

As I've stated before numerous times, I try to refrain from making political statements on this blog. What will come forth will be considered taking a political stance by some, and I very much understand that although that is not my intent.

I was putting my education to work a bit as I was asked to consult with a person tasked with creating anti-racial policies for an organization outside the bowling realm. The questions centered around my perspective from a psychology lens as to why there was so much underlying tension and divisiveness on how to handle the coronavirus and whether there was a serious racial component to it. There was a frustration from this person that when trying to address this racial component when engaging others in her organization, the conversations often devolved into the advocacy of conspiracy theories. Also, it was anecdotally noted that the conspiracy theories generally came from those from the mainstream dominant culture and not from minorities.

I tried to explain that many times, conspiracy theories arise when there is anxiety and a sense of a loss of control. I read a peer-reviewed paper, *The Psychology of Conspiracy Theories*, in which the authors, Douglas, Sutton, and Cichoka, explored the various motives behind conspiracy theories as well as a journal article (<https://psychcentral.com/blog/conspiracy-theory-disorder-understanding-why-people-believe/>) to help explain how conspiracy theories are a coping mechanism for many, whether from the dominant perspective or not. So, while not necessarily exclusive to the dominant perspective, sensitivity and some empathy to the sense of loss of control needs to be kept in mind when engaging those furthering conspiracy theories.

Where am I going with all this?

With the recent announcement that Washington state has closed bowling until Phase 4, effectively shutting down bowling for an extended time in that state, and with Oregon's announcement of further limiting indoor venues from 250 to 100, there has been a wave of despair, frustration with government officials, and a resulting proliferation of the promotion of conspiracy theories. It does appear bowling is in a dire, very dire, place.

What can we do?

I had a conversation with another person of color regarding the conspiracy theories centered around the coronavirus and oppression, a Black woman, and she stated that wearing a mask was not an infringement on civil liberties or oppression. She looked at me a little sideways as she explained and said, "Trust me, I know what crashing my civil liberties looks like, I know what oppression looks like, I'm Black and I'm a woman . . . wearing a damn mask isn't crashing civil liberties or oppression." I then saw on a Facebook thread almost the exact same sentiment from another Black person responding to a post

that had started with a plea for cooperation from bowlers and then had the seemingly inevitable responses furthering conspiracy theories.

As bowlers, we can do our part. We can wear masks and responsibly social distance. We can adapt. Are we giving up our civil liberties? Are we bowing down to a hidden agenda from nefarious leaders looking to control the masses? No, we are not. We are trying to survive. While government policy is not something we can directly control, the effort to try and survive is something we very much can control. Don't give up.

Gary Yamasaki, OSUSBC Association Manager