

Hideko Akashi: There's something about this place that pushes you and actually builds in you some confidence to speak up, to do and have conversations across difference that we may not have.

Sam Fuqua: That's Hideko Akashi and this is Well, That Went Sideways! A podcast that serves as a resource to help people have healthy, respectful communication. We present a diversity of ideas, tools and techniques to help you transform conflict in relationships of all kinds. In this episode, we bring you voices from the 2023 White Privilege Conference, which was held in April in Mesa, Arizona. The conference was founded by Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr. over 20 years ago. It seeks to empower and equip people to work for a more equitable and just world. In addition to recording several full length conversations with some of the presenters at the conference, the Sideways team also did a series of short interviews with various participants.

We're going to hear from seven people in this program, beginning with Stacie Walton.

Stacie Walton: My name is Stacie Walton. People call me the Diversity Doctor. I am a recovering allopathic physician. I'm a pediatrician. And my beginning life was in cultural anthropology, and throughout my professional career I was in, I was led to be involved in social justice around, uh, any issue that came up in the healthcare field.

Sam Fuqua: And so what brought you to WPC?

Stacie Walton: This is actually my second time. My first experience was beyond what I could imagine, in the sense that I met incredibly smart, interesting, joyful people in the work of social justice and doing it with so much love and joy. This conference, what has really been incredible for me are the little miracles that pop up all of the time. Being in sessions, watching, uh, facilitators facilitate with such skill, holding people's hearts, um, in their hands, sharing their wisdom, but also recognizing we're all on our own personal journeys towards understanding social justice and deciding to be involved in making this a better world.

Sam Fuqua: Coming out of the conference, is there something you're going to act on or commit to or change as a result of what you've learned here?

Stacie Walton: I have a signature talk on the neuroscience of implicit bias. And I had the honor of running a session. And in that session, um, the interaction with the participants was so lively, the questions were so probing that I'm going home and rewriting that signature presentation to reflect some of the deep thoughts that came from our, the participants that were in my session.

Sam Fuqua: Is there one you can share?

Stacie Walton: Absolutely. When we think about the neuroscience of implicit bias, I really try to talk about what is the neuroscience, what is implicit bias, and what we can do to mitigate our implicit bias. And then, I go into how to reduce your implicit bias, and I give participants a list of different practices that can actually reduce your implicit bias. And a participant asked the question about a particular practice, whether or not that, what was actually happening in the brain. And what I realized was that I do a really good job describing implicit bias, and the neuroscience of implicit bias, but I haven't made that connection of what's changing in the brain when you're involved in these practices that reduce your implicit bias. So, I'm gonna

push the neuroscience a little more in explaining why being mindful while using tapping, while why, um, paying attention to your body, how that is related to what's changing inside your brain.

Sam Fuqua: Dr. Stacie Walton speaking with us at the 2023 White Privilege Conference.

Up next, Norma Johnson, another member of our Sideways team, talks with Elizabeth Winslow.

Elizabeth Winslow: I am here at the conference because my racial literacy and racial understanding and unlearning racism needed some serious oomping up. So, when I heard about this White Privilege Conference, actually I had attended the White Privilege Symposium in 2015 in Denver and so I got a little taste of it there. And, you know, folks at our Quaker meeting talked so highly of it, and I could see that it was going to cover so many topics that I needed to learn about, I decided to come.

Norma Johnson: So, what's been a highlight so far?

Elizabeth Winslow: You know, I was thinking about it, and it, it was kind of like a banana split or a sundae or something, because all of the keynotes were so fascinating and so heartfelt and got me to thinking, yes, there's this whole other world of liberation and, uh, humanity for everyone around the world that I need to get more involved in. So, that was a highlight in terms of all of these keynotes. But then all of our workshop sessions, like I said, it was just like another dip of ice cream and another dip and another dip, and the icing on the top was today I learned how to make a podcast and that was a, really a highlight. That was a cherry on top.

Norma Johnson: Oh, and, and why was that?

