

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** The idea of understanding how this privilege comes about for you is not to again make you feel bad, but to challenge you to do something positive with it.

**Sam Fuqua:** That's Eddie Moore Jr., and this is Well, That Went Sideways! a podcast that serves as a resource to help people have healthy, respectful communication. We present ideas, tools, and techniques to help you transform conflict in relationships of all kinds.

On this episode, we talk with Dr. Eddie Moore Jr. about white privilege and the conflicts that sometimes arise when talking about privilege. Eddie Moore is founder and director of the Privilege Institute and the National White Privilege Conference. I'm Sam Fuqua, co-host of the program with Alexis Miles. Hi Alexis.

**Alexis Miles:** Hello!

**Sam Fuqua:** Dr. Eddie Moore Jr., welcome. Thank you for joining us.

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** It's so great to be here. Thank you all for the opportunity.

**Alexis Miles:** Well, Dr. Moore, over the years I've heard so much about you, listened to so many of your talks, and I'm very aware of the impact that you're having on the world.

So, I'd like to start off by asking you to tell us a little bit about the work that you do. And I would like to share this piece as I understand what you do. You build community and deal with conflict between individuals and groups by looking at love, power and skills. You call love foundational. So, can you talk about how love, power, and skill help us navigate relationships between [00:02:00] individuals and communities?

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** I appreciate the opportunity to talk a little bit about those three things because we're in a really important time around these issues where so much is being said that's scaring people, literally startling, frightening people into a frozen state where they're either not doing anything or they're moving to the extreme of banning, of insisting that nothing happened in reference to these issues, and so I have always, as part of my career, as a part of my work, made love, power and skill, a foundational piece. Love just really being something that I think I learned from my mama, which I often never understood as a young kid, be so loving when sometimes people would treat her so badly. So I have to admit that this love thing is something I've grown to understand better and to practice even better because originally watching that love and action in reference to my mom, and the way she was treated, I was often confused and frustrated in not feeling like that was the best strategy as a youngster.

When I would see her or people throw her money on the counter in reference to her change back as opposed to handing her money to her and her again, respond in a loving way, or people treating or saying things to her in reference to her appearance in, you know, the way she looked and a way that was derogatory, negative, and her just responding again in such a loving way, was just so powerful as I reflect on it as an adult, but so confusing as a young person. So, work like Bell [00:04:00] Hooks work, the late, great, of course, Bell Hooks, uh, Cornell West work, Dr. Naim Akbar. I mean there some really influential people that helped me in the scholarship of understanding about love - love for myself, love for my people as an African-American black man in America and my history, but also love for other people, particularly white people in a place like America, where the history has been so ugly between some of those populations of people, past, present, and possibly into the future.

So, I've always, as I've learned and grown and come to understand love better, kept that a part of my foundational piece, and then this power is something that again, everybody experiences. Everybody has

privilege, I argue. Everybody, which is a form of power, has access to some form of power. And what I talk about in my work is not that being a bad thing, but actually being a good thing that you can do good things with - having privilege, having power, is not a bad thing if you do good things with it.

And then lastly, it's a skill, it's learned behavior, it's practiced behavior. And so I feel good that this has always been a part of how, how I've always done the work. And I feel it's even more essential today as we're now seeing so much division, so much isolation, and segregation around. What is diversity work? What is justice work? Are we making people feel bad? Are we shaming people? Blaming people? Is this critical race theory all about division? Should we all just get along? Treat everybody equally? I mean, there's so much circulating right now and I offer love, power, skill, as a philosophy for folks to consider as they do the work moving forward over the next 25 years.

So, that's a little bit about kind of my evolution around that, uh, where I'm at today, and also some of what I'm thinking about as I look at the next 25 years of the work.

**Sam Fuqua:** Well, tell us why you do this work because you had opportunities in other parts of life, in athletics, in business. Why is this your life's work?

