

WLA EDI Open Conversations

This virtual space is intended to be a forum for **discussion** of ideas and for learning about differing viewpoints, not for **debate**. In discussions equity, diversity, and inclusion, it's important to understand that everyone sees and experiences the world differently - what seems "right" in your experience may not be so in someone else's. Everyone is asked to consider different perspectives, for the purpose of sensitivity, learning, and growth. To that end, there are some guidelines for participating in this space that we ask that everyone follow. It will be helpful to read and review these guidelines prior to each meeting to help get people in the right frame of mind for these discussions. Please read [WLA's EDI Statement](#) as well.

Discussion Guidelines:

1. Listen actively -- respect others when they are talking, no interrupting.
2. Speak from your own experience instead of generalizing (Use "I" instead of "they," "we," and "you").
3. Do not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions, but refrain from personal attacks -- focus on ideas.
4. Share responsibility for including all voices in the conversation. If you tend to have a lot to say, make sure you leave sufficient space to hear from others. If you tend to stay quiet in group discussions, challenge yourself to contribute so others can learn from you.
5. Understand that we are bound to make mistakes in this space, as anyone does when approaching complex tasks or learning new skills. Strive to see your mistakes and others' as valuable elements of the learning process.
6. Understand that your words have effects on others. Speak with care. If you learn that something you've said was experienced as disrespectful or marginalizing, listen carefully and try to understand that perspective. Learn how you can do better in the future.
7. Notice your own defensive reactions and attempt to use these reactions as entry points for gaining deeper self-knowledge, rather than as a rationale for closing off.
8. Instead of invalidating somebody else's story with your own spin on their experience, share your own story and experience.
9. The goal is not to agree -- it is to gain a deeper understanding.
10. Be conscious of body language and nonverbal responses -- they can be as disrespectful as words. This can be difficult via Zoom, but feel free to turn off your camera if needed.
11. Not Experts: Facilitators from the EDI committee are not "experts." They are here to help facilitate the process. They and everyone in the group are here to learn. We also recognize that everyone has an opinion.
12. Ask for help: It's okay not to know. Keep in mind that we are all still learning and are bound to make mistakes when approaching a complex task or exploring new ideas. Be open to changing your mind, and make space for others to do so as well.