Elizabeth Winslow: Well, you know, because I had just thought about it right before I came. I was talking to a friend of mine that I text and we're, we're sort of like unlearning racism partners texting back and forth. She lives in Illinois. And, um, somehow the topic came up about what we could do. And I'm like, we should make a podcast. And Sarah said, "I don't have any idea how to do that." You know, we're both kind of like baby boomers that might not be as tech savvy, but I said, "Well, let's look. I think I saw there's gonna be a session on making a podcast." And so, I was able to get in that session and the facilitators made it really hands on, and I'm a teacher of young children, and it just really spoke to me. But, the part was the role of synchronicity because we all were deciding, "Oh, I don't want to be the host. I'm scared to be the host," whatever. But then, one member of our group left, had to leave to catch a plane, and then another member of our group she was like, she's already got her podcast going and she was like processing all that and saying I'm kind of done. So, that just left two of us and then one of the other facilitators came up and said, "Come on, jump in. Who's gonna be the host? Who's gonna be, you know, who's gonna do the questions? Who's gonna be the guest?" And so, the other person and I just did it and that's the way I guess you need to dive into unlearning racism.

Norma Johnson: There's so much of that at this conference. You're not just theorizing. So Elizabeth, what would you do differently and what actions will you take going forward from this experience you've had at the conference?

Elizabeth Winslow: I know because I'm coming from my faith organization that, um, we made a commitment to share out some of the things that we've learned and to have like a presentation for our faith community. So, the three of us who came I think we'll probably get together and try to do something like, uh, you know, a bagged lunch and talk about all the wonderful things we learned and all the resources, and we've also purchased a bunch of books. And also, I'm on our anti-racism committee, so I'll definitely share with them and take a more active role in stepping up. I heard somebody say in a session yesterday, "Well, I've done a lot of reading, but, you know, our anti-racism committee at his school is really just kind of plateaued." And I thought, you know, that's me. I've done a lot of reading, but I still shrink. I shrink back when it's like identifying that a microaggression has happened. Or, talking about my own white fragility. And a big part of being here was learning this vocabulary. And as someone told me, it's always changing. And when you come across a new word, it's just like, okay, add that in your database, you know. Or, or maybe a word, maybe a term will even be replaced and part of that, I think it's like, I just get overwhelmed by maybe not understanding, kind of, the language of the whole thing of anti-racism. But that's not an excuse. Not anymore. I mean, I just, I've got to challenge myself more.

Norma Johnson: So that you don't have to get it right, but you get it done.

Elizabeth Winslow: Yes. Yes.

Norma Johnson: And so, if you wanted to encourage someone to come to this conference, what would you tell them?

Elizabeth Winslow: I would tell them that first, you know, you can look online, you can check out the sessions, you can talk to other folks who have been here before, you can make a goal for yourself. This is something that's really going to be trans, it could be transformative in my life. And also, you could tell them it's going to be good for your mental health. It's going to be, now maybe you're going to learn better ways to communicate with, uh, your affinity groups, your family, in the workplace. You're learning a new paradigm. And, I would just say, if you want to be part, I just try to be really enthusiastic and excited, and if you want to be part of that, you've got to go to this conference. It's been going on for 24 years, and so they've got to be doing something right.

Sam Fuqua: Elizabeth Winslow speaking with Norma Johnson.

Another Sideways team member, Mary Zinn, spoke with Hideko Akashi.

Hideko Akashi: My name's Hideko Akashi. I'm from San Francisco, California. My pronouns are she, her, and hers. I'm the founder of Liberation Consulting, which is a diversity, equity, and inclusion consulting, um, firm. And, I've actually gotten up the courage to finally start presenting some workshops after being a participant here for so many years. And so, that's what I did last year. I did a small workshop and then this year too, we did two of them. So...

Mary Zinn: And what are your workshops on?

Hideko Akashi: So, that's another, like, connected to why I've been coming, um, a lot recently is that I've been trying to increase the representation of Asian and AAPI, Asian American and Pacific Islander,

workshops, presentations, conversations, uh, and it's something that I've been doing a lot in my work lately. I find that people have been calling me in to do that work, whether I facilitate affinity spaces around that or they want me to do a presentation on racism in AAPI, or AAPI and suicide, or AAPI and, um, LGBTQ intersections. So, I've started to realize that in coming to this conference over the years, it's been really, really amazing professional development, personal development, like self care, all of the things. And, I also noticed that the conversation was, um, primarily in a black-white binary, and so, I think, um, Dr. Eddie Moore Jr. has become really aware of that and has really been trying hard to diversify, uh, the workshop and feel, make it more inclusive. And so, he's really been inviting more and more, um, AAPI speakers, um, presenters, to submit proposals, to show up, and I think we're heeding the call to action and really excited.

