

## Bridges out of Poverty: The Elephant in the Room

I'm a sucker for a good parable. Here's an oldie, but goodie — one that I have been thinking of this week while attending the [Bridges out of Poverty training](#) as part of the [Prosper Waco Initiative](#)...

Once upon a time there was a tiny village where no one had ever seen an elephant. One day an elephant and his keeper wandered into the village. The keeper needed a little cash, so he hid the elephant in an enormous barn and held a contest. Villagers could pay \$2 to come into the barn blindfolded and examine the elephant. Then, the contestant who could describe the elephant correctly would win half the money collected. Five folks decided to play. The first blindfolded man touched the elephant's ear. "An elephant is a large fan like the kind you use in church when it's hot," he said. The second person wrapped his arms around one of the elephant's legs. "An elephant is a pillar, like the ones on the courthouse," he stated. The third player was holding the elephant's tail. "An elephant is a type of rope," he stated with great conviction. The fourth player leaned against the elephants' side. "An elephant is clearly a big, flat wall," he said. The fifth had the elephant's trunk wrapped around his waist, "An elephant is a large python snake," he insisted in a condescending tone. The five blind-folded contestants argued deep into the night. While they argued, the elephant keeper ran away with all of the money.

The parallels to the poverty "elephant" are obvious. What causes poverty? "Obviously it's the destructive behaviors of the individuals in poverty," says the first blind-folded man. "It's definitely lack of education," says the second. "No, it's lack of jobs," says the third. "Good grief!" says the fourth, "Can't everyone see it's exploitation!" "You're all crazy! It's the global political and economic system," insists the fifth.

In the Bridges training this week 40 or so folks from health care, education, law enforcement, non-profit organizations, the city and a sprinkling of other occupations have been taking off blindfolds and looking at the whole elephant. It's hard not to be hopeful about the possibilities.

This entry was posted in Uncategorized on May 17, 2013 [<http://www.actlocallywaco.org/2013/05/17/bridges-out-of-poverty-the-elephant-in-the-room/>].

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## One thought on “Bridges out of Poverty: The Elephant in the Room”



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May 17, 2013 at 11:12 am

But even seeing the whole elephant we will all see something different, from different angles and sides. We must first define what poverty isn't and methodically move those people into that role. But I am sure blame will take the front row and costs will try to be avoided. tough job, good luck.

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