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** Oh, Sam, it's a good question as well. Um, you know, I feel it's important to say to people asking about my journey that this is not the work I decided to do, but the work I was chosen to do. And I really believed that that my life, the life I'm living right now is really a second opportunity. How I got to where I am today is an absolute miracle. Something far greater than me definitely has played a role in my life's journey. So, how I got to social justice work, the work I'm doing today, I owe a great deal of that to a power far greater than me, because some days I wonder.

I was just reflecting on this. I was asking myself, like, how did I come up with this idea in 1999? Like, what was I thinking about? What inspired that? What sparked that as I reflect on the story of the White Privilege Conference over 25 years, beginning to put that together, and again, I, uh, Sam, think about really growing up and wanting to play football. That's really where my focus was - athletics. In fact, I went to college really, again, inspired around the athletic opportunity. [00:08:00] And even when I got my master's degree, I went back thinking I'm going to be in the athletics world. Uh, and it was really in that time of my master's degree, where I met some people that really helped me and really challenged me to think about myself far beyond what I imagined myself.

In combination with that, how I got to the point of master's degree after my undergrad days and some of the addiction around crack cocaine and alcohol that I found myself submerged in, after graduating college even, I had dug myself back into a hole of addiction around crack cocaine and alcohol, and really getting a chance to realize that I could do more. I could be more in reference to where I was, what I was thinking, all of that in combination really put me in a position where I was actually, and by myself, even still today, using some of my athletic skill sets, some of the things that require us to be an athlete from the discipline to the diversity of dealing with different people, uh, to the kinds of positions I played in the leadership role, what's involved with that, I found myself being able to use some of those skill set and then being partnered with, which was always a desire of mine, which is to do good stuff, to contribute back, to give back, to impact in a positive way.

And I think that kind of got me on the path of diversity work and working with young people, particularly in Iowa, where I was, where a lot of young people were just inexperienced when it came to diversity work, I was really finding myself in some really awesome opportunities to impact these young people in such a positive way. And that's where I found my groove, where I found my light, where I found my passion, or it found me, so to speak. And I've been at it ever since then. So, I, I say again, Sam, the way I started, uh, the

answer to this question is not that I'm doing the work that I want to do. I feel like I'm doing the work that I've been called to do, and I'm so blessed and so fortunate that it's also work that I love to do.

**Alexis Miles:** If you had to give one bit of advice or information to people who are involved in, in conflict about how best to resolve conflict, what piece of advice would you give them?

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** Yeah, I think if I was advising myself with that question, which I hope is the way I would advise others starting with me, and that's just that, that may be I'm the problem. Maybe when the conflict that is before me is now before me, the reason it's there is because of me. That I suggest people when facing conflict, to start with introspection. What is the challenge that you're bringing to the table? Where is it that you can make an improvement in reference to this conflict? And that's something that I try to model. I try to practice myself 'cause I know I have blind spots. I know I'm not perfect. I know I need, and I have work to do.

And so that's what I would say as a piece of advice to anyone facing conflict, is start with the person in the mirror. Start with you. Where can you grow? What are the challenges that you're facing? Where are the hurdles, the obstacles that you are presenting as it relates to this conflict, and starting there. And opening up some ways and some opportunities to whoever torts whoever or whomever you may be in that conflict with, so that the answer moving forward is not what I'm telling others to do, it's what I'm telling myself to do first as a way to invite others into finding some answers, some solutions, some end to the conflict possibly.

**Alexis Miles:** So, I'd like to ask you, if you could give a very short example of a conflict that you might have been involved in, or that you witnessed that was resolved, and what you saw during that process.

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** What comes to mind for me is really family right now. I mean, what I'm facing right now, when I think I'm not alone in facing right now is COVID-19. And the real challenge and conflict around, uh, family gatherings, friendship gatherings, around COVID-19 and vaccination and wear a mask. And I think, um, one of the things I have witnessed around this situation with a close friend who I was just in conversation with most recently, is just feeling like there's some close family members that are just not operating by science, but operating by misinformation and informing other members of the family around that misinformation. That's really putting some other family members, elders, especially in real danger of exposure.

