NAACP Berkshire County Branch
White Learning Circle
Second Round
Syllabus
2021-2022

Preparation
Prior to our first meeting, if you have not already done so, please read
Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson
and subscribe to and read regularly
Anti-Racist Daily https://www.antiracismdaily.com/

These publications will provide a basic shared understanding upon which to build in our work together.

Aspirational Outcomes
• We each move forward in our personal journey towards becoming anti-racist;
• We each have become more effective at recognizing and resisting white-centeredness.
• We each are more informed members of the NAACP Berkshire County Branch;
• We each discover one or two areas of particular interest that lead to more in depth study and a commitment to become active in working for change, especially, but not solely through the Berkshire County Branch;
• We each feel supported and energized by belonging to a group of learners committed to fostering racial justice.

Member-led Discussion
In order to stimulate discussion among Circle members, for each session two members will take the lead in presenting their personal responses to the book they read for the topic under discussion. Guiding questions will provide the context for these personal responses. Assignments of lead members for each session will be worked out at the organizational session.

General discussion will follow these presentations. The final half hour of many sessions will be time to engage with a Black Mentor (see below).

Guiding Questions – the framework for approaching the reading
The focus of the Circle is on personal growth in becoming an anti-racist. Each member begins at a unique place in this journey. While books are the primary tool for learning, the Circle is neither a book group, nor an academic course. The guiding questions are intended to promote self-reflection and personal examination rather than being subject focused.

• What surprised you in the book you read and why?
• Did anything you read make you uncomfortable, defensive, or angry and why?
• How did what was presented line up or not line up with your own experience / view of the world?
• What did you learn about white-centering? How has it operated in your personal relationships and the opportunities you have had?
• Did the reading make you reconsider any of your assumptions, behaviors or actions? What changes are you considering?
• What questions did the book raise for you that you are interested in exploring further?
Black mentors
The circle is composed of white members only:
- so members do not refrain from honest speaking for fear of “exposing themselves”
- so white members do not look to a Black person to raise the difficult issues and to make white members feel good;
In order to keep the Black experience framed in our discussion, a Black mentor will attend the last half hour of most meetings to help with questions and issues that arose from our discussion. Most Black mentors will be from the Branch leadership.

Topics
- Early sessions address origins and history of racism, the Black experience and being white;
- Then there will be 8 sessions on NAACP “gamechanger” topics;
- Final sessions will be on white supremacy, and anti-racism.
- Along the way there are two sessions for catch-up and general reflection.

Reading
For each topic there are 3 or 4 choices of books. Offering this limited option affords everyone the opportunity to read something not previously read and facilitates use of a library for access to the books while maintaining a degree of commonality among members to spark discussion. With a few exceptions, these books are all works of Black authors. For each topic there are also two or three other media sources for supplementary exploration.

Session Leaders
For each session, two members will take responsibility for facilitating the session, including:
- preparing ahead by reading one of the books for the topic under discussion;
- time management for the session;
- each making a brief presentation using the book they read and the “guiding questions” as context;
- ensuring inclusive and respectful dialogue/conversation among the group;
- capturing the substance of the group discussion into a question to pose to the Black mentor, as scheduled.
Each member will be a session leader for at least 3 sessions during the course of the Circle.

Rules of Engagement and Expectations
1. Any one may disclose to whomever they please their own participation in the WLC, but no one will disclose the name of anyone else in the Circle.
2. We may share beyond the Circle the general content of discussions, but our individual expressions will remain entirely confidential.
3. We will each participate thoughtfully as both listener and speaker so all voices are present and heard.
4. We will respectfully help each other to recognize our own implicit biases and how they are manifested in our language and ideas.
5. We will prioritize the work in our daily lives and make an effort to be present and prepared for all sessions, both for our own learning and in support of each other.
Calendar

Oct. 3  Organizational Meeting
Overview of plan
Review of Syllabus
Setting up of breakout rooms
Personal introductions
Assigning leaders for each session

Oct. 17  History
Books:
Stamped From the Beginning: a History of Racist ideas in the United States by Ibram X. Kendi
The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson
The Half has Never been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism by Edward Baptist
White Rage: the Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide by Carol Anderson
The Color of Compromise: the Truth about the American Church’s Complicity in Racism by Jemar Tisby

Media:
The 1619 Project
The Origin of Race in the USA from a PBS Series
The Myth of Race Debunked in 3 min.
Race and Racist Institutions – from Stonybrook University
The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross author/host Henry Louis Gates, PBS documentary – widely available in libraries

Black Mentor: Frances Jones-Sneed

Oct. 31  Being Black
Books:
I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness by Austin Channing Brown
Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates
When they Call You a Terrorist by Asha Bandele & Patrisse Khan-Cullors
Born a Crime by Trevor Noah
Eloquent Rage by Brittany Cooper
Heavy by Kiese Laymon

Media:
Who Is Black In America (CNN Documentary)
Race Matters: America in Crisis PBS NewsHour Special

Black Mentor:
Nov. 14  
**Being White**  
**Books:**  
*White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo  
*Mediocre: The Dangerous Legacy of White Male America* by Ijeoma Oluo  
*Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment Is Killing America's Heartland* by Jonathan Metzl  
*The History of White People* by Nell Irvin Painter  

