

**League of Women Voters Minneapolis**  
**September 2022 Unit Meetings**  
**Study Guide and Discussion Questions**  
**Topic: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

**Background:**

Note from Ellen van Iwaarden, Program Chair: This program year we hope to incorporate the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion into all our program topics. We are beginning with an introduction to the topic and a *Civic Buzz* from leaders in the field of helping organizations realize their full potential by embracing diversity. It is with great humility that I write this study guide—I know that many of you may be far more knowledgeable than I am on this subject. I hope you will find these resources helpful for your Unit's discussion.

In her book *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, Robin Diangelo states: "When white people ask me what to do about racism and white fragility, the first thing I ask is, 'What has enabled you to be a full, educated, professional adult and not know what to do about racism?'" She goes on to demonstrate that if we look at how we have managed not to know what to do about racism, it will give us the guide to what we need to do. If we need education about racism, get educated. If we don't know people of color, build relationships. If there are no people of color in your environment, change your environment. And then work to internalize those assumptions so we just aren't changing ourselves but are working to change our institutions. (*White Fragility*, page 144).

As we begin or continue those steps, we need to be sure we know how to communicate with others in way that is going to be productive—that will enable us to convey what we mean and get what we want. One way to start building our communication skills is to get familiar with the idea of cultural competence. This is the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact with people from cultures or belief systems different than your own.

The work on cultural competency has been going on for decades, and leaders in professions such as education and healthcare know that outcomes are better for students and patients, when the professionals honor the beliefs, languages,

styles, and behaviors of those they are working with. Business leaders know that diverse teams work better with cultural competency and that diversity leads to more business success. We all know our world would be better if there were no racism and equality for all.

So we need to dream bigger than just improving ourselves and our League. We need to become antiracists. Ibram X. Kendo, author of *How to be an Antiracist*, defines an antiracist as: “One who is expressing the idea that racial groups are equals and none needs developing, and is supporting policy that reduces racial inequity.” (*How to be an Antiracist*, p. 24). In his book he vividly illustrates what racism and racist behavior are, and how prevalent they are in our society.

Kendo has also said that the heartbeat of racism is denial. Here are some resources to help us continue learning about racism and its devastating effects on people of all colors.

**For more information:**

Join the *Civic Buzz* and hear about cultural competence from experts Rev. Kelly Chatman and Deacon Dan Bielenberg of the Center for Leadership and Neighborhood Engagement on Wednesday, September 7 at 7:00 p.m. Zoom link: <https://lwvmn-org.zoom.us/j/82861428958>

Alexander, Michelle, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, New York, New Press, 2010.

Brown, Dee, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, New York: Open Road Media, 2012.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi, *Between the World and Me*, New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015

Diangelo, Robin, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.

Kendi, Ibram X., “The Heartbeat of Racism is Denial,” *New York Times*, January 13, 2018.

Kendi, Ibram X., *How to be an Antiracist*, New York: One World, 2019.

Morrison, Toni, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, New York: Random House, 1992

Shin, Sun Yung, editor, *A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota*, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2016.

Wilkerson, Isabel, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, New York: Vintage Books, 2011.

There are so many more great books and articles!

### **Discussion Questions:**

What was the first experience that helped you understand, appreciate, and interact with another culture or belief system. How did it impact you?

What is the most recent experience that helped you understand, appreciate, and interact with a culture or belief system different than yours?

What experience or book, film, or article has inspired you the most to be an antiracist? Why?

Empathy is a key component of cultural competency. How do you teach empathy to the people in your life who need more of it?

What ways have you found to expand your environment to include more diversity?

What has been the best way for you to build relationships with people of different cultures, races, and/or belief systems?

What are your ideas on how LWVMpls can expand its community of partners to increase the diversity of our membership?