

In truth, all of our topics are timely, kept up to date with current information, and relevant to the challenges we’re facing as a society at present. But if you’re looking for program options that most explicitly connect with the news headlines right now, we suggest the following:

Canaries in the Coal Mine: Attending to Racial Health Disparities in the Age of COVID-19*

This presentation provides a close look at the impacts of health disparities among diverse racial/ethnic groups in the US and how these affect COVID-19 illness and deaths today. We will examine the historical and contemporary factors that created and maintain shockingly wide – and often lethal – gaps in health and healthcare. These factors include the racial wealth gaps, poverty, food deserts, and environmental pollution that result from residential segregation. Such stressful conditions contribute to higher rates of heart and lung diseases, diabetes and obesity in the African American and other marginalized communities, leading to more severe illness and much higher death rates from COVID-19. The availability and quality of medical care is seriously affected by two additional factors: the well-researched unconscious bias within the predominantly white medical community and distrust, particularly within the black community, based on historical mistreatment, including experimentation on the enslaved, the historical desecration of graves for medical cadavers, and the infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment. Finally, we look at the critical urgency of correcting these disparities to improve the health of the entire US public – during the current pandemic and beyond.

*A saying that refers to the caged canary birds that miners used to carry. If dangerous gases like carbon monoxide collected in the mine, these would kill the canaries before killing the miners, thus providing a warning to exit the mines immediately.

4-Lecture Series: Do Black Lives Matter? The Devaluation of Black Lives in...

These four two hour-long presentations will examine the hot topic of Black Lives Matter by asking the question: Have black lives mattered in our society historically? The sessions are designed to provide historical context for the present day dilemma facing blacks in America. The sessions will trace: the history of legal and extra legal violence against blacks, pseudo-scientific justifications for devaluing blacks, lynchings and race riots, a history of American policing of blacks, scientific and medical experimentation on blacks and the psychological impacts of this devaluation on black lives, as well as laws and court decisions that have led to the devaluation of black lives.

While this material is most impactful as a series, we can also offer any of of the sessions as a stand-alone lecture if preferred.

Introduction

- How have black lives been devalued in America from 1619 to 2015?
- How did the historical mistreatment of blacks in America evolve from the time of the first enslaved Africans being brought to Jamestown, through modern times?
- What psychological damage was done to blacks during slavery and Jim Crow?
- How does the historical inferiority complex suffered by blacks impact present-day self-devaluation, self-hatred and intrapersonal violence?

Politics and Law

- What were the debates about slavery and citizenship rights for blacks?
- Why was a Civil Rights movement necessary in light of the legal protections already in place?
- What roles have political parties and the legislative and judicial branches of our government played in African American lives?

Science and Medicine

- Is it true that black bodies have been used as experimental tools by medical schools and the US government?
- How did the giants of psychology, such as Jung, Skinner and Freud, view people of African descent?
- What is now known about the epigenetic effects of trauma resulting from the devaluation of black lives?

Criminal Justice

- Where, when, and why did night riding, lynchings, and race riots happen – and what repercussions from these are still felt today?
- How did the current relationship between the police and the Black community evolve?
- What accounts for the racial disparities in the application of the death penalty?

Popular Introductory Lectures

These are programs we do regularly and are appropriate for most adult audiences:

The Hidden Impact of Segregation

Residential segregation did not happen by accident – and it has many damaging ramifications for our communities’ and country’s well-being. This talk uncovers the little known political, economic, and social forces that created and maintain residential segregation locally and nationally. In a lecture that is both data-based and surprisingly engaging, Reggie Jackson illuminates the roles of federal and local governments, the real estate industry, and a de- industrializing economy in creating this situation.

How We Got Here: The Hidden History of Diversity in America

This talk takes a long look at American history and explores our national ambivalence about diversity and inclusion. We examine the legal and social treatment of Native Americans, enslaved Africans, White Ethnic immigrants (such as the Irish, Italians, and Jews), as well as immigrants and refugees from Asia and Latin America – and how those experiences have led to the racial and ethnic disparities we witness today.

The 2.2 Million: The History and Human Cost of Mass Incarceration

In this talk we expose the roots of our country’s current system of mass incarceration, including the laws and policies which have made it possible to incarcerate over 2 million Americans. Wisconsin exemplifies many of the issues in this system, so we examine its correctional system in detail: where and why we’ve built prisons around the state, who’s in them, why our prison population keeps growing – and the costs to both families and communities back home.

Unconscious Bias: Can We See Our Own Blind Spots?

Incorporating fun, interactive exercises, we explore how our normal brains serve as effective pattern-making machines that unconsciously “prime” us for stereotyping – whether we intend it or not. We examine how the concept of race developed throughout US history and how this history and human tendency towards bias helped create and maintain today’s systemic racial inequities. We explore together how bias affects daily life, and whether something this difficult to perceive can ever be changed.

Building Racial Understanding

How did we become so divided by race? In this presentation, we take a close look at the forces that have created and maintained racial divisions throughout our nation’s history. We also present some common sense solutions that individuals and institutions can use to move us toward an equitable, diverse society in which all Americans can thrive.

Truth-telling as Healing: How We Can Answer Dr. King’s Call

Dr. King declared, “A man dies when he refuses to take a stand for that which is true.” But standing for the truth – or even just facing it – can be uncomfortable, so why do it? We see recognizing the hard truths of American history as an essential step towards racial repair, reconciliation, and healing. In this interactive, multimedia presentation, we explore the questions: How can truth lead to healing, what truths must we face, how is truth now being acknowledged in our country, and how might Dr. King and other truth tellers inspire and guide our actions? [Note: this presentation is generally shorter than the others on our list.]

Other Lectures

These programs are either more advanced in some way or more specialized. If one of them looks appealing, let’s talk briefly to make sure it’s a great fit for you.

Urban Myths or Realities? MKE Matters for Suburbanites

Many people of good conscience who live in the suburbs, exurbs and rural communities encircling WI’s largest city have questions about what’s really going on in the city, whether and how this might affect them and their children now and into the future. We examine such questions as: What’s the deal with black-on-black crime? Why do there seem to be more black youth in prison than in college? Are MPS schools failing, or it is that black kids and parents fail to properly value education? Is poverty moving into the suburbs?

Raising Suburban Kids for Success in a Multicultural Democracy

In 2020, just half of all infants born in the US will be white. Though many of us are raising white kids in predominantly affluent white communities, they will live their adult lives in a highly connected, very racially and culturally diverse globalized society. This talk examines questions like: How are our schools preparing kids for a diverse and inclusive society? How can we as parents and grandparents help suburban children understand, relate well to, and collaborate with people whose lived experiences, perspectives, and styles differ from their own?

From Good Will to Good Work: How People of Conscience Can Create a Just Society

Throughout history there have always been white people who supported the struggles of African Americans and other marginalized groups to realize America’s promise of liberty and justice for all. We may have learned of a few of these, like abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Angelina Grimke, in school. Sadly though, most of their stories are still unsung. This talk introduces us to white people of conscience past and present, providing role models and guidance for those of us who wish to learn from their examples.

Custom Lectures

We would be happy to talk with you about creating a custom presentation that combines elements from the above or integrates other topics in order to meet the unique needs of your audience.