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Is There A Place for “Woke” Culture in the Food Allergy Community?

by Aleasa Word, FAACT's Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

February 2023

When people hear the word “woke,” a few different reactions arise. Some may roll their eyes and think, “Here we go with this stuff. Can’t we just leave things alone and live peacefully?” Others might retort with, “It’s about time we stir things up so people can see that there are real issues to address.” There could also be people who think, “Here we go with the fluff. Nothing changes other than another lame attempt to pacify people.”

Whatever your stance on the idea of wokeness, please hear me out. The word “woke,” as defined by dictionary.com, means the past tense of “wake.” Wake means to emerge from a state of sleep, to become aware or alert from a sleeping or unaware position. This leads me to ask a few questions: Are we as caregivers and individuals managing food allergies truly conscious of the dimensions of diversity that impact our community? Or are we on autopilot, buying into the notion that everyone’s experiences are generally the same? Are we aware of what is really happening to those around us?

The idea of being “woke” in our community excites me. It opens up opportunities to intentionally learn more about other people because we want to – and NOT just through the dimension of food allergy that brought us together. It helps us see that the food allergy experience in one culture could significantly impact an entire family and community, whereas in others, it’s just another day in the life.

The choice to be woke can help us feed our natural curiosity as humans to find out more about what we don’t know – but only if we make the choice to learn. If we don’t make that choice, we may doom ourselves a life that is often void of the amazing color of change that makes the world beautiful. That change includes the hues of skin attached to diversity or race, the nuances of differing cultures, the wisdom of varied generations, the abilities of those in every social-economic class, and the acceptance of those who found their “happy” identifying with a gender or orientation that suits their true self.

Woke culture does not have to be a monolith – it can and should be multidimensional. It does not have to come with the negative connotation that is frequently attached, as if it is some divisive way of pointing out negativity in others. Let’s be honest, though. There are some negative things that woke culture has spotlighted for us. Systemic racism exists. Systems of oppression exist. Real world issues like hatred, violence, and malice exist. While understanding the reality of all of these, I would caution all of us to NEVER LOSE HOPE! When we WAKE UP, we can see that it is the awareness of all of these things that gives us a chance to make things better. Each day when you physically awaken,



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CHOOSE TO BE WORK:

Phone: 513.342.1293

Fax: 513.342.1239

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