Welcome to Week 1 of Cultivating Justice: A Quest Toward Racial Equity. We are so excited to share with you materials and resources created by and for people in the Cedar Valley to promote racial justice and activate systemic change in our communities. Each week of the Quest has a specific purpose and these newsletters will help guide you on your journey.

Welcome

Watch this Video by Provost Jim Wohlpart as he welcomes you to the Quest and discusses the importance and power of listening.

Mission

Watch this Visit the Listen page on the Quest website. Each day this week, click on a different link on the "Listen" page to hear, watch, read, or view others' stories. This week, people share their stories and perspectives through poetry, storytelling, artwork, podcasts, documentary, and performance.

Contemplate

To get in the listening spirit, contemplate the following quotation on generous listening found in On Being’s Better Conversations: A Starter Guide:

Listening is an everyday art and virtue, but it’s an art we have lost and must learn anew. Listening is more than being quiet while others have their say. It is about presence as much as receiving; it is about connection more than observing. Real listening is powered by curiosity. It involves vulnerability—a willingness to be surprised, to let go of assumptions and take in ambiguity. It is never in "gotcha" mode. The generous listener wants to understand the humanity behind the words of the other and patiently summons one’s own best self and one’s own most generous words and questions.

Community Assignment

Yaw Kyeremateng, a UNI alumnus and 2013 Homecoming King, performs the slam poem "Accent" in which he offers the audience a glimpse into his life as a Ghanian-born person living in the United States. Kyeremateng explores racism as he lived different accents, code-switching, and the dissonance of existing in the space between his Ghanaian ancestral roots and his Americanized speech. Email Yaw Kyeremateng at yawpoetry@gmail.com to hire him to perform.

*The original performance has been edited for mature language.

Reflect & Discuss

1. As you listened to Yaw Kyeremateng’s story, what moved you? Are there particular moments from the performance that have stayed with you? What emotions did his poetry spark for you? What can you learn from those feelings? What type of action does Kyeremateng’s poetry inspire you to take?

2. Want to learn more about code-switching? Reflect on The Cost of Code-Switching published in the Harvard Business Review. Discuss what you have experienced or witnessed the cost of code-switching and what you can do to help address it.

3. What is the role of listening in cultivating justice in our communities?

4. Dedicate time this week to contemplating your own identity as well as your role in organizing activism in your own community. Complete this Organizing Activism Inner Work Worksheet provided by Passion Planner.