

League of Women Voters of Florida

**Diversity Equity and Inclusion Work
Plan for Florida Leagues**



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INTRODUCTION

Following the June 2018 National Convention of the League of Women Voters, Chris Carson, LWVUS president & Virginia Kase, LWVUS CEO released a statement declaring the League's commitment to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion of Leagues at the national, state, and local level and provided guidance and tools to help with the fulfillment of this commitment.

"The League of Women Voters serves millions of voters in underrepresented communities across America every year, but as an organization, our membership does not always reflect the communities we serve. As we approach our 100th anniversary, we are not only striving for better, we will do better.

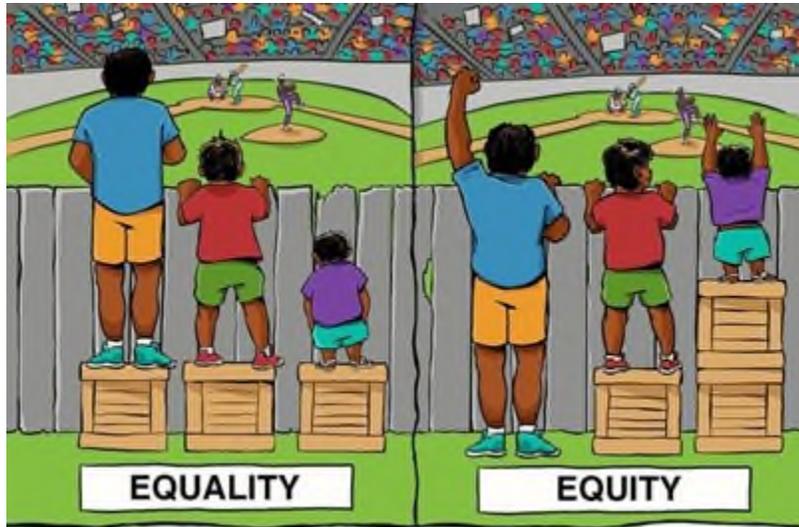
We are having tough conversations about race in this country—and making sure that as an organization we confront our place in history. African Americans were shut out of the vision of the League. As we continue to grow our movement, we acknowledge our privilege and must use our power to raise the voices of those who haven't always had a seat at the table".²²

Diversity refers to population groups that have been historically underrepresented in socially, politically, and economically powerful institutions and organizations. These groups are commonly racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, LGBTQ persons, and people with disabilities.

Equity is a policy of fairness that ensures all are given equal opportunities. This means that resources may be divided and shared unequally to make sure that each person has a fair chance to succeed. Equity takes into account that people have unequal access to resources because of a social system of oppression and privilege. Equity seeks to balance that disparity.

Equity prioritizes efforts to ensure the most underserved and marginalized among us has as much of an opportunity to succeed as the most well-served and advantaged. By considering the various advantages and disadvantages that people face, we work to ensure every person has an equal opportunity to succeed.

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Artwork by Angus Maguire, <http://beclouded.net>

Inclusion refers to the degree to which diverse individuals can participate fully in the decision-making processes within an organization or group. Inclusiveness enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected, engaged, motivated, and valued for their contributions toward organizational and societal goals.¹²

In January 2019, Florida League President, Patricia Brigham tasked LWVFL Speakers Bureau Chair, Ethelene Jones and LWVFL Membership Chair, Betty Haynes with creating a work plan local Leagues could use to increase their diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The findings and proposals in this work plan are based on two years of study, that included:

- Examination of the diversity status of local Florida Leagues in representative regions of the state and the population demographics of their surrounding communities.
- Interviews of League members about their experiences and perceptions vis-à-vis League diversity.
- Study of books, articles, and podcasts about factors that impede organizational diversity.
- Participation in training workshops on the historical roots of biased governmental policies and laws that led to systemic racial inequities in the U.S.
- Attendance at webinars, panel discussions and lectures concerning organizational diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A diverse group of thirteen League members, including nine League leaders, collaborated in the development of this work plan. Several are alumni of Phase 1 Racial Equity Institute 2-day training workshops.

