



The Sum of Us by Heather McGhee **Community Wide Summer Book Club**

Thank you for participating in Bay Bridge's second annual community wide book club for Whitefish Bay/Northshore on The Sum of Us, by Heather McGhee. Our vision is to offer a community to grow and learn together, engage as many as possible in the conversation, and inspire action. Please help us spread the word! If posting on social media, please include the hashtag **#wfbReadsSumofus**.

First Steps:

- 1) Secure the book; it is popular! Some sources are the Whitefish Bay Public Library, Boswell Books, Audible, SmileAmazon.
- 2) Finalize your book club members (contact Bay Bridge if you need additional members).
- 3) Decide your book club format and schedule meeting date(s).

Plan to share what you will do differently to make Whitefish Bay more inclusive and welcoming on our virtual [Commitment to Change Wall](#). Even better - pick an accountability partner and hold each other accountable to your commitments!

Potential book club formats:

- One meeting to discuss entire book
- Multiple meetings to discuss several chapters at a time
- One meeting, group members each pick several chapters to read and summarize for the group to discuss
- whatever other format works for you!

Alternatives to Reading – Don't have time to read the whole book? Here are some alternatives:

- [NPR Fresh Air Interview](#)
- [Trevor Noah The Daily Show interview](#)
- [Youtube Zoom interview with the SEIU](#)
- Coming Soon! [The Sum of Us Higher Ground Podcast](#)

Please contact BayBridgeWisconsin@gmail.com with any questions, feedback, additional names of interested members, or requests for support. We are here to help make this a good experience, so don't hesitate to reach out!

Book Club Discussion Agenda

There are three main components to your book club discussion that we suggest in order to get the most value out of the experience.

1. Community Agreements
2. Discussion
3. Commitments

Of course, we also recommend time for getting to know each other and/or catching up as humans, with perhaps a beverage in hand, and any interaction should take place in a virtual or other safe way.

1. Community Agreements

When discussing race or crossing any lines of difference, an essential first step is creating ground rules to ensure open, respectful dialogue and encourage maximum participation.

Starter ground rules are below. Share with the group and ask if all can agree to use these and ask if there are any additions. Make sure to wait for acknowledgement before continuing.

Here are some suggested guidelines on creating community agreements:

- *Stay engaged: Staying engaged means “remaining morally, emotionally, intellectually, and socially involved in the dialogue.”*
- *Experience discomfort: This norm acknowledges that discomfort is inevitable, especially in dialogue about race, and that participants make a commitment to bring issues into the open.*
- *Speak your truth: Use “I” statements when talking. You are the only person who has your unique experiences.*
- *Expect and accept non-closure: This agreement asks participants to “hang out in uncertainty” and not to rush to quick solutions. Be aware that racial understanding requires ongoing dialogue.*

2. Book Discussion Guide for The Sum of Us:

Here are some discussion questions to help guide your group dialogue.

1. Discuss Heather McGhee’s definition of zero-sum theory. Why is this a harmful—and false—way of looking at race and public policy?

2. McGhee uses the example of public pools to illustrate how racism caused people to destroy something that could have benefited us all. Can you identify other “pools”—public goods that you see America going without—and how do you now think differently about the role racism might have played in this dynamic? **Are there any examples specific to Milwaukee or Whitefish Bay/North Shore?**

3. McGhee writes that white people are the most segregated people in America. What are some of the costs of continuing to segregate like this? What are the benefits of integration—both culturally and economically?
4. McGhee shares a memory of white classmates proudly stating that they are fiscally conservative and socially liberal but challenges the morality of fiscal conservatism when we can afford to eliminate poverty. Do you agree with McGhee? Why or why not? How can you best explain this concept to peers or family members who might also think of themselves as “fiscally conservative but socially liberal”? **Are there examples of this thinking in Milwaukee or Whitefish Bay/North Shore?**
5. What are some ways white people can work to challenge zero-sum thinking? **Any ways specific to Milwaukee or Whitefish Bay/Northshore?**
6. McGhee coined the phrase “The Solidarity Dividend” to describe Americans reaching across racial lines to work together for the common good—and securing better lives for us all. Discuss some of the examples she shares where such solidarity has been achieved. **Any solidarity examples in Milwaukee or Whitefish Bay/North Shore?**
7. What’s one thing you can do this week to work toward solidarity? **How about one thing you can do to create more solidarity in Whitefish Bay?**
8. What are your thoughts on making reparations for POC?

Here are the official full [DISCUSSION QUESTIONS](#) if you want more.

3. Commitments

Before wrapping up the experience, ask each person one thing they will do differently after reading the book. Answers to questions 5 and 7 above may be good commitments! Encourage people to log their idea on the virtual [Commitment to Change Wall](#).

Tip: Ideas for additional impact and “stickiness” includes picking a person to hold them accountable (in the group or beyond), and/or identifying 1-2 people to engage in further discussion on this topic.

Talk about additional resources - have members share ideas on what they can do to continue learning about how to be a better ally and create change in the community. See below for suggestions.

Don’t stop now! Additional Ways to influence change:

Join a group: Join the Bay Bridge email list or follow Bay Bridge on FB at Bay Bridge Wisconsin.

- Become an advocate to receive information on current issues and action items you can take. [Request to be added to the Advocate list](#).
- Bay Bridge is also championing a village and school scorecard with action plans you can support. [Indicate if you'd like to support these action plans](#).

Other Milwaukee area groups you may want to consider joining that provide ways you can influence change are Bridge the Divide in Cedarburg, the Milwaukee chapter of Standing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ), Rid Racism, Shorewood Moving Forward, Tosa Together, PAGE in Greendale, PASE, PACEcubed, From the Same Dust.

Articles regarding advocacy and allyship:

- *[8 Ways to be an Ally](#)
- *[Harvard Business Review: Be a Better Ally](#)
- *[Marie Claire: How Can I Become a Better Ally?](#)
- *[How Can I Be an Advocate for People of Color in 2021?](#)

General Resource Collections if additional learning is needed:

- [75 Things White People Can Do for Racial Justice](#)
- [Jenna Arnold's resources \(books and people to follow\)](#)
- [Resources for White People to Learn and Talk About Race and Racism](#)
- [Showing Up For Racial Justice's educational toolkits](#)

Organizations to Follow on Social Media that share what you can do:

- [Antiracism Center: Twitter](#)
- [Audre Lorde Project: Twitter | Instagram | Facebook](#)
- [Color Of Change: Twitter | Instagram | Facebook](#)
- [Equal Justice Initiative \(EJI\): Twitter | Instagram | Facebook](#)
- [The Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights: Twitter | Instagram | Facebook](#)

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