

“I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”

– Elie Wiesel (Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, delivered on December 10, 1986)

CONGRATULATIONS! You’ve made it to the final week of the **14-Week Equity Challenge!**

We are grateful to the participants who joined us on this journey, and we are so impressed with the continued engagement of so many in the weekly challenges. Our community has participated in a big way, showing that we are committed to the change that starts from within and reaches through our families, friend groups, professional networks, organizations, and community-wide actions. We’ve created a brief [Post-Challenge Survey](#) that asks you to share your final thoughts on the experience. Once you complete the survey, you’ll have access to a [participation certificate](#).

We started this journey on Labor Day, with our first weeks dedicated to developing a shared vocabulary and a baseline understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion. We then shifted to examining the internal impacts of racism and inequity, their impacts on relationships and person-to-person interactions, and how some of these traumas can persist over generations. We then examined how racism and discrimination show up in our institutions, organizations, systems and structures.

Throughout the Challenge, we sought to better understand how racism, inequity and privilege impact our lives and communities, which included an exploration of our own identities, individual experience and internal biases. Weekly challenges included reading, listening and watching resources about our history, current data and personal accounts and experiences. There were articles and videos that recommended actions individuals and organizations can take to create more equitable, inclusive environments and ideas for how to discuss and deal with difficult topics. You were called to consider actions and activities to advance your understanding and work toward equitable, inclusive environments in your home, workplace and community.

And finally, in Week 13, we learned that being an ally is not an identity — it is an action. It is an active and consistent practice of using our power and privilege to achieve equity, inclusion and justice while holding ourselves accountable to the needs of dispossessed people.

As we come full circle, we encourage you to visit or revisit the websites of the two individuals who created and support these challenges around the country: [Dr. Eddie Moore](#) and [Dr. Debby Irving](#). They host on their websites an incredible number of additional resources and content. Most importantly, they offer ideas for more engagement and action. While this Challenge has helped to develop a deeper understanding of race, equity, and our collective role in improving our community, what we each choose to do next will define “success.”

As you complete **the 14-Week Equity Challenge**, we encourage you to write down a goal you have moving forward. Research shows that when you write down your goals, you are more likely to commit to them and achieve them.

Connect with some of the agencies and organizations doing critical anti-racism and justice work in our community, such as

[Niagara Organizing Alliance for Hope](#), the [Rose Bente Lee Ostapenko Center for Race, Equity & Mission, Voice Buffalo](#), [United Way of Greater Niagara](#), [YWCA of the Niagara Frontier](#), [National Federation for Just Communities of Western New York](#), and [Partnership for the Public Good](#).

Also, check out the important work of the DEI offices at [Niagara University](#) and [Niagara County Community College](#).

This week, we encourage you to reflect on your own journey these past few months. Remember, you can always go back and review our calendar of the previous weeks' topics and emails; just visit www.uwgn.org/equity.

This Week's reflection questions:

- What were some of your assumptions about racism and inequity before you started this 14-week challenge? In what ways have these assumptions been challenged? In what ways have they been reinforced?
- What are your identities and cultural background? And in what ways have they impacted your life? What supports have been available to you that have helped you overcome difficulties? Is there a way for you to create similar opportunities and supports for others who do not have these same resources available to them?
- What two or three shifts, changes or actions can you take to create a more inclusive and equitable environment in your home, workplace, classroom and community?
- How can you talk to your family, friends, and colleagues about what you have experienced and learned during this Challenge?

Share What You Learned: Please continue this learning and dialogue with your family, friends, and networks. And please take the survey to share your thoughts and experiences. Finally, celebrate small victories and continue to give space and grace to those who are, themselves, working to become antiracist.

As we noted, this week's challenge is, mostly, a final reflection on your experiences. However, we offer two resources to close us out. First, we think a beautiful and moving talk by John A. Powell does a nice job of wrapping up our Challenge. While it certainly fits in the final week, it could have easily – like many of our resources – kicked off the Challenge. It has 42,000 views; it should have 42 million views. Second, we think Elie Wiesel's the *Perils of Indifference* address at the White House in 1999 is also appropriate and tremendously moving.

WATCH

[john a. powell Keynote: The Mechanisms of Othering](#)

john a. powell holds the Robert D. Haas Chancellor's Chair in Equity and Inclusion and is a Professor of Law, African American Studies, and Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley. He gave this very thoughtful and powerful talk at the 2017 Othering and Belonging Conference and Summit. john spells his name in lowercase in the belief that we should be "part of the universe, not over it, as capitals signify." (About 26 minutes)

[Elie Wiesel: The Perils of Indifference](#)

"Indifference elicits no response. Indifference is not a response. Indifference is not a beginning; it is an end. And, therefore, indifference is always the friend of the enemy, for it benefits the aggressor -- never his victim, whose pain is magnified when he or she feels forgotten." Just part of the address delivered by writer, political activist, Nobel Laureate and Holocaust Survivor Elie Wiesel. Address was given at the White House in April, 1999. (About 21 minutes)

We want to once again thank the United Way of Greater Niagara and Niagara University for their support and enthusiasm for this initiative. Please keep an eye out next Fall for the 2024 3rd Annual 14-Week Equity Challenge. And, as always, please share resources and content that you come across in the coming months. You can send them to either dtaylor@niagara.edu or william@uwgn.org. And we will try to work them into the next Challenge. We would also love to increase our partnerships in putting this Challenge together. Reach out to us!

Again, thank you for joining us on this journey!

In closing, knowledge is power – be powerful!