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Newsroom: Are You Sure You're Not Prejudiced? 04-07-2016

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Newsroom

April 7, 2016

Are You Sure You're Not Prejudiced?

Challenge your self-perceptions and explore the hidden biases we all carry about age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, social class, sexuality, disability and more.



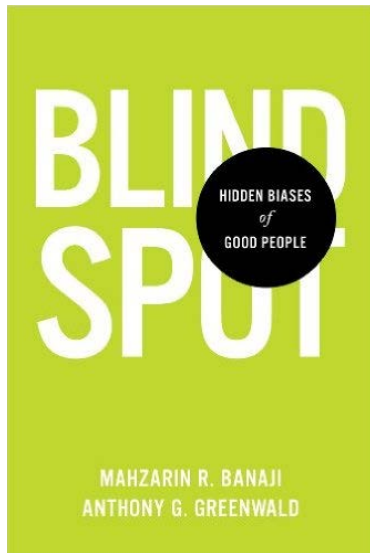
- *I know my own mind.*
- *I am not a prejudiced person.*
- *I am able to assess others in a fair and accurate way.*

But are you really sure?

Join Harvard psychologist Mahzarin R. Banaji as she challenges our self-perceptions, and explores the hidden biases we all carry from a lifetime of exposure to cultural attitudes about age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, social class, sexuality, disability status, and nationality

Banaji will discuss her work in an intriguing lecture, "[*Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*](#)," at **Roger Williams University School of Law** on **Thursday, April 14, 2016 at 4:30 p.m.**, in Appellate Courtroom 283.

Drawing on her book of the same name, co-written with colleague Anthony G. Greenwald, Banaji reveals hidden biases based on their Implicit Association Test, a method that has revolutionized the way scientists learn about the human mind and that gives us a glimpse into what lies within our metaphoric "blindspots."



As Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* wrote, in discussing Banaji's work:

“*To better understand the roots of racial division in America, think about this: the human brain seems to be wired so that it categorizes people by race in the first one-fifth of a second after seeing a face. Brain scans show that even when people are told to sort people by gender, the brain still groups people by race. ... [But] we can resist the legacy that evolution has bequeathed us. [Biases] are learned, so they can be unlearned.*”

In her lecture, Banaji will demonstrate the extent to which our perceptions of social groups – without our awareness or conscious control – shape our likes and dislikes and our judgments about people's character, abilities, and potential.

While most human beings take seriously the idea that their behavior ought to be consistent with their stated beliefs and values, research in psychology has challenged that possibility by revealing that our minds operate, much of the time, without conscious awareness. Dr. Banaji's work has been instrumental in this realization, and she will address the question of how well-intentioned people behave in ways that deviate from their own intentions, and how this state of affairs compromises our decisions in legal, medical, financial, and political contexts.



Mahzarin Banaji, Professor of Social Ethics in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University, studies unconscious thinking and feeling as they unfold in social context, especially implicit decisions about people's worth, goodness, and competence.

Banaji taught at Yale for 15 years and is currently the Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics in the Department of Psychology at Harvard. She is also Harvard College Professor in recognition of her outstanding teaching.

Banaji is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Herbert Simon Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. She has received many awards, among them Yale's Hixon Prize for teaching excellence, a citation from the President of the American Psychological Association, the Diener Prize for outstanding contributions to social psychology, and named William James Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science for significant lifetime contributions to the basic science of psychology. In 2014 she received Barnard College's highest honor, the Medal of Distinction, and in 2015 an honorary degree from Smith College.

This is the seventh lecture in RWU Law's Thurgood Marshall Memorial Lecture Series, which honors the memory of Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first African-American to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States. In his earlier career, Marshall was a key architect of the legal strategy that convinced the Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional the doctrine of "separate but equal," which had allowed racial segregation in public education and many other aspects of American life. He also served with distinction and as a protector of civil rights as Solicitor General of the United States.

The Thurgood Marshall Lecture Series is sponsored by the law firm of Hinckley Allen, with additional support provided by Diversity and Inclusion Professionals (DAIP).