He, you know, he reached out and specifically to some of us to say, get your workshops in, you know, we want you on the, we want you on the program. Um, so, yeah, I think that's one of the primary reasons that I was showing up in presenting in this way, right? Even though I don't only solely do AAPI work, it is an area that I do feel passionate about and I have gained a lot of experience and stories and some materials and processes that help people be self-reflective about it. And so, I figured yeah, this would be a great topic to bring into WPC and feels like it's needed. Um, we have a, I have a lot of great predecessors who have been coming into WPC like John Doe and Xiaowen and Rosetta Lee. Like, these are, you know, Natalie Thorsten, these are all people who have been breaking that and coming into that space So, it feels nice to kind of fall in their footsteps and, um, also be able to do that. So...

Mary Zinn: Some of the people I've interviewed have talked about WPC as community, and that it seems to them that coming here gives them that sense. Would you agree with that?

Hideko Akashi: Yeah. You know, at first when I was coming as an educator and bringing students, I felt like I was always with my community I was coming with. And then, as I branched out and I started coming by myself, it really forced me to actually, um, socialize, network, talk to people, uh, meet new people. And now that I've done that a number of years, I've actually come back every year and realized, oh, I actually feel like a part of this community now. I know a lot of people. I didn't realize, like, over the years, uh, I've been making connections. And so, yeah, that, that is a pull for me, too, is to come to a place where I think I really feel, like, valued and important here and, um, belong, and I grow so much. I learn so much every year, every speaker, every workshop. And, um, so, yeah, I would say that's so true.

Mary Zinn: Thank you so much. And finally, what would you say to another person who was considering coming to the conference and just not sure whether they ought to or not?

Hideko Akashi: Yeah, in fact, I brought somebody with me this year to the conference, a colleague of mine, Lisa, and she and I both have a lot of experience of going to the People of Color Conference, which is put on by the National Association of Independent Schools, because both of us worked in independent schools. And I shared with her that when I was first exposed to WPC in my professional development as an educator, I was really blown away. I said, this is next level. It is not, it's not one on one, over and over again. And I would have to say I went back to POCC even after I was frustrated with it. Went back and I think they've made huge improvements on it. So, I think they're also recognizing that they needed to get a little bit more advanced. But WPC for me has always been, like the speakers have been incredibly impactful. The caucus spaces have always been a place where I've just learned so much and grown and it's emotional sometimes, and sometimes it can feel like drama, and that's also, you know, we don't always have that or get that opportunity.

So, I was trying to describe it to her. I was like, "I hope you're going to get something out of this. And I, I believe you will," even as advanced as I feel she is in this work. I said, there's something about this place that pushes you and actually builds in you some confidence to speak up, to do and, um, have conversations across difference that we may not have, especially in California or the San Francisco Bay Area. Like you get used to a certain demographic of people there who have this conversation and then you come out here to, you know, um, well, we're not in the Midwest, but I often think of WPC happening in the South and the Midwest and the East Coast. But yeah, I think it's cool to see and experience it that way. I just really want to continue supporting this conference. I really believe in what Dr. Eddie Moore Jr. began and is continuing to hold the space for us, even as I think it gets difficult over the years to maintain and to continue to have people coming consistently. I feel like they're constantly looking to improve. They're constantly open to feedback. I just really believe in the work that I feel like I've gotten out of this. And so I want to bring other people in to also experience it and see ways I can support it.

Sam Fuqua: Hideko Akashi, talking with Mary Zinn.

We're listening to voices from the 2023 White Privilege Conference here on Well, That Went Sideways!

I spoke with Robin Breyers.

Robin Breyers: My name is Robin Breyers, pronouns they/them. What brings me to WPC, I think, is connecting with other people who are really deeply involved and embedded into doing equity and justice work, and really working towards liberation. And, people from all sorts of lived experiences, and all sorts of, sort of phases I guess, in their process of growth and development and learning who are coming together for the same end, uh, of, of that collective liberation. And, it's an inspiring community to be a part of, and to witness the learning process, and participate in the learning process, and build community together. And, I think those are some of the elements that really bring me to WPC.

Sam Fuqua: And is this your first one?

Robin Breyers: No, this is the second time I've attended and, and presented as well. And then I also, um, support the facilitation of the White Caucus groups.

Sam Fuqua: Tell us what you presented on.

