DAY 21: Take Action in Washtenaw County

"Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble." – John Lewis, American politician and civil rights activist

About this photo:
Temporary public art installation by artist Kara Springer on the campus of Temple University’s Tyler School of Art.

Over the past 21 days we have engaged together in learning, dialogue and reflection to expose systematic inequities in our community and build upon our various foundations to confront and deconstruct those inequities together.

Today, as we wrap up the 2023 Equity Challenge, we need to bring the focus back to race. As discussed in Day 1’s materials on Levels of Racism and Day 3’s lessons on Institutional and Systemic Racism, the U.S. operates from a racist foundation that systematically oppresses people who are not part of the dominant group (historically white, male, straight, land-owning, etc.). All work to maintain and protect the system of white supremacy.

To work toward equity and justice across all forms of oppression (racism, sexism, ableism, religious persecution, heterosexism, ageism, anti-Semitism and more) we must center race because the system of white supremacy benefits from and expects our silence.

Where do we go from here? The work begins within us all; the work is all of us. In today’s challenge, we encourage you to dig deeper into the frameworks of anti-racism and equity-mindedness. It’s important to note that anti-racism and equity-mindedness will look different for white people, Black people, and people of color. This is an ongoing practice and process for all people, because we all suffer under white supremacy.

Share your reflections on today’s topic on social media using the hashtag #unitedforequity or #uwwcequitychallenge and tag @uwwashtenaw.
Anti-racism and equity-mindedness holds us accountable by requiring us to have an active and consistent practice of using the areas where we have power, influence and privilege to engage in actionable steps to undo behaviors, thoughts and actions that maintain white supremacy.

Please take a moment to complete our post-challenge survey by clicking here.

We challenge each of you to share a reflection on your experience with a family member, friend or co-worker to continue the momentum from this challenge. Thank you for joining us on this journey.

Sincerely,

Pam Smith
President & CEO
United Way of Washtenaw County

Gregory Dill
Board Chair, United Way
County Administrator, Washtenaw County

Today’s Challenge:

Option 1: Join us for our last Community Conversation.

Join other Equity Challenge participants over Zoom on January 31, at 8:00 am, to reflect, share, and take action on what you’ve learned during the Challenge!

This meetup is free and private, allowing participants to openly express their thoughts with others.

Click here to sign up!

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Option 2: Use your voice.

Engaging in advocacy is one way to shift the policies and institutional practices that keep problems in place.

Click here to sign up to receive future action alerts from us!

Option 3: Lend a hand by volunteering.

Find an in-person or virtual volunteer opportunity or nonprofit service project that fits your schedule and interests at VolunteerWashtenaw.org and washtenaw.catchafire.org.

Option 4: Join a movement.

Sign up for one of the learning communities hosted by Nonprofit Enterprise at Work. Want to go further? Apply to Nonprofit Enterprise at Work’s Champions for Change Fellowship, with cohorts designed specifically for leaders of color and white leaders.

Option 5: Explore artistic expressions of social justice.

- Visit Ypsilanti’s Black Lives Matter murals
- Dive into the online gallery from Embracing our Differences Michigan. Inspired? Submit your own quote or artwork for the upcoming 2023 exhibit.
- Check out local artist Yen Azzarro’s digital installation of Altar|Alter, an impassioned homage to the victims and families of anti-Asian hate crimes since the beginning of the Covid pandemic. Trigger warning: This webpage and its contents contain descriptions of violence which you may find disturbing and/or upsetting.
- Support the work of Staying Power, a youth-driven movement for housing justice and belonging through arts advocacy.
- Watch the work of The Guild, a collage of Michigan-based artists best known for their honest and original spoken word poetry, and then book them for your next event.
- Visit the University of Michigan Museum of Modern Art virtual exhibit Unsettling Histories: Legacies of Slavery and Colonialism, curated by Ozi Uduma, assistant global curator for UMMA.

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Option 6: Support a local organization engaged in dismantling racist systems.

We’re relisting the organizations and groups referenced over the past 21 days. *Note: This is not an exhaustive list of anti-racist actors in Washtenaw County.*

- A Brighter Way
- African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County
- Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living
- Avalon Housing
- Black Men Read
- Coalition for Re-Envisioning Our Safety
- Defend Black Voters Coalition
- Dispute Resolution Center
- Our Community Reads
- Peace Neighborhood Center
- Stand with Trans
- Survivors Speak
- Nonprofit Enterprise at Work
- The Michigan Prison Doula Initiative
- The Mutual Aid Network of Ypsilanti
- Trusted Parent Advisors
- Washtenaw County Mutual Aid + Resources group
- We the People Opportunity Farm

Option 7: Shift the way you talk about others.

Creating equitable outcomes requires that we change the way we talk about members of our community, focusing on their aspirations rather than their challenges- this is called asset-framing.

Learn more about how the [Skillman Foundation](https://www.skillmanfoundation.org/) is using asset-framing in their work with Detroit Children, and watch videos from Trabian Shorters, founder and CEO of BMe Community, discuss how to put asset-framing into practice.

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Option 8: Continue your learning journey.

- Participate in a workshop like Bystander Intervention Training from our partners at the Interfaith Council for Peace & Justice.
- Attend an event hosted by Showing Up for Racial Justice-Washtenaw.
- Sign up for Washtenaw Community College’s Race and Ethnic Relations Virtual Learning Series (free).

Don’t forget to complete our post-challenge survey by clicking here.

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