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BACKGROUND

Florida is a large state encompassing regions with remarkably varied demographic characteristics and historical attitudes about race and diversity. Some Florida local Leagues exhibit a strong dissimilarity between the racial makeup of their membership versus the racial demographics of their surrounding communities. Other Leagues have little racial diversity but are reflective of the racial makeup of their communities. The latter are generally White Leagues in White communities.

Often, throughout United States history, racial bias has been codified in federal, state, and local policies, regulations, laws, and practices that implicitly, but affirmatively advantage White people. They define Whites and White culture (physical characteristics, religion, family structure, speech patterns, clothing, music, etc.) as the norm while disadvantaging non-Whites and defining non-White cultures as inferior. Consider these historic examples:

- State-mandated segregation of the military, public transportation, schools, and businesses.
- State felon disenfranchisement laws from the 1860s to modern times.
- The "redlining" policy of the **Federal Housing Administration (FHA)**. Established in 1934, the FHA provided mortgage insurance to middle class and lower-middle-income families for affordable housing but refused to insure mortgages in any neighborhood where Black people were allowed to live. This policy played a major role in urban segregation, the creation of urban ghettos, and the inability of Blacks to create wealth through home ownership and today's racial wealth gap. Not until thirty-four years later did the Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibit redlining policies.
- **The Social Security Act of 1935** specifically excluded domestic & agricultural workers, groups that were disproportionately people of color. As a result, sixty-five percent of African Americans were denied the opportunity to participate in this social insurance program that provided income after retirement, thus contributing to the Black/White wealth gap. Legislation expanding coverage to all domestic workers and farmworkers did not arrive until 1954.
- **The GI Bill of 1944** sent WWII veterans to college, but White colleges would not accept Black veterans and historically Black colleges and universities could not meet the demand. Job training counselors matched veterans with jobs based on skills veterans gained in the military. For men of color, these were menial jobs such as cooks and dishwashers.
- The **War on Drugs of 1984** levied a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years without parole for possession of 5 grams of crack cocaine (which was the form most used in Black communities) while it mandated the same for possession of 500 grams of powder cocaine - the most common form used among affluent White communities.³³ The result was mass incarceration of Black men and the destruction of minority families.

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Local League	1. What do you guess is the approximate percent of members in your League who are Black?	2. What do you guess is the approximate percent of members in your League who are Latino?	3. Do Black or Latino members drop out of the league at a higher rate than other members?
Alachua	Less than 5 percent: 28%	Less than 5 percent: 10%	No
Bay	Over 15%: 12%	Less than 5 percent: 7%	No; >Minorities<Whites
Broward	Over 15%; 30	10 to 15%; 30%	No
Citrus	Less than 5 percent: 3%	Less than 5 percent: 6%	No
Charlotte	; 6%	; 7%	
Collier	Less than 5 percent; 7%	Less than 5 percent: 28%	No
Hillsborough	; 18%	; 28%	
Jacksonville/1st Coast	Less than 5 percent; 31%	Less than 5 percent; 9%	No
Lee	5 to 10 percent; 9%	5 to 10 percent; 21%	No
Lower Keys (Key West)	; 13%	; 24%	
Manatee	; 9%	; 17%	
Martin	Less than 5 percent; 6%	Less than 5 percent; 14%	No
Miami-Dade	; 18%	; 69%	
North Pinellas	; 11%	; 10%	
Okaloosa/Walton	; 5%	; 6%	
Orange	Less than 5 percent; 23%	5 to 10 percent; 31%	No
Palm Beach	5 to 10 percent; 20%	Less than 5 percent; 22%	No
Pensacola Bay Area	; 29%	; 5%	
Polk	0 Percent; 16%	Less than 5 percent; 24%	No
Sanibel	; <1%	; 1%	
Sarasota	; 5%	; 9%	
Seminole	10 to 15%; 13%	Less than 5 percent; 21%	No
Space Coast (Brevard)	Less than 5 percent; 11%	Less than 5 percent; 11%	No
St. Lucie County	; 21%	; 20%	
St. Petersburg (Pinellas)	Less than 5 percent; 11%	Less than 5 percent; 10%	No
Tallahassee	; 35%	; 7%	
Tri-County Villages	Less than 5 percent; <1%	Less than 5 percent; 2%	No
Upper Keys	Less than 5 percent; 2%	Less than 5 percent; 23%	No
Volusia	Less than 5 percent; 11%	Less than 5 percent; 15%	No
Leagues in Bold font: Leagues in counties in which more than 25% of population is Black and Hispanic. Bold percentages: percent of the described demographic in the local population.			