Robin Breyers: The workshop was around building, uh, self-reflexive practice and, um, a toolkit essentially for resistance, uh, in what I think many of us would refer to as a harmful culture that we exist in. And so, we, uh, really focus the workshop on self-reflection with the intent of action, being able to learn about, go inward and learn about ourselves with the goal and purpose of implementing that learning and awareness. Uh, and the end goal was essentially to identify that the tools that we need are within us, they're intuitive, and how do we create spaces and opportunities to connect with ourselves in order to have access to that internal wisdom and knowledge and information.

Sam Fuqua: Is there one tool you could share?

Robin Breyers: Well, the, I guess I could offer the tool that was within the workshop, because really so much of the tools that people identified were unique to them. Um, unique to their own growth learning and journey process. But the tool that we walked through was the metaphor of a dwelling, or a house. And the idea that we each have sort of different aspects of ourselves that we've compartmentalized in different ways to really survive in a culture, in a society that forces us to compartmentalize, uh, compartmentalize our harm, compartmentalize our trauma, compartmentalize, uh, the ways in which we've, uh, created and cultivated mechanisms for survival. And so, the metaphor and walking through that metaphor of, uh, noticing the imagery or the internal imagery that comes to mind when you think about different parts of yourself and how you've adapted. Uh, and so what, what would it mean to renovate that dwelling, uh, for liberation, and do some redecorating so that we're a little bit more integrated.

Sam Fuqua: That's Robin Breyers.

Up next, Mary Zinn talks with Josette Huntress Holland.

Josette Huntress Holland: My name is Josette Huntress Holland. I'm the head of the middle school at Cary Academy in Cary, North Carolina, and we've been trying to come to the White Privilege Conference for about three years now. We're sidetracked by COVID, but it's been a priority of mine to learn and grow and take things back to my community that can help us make it a safer, more inclusive place for our students and our faculty.

Mary Zinn: And what have you found here that will work for you?

Josette Huntress Holland: So many things. I think there's, uh, building of a shared vocabulary that's going to be helpful for schools across the country. Identifying words and phrases and feelings and, um, and how to be interrupters, that is just, it's gonna be so useful. I think there's also a camaraderie that is at a place like this where you realize that you're not alone in doing the work, but that also your work is not done. So, that's been really inspiring and oftentimes my partner at, um, Cary Academy, and all of the work that I do, is our Diversity and Inclusion Director, um, Danielle Johnson Webb, and she and I often borrow courage from each other. And I think this community at White Privilege Conference is filled with, with like-minded people who understand that there are times when you need to borrow courage from each other to do the good work, and to keep learning, stay humble, and, and continue to lift each other up.

Mary Zinn: And has there been anything particularly surprising? This is your first conference, so has anything surprised you?

Josette Huntress Holland: So, as my first conference, I didn't know what to expect. I didn't know what sort of people would be attracted to a conference like this. I've attended the POCC, which is the People of Color Conference. It's several times over that my 25-year career, and I understand that sometimes people come to conferences to learn, and sometimes people come even though they think they know everything already. And so, what I'm finding is, um, a refreshing sense of humility that perhaps I didn't see before COVID where people understand that, um, white people, especially if they're not the center of the universe and there's a whole lot to learn here, um, from the good people around us who come to conferences like this. I also would say, so that's been surprising, refreshing sense of humility. I would also say that I'm surprised at the wonderfully talented authors that I've met. I hadn't, all these books were written in the

past two, three years over, um, over COVID. I'm just so impressed by their dedication to this work, by their ability to write a book when the world was making us so fearful of our lives, and they said no, the priority here is to share what I know and, um, encourage others to share what they know. So, you know, I was raising my family during the COVID, and they were writing books. I just, I'm so impressed by them. So, not surprised, but very, very impressed that these wonderful people are here sharing what they know.

Mary Zinn: I'm hearing there are so many resources here for you that you're discovering what you didn't get to have access to during COVID.

Josette Huntress Holland: Yes. Yes. Documents, very easy, transferable documents, that we could take back to help inform how we hire, how we write job descriptions, how we care for our students in affinity groups, how we care for, um, our students who are growing into an understanding of their whiteness. I just, I feel like the, the resources, it's what I've been really praying for and hoping for for three years, so...

Mary Zinn: Congratulations on making the decision to come here.

