

NEWSLETTER

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion



Welcome to the United Way Montcalm - Ionia Counties' 21 Day Equity Challenge. We invite you to join us on a self-guided learning journey that examines the history and impacts of racism and how it shapes the experiences of people right here in Michigan. Before you begin, [please take this quick pre-survey](#) and if you have not already done so, please download these tools that you will help you:

[Download our discussion guide by clicking here](#)

[Click here to download the log.](#)

Each morning you will receive an email that will contain a daily lesson based on a specific topic. There will be a challenge for the day along with some options for you to explore. Complete any one option or combination of options every day. In addition to those options you will find a United Way Montcalm - Ionia Counties' Staff Pick. You can spend as little or as much time exploring the daily topic as you would like. It is best if you do the challenge in order from day 1 - 21 as each day builds on the lesson from the day prior. If you are participating as a recommendation from your employer, it is important that you complete the pre-survey and post-survey.

At times, this journey may feel uncomfortable and may evoke hidden feelings. It is then that we are able to allow ourselves to be vulnerable, and help make change happen. We have tried hard to make sure that the learning options are relevant for our region.

If at any time you have questions or concerns please do not hesitate to reach out to the United Way staff.

Now, let's get started

Terri

Day One - Personal Racial Identity

“Not seeing race does little to deconstruct racist structures or materially improve the conditions which people of color are subject to daily. In order to dismantle unjust, racist structures, we must see race. We must see who benefits from their race, who is disproportionately impacted by negative stereotypes about their race, and to who power and privilege is bestowed upon – earned or not – because of their race, their class, and their gender. Seeing race is essential to changing the system.” - Reni Eddo-Lodge

We cannot cease in confronting our country's history and relationship to identity. It is time for us to take a closer look at the inequities that are deeply rooted in our systems and institutions and work together to create an America where every individual has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, religion, and identity. Over the next 21 days, we will explore difficult topics, like structural racism, segregation, oppression, and privilege, to open up dialogue on how we can be champions of equity in our personal and professional lives.

Today's Challenge

How do you think about your racial identity and its relevance to your work?

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Identity matters. Who we think we are and who others think we are can have an influence on all aspects of our lives. Think about the first time you became aware of your racial identity. What is the first thing that comes to mind? Choose as many options as you'd like, and write down how you felt after reading or listening to learning resources below:

Option 1: [Listen to this Stateside episode with Eddie Moore, Jr., executive director of The Privilege Institute](#) (8:18 minutes), about the White Privilege Conference in Grand Rapids creating a space for people to have “tough conversations.”

Option 2: Watch the TED video: [We Are Not All That Different: Race and Culture Identity](#) (12:24 minutes).

Option 3: [Watch one or more of the short videos](#) (5 minutes per video) and reflections from the New York Times on racial identity in America.

UWMI Staff Pick

No. You Cannot Touch My Hair! (16:02 minutes)

Excerpt from YouTube Description: “My seven-year-old self learnt to tell people what I thought they wanted to hear. By the age of eight I’d convinced the other kids that my hair was made of sponge... because being black it couldn’t be made of ‘hair’.”

Through her own personal story and the hair-raising experiences of other women and girls, Mena Fombo’s TEDxBristol talk is a witty, yet compelling and sometimes dark exploration of the objectification of black women. It’s an issue she has spent a lifetime experiencing and exploring, with both a political and creative lens.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLQzz75yE5A>

Tomorrow's Topic: Understanding and Reflecting on Our Bias

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