

WELCOME

Welcome to the 2023 2nd annual 14-Week Equity Challenge! The United Way of Greater Niagara (UWGN) is again proud to partner with Niagara University (NU) to offer this important community learning opportunity.

Thank you for making the time to connect, reflect, and participate in this Challenge as we work to develop a deeper understanding of race, equity, and our collective role in improving our community. When change starts within enough of us, together, we can make progress toward becoming an equitable community - for all. We hope this experience launches what will be a lifelong commitment to confront racism, bias, and other social inequities, as we work to become champions of equity in our personal and professional lives.

HOW THE CHALLENGE WORKS

Each Monday morning during the 14 weeks of the Challenge, you will receive an email like this one with the content for that week. Week 1 of the Challenge begins today, September 4th. The final week of the Challenge, Week 14, begins on December 4th.

Each week there will be a variety of resources to listen to, watch or read; but also ideas and opportunities to reflect, connect and ACT. And, of course, we want you to share your experiences and encourage others to join you in the Challenge. As people can join the Challenge at any time over the next 14 weeks, please invite your friends, family, co-workers and others to join us and sign up by going to www.uwgn.org/equity. Students at Niagara University and Niagara County Community College will be learning alongside our United Way partner agencies and others in the community.

A FEW REMINDERS:

If you haven't yet filled out our pre-challenge survey, please do so [here](#). Visit our home page at www.uwgn.org/equity to access the many resources available to support the Challenge. These include a tracking tool and a sample group discussion guide.

If you are returning for this year's Challenge, you will see new content as well as a few vital resources from last year. A number of materials are foundational and critically important to setting the stage for our conversations. In addition, as we did last year, we are asking participants to give us only 20 minutes a week. Of course, should you find yourself with extra time, please read, listen or watch some of the additional materials. Given the diversity of our audience, we will have a wide array of options from which to choose. We hope, over the next 14 weeks, that you tailor the Challenge to fit your interests.

The content in Week 1 is intended to be introductory, helping us prepare for the Challenge; however, the materials are also provocative, lending themselves to discussion and reflection. We encourage you to read the article entitled, "A Black Chief Diversity Officer Lost a Job Offer

After Flagging Racial Bias.” This is a very good article for an initial conversation about the issues we will confront in this Challenge. *Was Mr. Hill too sensitive about race?*

A NOTE ON CONTENT:

Over the next 14 weeks, we will tackle some difficult topics like structural racism, segregation, and privilege. Some of the Challenge materials may contain sensitive language and/or content that may make some participants uncomfortable. Some readings could come across as offensive and/or traumatizing. If you believe that you will find certain materials traumatizing, you may choose to forgo and not engage with those particular resources. While we will do our best to prepare participants for such moments, we may miss a few things. It is important also to note that, intellectual discomfort is part of the learning process. You will likely, at time, feel uncomfortable as we have difficult conversations. We also encourage you to take breaks as needed and return to the Challenge when you are ready.

To prepare for the Challenge, we offer here basic definitions of common terms to develop a shared understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are drawing our definitions from the work of the national [United Way office](#), however, there are many other good sources for definitions of DEI and related terms and concepts. We include a few here in our opening set of readings. You can learn more about the United Way’s equity framework [here](#):

Diversity: Everyone is unique, and groups of individuals reflect multiple dimensions of difference including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and cognitive styles.

Equity: In the context of societal systems, equality, and equity refer to similar but slightly different concepts. Equality generally refers to equal opportunity and the same levels of support for all segments of society. Equity goes a step further and refers to offering varying levels of support depending upon the need to achieve greater fairness of outcomes. Equity is about creating fair access, opportunity and advancement for all people.

Inclusion: Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policymaking in a way that shares power. Inclusion is an ongoing process, not a static action.

We are using these definitions to frame our conversations, but possibly your organization or agency has its own definition to best frame their work. It is not uncommon for schools, governments, community organizations, and workplaces to have DEI statements or workplans. Finally, this Equity Challenge owes a debt of gratitude to Dr. Eddie Moore and Dr. Debbie Irving who have assembled much of the content and provide the energy behind the Challenge. We are also thankful to the many organizations and companies who have offered these challenges around the country. They have been more than gracious in sharing and encouraging people to use their many resources.

READ

[What is Racial Equity?](#)

The Center for Social Inclusion offers a primer of definitions, comparisons, and examples to help us learn about racial equity, other race-related terms and concepts, and how they relate and differ to one another. (About a 7-minute read)

[What's the Difference Between Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity?](#)

In this advice blog, social justice facilitator, creator, and collaborator Meg Bolger explains the distinction between diversity, equity and inclusion, and why each element is important. She shares helpful thought exercises throughout her article. (About a 6-minute read)

[Why Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Matter](#)

In this perspective piece, equity experts from ProInspire share their definitions of diversity, equity and inclusion. They offer their key arguments to make a case for DEI. (About a 4-minute read)

[Examining the Racial and Ethnic Diversity of Adults and Children](#)

The 2020 U.S. Census shows that the overall U.S. population in 2020 was more racially and ethnically diverse than it was a decade earlier. But how racially and ethnically diverse were different age groups within the population? This article explores the racial and ethnic diversity of two groups from the 2020 Census: under-18 and adults (18 and over). (About a 12-minute read)

[A Black Chief Diversity Officer Lost a Job Offer After Flagging Racial Bias](#)

During the onboarding process for his new position as vice president, chief equity, diversity and inclusion officer at a large hospital in Houston, Joseph B. Hill experienced a series of microaggressions that he, in turn, shared with the vice president of the hospital's human resources department. He then received a two-sentence note that the offer of employment had been rescinded. While there are two sides to the story, Hill states that his attorney was told that he was "too sensitive about race." Read this brief article, and consider for yourself, was Hill too sensitive about race? (About a 7-Minute read)

[A Sociologist Examines the White Fragility that Prevents White Americans from Confronting Racism](#)

This brief 2018 article by Katy Waldman, in the New Yorker, examines Robin DiAngelo's book [White Fragility](#). (About a 9-minute read)

LISTEN

[Turning the Lens \(Seeing White, Part I\)](#)

In the opening episode to his *Seeing White* podcast, John Beiwen and his guest (co-host, really), Chenjerai Kumanyika introduce the series and examine the many events of the past several years that have turned a challenging spotlight on White people, and Whiteness, in the United States. (About 16 minutes)

Warning: This podcast episode contains offensive language and material that may be upsetting to some.

[Is 'Diversity and Inclusion' Far from its Roots?](#)

From NPR's It's Been A Minute, listen to this 2021 interview with Kim Tran, consultant and writer who brings grassroots organizing and transformative justice approaches to the workplace. Tran talks about the history of DEI and asks whether the diversity, equity and inclusion industry has lost its way and strayed from its movement roots (listen to first 13 minutes).

If you prefer instead to read Tran's original article in Harper's Bazaar, please go [here](#).

WATCH

[The Danger of a Single Story](#)

Our lives, our cultures, are composed of many overlapping stories. Novelist Chimamanda Adichie tells the story of how she found her authentic cultural voice -- and warns that if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding. This featured Ted Talk is a great starting point for kicking off both personal reflections and group discussions. It has been viewed more than 34 million times. (About 18 minutes)

[On Diversity: Access Ain't Inclusion](#)

Anthony Abraham Jack, Assistant Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, shares his own experience and research about how and why disadvantaged students may struggle in college. He offers ideas on what schools can do differently to help students thrive. He urges listeners to grapple with a simple fact: access is not inclusion. (About 13 minutes)