**Media:**  
*Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* Peggy McIntosh, feminist, activist  
*Robin DiAngelo and the Problem With Anti-racist Self-Help: What two new books reveal about the white progressive pursuit of racial virtue* By Danzy Senna  
*White People: I Don't Want You To Understand Me Better, I Want You To Understand Yourselves* by Ijeoma Oluo  
*The White Man's Guilt - Ebony article by James Baldwin*  
*The March of the Karens* by Lagaya Mishan in NYT Magazine  
*The White Savior Industrial Complex* by Teju Cole (Atlantic Magazine)  

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Nov. 28*  
**Time to reflect together**  

*Note: Hanukkah begins at sundown*  

Dec. 12  
**Voting Rights**  
**Books:**  
*One Person, No Vote* by Carol Anderson  
*Slay It Louder* by Tiffany Cross  
*Uncounted: the Crisis of Voter Suppression in America* by Gilda Daniels  

**Media:**  
*Voting Rights Round-up July 2021* Brennan Center for Justice  
*All In: the Fight for Democracy* with Stacey Abrams – documentary on Amazon Prime  
*Whose Vote Counts?* Frontline  

**Black Mentor:**  

Note: 4 week break for winter holiday season  

Jan. 9  
**Education**  
**Books:**  
*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* by Beverly D Tatum  
*Unconscious Bias in Schools* by Tracy A. Benson and Sarah Fiarman  
*Blackballed: the Black & White Politics of Race on America's Campuses* by Lawrence Ross
Media:
Why black girls are targeted for punishment at school -- and how to change that TED talk by Monique W. Morris
Edutopia: Diversity
Why hugging out racism in education just won't cut it | Laura Mae Lindo TED Talk
Learning for Justice from the Southern Poverty Law Center

Black Mentor:

Jan. 23    Environmental Justice
Books:
What the Eyes Don’t See by Mona Hanna-Attisha
Farming While Black by Leah Penniman
The Color of Food by Natasha Bowens

Media:
David Lammy: Climate justice can't happen without racial justice TED talk
Majora Carter: Greening the ghetto TED talk
Climate Justice Alliance
Sunrise Movement

Black Mentor:

Feb. 6    Criminal Justice
Books:
Just Mercy by Bryan Stephenson
The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander
Until We Reckon by Danielle Sered

Media:
The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration by Ta-Nehisi Coates
Slaves of the State 13th Amendment, mass incarceration and the prison industrial complex Educating4Democracy blog
What prosecutors and incarcerated people can learn from each other by Jarrell Daniels TED talk

Black Mentor: Brandon Mauer

Feb. 20    Housing
Books:
Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership by Keenaga-Yamahtta Taylor
Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City by Matthew Desmond
Media:
Shelterforce: the Original Voice of Community Development
What if gentrification was about healing communities instead of displacing them? By Liz Ogbu  TED talk
Mass Fair Housing
Dudley Neighbors Community Land Trust

Black Mentor: Kamaar Taliferro

Mar. 6  Time to reflect together

Mar. 20  Health
Books:
Medical Apartheid by Harriet Washington
Black Man in a White Coat by Damon Tweedy
My Grandmother’s Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies by Resmaa Menakem

Media:
Why your doctor should care about social justice by Mary Bassett  TED talk
How racism makes us sick by David R. Williams  TED talk
The Use of Race in Medicine and Implications for Health Equity  session 1 UCSF School of Medicine

Black Mentor:

April 10  Economic Justice
Books:
The Sum of Us by Heather McGee
The Color of Money: Black Banks and the Racial Wealth Gap by Mehrsa Baradaran
Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance by Edgar Villanueva

Media:
Racism has a cost for everyone by Heather C. McGhee  TED talk
Racial Justice also means Economic Justice excerpt The Laura Flanders Show

Black Mentor:

April 24  Reparations
Books:
From Here to Equality by William Darity and Kirsten Mullen
Long Overdue: the Politics of Racial Reparations by Charles P. Henry
Media:
The Case for Reparations by Ta-Nehisi Coates in The Atlantic
Why We Need Reparations for Black Americans by Rashawn Ray and Andre M. Perry

Black mentor: A.J. Enchill

May 1       White Supremacy

Books:
Everything You Love Will Burn: Inside the Rebirth of White Nationalism in America by Vegas Tenold
American Swastika by Pete Simi and Robert Futrell
Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly About Racism in America by George Yancy

Media:
White Supremacy Culture Tema Okun’s contribution to “our shared anti-racist racial justice commitment”

*Note schedule deviation – to avoid Mothers’ Day

May 15*       Anti-Racism

Books:
How to be an Anti-racist by Ibram X Kendi
Me and White Supremacy by Layla Saad
Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon for White America by Michael Eric Dyson
Letters to My White Male Friends by Das-Devlin Ross

Media:
The difference between being "not racist" and antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi TED talk
Ezra Klein Interviews Ibram X Kendi Transcript from the New York Times

Black Mentor: Shirley Edgerton

May 22       White Learning Circle – Evaluation

*Note schedule deviation – to avoid Memorial Day Weekend