And, I don't know if we resolve this conflict, but again, I try to talk about what are you doing to role model? What, where, where are the hurdles? What are the hurdles that you're facing to really challenge my friend? And also looking at some of myself, because it's not like this conversation is not happening in my family as well, but what is it that we're doing in talking about why we're vaccinated, why we got vaccinated, why we're boosted, why we're still wearing a mask, and talking about it from not only our selfish standpoint of protecting ourselves, but looking out for others. And also I think, again, the most difficult thing about this conflict is the answer is not resolved. The answer is not what we want it to be, which is vaccination and wearing masks.

And, I think that's one of the most recent conflicts that I assisted someone with... face, that I'm still not sure I'm okay with. I mean, I'm sure y'all, aren't unfamiliar with this, but the conflict did not come to a peaceful resolution. It's still producing tension, anxiety and some, a bit of some resistance in the air. And I don't know how I feel about that. It just feels incomplete, if that makes sense. So that's something I would talk about that I've participated in, that I'm grappling with right now, that right now.

**Alexis Miles:** So, would you say then that it's not necessarily the conclusion of the answer, but the fact that you can be in communication and love with love as the foundation of that? Is that a piece of it?

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** It's so good. It's so good to hear you ask that because I mean, this love piece can be, I feel like is being stressed and challenged to the highest level because we're not just talking about, uh, possibly decisions around money that maybe could be recovered or maybe that was stolen, and there's some bitter feelings. I mean, we're talking about life and death here. This decision could have an impact on whether people live afterwards. And I find myself, I'm finding myself, Sister Alexis, I'm finding myself like at a different point when love, when I'm calling on love around that kind of decision. And, um, I, I, I don't remember in my life being faced with this kind of scenario before. And so I feel like power, skill, are a little easier for me to fall back on and my, you know, kind of philosophical approach of those three and love is being tested as a part of this COVID-19 family challenge unlike it's been tested before because people's lives are at stake.

**Sam Fuqua:** So, how do you approach a white person who is not aware of their privilege? For example, someone who says I grew up poor, I grew up in very difficult family circumstances, I didn't have any privilege.

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** Yeah. I think for me, it's going back to the basics. I mean, the fact that we're talking together and you're able to hear me, you never inquired about an interpreter or whether or not I'm going to need an interpreter or translator of any kind, or if any of those kinds of components would be involved with the interview, shows a real level of privilege that we all possess. Like sometimes for me, talking with people about privilege doesn't start with white. Let's start with economics 'cause that may be true for those folks that they did work hard, that maybe some privileges haven't come to them because they're white. And so what I do in cases like that is start with areas of privilege that are low hanging fruit, so to speak.

The fact that I can leave my house, even in a snow storm, knowing that I'll be okay to walk to the mailbox, not worried about how many steps or what degree the ramp is, uh, in reference to my driveway, because I have ability privilege to be able to operate, not having any concern around that. So that's sometimes something that people can be in agreement with, and that's where I try to start because sometimes starting with race as a part of the privilege conversation, or even economics sometimes, even religion in some cases, can be a real triggering and difficult starting point. So, it's not that it's just basic in that the understanding of that, it's just, I think basic in that we can all pretty much relate to that in many cases when it comes to areas of privilege. And so I start with ability as opposed to starting with race or economics.

**Sam Fuqua:** So, what's different now compared to when you started this work back in the 1990s? Have we made progress?

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** Yeah, you know, it's a good question, and it's a good point of reflection that we're at right now, organizationally, as we look at, as I mentioned earlier, 23 years, and soon to be headed towards 25 years over these next few years, as we think about a quarter of a century of doing work around white supremacy, white privilege, and other forms of oppression. Creating a conference, a space, a place where people can gather and have that conversation. I think, uh, when I look at what resistance I faced in '99, and what I face today, is it different? Whoo! In some ways, yes. I mean, I feel like there's some progress in that we have people saying white privilege, discussing white privilege, reading about white privilege, and conversation around white supremacy. I mean, it's on the networks now.