Selected Florida Counties Census Data Population estimates July 1, 2019

2020 Presidential Preference Primary Election Book Closing: February 18, 2020 - Registered Voters by Race

SOURCES: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>

<https://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/voter-registration-statistics/bookclosing/bookclosing-reports-regular/>

<https://dos.myflorida.com/media/702730/2-by-county-by-race.pdf>

	FLORIDA	Leon (Tallahassee)	Alachua	Seminole	Orange
Total Population 7/1/19 (Estimate)	21,477,737	293,582	269,073	471,826	1,393,452
Registered Voters	13,701,765	215,428	184,091	318,413	845,817
Percent of Population registered to vote	64%	73%	64%	67%	61%
Black or African American alone ^(a)	3,651,215	93,946	56,505	61,337	320,494
Percent of population	17%	32%	21%	13%	23%
Percent registered (of their respective population)	49%	66%	53%	53%	45%
# Registered (2/18/2020)	1,837,915	62,035	29,997	32,634	144,095
Hispanic or Latino ^(b)	5,582,121	20,551	26,907	103,802	445,905
Percent of population	26%	7%	10%	22%	32%
Percent registered (of their respective population)	57%	47%	53%	47%	48%
# Registered (2/18/2020)	2,320,811	9,623	14,044	49,107	212,921
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	11,383,201	167,342	164,135	283,096	557,381
Percent of population	53%	57%	61%	60%	40%
Percent registered (of their respective population)	73%	76%	74%	72%	70%
# Registered (2/18/2020)	8,541,744	127,526	121,248	203,517	389,139
Asian alone	644,332	11,743	16,144	23,591	83,607
Percent of population	3%	4%	6%	5%	6%
Percent registered (of their respective population)	2%	35%	44%	40%	39%
# Registered (2/18/2020)	273,079	4,074	7,061	9,371	32,417

(a) Included persons reporting only one race

(b) Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories

Selected Florida Counties Census Data Registered Voters by Race as of 2020/02/18

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Selected Florida Counties Census Data Population estimates July 1, 2019
2020 Presidential Preference Primary Election Book Closing: February 18, 2020 - Registered Voters by Race

SOURCES: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>
<https://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/voter-registration-statistics/bookclosing/bookclosing-reports-regular/>
<https://dos.myflorida.com/media/702730/2-by-county-by-race.pdf>

	FLORIDA	Hillsborough	Manatee	Palm Beach	Miami-Dade
Total Population 7/1/19 (Estimate)	21,477,737	1,471,968	403,253	1,496,770	2,716,940
Registered Voters	13,701,765	878,811	256,206	976,612	1,470,194
Percent of Population registered to vote	64%	60%	64%	65%	54%
Black or African American alone ^(a)	3,651,215	264,954	36,293	299,354	489,049
Percent of population	17%	18%	9%	20%	18%
Percent registered (of their respective population)	50%	52%	46%	46%	51%
# Registered (2/18/2020)	1,837,915	136,527	16,852	137,848	247,480
Hispanic or Latino ^(b)	5,582,121	426,871	68,553	344,257	1,874,689
Percent of population	26%	29%	17%	23%	69%
Percent registered (of their respective population)	42%	37%	26%	35%	45%
# Registered (2/18/2020)	2,320,811	157,789	18,069	119,120	850,102
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	11,383,201	706,545	286,610	823,224	353,202
Percent of population	53%	48%	71%	54%	13%
Percent registered (of their respective population)	75%	72%	72%	77%	73%
# Registered (2/18/2020)	8,541,744	505,497	207,202	635,195	257,406
Asian alone	644,332	58,868	8,065	44,903	54,338
Percent of population	3%	4%	2%	3%	2%
Percent registered (of their respective population)	42%	44%	51%	41%	32%
# Registered (2/18/2020)	273,079	25,811	4,138	18,618	17,214
(a) Included persons reporting only one race					
(b) Hispanics may be of any race, so also are included in applicable race categories					
Selected Florida Counties Census Data Registered Voters by Race as of 2020/02/18					

