in this country as well as locally, specifically to oppress and kill people of color for the benefit of the rich, nothing short of full transparency and accountability can redeem our city or our culture. Ellie taught all us kids always that brothers and sisters and friends are to love. Dangerous words—just ask Jesus or the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. My family has asked me to remind us all of what this award means: that to embrace Dr. King is to embrace a revolution of nonviolence and unity. Though he was assassinated, he gave his life to peace and so do we and so did Ellie.

So, Ellie did work with the Human Relations Commission and also with the Central California Criminal Justice Committee preparing detailed recommendations for

implementation by the City Council for an effective civilian review board. The board would represent all districts and be appointed by each council member. You would also be represented and felons would not be prohibited from representation, as well. The independent police auditor, with investigative and subpoena power, would report to the review board.

So we ask you, on behalf of Ellie and the CCCJC (Central California Criminal Justice Committee), today where is the transparency regarding implementation of these recommendations?

And, as Dr. [Sudarshan] Kapoor said, please note: We do request that the City Council bring back the Human Relations Commission.

To the Mayor, Ellie and the CCCJC would say: If we want to show respect for communities of color in Fresno, we could start by having the District Attorney drop the Gang Injunction, which is a continuation of the war on youth of color. We say—No More Stolen Lives!

As to public service, many would like to see the mayor pay back the \$900,000 lost defending his discriminatory practices against his own police officers of color. White privilege is alive and well. But love is more powerful than fear. Where we're going, we're going together.

Members of Ellie's family and friends then ended the ceremony with "We Shall Overcome," inviting all to join in.

—Jean Hays



Bluestein family says: No More Stolen Lives!

WILPF MEETING

Feb. 10, Thursday, 7 p.m., online. Watch your e-mail for an announcement with a link and call-in number. For more information, contact Teresa at taca_03@yahoo.com or Leni at lenivreeves@gmail.com.

STIR IT UP—WILPF KFCF 88.1 FM

Feb. 23, 3 p.m. (fourth Wednesday of each month). Jean Hays highlights people and events important to our WILPF community.

MEMBERSHIP

Send dues to WILPF Fresno, P.O. Box 5114, Fresno, CA 93755.

For questions and information updates, contact Nancy Hatcher at nhatcher46@gmail.com or Kyla Mitchell at kyla.noelle@gmail.com.

WILPF membership is \$35/year. Contact Nancy H. about the low-income rate, sponsored by our contributions above the \$35 of WILPF-US dues.

COMMITTEES—STILL AT WORK!

DISARM COMMITTEE

Contact Melissa Fry at mjfry2008@icloud.com.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Contact Jean Hays at skyhorse3593@sbcglobal.net.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE

Contact Cheryl Caldera at grammy44cac@gmail.com.

EARTH DEMOCRACY

Contact Jean Hays at skyhorse3593@sbcglobal.net.

CUBA AND THE BOLIVARIAN ALLIANCE

Contact Leni at lenivreeves@gmail.com.

ADVANCING HUMAN RIGHTS/WINGS

Contact Bev Fitzpatrick at dfitzpatrick29@comcast.net.

RAGING GRANNIES

Contact Evonne Waldo at evonnewaldo@yahoo.com.

UNPACKING RACISM

Zoom discussion held on the last Sunday of each month at 6:30 p.m. RSVP with your e-mail address for the Zoom link to drjeankennedy@yahoo.com or text 559-270-1023.

WOMEN IN BLACK

Feb. 2 (first Wednesday), noon, at the Courthouse. Check first with Bev at dfitzpatrick29@comcast.net.

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