I remember in 1999, it'd be hard to find, you'd be hard pressed to find a news story around white supremacy, and if you did, they wouldn't be using the words white supremacy in many cases. And so I think that there's some areas where in higher education and reporting news alerts, news reports, in religious spaces, and organizations that there is a conversation abuzz about white supremacy, white privilege, and other points of oppression that didn't happen in 1999.

When we look at power resources, privilege across numbers, yeah, there's still some work to do. And I think, yeah, there's been some real progress around billionaires and millionaires, economic status, if you're looking at it in that way, which means those of us doing this work have to also, I think consider how are we going to be over these next 25 years not just talking about definitions of power and privilege, but maybe doing some things to really bring some answers to the inequalities and the inequities that we're seeing that have over these last 25 years, the gaps are getting whiter, or wait a minute wider, or maybe both. And that I think continues to be an ongoing challenge of where we're looking at as an institution is not just talking about white supremacy, white privilege, and other forms of oppression, but can we change the numbers? Can we see some real shifts in the inequities? Or minimally, maybe we can see those who are on the privileged side of those inequities thinking, operating, deciding distributing differently. I think that's going to be the next test, the next test for us over these next 25 years as a organization for us, but also I think as a nation, as a world, is really addressing the increasing inequities that continue to show themselves year after year, decade after decade, here across the US, if not also across the world.

**Alexis Miles:** You've been doing the work a long time. You and other people have been doing the work for a long time. Isn't there something just intractable in human nature that won't allow us to go much further than we are? Is there something we just don't understand about the nature of power that keeps us from moving further?

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** What comes to mind when I look at the arc of the universe, the arc of oppression, of inequities, and even though we see some, what seems to be the more things change, the more things stay the same results, we have to remember, and I learned this watching Professor Ibram Kendi talk a little bit about, you know, his work and stand from the beginning, and, um, he says something about, there was a time in American history when emancipation seemed impossible. Like, people thought we'd be in chains forever. It made me think about things like Obama. And I remember thinking, America, they, they never gonna elect a black man to be president. Come on! Right? And two terms.

And I remember thinking about even as a sports guy, I think about the, um, Washington football team, and the fact that they changed and took away that mascot. I've never thought. And now we have the Cleveland Guardians, right? Removing Chief Wahoo. I mean, these are things that have happened right in our lifetime, right before our eyes. And so, I think, to some extent, yes, there are some things that may be human nature wise, it seems like maybe ending white supremacy is not possible. But then again, I look at some of the sacrifices of our elders and what they've been able to accomplish and the fact that a young, black crackhead like me has now a PhD and founded a conference called the White Privilege Conference, and have thousands of people gathering at least pondering this question and willing to go back into their spaces and places and push and challenge.

I think yes, sometimes humanity tells me maybe we're at the limit, but then again, you'll see somebody emerge out, and come up with some ideas, some opportunity and says, you know what, 1619, right? Who've thought we now have this project in our hands, inspiring young people coming from a young sister who was inspired in a high school, in a school system in Iowa to produce a worldwide project that's changing people's minds, inspiring people's minds. So I think that's what I'm excited about, is not the limits

of humanity, but the possibilities that we've been able to spring into or conjure up to blossom across the world.

Humanity still got a few surprises embedded inside of it. And that's what I'm excited about and hoping and wanting to be a part of not only maybe contributing, but I think, what I think about as an educator now, is planting a seed that will explode into an oak tree. I may not see it. I may never see that oak tree in my lifetime, but I want to be one that's out there planting those kinds of seeds. And that's what I'm excited about.

**Alexis Miles:** Put your attention and focus on what you want to see grow. I love that response, thank you.

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** Human possibility. Since you got me excited over here with that question, I, I, yes, yes, yes, that was powerful. Thank you. Thank you for bringing that question forward.