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Work Plan Goals

1. The plan's first priority is voter registration, education and outreach to large groups that are historically underserved by Leagues - Black and Latino residents, especially those with lower incomes.
2. The plan should promote increased recruitment and retention of Black and Latino members and focus on nurturing a sense of belonging and purpose for members with different backgrounds.
3. The plan should promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in every aspect of the organization.

Work Plan Phase I - Study

The societal upheaval of 2020 that produced nationwide recognition and alarm over racial disparities has intensified the expectation that leading organizations like ours will respond with self-examination to expose and eradicate policies and practices that are implicitly racially biased.

The challenge to Leagues is not simply to recruit a diverse membership, but to also network with minority leaders and join in coalition with diverse organizations within our local areas to address common concerns.

We must examine how the longstanding, deep-rooted culture of race in American society has prevented meaningful diversity within the League for 100 years despite past efforts and the best intentions of the organization. Without training and intentional action, the reshaping of League culture will not happen, and Leagues will lose relevance to the communities around them. Any plan to promote DEI in an organization must take into consideration that its members – both White and non-White – are at various stages in their awareness of pervasive implicit systemic racism and how to deal with it.¹ Just like businesses, governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations across the nation are doing, local, state, and national Leagues should seek funds to provide professional racial equity training for League leaders to help us develop the tools and skills we need to successfully guide us in today's multiracial, multicultural society. DEI-trained leadership is a requisite for successful, inclusive organizations serving diverse communities.

It is common for both Black and White leaders to report experiencing an epiphany when they participated in intensive Diversity-Equity-Inclusion training workshops. A local League leader wrote the following concerning a meeting for Racial Equity Institute workshop alumni:

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“This workshop was for those embarking on the search... One thing that was made abundantly clear during workshop discussion: it is critical that anyone involved in this work participate in the REI two-day workshop. It is imperative, for me, to understand that much of what we see as working just fine - our organizational structures - work well for those who created them, and who are ever more desperately seeking to maintain control of them. The first big job isn't institutional change, which I heard many times during the workshop. The first big job is to acquire the humility and commitment for self-examination regarding personal attitudes, when adopting a defensive stance will be the automatic first response to the insights required to proceed on the road to achieve equity.”

Another League leader, commenting about systemic implicit bias said:

“We (White and Black Leaguers) are all in this together!”

Training that elucidates implicit systemic racism and imparts understanding that systemic implicit bias – **NOT conscious, intentional individual or organizational racial bigotry** – is what undermines attempts to implement diversity, equity, and inclusion in organizations like the League. Trained leaders can guide and support a League DEI task force to begin work on Phase II, Implementation.

Work Plan Phase II – Implementation

The pursuit of diversity, equity and inclusion is a long-term commitment. It may require years of intentional direction to infuse DEI into League culture. LWV of Florida will begin its DEI campaign by presenting the DEI Work Plan to the Boards of local Leagues that meet the following criteria:

1. They are large organizations. Larger Leagues have the potential to establish relationships with large minority groups in their communities. DEI policies and practices offer the potential to form large coalitions that can wield substantial influence with elected politicians and agencies. The prospect of such power is a healthy incentive to succeed in building diverse coalitions.
2. There is a significant disparity between the racial makeup of the membership of the local Leagues and the racial makeup of their surrounding populations.

