

Shur Fellow Guidance
September 2018
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the League

The following memo was created post-Convention and shared with state leaders and Convention attendees. The links within contain tools and resources helpful to all League members as we continue this journey to a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive League.

“The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training sessions offered at the 2018 LWVUS Convention provided us with a comprehensive look at each component of DEI, and the value of engaging in developing a strong DEI program within the organization.

In addition, LWVUS Director & DEI Committee Chair, Deborah Turner, led an esteemed panel, including Dr. Alfreda Brown, VP for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Kent State University; Sarah Bury, Interim Vice President, LWV Lake Michigan; and Cecile Scoon, First Vice President, LWV Florida. These knowledgeable women each shared some of their amazing DEI related experiences with us. Dr. Brown discussed the need to find ways to come together for the benefit of the whole organization. Sarah Bury and Cecile Scoon encouraged all League leaders to do more listening and outreach to people of different backgrounds. Cecile Scoon emphasized the need for members to build real relationships *before* attempting to recruit members for the League. “We have to do better,” she said.

The interest and excitement that so many of you experienced after attending the training sessions and listening to the panel is wonderful, and we understand your eagerness to get started on applying what you’ve learned. [The follow up materials from the DEI training are available on the League Management Site HERE](#). Additionally, LWVUS has posted the [definitions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion online](#), as well as our [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy](#). For those looking for additional resources and tools, LWVUS has also provided [continued learning and materials HERE](#).

There are many more helpful and reliable DEI documents on the Internet. An interesting website to visit is [Nonprofits You Are The Champions](#). The site is hosted by the *National Council of Nonprofits* and it offers a wealth of information, including examples of how the nonprofit community is currently championing the values of DEI. The site also contains links to short videos, a *Nonprofits, Leadership and Race Survey*, and links to other resources and websites to help guide you on your DEI journey.”

We encourage you to review all of the materials and look for future updates on additional materials being added or trainings offered. We’ll be highlighting various aspects of the training throughout the year starting with some information on Unconscious Bias below.

Unconscious Bias

What is unconscious bias?

Bias is a tendency or inclination that results in judgment without question. It's an automatic response, and a shortcut to interact with our world.

Unconscious bias is mental associations without awareness, intention, or control. These often conflict with our conscious attitudes, behaviors, and intentions.

The **function of bias** is to serve as our internal "danger detector," and to aid us in making instantaneous decisions in a world that inundates us with information and stimuli.

We all have unconscious biases and it is important to recognize what they are to begin to overcome them.

Following are five real world examples of unconscious bias from [ELI](#). While set in the workplace, they illustrate universal lessons that could just as easily be applied to a discussion at a board meeting, conference call with coalition partners, or in a one-on-one conversation at a voter service event.

1. HELP! My video is upside down.

Many times we think of unconscious bias as being about race or age, but it covers a much broader spectrum and no one, it seems, is immune to stumbling over it. [Google supplied an excellent example](#) of how even a simple bias can affect your business.

When YouTube launched the video upload feature for their app, 5-10% of videos were uploaded upside-down, and Google developers were baffled. Could such a large percentage of users be shooting their videos incorrectly? "Incorrectly" was the key word. Google engineers had inadvertently designed the app for right-handed users. They never considered the fact that phones are usually rotated 180 degrees when held in a user's left hand.

With the help of unconscious bias, Google had created an app that worked best for right-handed users and never addressed the possibility of a left-hand user. We think Google needs a little more diversity on their team ...any left-handed engineers need a job?

2. This candidate sounds great!

Resumes are a consistent source of unconscious bias. One particular study gave a group of managers a set of resumes. Some of them were exact duplicates where only the names had been changed. Resumes with the Anglo sounding names received substantially more callbacks than those with diverse names of other origins. Clearly it was the names and their associated biases that impacted the decisions instead of the qualifications and value they could bring to the company.

Activities were another source of assumptions. Those that sounded more prestigious, like polo or horseback riding vs. basketball or softball, skewed the perception of the candidate. Those engaged in more prestigious sounding activities were considered more refined and successful than their counterparts, simply because of their perceived financial status. These conclusions may have very well been valid, but they could just as easily been untrue. An interviewer's bias

makes a substantial difference in the selection arena. Very talented applicants would have been turned away for unfounded reasons.

3. She's not great with computers.

Assigning a project with a significant technical component? The best choice is a Generation Y-er, not the Baby Boomer, right? This could be an accurate assumption, but it's not always the case. It's not wise to base a decision on an idea or belief that doesn't have the facts to support it.

There are many times when a manager or employee will frame their unconscious bias as common sense. However, your Xbox playing, mobile app developing Baby Boomer may be more tech-savvy than most. By assigning the project to a younger, less experienced employee, you could potentially sacrifice quality or miss out on an innovative idea. Evaluating competency based on age is a common mistake and one that could be costly to your company.

4. You remind me of someone I know.

Have you ever worked with or hired someone who reminded you of another person? It's a subtle, but real form of unconscious bias. The feelings and opinions you associate with another person can easily influence the way you see someone else.

Leaders have the responsibility to put aside past experiences and see the person as an individual. This can be difficult at times, so leaders should feel comfortable enough to ask for others' input. Letting a past experience shape your current decisions is unfair to you, the potential employee, and the company.

5. He speaks the language.

A manager has a high-profile urban project that needs a qualified project manager to get the job done and uses "common sense" to select an African American project manager. When asked about the decision, the manager states that his choice "is a great fit" and "speaks the language."

It's not overtly racist; it's simply an assumption that because this person is African American, he must be more familiar with the urban environment and the issues the community faces. The reality may be that this African American project manager grew up in the suburbs, went to private school, played polo and has had no experience living in an urban community. He may or may not be the best project manager for the job, but the choice could have easily been based on an invalid assumption completely unrelated to the requirements of the project.

These simple examples demonstrate how easily unconscious bias can creep into your organization, shape daily decisions, and impact your company. Recognizing its influence is the key to making objective decisions and avoiding these common mistakes.

Think back to your recent encounters with someone new to your life and try to remember how unconscious bias may have played a role in your first impressions of them. What did you think about them based on what they looked like, how they talked, how they dressed, what their name was, or other small pieces of who they are? What have you since learned about them and how has your impression of them changed?