**Sam Fuqua:** And thank you for mentioning the 1619 series created by Nicole Hannah Jones of the New York Times, an in-depth series on the consequences of slavery and the essential contributions of black Americans. Really great series.

I wanted to ask you about another practical approach that's part of your website, eddiemoorej.com. You have the 21-day racial equity challenge. What is that? And how did that come about?

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** Again, this is divine inspiration. That first of all, I, the fact that I'm here is something far greater than me. And then some of the projects I've been a part of, like the 21-day challenge, is now out and about in the world as a part of that second opportunity. And this was something that came to me, basically, because I wanted to come up with a practical, something really hands-on, something tangible as a teacher, as a teacher of teachers. A lot of times educators were saying to me after my presentations, okay Eddie, this is great, but what can we do? What's next? And I used to have this long list and I'd say, listen, if we're going to make things better in education, we gotta do one thing a day every day of the year. And it just seems so daunting for a lot of people.

And a friend of mine, colleague of mine, came to me in reference to that, and I went back to the lab, reflecting on that challenge that she presented to me, and then I emailed her and I said, Debbie, would you be willing to work with me to create a 21-day challenge, which was based on like the habit-building research that's out there. The research actually shows it takes 66 days, not 21 days. The 21-day challenge is actually the beginning. It's a way to get started. And so that's what came to me. That's how that idea came about. Deb and I got to work and really worked together and came up with, what if you did one thing a day? That's what the research shows. If you do one thing a day 21 days in a row, it builds a habit. It changes a habit. And a lot of times people were doing this around that diet, they were doing this around exercise, and people were seeing results.

And I thought, okay, what if we did this around justice? Around love? Around self-care? Around Juneteenth? What if we use the 21-day habit-building framework to do good things around justice, equity, diversity, inclusion. And so that's kind of how it came about. I wanted to contribute that. This is my real opportunity to give back to the universe something because the universe gave me a second chance. And the 21-day challenge, I wanted to give something back that was free, that was open, that was accessible, and that's really what came about. And so, if you go on that website that you mentioned, we got a lot of different 21-day challenges.

Uh, I'd love to work with you and Alexis to think about a conflict oriented 21-day challenge. And that's how the challenges continue to build and expand. And so, um, let me just say this last thing we're not asking

you to do, you know, a march a week. You know, we're not asking you to, to write a dissertation about protests. We're saying, can you do one thing a day? In the time it takes you to get dressed in the morning, towards justice. And if you do one thing over some days, this practice becomes a part of your everyday life. That's the whole, that's the goal.

**Sam Fuqua:** Well, as we near the end of our time, can you tell us more about the White Privilege Conference?

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** One thing I love about the White Privilege Conference is it's black genius. It's a black idea. It started by a black person, ran by a black person, unapologetically. That's so important because what we're trying to do there, is not about just answering the one group of people. Uh, not about pointing at white people and saying white people bad, and this is how things are going to get better. So, the White Privilege Conference, even though white is in the title, it's really about white supremacy. That foundational framework that was so harmful, but also so critical to America founding. And what we argue, what I argue as a founder is we can't really build justice equity in a structure designed by white supremacy, white male culture dominance, if we don't understand that structural design. So that's the basic premise of the White Privilege Conference. Not blaming, not shaming white people, but really challenging all of us to understand white supremacy design, white male culture dominance framework, so that we could truly continue to push for the kind of America that we've been grappling and trying to create for hundreds of years. Not to blame, not to shame, but to challenge us all to better understand.

And on top of that, this framework produces privilege for all of us. We argue that everybody's got privilege. It just manifests itself in very different ways. I spoke to this earlier. So, the idea of understanding how this privilege comes about for you is not to again, make you feel bad, but to challenge you to do something positive with it. And so, in addition to understand white supremacy structure and design, you've got to understand how you benefit, how you come to be in a privileged position because of that design and not to feel ashamed, but to be activated, to do something positive. Okay? That's why the diversity of the community of the attendees is so important.