Coordination of the work of local Leagues will be managed at the State League level. Progress will be documented and shared with the Florida LWV Board and the LWVUS DEI Committee to promote best practices for LWV Leagues.

The faces of DEI leadership on every level of the League must be the those of committed, trusted League leaders who are trained in the recognition of implicit organizational bias and are committed to carrying out strategies to reduce or eliminate it.

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What follows are suggestions for beginning this work.

A. Appoint and Train Local League DEI Task Force Members

The Board of the local League should create a 4-member DEI Task Force of two White members and two African American members with these qualifications:

1. Strong commitment to the goals of the work plan.
2. Commitment to participate in racial equity training if they have not already had such training.
3. Extensive experience in successfully collaborating with persons who are racially/ethnically unlike themselves.

A review of racial equity literature and League members' descriptions of their own observations suggest that many League members – Black as well as White - accept and support recommendations on matters of race more readily from a respected, well-known, and well-liked leader who is White than from one who is Black.^{1,3} The stark reality is that some Leagues are not ready to view non-Whites as “trusted voices” of leadership.

The DEI Task Force should have a Black co-chair and a White co-chair. All four members should share responsibility and respect in equitable measures within the Task Force – operating as a model of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

B. Define the Task Force's Role and Establish Procedures for Task Force Operation

The role of the DEI Task Force is to consult with the local League Board and committees to promote and document diversity, equity, and inclusion considerations in all aspects of the League's policies and actions. Procedures should be established to address these questions:

1. How will the Task Force interact with the Board, standing committees and issue committees?
2. How will incidents or complaints of bias be managed/resolved?
3. How frequently should the Task Force provide a report to the Board?

C. Lay the groundwork

Communicate to every member by email or newsletter that the Task Force has been established to help the League realize the long-term commitment of the national League of Women Voters is to increase diversity of the League on every level - national, state, and local.

*“We have embraced a new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy. We know policy alone does not solve a problem. The League is committed to living our values and prioritizing inclusion”.*²²

D. Assess Current League Status

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Assess your League's current status on the *Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization*.²⁵ It is available at <https://philanos.org/Anti-Racist-Organizations>.

1. Assess what is the racial make-up of your League Board? Of the nominating Committee? Of issue committee chairpersons?
2. Review who are your minority action 'partner' groups within your county, such as the National Organization of 100 Black Women, NAACP, sororities and fraternities, social activist groups, etc. How often do you work together or interact? Do you attend their events?
3. Plan activities to assess knowledge, awareness, and attitudes of active local League members concerning implicit racial bias.
4. Review existing policies or practices of the local League to rule out implicit bias. For example, are monthly meetings held at venues where non-whites feel welcome? Do your website, newsletter and distributed literature include images of non-Whites? Refer to, *"What to Ask When Examining Your Work Through a DEI Lens"*.³⁹

E. Take Action

The League of Women Voters of the US (LWVUS) web pages provide guidance, tools and resources for Leagues engaged in building DEI into the fabric of their organizations. **See *DEI Checklist*¹¹ and *DEI Webinars*¹³.**

1. In keeping with our mission to empower voters, Leagues should actively and consistently seek opportunities to provide voter registration and education services to underserved minority and low-income communities. Recruitment of Black and Latino members will flow naturally as outreach activities bring League members into regular contact with minority community members who share an interest in educating voters and defending democracy. Leagues that recognize and eliminate implicit organizational bias from their policies, practices, and procedures offer a more comfortable, considerate, and welcoming environment for their minority members.
2. In leagues that have only token numbers of minorities, the opinions, recommendations, and priorities of minority members are often disregarded or rejected by the larger, overwhelmingly White majority. Retention and recruitment of Black and Latino members can be improved by appointing minority outreach committees. For example, a Black Outreach Committee of League members who are Black or have involvement and acceptance and trust by local Black groups can more effectively plan and oversee minority community outreach and recruitment because they share social networks, cultural language and jargon, meeting place and food preferences, etc. just as Young Leaguer Committees succeed in reaching, recruiting and retaining members like themselves who share speech patterns, communication styles, interests, worldview and culture that is quite different from that of older members. Projects undertaken by Black or Latino Outreach Committees can more effectively recruit, retain, and provide a welcoming presence to new minority members while increasing the League's profile in minority communities.^{7, 24}

