UW-Madison MLK Day Discussion Guide

This discussion guide was created to support the continued and persistent examination of issues of race and racism here at the University of Wisconsin. This guide is intended to build off of the centralized speaker event by providing UW schools, colleges, and departments with a resource to engage in critical conversations at a more local level. Every one of us has a role to play in combating racism and cultivating a more inclusive community. Racism is a campus-wide issue and it is essential that these conversations are happening at every level, within every department, every classroom, and every office in order to ensure a stronger campus community.

This discussion guide was created to complement the MLK Day Speaker, Dr. Mae Jemison, the first woman of color in space. Certain questions and activities may require some familiarity with the speaker. However, this guide also contains questions, activities, and resources that can be used by any audience, whether you’ve seen the speaker or not.

We want to send our thanks and appreciation for folks who are utilizing this guide within their spheres of influence to move these critical conversations forward. It is your passion and dedication that helps us to continue creating a stronger, more equitable campus for all at UW.

Guiding Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to analyze the impact of race and racism within their own lives and at UW-Madison.
2. Participants will be able to identify areas of opportunity for creating a more equitable and inclusive campus within their departments and spheres of influence.
3. Participants will be able to consider the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr and its role in our lives today.
OVERVIEW

How to use this guide:
- We encourage you to structure this conversation in whatever way makes the most sense based on the group the conversation is intended for. What we have provided is a set of considerations, prompts, and activities that may serve to frame and deepen your discussion.
- Activities and prompts can be used in any order for varying amounts of time.
- Although we have no specific guidelines in place for the use of these materials, we recommend scheduling the conversation for a minimum of one and a half hours. The sensitive and complex nature of this topic is best explored when ample time is given.
- Depending on the size of your audience, we recommend a strong blend of small group discussion and large group share out.

Next Steps:
- We encourage you to use this discussion as a stepping stone to continue having these conversations in your workspaces. If you need support in planning a discussion, consider reaching out to relevant campus resources
  - MSC, Morgridge Center, DDEEA, Dean of Students, etc
- Let us know how your conversation went! Please fill out this survey to help us understand your experience with this guide.

(Recommended) Community Expectations:
You may consider using these general expectations as a way to ground the conversation. You should share these with your participants and allow an opportunity for participants to add to and seek clarification on these expectations.
- Listen to understand, not to respond.
  - “Could you tell me more about…?”, “I think I get what you’re saying, but I’m having trouble understanding what you meant by….”
- Be open-minded in conversation and allow yourself to be challenged
- Speak authentically
- What is said here stays here, what is learned here leaves here
- You are not coming into this dialogue working to change people’s minds, you are only seeking to deepen your understanding of others and the topics discussed
- This is a process. Answers to our questions will not be found today. This dialogue will not solve the larger systematic issues shaping our society, this is merely a starting point.
- Accept responsibility for your impact, regardless of your intent.
Intention-setting Introductions
- Name, pronouns
- Position/Role/Major
- 1 insight or lesson you are hoping to get out of the discussion
  - Facilitation tip: Note down some of what people are saying here to reference near the end of the discussion.

Discussion Topics and Activities:

Land Acknowledgement
We encourage you to open your discussions with a reading of UW’s Land Acknowledgement Statement. Then consider briefly reflecting on the impact of the statement by utilizing some questions below.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison occupies ancestral Ho-Chunk land, a place their nation has called Teejop (day-JOPE) since time immemorial. In an 1832 treaty, the Ho-Chunk were forced to cede this territory.

Decades of ethnic cleansing followed when both the federal and state government repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, sought to forcibly remove the Ho-Chunk from Wisconsin.

This history of colonization informs our shared future of collaboration and innovation. Today, UW–Madison respects the inherent sovereignty of the Ho-Chunk Nation, along with the eleven other First Nations of Wisconsin.

Please take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration and settlement that bring us together here today. And please join us in uncovering such truths every day.

Reflection Questions
- What are your initial reactions to the land acknowledgement?
- What are the potential impacts of authentically acknowledging this history of Wisconsin and UW?
- How can this statement frame our conversation today?

