



## **DEI Discussion: The Danger of a Single Story**

In March 2019 LWV hosted a webinar on Chimamanda Adichie's The Danger of a Single Story TED Talk and how the single stories we hold can impact how we welcome others and build relationships in all aspects of life, including our League work.

[A recording of the webinar is available to watch here.](#) (If your League is interested in using this webinar please [contact us](#) for a version of the presentation edited for general League use.)

We invite Leagues to host their own discussion on this powerful presentation and how its message applies to the DEI work we are exploring at an individual level and as a collective organization.

### **BACKGROUND**

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian author. Her written works include short stories, novels, and non-fiction. She divides her time between Nigeria and the United States. After a year at the University of Nigeria she moved to the United States to continue her education. She received her bachelor's degree from Eastern Connecticut State University and holds master's degrees from Johns Hopkins University and Yale University. She is also a highly sought after lecturer and her two TED Talks, The Danger of a Single Story and We Should All Be Feminists are two of the most popular and viewed on the TED Talks website.

### **HOW TO WATCH**

Please use the below links to view/read the transcript of her The Danger of a Single story TED Talk:

- TED Talk Link (includes transcript): [https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en)
- Youtube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg&t=217s>

### **DISCUSSION GUIDE**

The impact of the lecture comes from the personal stories she shares to illustrate the theme of how only knowing one story of a culture can enhance our implicit biases and create incomplete pictures of those different from us. She ends the lecture by encouraging us to reject the single story and to recognize that no place or people has one single story.

Just as single stories can create barriers in our personal lives they can do the same in our League work. One story can lead to a more complex series of assumptions that could prevent us from empowering different voices or working with a particular community.

After viewing the TED Talk use the following discussion questions and scenarios to facilitate your conversation:

- What single stories can individuals share that have been told about them? How did it make them feel? Did it create any barriers for them as far as achieving a goal or participating fully in an activity or organization?
- “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete.” What do you think Adichie means here? Do you agree with her?
- What do you think Adichie means by saying, at the end, that to reject the single story is to “regain a kind of paradise”? When a single story is rejected as untrue or impossible, what takes its place?
- Adichie discusses the power of single stories throughout her lecture. There is the power of what one single story can do to how we view a place or people and how the imbalance of power prevents more stories from being told. What are some ways we see the power of telling a single story play out in our lives, our League lives, or even local or national news?
- If a new member or engager becomes involved in your League work and they are part of a community that is underrepresented in your League, it is important to take the time to learn why they are there and what they can offer and want to offer. Making assumptions based on someone's age, background, family set up, or other characteristics could prevent them from becoming fully engaged or cause them to disengage completely.

Can anyone share a story of a time they saw this happen in their League and what could have been done differently?

- What can individual League members do to stop single stories?
- What can a League do to stop single stories?

## MORE RESOURCES

- Recordings of other DEI webinars can found [here](#)
- More DEI resources can be found [here](#).
- More about Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, including her other books and lectures, can be found [on her website](#).