



**Diversity Committee
Racism Discussion Series
Program Description**

Background

By May of 2020, our branch Diversity Committee had been active for 2 years. Virtually all goals that the Planning Committee specified had been accomplished and the Diversity Committee was working on its continuing charge: to encourage members to participate in community events that highlight diversity. Previously, the committee had decided to host a major “diversity” event each year. In 2019, we hosted an International Food Tasting and Dance Performance. In 2020, we wanted to help members focus on the diversities we exhibit in our branch and were planning a luncheon for that purpose. Then COVID-19 hit, and we needed to change our plans. Although never expressly stated, our approach was to engage our membership gently around diversity. We wanted members to appreciate diversity, but we didn’t want to shake anyone up.

Then George Floyd died, and his horrific murder laid bare the racism that is built into the DNA of our country. Our immediate reaction was, “We need to do something!” And our Racism Discussion Series was born.

Design Elements

Equity is an important value for us, as individuals and as members of AAUW. Our mission to advance equity served as an impetus to launch this series, opening it as widely as possible to offer an opportunity for open dialog and learning. So, we decided that the series would be free, open to the public, and offered in the online environment.

We also specified the following design elements:

- Our **purposes** were to touch hearts and minds, to raise awareness, and to bring diverse groups together. We also wanted the series to serve as a branding and recognition mechanism for AAUW and our branch. But because none of us considered ourselves experts in the topic, we also wanted to educate ourselves.

- Our **target groups** were AAUW Lake/Sumter members as well as members of local Asian American and African American Clubs. One of the committee's previous accomplishments was to develop a Diverse Groups Roster, which includes local groups that were interested in receiving information about our programs. In addition to the two groups just mentioned, we also targeted other selected clubs in The Villages to receive invitations to the discussion series.
- Our **format** would be 90-minute monthly discussions conducted online via Zoom. Our committee co-chairs would facilitate or serve as technology back-up for the discussions. Our branch leadership had invested in Zoom licenses, so we have been able to continue conducting business despite the pandemic. We also decided to specify preparatory materials for each session – typically short videos and/or short readings – and asked participants to review those materials prior to each discussion.
- Our discussion **guidelines** included:
 - Keep comments and questions to ≤ 2minutes
 - Speak to entire online audience
 - Be respectful of other's comments
 - Avoid blame, shame, guilt, or preaching
 - Disagree without being disagreeable

Curriculum

Session 1: Racism 101

- Preparatory Materials
 - *Understanding Race and Racism*
(<https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/racism-101.html>)
- Discussion Plan
 - Welcome
 - Technology Review
 - View Video: *The Look* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJav36Nbn58>)
 - Large Group
 - Reactions to video
 - Follow questions for discussion from Racism 101 website
 - Closing

Session 2: White Privilege

- Preparatory Materials
 - *Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack of White Privilege* by Peggy McIntosh, 1988
(https://psychology.umbc.edu/files/2016/10/White-Privilege_McIntosh-1989.pdf)
- Discussion Plan
 - Welcome
 - Technology Review

- Large Group
 - Comments about/reactions to preparatory materials
 - Guest Facilitator: Peggy McIntosh
- Closing

Session 3: Antiracism

- Preparatory Materials
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mG1tlZoSdZI>
6-minute CBS This Morning interview from August 12, 2019
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCUOX3NMd4U>
12-minute interview with Stephen Colbert on June 26, 2020
 - “A Note from Ibram X. Kendi,” *The Atlantic*, September 2020 [attached]
 - Being an Antiracist graphic [attached]
 - Recommend the book, *How to Be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi, 2019
- Discussion Plan
 - Welcome
 - Technology Review
 - Anonymous Polling -- questions
 1. Do you think that racial and ethnic discrimination is a “big problem” in the United States?
 2. Has reading the articles and viewing the videos influenced how you think about racial and ethnic discrimination?
 3. Do you think personal change is possible?
 - Comments about/reactions to preparatory materials
 - Breakout Rooms – discussion stimulator
Why do you want to be antiracist? Considering the breadth and depth of racism, committing to being antiracist may feel overwhelming, yet small choices made daily can add up to big changes. Reflect on choices you make in your daily life (i.e., who you build relationships with, what media you follow, where you shop). How do these choices reflect being antiracist?
 - Large Group
 - Debrief: Offer anyone who wishes the opportunity to comment on personal “aha” moments from small group discussions
 - How might we use the blue antiracist graphic to become antiracist?
 - Closing

Session 4: Implicit Bias

- Preparatory Materials
 - <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>
Verna Myers 17-minute TED Talk: How to Overcome Our Biases
 - <https://florida.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/pov-biased-lpclips/who-me-biased/>
Series of six short (< 3 minutes each) instructional videos about implicit bias from PBS POV

- *Peanut Butter, Jelly, and Racism*
- *Check Our Bias to Wreck Our Bias*
- *The Life-Changing Magic of Hanging Out*
- *Why We're Awkward*
- *Snacks and Punishment*
- *High Heels, Violins, and a Warning*
- <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>
Implicit Association Test (IAT) – Project Implicit at Harvard
- Discussion Plan
 - Welcome
 - Technology Review
 - View video: *Peanut Butter, Jelly, and Racism* (1st of PBS POV videos)
 - Anonymous Polling – question
 1. If you took the Implicit Association Test, were you surprised by the result?
 - Breakout Rooms – discussion stimulator
Discuss/share reactions to the preparatory videos and/or your results on the IAT
 - Large Group
 - Debrief: Offer anyone who wishes the opportunity to comment on personal “aha” moments from small group discussions
 - How does what we have learned about our implicit biases impact our behaviors and other people?
 - Closing