Where to learn more on this topic: https://oursharedfuture.wisc.edu/; https://wisconsinfirstnations.org/native-people-wisconsin/
Discussion on Mae Jemison
Time: Variable | Materials needed: None

- What are your thoughts on Mae Jemison’s speech? Were you familiar with her beforehand? Did you learn anything new?
- In her talk, Jemison spoke heavily about the importance of representation. As a child, she was frequently frustrated by the lack of women astronauts, let alone black women astronauts. She states that she was excited by Star Trek’s inclusion of a black woman as an officer on the Starship Enterprise.
  - Besides Mae Jemison, can you name any other scientists or astronauts of color? How about white scientists or astronauts? Why might it be easier to identify white scientists compared to scientists of color?
  - What are the benefits of inclusion and representation? Who benefits when a stronger diversity of people is included and represented within an organization?
  - If we think about our own campus, who is primarily represented here? How does that representation vary when we look at the student, staff, and faculty populations? Who is represented in high-level leadership?
  - What role can we play in building a more inclusive and diverse campus population?
- Jemison also spoke about the importance of interdisciplinary teams and approaches to solving complex issues. What are other important lenses that guide your work/life that may not align with your academic focus?
  - How might we translate this interest into forming strategic campus and community partnerships to enhance our work? What are some offices, organizations, or connections that you might consider engaging to add a unique lens to your work?
  - Interdisciplinary work was also a way in which Jemison found community. By engaging with African American Studies and Dance, Jemison was able to more easily find community to support her success throughout her journey.

Activity: Quotes
Time: 15 - 20 minutes | Materials needed: Tape, printed quotes
Description: Provide participants with the list of quotes. Give participants time to read through the list and select a quote that resonates with them. In pairs, have the participants discuss their selected quotes in relation to the guiding questions. After a reasonable amount of time, bring the group back together to share out any takeaways or interesting points of discussion.
Facilitation Tip: Copy these quotes into a separate document and print them off and cut them out so you can post them around the room, to give participants a chance to move around.

- “Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains some people more than having to think.”
- “If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.”
- “There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular, but he must take it because his conscience tells him it is right.”
- “Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”
- “Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will.”
- “We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”
- “A riot is the language of the unheard.”
- “He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it. He who accepts evil without protesting against it is really cooperating with it.”
- “History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.”
- "Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education."
- "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."
- “Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.”

Guiding Questions for quotes:
- Why does this quote resonate with you?
- Consider aspects of your identity (i.e. race, gender, age), how do those aspects of your identity impact your relationship to this quote?
- How might the quote’s meaning have evolved from MLK’s time to now?
- What connections, if any, does your quote have to higher education? To UW? To your work?
Activity: My Personal History Map
Time: 20 - 30 minutes | Materials needed: Paper, pens, markers

Give participants about 10 minutes to construct a timeline of history that has influenced them or their current world in some way. The timeline does not need to include just personal history (i.e. birth, graduation) but can also include familial history (i.e. immigration, death) as well as global history (i.e. colonization, civil rights protests). See attached example for reference.

After 10 minutes, have participants break up into small groups (2-3 people per group) and discuss their timelines. Allow participants at least 10-15 minutes to discuss.

Consider this MLK quote as prompt for discussion:
“We are not makers of history, we are made by history.”
- Do you agree with this statement? What history has made us?
- What impact does the history of racism in the U.S., this university, and in our own lives, have on us today?
- In what ways can we disrupt the impact of this history?

Examining UW's history: Then and now
Time: 20 - 30 minutes | Materials needed: Printed demands (see links below)


Using the two documents as a guide, break the group up into three teams. Each team will receive a copy of both documents. One team will focus on what is unique about the 1969 demands, another team on the 2019 demands, and the third team will look for points of similarity between the two documents. Allow each group approximately 10-15 minute to review their documents and compile their ideas. Findings from each group will be compiled into a Venn Diagram as a way of comparing and contrasting the documents. Once all groups have contributed to the Venn Diagram, engage in a large group discussion on the findings.

Consider these questions for further reflection:
- Were you familiar with any of this history? If not, why do you think that is?
- How does UW’s history of racism, whether it be the events of 1969, the rich, but often forgotten history of the indigenous land and its people, or the KKK names present on rooms in the Memorial Union, shape our relationship to this university?
- What role, if any, do we have in addressing, calling out, acknowledging, this history?
- Considering the 2019 demands, what actions can we be taking today to prevent the repetition of these histories?

