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Pioneer in Diversity Training Speaks at Illinois Wesleyan

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Pioneer in Diversity Training Speaks at Illinois Wesleyan

BLOOMINGTON, Ill — Jane Elliott, creator of the “Blue Eyes/Brown Eyed” experiment in prejudice, will present “The Anatomy of Prejudice” at Illinois Wesleyan University on September 18 at 7 p.m. in the Shirk Center. The program is open to the public, and admission is free.

Elliott was a third-grade teacher in Riceville, Iowa, when Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968. The day after his death, Elliott divided her all-white class into groups based on eye color in an effort to teach the issue of discrimination. The sensitizing exercise labeled the participants either inferior or superior based on the color of their eyes. She now uses the same experiment to educate college students, instructors, and corporate officials. The exercise forces those in the “majority” to experience life as one who has been rendered powerless on the basis of a physical trait over which he or she has no control.

In her live presentation, Elliott contends, “A white person who has been raised and socialized in America has been conditioned to be a racist... We live in two countries, one black and one white.”

Elliott, who received her teaching degree from Northern Iowa University, has been featured in numerous national television programs, and three award-winning films have focused on her work — *Eye of the Storm*, *Eye of the Beholder*, and *Blue Eyed*. She is the recipient of the National Mental Health Association Award for Excellence in Education.

The program is sponsored by Illinois Wesleyan’s Residence Hall Association.