

NOVEMBER 2021



## TURNING 75

**J**ust saying seventy-five years old is pretty daunting, let alone a bit startling. Sometimes the looks on some people's faces are: REALLY? or damn, you sure don't act like it! The latter of which I'm not too sure how to interpret. The truth be told, I never thought I'd make it this far.

I always feared I'd die in a plane crash or given my driving record.... well, that's another story that only my closest friends will nervously attest to.

When I look back (which is more often nowadays) it has all been quite a journey. One that I would never have imagined or dreamed of. Being a person of color and Chinese, early on, the range of my dreams was limited at best. Prophetically defined by society's boundaries and perceptions. My father was shocked that corporations and government agencies wanted my services or even knew about me. To him, he could not imagine that happening in his lifetime, let alone by one of his sons. He was a proud man. A self-made Chinese man who became a millionaire, but who never quite felt comfortable or accepted by whites or even by his own community. I think that 'doubt' is something that racism imbeds into BIPOC.

I remember someone saying to me that, as a black woman, she was so nervous getting ready to speak to a mostly white audience. I looked at her and said, "I feel that way all the time." She was shocked. You see, no one suspects if you keep smiling and acting brave. However, what whites don't understand is the part they all played in my 'keeping quiet' and 'playing the game'. I was trained to caretaker whites from the day I was born. To humor them, imitate them, sound like them, think like them if I were ever to hope of succeeding. So what changed?

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I think that eventually I came to accept that I could never 'be white' enough. However, what I came to discover later on in life was that deep down that wasn't the problem or the real obstacle. It was that I could never be 'fully me' or at least that was what I was acculturated to believe like so many other BIPOC struggling to 'see themselves' as useful and important in a predominantly white world. Nothing in the business, educational or counseling realms values what we bring as BIPOC. It is as if as one employee of color shared to me personally: They (the white administrators and directors) are only interested in what we can do (which is usually the white male model), not who we are or what we bring as BIPOC. Our culture, our ways of moving and thinking in the world is of no interest or use. We are only 'visible' and 'celebrated' through our foods, holidays, dances and music. Or as one white therapist said to me after my keynote: You were incredible! I want you to know that I don't see you as a Chinese therapist, but as a white therapist! I was beyond rage because comments like that had become a part of my life of silent retreat and invisibility.

And so, on my 75th day of my birth, I would like to share a poem I wrote and read in front of my first major corporate client, GAP in 1996. After I read it, I got a standing ovation. From that moment on, I never looked back. I broke my silence and reclaimed my heritage and my warrior's voice:

### **Bok Fan**

I never knew that my eyes  
were not as opened as yours

That the color of skin was yellow  
that these words I spoke  
were harsh and foreign.

I always thought that this land of my birth  
this place where I took my first breath  
was the same as yours.

When I was young, I thought we both ate  
hom yeur ging gee yook, bok fan,  
see you guy, and lop cheung  
The same as any family coming home  
from work.

I did not know that my foods were strange  
or smelled

Just as I never knew my quietness would be  
seen as weak

My waiting, a sign that I was empty and  
without fire.

I was taught that waiting was a sign of  
virtue and an honor

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And that the eyes and heart were more  
direct than words.

But, I have learned: you do not follow the  
path of my hands  
or hear the words of my eyes.

You do not smell the sweet fire of the  
black bean or lower your eyes to honor the old ones.

Instead, you speak over my words  
Call me little as if I were a child

Decide that I cannot sing the sweet songs  
of love or hold a woman with my tenderness alone.

You have stolen the dragon's fire from my  
father's lips  
And now you seek to rob me of  
a warrior's life.

Do you not see the blood that you have spilled?  
Or the children you have shamed?

See me now.

My name is Lee Mun Wah.

My name is Lee Mun Wah.



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

## **StirFry 2022 Workshop Schedule**

Our 2022 Workshop Schedule is now online, with exciting options for  
everyone, no matter what your experience level.

And remember to look for the schedule for the **Tea Time with Lee Mun Wah 2022**  
we'll announce the dates next week!

**See the full schedule of StirFry Workshops  
at [stirfryonline.com](http://stirfryonline.com)**

# UPCOMING STIRFRY WORKSHOP

## Mindful Facilitation Training Part 3, Advanced Practicum

Saturday November 6, 2021 9am – 3pm

Facilitated by Lee Mun Wah

\$175

This training will be practicing the advanced mindful facilitation techniques through the use of filmed vignettes, role plays and personal stories. The main focus will be on integrating group process and mindful facilitation techniques in situations where there are intense confrontations and conflicts over diversity issues, coupled with a high degree of escalation and polarization. Participants will learn how to de-escalate these types of conflicts within seconds and help those who are disconnected to become reconnected. Participants will not only learn the art of listening, but also the art of responding in a way that supports everyone to feel heard, seen and understood.

Participants will learn:

- How to mindfully facilitate conflicts within a diversity context
- How to de-escalate conflicts within seconds
- Ways to identify and respond when there is a major disconnection
- Ways to create community based on empathy and curiosity
- How to identify when to use the four major advanced mindful interventions
- How to improve their auditory and visual acuity
- The Art of Summary
- How to identify the common threads and issues in most groups
- The intersection of Mindful Facilitation and Group Process
- How to use personal stories to create community and deeper understanding
- The Art of Listening
- The Art of Co-Facilitation

***This training is especially appropriate for: managers, social workers, educators, directors, supervisors, administrators, therapists, and diversity trainers.***

This workshop is recommended to those who have taken any previous in-person or online Mindful Facilitation workshops (Intro. to Mindful Facilitation & Mindful Facilitation Part 2, Cross-Cultural Facilitation Skills for Educators, Therapists and Diversity Trainers, etc.). Get Info and Register at [stirfryonline.com](http://stirfryonline.com)