Josette Huntress Holland: Yes. And you too.

Mary Zinn: Yes, me too. And if you were encouraging someone to come, just briefly, what would you say to them? What would compel someone that you would believe would compel them to join and be at the White Privilege Conference?

Josette Huntress Holland: Right. Well, I would say school leaders definitely need to prioritize a conference such as this, um, not only to, because if not school leaders, um, to do this work and, and protect people and also do, make the right decisions, then who? If in a school, if, if it's not going to be the heads of school or the principals, then who's it going to be? And, so, I would say to school leaders to prioritize this. We just went to a wonderful session with a woman who has written a book, um, *Teaching and Learning While White*. Her work in inviting the energy of people who aren't quite sure of the work, um, inviting that energy and, and the, the resistance, if you will, the energy of resistance means engagement. So, invite that in and engage with people to do the good work because ultimately, if you're working in a school, you're, you have such a potential to be a change agent, and for all the right reasons for all these wonderful people, both teachers and students.

Sam Fuqua: Josette Huntress Holland talking with Mary Zinn.

To conclude our program, we'll hear Norma Johnson's interview with Papillon Aguilar and Camila Villalon from the group *Journey Through Our Heritage*.

Norma Johnson: Why are you here?

Papillon Aguilar: So, I'm here because I wanted to see what this conference was all about because at first I thought it was just to teach about white people, but clearly it isn't. It's so much more than that. It teaches us about how us as minorities to help each other and help us around like, uh, face the problems and conflicts that go around the world.

Norma Johnson: Oh, beautiful. Thank you. What's been a highlight so far?

Papillon Aguilar: A highlight for me was, like, I think, the first day we came here and I went into the workshop of microaggression, and I was talking about how, like, if me being up front or doing things, I might get called names for that because I am a woman. And, like, people I didn't even know knew my name, strangers, already they're telling me that they would support me if anybody like me would be in that case. So, like, knowing that just, like, made me feel, like, empowered knowing that people look out for people like me who go through those type of things.

Norma Johnson: Ah. Does that encourage you?

Papillon Aguilar: Yes, it encourages me more to not be afraid to speak up towards the things I believe in.

Norma Johnson: Wow. Beautiful. Yes. And what's been your highlight?

Camila Villalon: Um, a highlight was hearing the keynote talk about In Lak'ech because of my old middle school, we were taught, we were taught it, and hearing it being presented was surprising and exciting. It makes me happy that others also know about it, and now people just learned it as well.

Norma Johnson: And what would you tell people?

Papillon Aguilar: It's about how we help each other and how we can confront those problems in the real life world and how we can show others how to do that along with the others.

Norma Johnson: Alright, and what would you tell people?

Camila Villalon: I would tell them that a lot of people from around the world attend this amazing conference and it's a great opportunity to interact with people from different backgrounds and understand their opinions on social justice.

Norma Johnson: Okay, we have a lot to learn from you very young people. And thank you so much for doing this interview with us and thank you for sharing your expression of this conference. Very powerful, very powerful. Proud of you.

Papillon Aguilar: Thank you.

Camila Villalon: Thank you.

Sam Fuqua: Camila Villalon and Papillon Aguilar from the group *Journey Through Our Heritage* speaking with Norma Johnson.

Those were a few of the voices from the 2023 White Privilege Conference. The 2024 conference will be held April 3rd through April 6th in Tulsa, Oklahoma. To get more information and register for the conference, visit theprivilegeinstitute.com. That's theprivilegeinstitute.com.



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

S4 BONUS EPISODE - VOICES OF THE WHITE PRIVILEGE CONFERENCE

Thanks for listening to Well, That Went Sideways! We produce new episodes twice a month. You can find them wherever you get your podcasts and on our website, sidewayspod.org. We also have information on our guests, interview transcripts, and links to more conflict resolution resources. That's sidewayspod.org. Our production team is Mary Zinn, Jes Rau, Norma Johnson, Alexis Miles, Alia Thobani, and me, Sam Fuqua. Our theme music is by Mike Stewart. We produce these programs in Colorado, on the traditional lands of the Arapahoe, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations. To learn more about the importance of land acknowledgement, visit our website, sidewayspod.org. And this podcast is a partnership with The Conflict Center, a Denver-based nonprofit that provides practical skills and training for addressing everyday conflicts. Find out more at conflictcenter.org.