Where to learn more: https://www.instagram.com/sicofuw/

Women of Color in STEM
Time: 15 - 20 minutes | Materials needed: Article (see below)

- Allow everyone a few minutes to read this article: https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190416170914.htm
- In small groups, have participants discuss the following questions:
  - What were your reactions to reading this article? If you are a professor or staff, did you feel a sense of belonging when you started in your field? What contributed to that?
  - The study suggests that black women are likely to experience a stronger sense of belonging when they encounter more faculty who resemble them. Do you think your own department feels representative of a diverse array of students? If not, what role can you play in supporting students of color?
  - Retention of faculty of color is another issue that UW faces. Representation is just one aspect of feeling a sense of belonging. Feeling supported and valued is another. What work is being done or could be done in your unit to ensure adequate support of faculty and staff of color?
- Share out in large group to close activity.

Where to learn more: https://www.sswoc.org/
Service and MLK Day: Video and Discussion
Time: 10 - 15 minutes | Materials needed: Video player

Description: This commercial (linked below) from the 2018 Super Bowl uses a component of MLK’s The Drum Major speech to make a point about service, in order to sell a truck. In that same speech, MLK criticizes the power of advertisers who try to tell us which products we should buy and what we should believe those products say about us. Using the questions below, grapple with the relationship between these two pieces.

- Video: [Dodge Ram Super Bowl Commercial](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=example_video_id) (1 minute)
- Note: This video does not include captions. See the transcript below
- Excerpt from the same speech:
  - “Now the presence of this instinct explains why we are so often taken by advertisers. You know, those gentlemen of massive verbal persuasion. And they have a way of saying things to you that kind of gets you into buying. In order to be a man of distinction, you must drink this whiskey. In order to make your neighbors envious, you must drive this type of car. In order to be lovely to love you must wear this kind of lipstick or this kind of perfume. And you know, before you know it, you're just buying that stuff. That's the way the advertisers do it.”
  - MLK’s Sermon, *The Drum Major Instinct*

- Guiding questions:
  - What are your reactions to the commercial? Do you recall seeing it when it aired? Did you have any reactions then?
  - What is MLK’s argument with this excerpt from his speech? What’s the commercial’s relationship to that argument?
  - Have “social justice” type language and ideas been co-opted by advertising and companies? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?
    - What is gained from “socially aware” companies? What is lost?

Transcript: “If you want to be important, wonderful. If you want to be recognized, wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That’s a new definition of greatness. By giving that definition of greatness it means that everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You don’t have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. You don’t have to know Einstein’s theory of relativity to serve. You don’t have to know about the second theory of thermodynamics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace and a soul generated by love and you can be that servant.”
Personal Reflection Activity (window pane)
Time: 10 minutes | Materials needed: Sheets of paper

- This is a personal reflection tool intended to be completed individually during the session. We recommend you give participants about 10 minutes to complete this activity. Participants, may write, draw, whatever makes sense for them. You may choose to give participants an opportunity to share out in small groups, or you may simply close the activity by thanking participants for taking the time to reflect.
- Facilitation tip: Post the questions so they are visible to all and have participants draw their own boxes on their piece of paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why is it still important to celebrate the legacy of MLK and question the relevancy of his work today?</th>
<th>What role do you play in either perpetuating or challenging systems of racial inequity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How are you going to remain committed to this issue beyond this single day of service?</td>
<td>Reflect on the MLK quote: &quot;Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Large Group Closing Discussion
Time: 10 - 15 minutes | Materials: Poster paper

- Prompt: Events like MLK Day and African American history month are wonderful events, but far too often they are used to "check the box" of discussing diversity and inclusion. Moving towards meaningful change requires us to consider these issues each day within our daily practice and lives. With all that has been discussed today in mind, what next steps can you or your office take to continue to grapple with these questions and move towards meaningful change?
- If time allows, these proclamations can be used as fuel for more discussion. Consider what the proposed actions look like for folks and what barriers exist to actualizing that action.