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3. Each League should consider the history, culture and racial awareness of their membership and tailor the DEI work plan to fit their League. A successful plan will motivate League leaders to identify, discuss and confront implicit racial bias in their practices and procedures and take steps to promote a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout their organization.
4. Non-diverse Leagues located in regions with minimal racial diversity should examine the economic diversity of their communities and consider increasing their outreach to working class and low-income residents.
5. With local Board approval, develop goals, implementation steps and deadlines for achieving them. Provide regular reports to the Board on DEI progress.

Action Ideas

1. Study DEI Success stories that describe work other Leagues are doing at <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/diversity-equity-inclusion/dei-success-stories>
2. Review and revise policies and practices to identify opportunities and barriers to the advancement of DEI goals.
3. Expand equitable access to League membership by offering monthly or quarterly payment plan options for dues.
4. Collect information about the race/ethnicity of your membership. Explain to members why the data is being collected. If you do not know the demographics of your members, you cannot track your DEI progress. Potential strategies for tracking membership diversity include:
 - a. Add precinct and optional check boxes for race and ethnicity to the membership application form. A member's precinct may indicate whether the member lives in a Spanish-speaking or Creole-speaking community. Precinct information is also helpful for selecting members who are willing to contact specific politicians who represent their region.
 - b. If preferred, an anonymous survey can be conducted using serial numbers to prevent overcounting. A survey is especially needed if current members have never been invited to self-identify. See sample demographic survey on the National LWV website at <https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2019-09/demographicquestions.pdf>.
 - c. Maintain a membership database that includes demographic data.
 - d. Set numerical goals with timelines for increasing membership diversity.
5. Ask Black and Latino League members why they joined the League. Use what you learn to increase outreach.
6. Increase the number of presentations your League makes to minority groups and learn from their speaker evaluations.
7. Build networking with minority organizations and use those connections to find opportunities to offer voter registration to minority citizens.

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8. Attend new citizen naturalization swearing-in ceremonies and register new citizens to vote.
9. Connect with students in Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCU) in your area to pursue common campaigns together, recruit new members, register young voters, and offer speakers bureau presentations.

FLORIDA HBCUs

Bethune-Cookman University, Daytona Beach
Edward Waters College, Jacksonville
Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, FL
Florida A&M University College of Law, Orlando, FL
Florida Memorial University, Miami Gardens, FL

10. Include minority members in the review of handouts and documents created for public consumption to assure that wording is clear across cultures. Wherever practical, make handouts readable at the 6th to 7th grade level - suitable for outreach to underserved, less educated audiences as well as more educated audiences.
11. Raise money to organize members to call voters with whom they are culturally aligned to give GOTV messages
 - a. Creole-speaking Haitians.
 - b. Black students
 - c. High school and college students
 - d. Rural and low-income White students
12. Establish a study group or book club to begin conversations about race, diversity, ethnicity, and cultural differences.¹⁻⁷ In addition to books, discussions might include:
 - a. "When I first became aware of race"
 - b. Personal experiences with discrimination because of one's
 - i. Religion
 - ii. National origin
 - iii. Gender
 - iv. Sexual orientation or identity
 - v. Income level
 - vi. Age
13. Schedule viewing and discussion of these videos and/or others during monthly membership meetings:
 - a. *"Holy Post – Race in America"* (17-minutes) and *"Holy Post – Race in America – Part 2"* (26-minutes).^{35, 36}
 - b. *"We Are the League of Women Voters"*³⁸ (5 minutes)
14. In your League's events schedule, include events with content specifically chosen to attract minority audiences. The events should be affordable, accessible, and open to

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the public in race-neutral locales. Consider co-sponsorship with Black or Latino organization(s).

15. Write articles and publicize events in ethnic newspapers and on ethnic radio stations.

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