Session 5: Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome

- Preparatory Materials
 - <https://youtu.be/OZNwZAWI-WE>
Interview/lecture with Joy DeGruy from 2018 for counselors/students in counseling
 - Recommend *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* by Joy DeGruy, 2017.
- Discussion Plan
 - Welcome
 - Technology Review
 - View Video: *The Effects of Slavery Today*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rorgjdvphk>
In this 6-minute, professionally made video, Dr. DeGruy provides a description of post traumatic slave syndrome.
 - Breakout Groups – discussion stimulator
Share one thing about the impact of slavery that you didn't know before but learned from DeGruy's videos
 - Large Group
 - Debrief: Offer anyone who wishes the opportunity to comment on personal “aha” moments from small group discussions
 - DeGruy calls PTSS an “explanatory theory.” What does it explain for you?

- What does epigenetics add to the theory?
- DeGruy calls blacks a “miracle people.” What might contribute to their apparent resilience?
- Finish (two files run simultaneously in split screen)
 - Our PowerPoint slide show of black achievement [attached]
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDyTu9wg_JU
Maya Angelou reading *Still I Rise* (with music)
- Anonymous Polling – questions
 1. Learning about post traumatic slave syndrome has changed my perception of people of color.
 2. I was aware of the connection between racism and trauma before this meeting.
 3. I was familiar with epigenetics before viewing the long DeGruy video.
 4. I now see resilience as a characteristic of the black community.
- Closing

Session 6: Microaggressions [in preparation]

Session 7: Implications and Impact of Confederate Monuments

Session 8: Systemic Racism: Housing

Evaluation

Our evaluation plan focused in two directions: we looked at effectiveness of the discussion series, and we reflected on our own learning.

Effectiveness

We defined several measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the series in meeting four purposes:

1. touch hearts and minds
2. raise awareness
3. bring diverse groups together
4. branding and recognition

The measures included:

- Number of people who have registered at least once [addresses Purpose 4]
- Number of participants at each discussion [rising numbers addresses Purposes 2 and 4]
- Participant organization [tally number of AAUW members vs others and specify others – Purpose 3]
- Number of views and/or downloads of session videos [addresses all Purposes]
- Polling questions [to be developed – addresses Purposes 1 and 2]
 - Questions focused on emotional responses
 - Questions focused on intellectual responses
 - Questions focused on increased fact-based knowledge

We designed and will implement a 10-item questionnaire on Survey Monkey early in the new year.

- Unsolicited comments from participants/viewers [addresses all purposes]

We are in process of compiling effectiveness data for the first five discussion sessions. But responses to the polling questions during the discussion of post traumatic slave syndrome suggest a positive impact of the series on participants:

Question about Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (PTSS)	% Yes	% No
Learning about PTSS has changed my perception of people of color.	90	10
I was aware of the connection between racism and trauma before this meeting.	55	45
I was familiar with epigenetics before viewing the DeGruy videos.	35	55
I now see resilience as a characteristic of the black community.	80	20

Reflection

We have learned a great deal about the logistics of offering this program.

- 90 minutes wasn't enough time. After a couple of sessions, we extended the time to 2 hours.
- Technology

In the online environment, the facilitator couldn't handle all required tasks alone. We ended up with a "tech team" of three: the facilitator who used the share-screen function for moderator slides and other resources as needed; a co-facilitator who managed microphones and electronic hands and also admitted participants who may have joined late, kept an eye out for physical hand raises that the facilitator might miss; a recorder who turned the video recording on and off as needed during the discussion.

As we learned more about and became more comfortable with Zoom, we added some features to each session with the intent of making it easier for participants to engage actively in discussions. We developed "moderator slides," and we added anonymous polling and breakout rooms to the discussion plans.

We used the moderator slides for the technology review so that participants who were unfamiliar with Zoom could see and hear how to accomplish functions such as mute/unmute, video on/off, and raising electronic hands. We also added slides showing breakout room discussion stimulators to provide both auditory and visual input, and we added anonymous polling after we received feedback that the poll didn't appear on the recording.

We learned that polling was easy to do on Zoom and offering the opportunity to respond anonymously to polling questions seemed to reduce participants' reticence to speak out. Polling questions also gave us a sense of the impact of discussions on participants.

We also learned how easy it is to set up and implement Break out rooms on Zoom. From our own teaching backgrounds, we knew that small group discussions of no more than five people was an effective way of engaging participants. Also based on experience, we wanted to have small groups report back to the larger group about their discussions. But we learned from Peggy McIntosh that information shared in small groups is personal and participants may not want their comments shared more broadly. Peggy suggested that, in discussions of race, it may be better to offer individuals the opportunity to share their own "aha" moments if they wish to do so. So, we altered our approach and stepped away from the assumption that we needed to hear testimonies and revelations with our own ears. Relinquishing that aspect of control was a powerful learning for our committee.

A frequently used feature of Zoom is "chat." While that function is activated in our discussions, we have not encouraged its use. Committee members have found chat distracting in other meetings because participants seem to use it for non-substantive comments. The chat transcripts, another nifty feature of Zoom, supports that conclusion.

Self-Education

While we are still far from being experts in race, racism, and social justice, the extent of our reading and research required to prepare for discussions has moved all committee members along in their journeys toward antiracism. We have all commented on this, noting that we now see more clearly instances of individual racism but the institutional and system racism that permeates this country as well. And we find ourselves speaking up and speaking out more often when we hear or see microaggressions and expressions of ignorance about black history and racism.