

# DAY 1: Personal Racial Identity & Privilege

United Way of Washtenaw County has a vision that by 2030 your zip code will no longer predict your opportunity in life. At present in Washtenaw County, [it does](#). With the Governor's "stay home stay safe" in effect until the end of May, we want to make the connection between the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and African American communities and the community conditions which enabled this to occur.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further revealed to us the inequities that are deeply rooted in our systems and institutions-- [a look at local health department data illustrates this reality](#). Over 5 days, you will explore difficult topics like structural racism, segregation, and privilege to open up dialogue on how we can be champions of equity in our personal and professional lives.

Our goal? You take the time to reflect and learn how racial inequities permeate our community on individual, institutional and systemic levels, and how we're seeing these inequities unfold during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are all impacted by the system of racism in our country and therefore all responsible for dismantling the structures that allow it to persist. The final day of the Challenge will offer tools and resources for taking action locally in Washtenaw County

Our hope is that as a result of the Challenge more people in our community, instead of asking "what will someone else do?" will ask "what must I do?"

**Before you get started, if you haven't done so already, please fill out this [pre-event survey](#) to set your intentions and share your goals for the challenge with us.** We also encourage you to download your [Challenge Activity Log](#) – a tool to ensure you are taking full advantage of what the challenge has to offer.

We want to thank the [YWCA of Greater Cleveland](#) and [Food Solutions New England](#) for inspiring this challenge. Food Solutions New England was the first to adapt an exercise from Dr. Eddie Moore and Debby Irving's book into the interactive 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge, which they launched in 2014.

*"Not seeing race does little to deconstruct racist structures or materially improve the conditions which people of colour 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*

*"For those of us called white, whiteness simply is. Whiteness becomes, for us, the unspoken, uninterrogated norm, taken for granted, much as water can be taken for granted by a fish."*  
— [Tim Wise](#), *White Like Me*

Privilege is the unearned social, political, economic, and psychological benefits of membership in a group that has institutional and structural power ([source](#)). There are many types of privilege that different groups have in the US. We commonly hear about privilege because of race or

gender, but privilege also exists for different groups based on religion, sexuality, ability, class, education level. Read more about [5 common types of privilege](#).

Having privilege can give you advantages in life, but having privilege is not a guarantee of success.

## Today's Challenge:

How do you think about your racial identity and its relevance to your work/volunteerism/studies? 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 comes up for you?

**OPTION 1:** Listen to United Way Vice President of Impact and Advocacy Bridget Healy and local minister Darryl Johnson in this [Washtenaw United interview](#) make the connect between the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black and Brown communities, and why a COVID-19 edition of the Equity Challenge is needed now, more than ever.

**OPTION 2:** Watch one or more of the [short videos and reflections from the New York Times](#) on racial identity in America.

**OPTION 3:** [Read this op-ed by Charles M. Bow in the New York Times on how social distancing is a privilege](#) and why the idea that this COVID-19 is an equal-opportunity killer must itself be killed.

**OPTION 4:** Take this eye-opening [privilege self-assessment](#) by BuzzFeed to discover where you are on the spectrum.

**OPTION 5:** Watch this [video from Robin DiAngelo, author of White Fragility](#) about how racism isn't only individual acts of discrimination, it is a deeply embedded system that impacts all of our lives.

**OPTION 6:** [Listen to this Stateside episode with Eddie Moore, Jr., executive director of The Privilege Institute](#), about the White Privilege Conference in Grand Rapids created a space for people to have "tough conversations."

**Share your reflections** on today's topic on social media using the hashtag **#unitedforequity** and tag **@uwwashtenaw**.