So we got young people at the Conference. We got people looking at religious. We got people looking at ability. We got people looking at race. We got people looking at gender. So it's really creating an incubator kind of learning atmosphere. We're looking at, at the highest level of challenges associated with issues of diversity. That was really important in putting the Conference together, is we wanted to create what I call calculus diversity or cross-fit diversity, a real high level of challenge of content to really push us beyond Diversity 101, Diversity 201, because a lot of people gotta start where they are, and there are a lot of folks who are good people and they just haven't had exposure. They don't know the term, they don't know the challenges. So we really think that there's needed space for folks to have opportunity to learn about Diversity 101, 201, and some of those elements.

But after that, you gotta be ready to go to the next level of looking at systems, organizations, institutions. That's really what we've been trying to create in the design of the White Privilege Conference. So, let me say this lastly, 'cause you know, you could Google White Privilege Conference, the website comes up, it'll give you some ideas about workshops, it'll give you some ideas about themes. I mean, we're going into our 23rd year. 1999 was the first year we began planning the White Privilege Conference. And the first Conference happened in 2000 and we've been going ever since.

But let me also say this. The Conference is also designed for people who do diversity work. I used to, and still I ask people all the time, if you take yoga, do you ever wonder where your yoga teacher goes to yoga? Like who challenges the teacher? So, we also wanted white privilege, and we continue to build this space

for people who do social justice work to also have a space where they get challenged, where they do their work. And we ask all of our speakers not only to come and present their work, but also come and do their work. So, wanting all of your listeners to know that wherever they fall on that spectrum, whether they're high school student or a teacher or a young professional, corporate, social justice, nonprofit, for profit, wherever you are, we're trying to, we're trying to create a space where we can look at some of the toughest work associated with diversity and inclusion, white supremacy, white privilege, other forms of oppression.

And we built up a pretty strong and solid following of folks who again, are coming, not to shame, not to blame, not to attack, but to really look at some of the toughest issues associated with this work and not just to talk about it, but to really do some things once they go back. And so that's where we are right now, as we look at these next 25 years, I think we've all seen with January 6th, the insurrection, I mean, white supremacy, white supremacists, I mean, they're active. They're really out there, and in some cases, in many places and spaces that they've never been before since the '60s publicly, I mean, it's not, remember back in the days when they used to wear hoods and we didn't know whether they went to the meeting or not? Now they're saying, nah, here I am.

What we're saying to people is if you're going to be in an environment where white supremacy and white supremacists are going to be out there publicly in this way, you got to have some skills. You got to have an understanding of your power, your privilege. You gotta be able to love. Can you love a white supremacist? Whoa. Can you co-exist? Can you solve problems? Are you willing to be in conversation? I mean, these are, we think, some of the challenges over the next 25 years, as we look at the landscape of America, issues of diversity and inclusion, and often there's not a space in place to have that kind of conversation, have that kind of learning.

So, that's the White Privilege Conference. That's what it's all about. Please check out the website, [www.whiteprivilegeconference.com](http://www.whiteprivilegeconference.com), and, uh, if there are any additional questions, people can email me directly. Find me at my website, [eddiemoorejuniior.com](http://eddiemoorejuniior.com), and I'm happy to talk more about, uh, any other questions, any other concerns that people may have, who may want to find out more or learn more or tell people more about the Conference.

**Alexis Miles:** I just want to tell you it was a real privilege and pleasure to be with you.

**Dr. Eddie Moore Jr.:** Thank you again for this opportunity. I really appreciate it.

**Sam Fuqua:** Dr. Eddie Moore Jr. is founder and director of the Privilege Institute and the National White Privilege Conference. You can find out more about the Conference and about the 21-day racial equity challenge at his website, [eddiemoorejuniior.com](http://eddiemoorejuniior.com).

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