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## Meeting summary for DEI Meeting (05/05/2025)

### Quick recap

Emily Bowling discussed the importance of dialogue as a tool for pluralism and community connection, emphasizing the need for engaging in conversations across differences. She also introduced the concept of moral foundations theory and its relevance to the discussion, highlighting the importance of moral humility and understanding different moral values to break down ideological gridlock. The conversation ended with a reflection on spaces where participants could engage in more dialogue in their lives, and a discussion on the importance of storytelling in fostering inclusivity and understanding.

### Next steps

- Randa to share Emily's presentation slides on the California Online website.
- Randa to ask Lotta to share the website link with attendees from the DEI Committee.
- Emily to provide her work email address for follow-up questions and resource requests.
- Kathy to follow up with Emily about potential future presentations on DEI topics.
- DEI Committee members to consider implementing dialogue strategies in their branches.
- Emily to check the AAUW California Public Policy website for more information on current initiatives.
- Kathy to explore organizing more educational programs on LGBTQIA+ issues for AAUW members.
- DEI Committee members to review the "36 Questions for Civic Love" resource for potential use in dialogue activities.
- AAUW members to consider engaging in more dialogues with people who have different viewpoints.

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### Summary

### **Dialogue for Pluralism and Community**

In the meeting, Emily Bowling, a special guest, discussed the importance of dialogue as a tool for pluralism and community connection. She emphasized the need for engaging in conversations across differences, especially in the current context of gridlock and debate. Emily also shared her professional experience in higher education, where she has been working on service learning, civic engagement, and leadership development programming with students. She introduced the concept of moral foundations theory and its relevance to the discussion. The agenda for the meeting included introductions, a discussion on the current context, moral foundations theory, pluralism, dialogue, and dialogue strategies. Emily also encouraged participants to share their thoughts and experiences in the chat. The conversation ended with a reflection on spaces where participants could engage in more dialogue in their lives.

### **Bridging Political Polarization Through Pluralism**

Emily discussed the increasing polarization in society and the fear of engaging in discussions with people who hold different political views. She highlighted the perception gap between Democrats and Republicans, where each group misjudges the other's priorities. Emily emphasized the importance of bridging, which involves engaging in dialogue, listening deeply, and acknowledging shared humanity, rather than breaking into an "us versus them" mentality. She also introduced the concept of pluralism, which involves an energetic commitment to engaging with diversity and diverse perspectives. Emily concluded by mentioning moral foundation theory, which she planned to discuss further.

### **Moral Foundations Theory and Ideological Gridlock**

Emily discussed the concept of moral foundations theory, which suggests that people's moral values are organized in advance of experience. She explained that liberals tend to value fairness, care, and liberty, while conservatives value a broader range of moral foundations, including authority, sanctity, loyalty, and fairness. Emily emphasized the importance of moral humility and understanding different moral values to break down ideological gridlock. She also highlighted the challenge of engaging in open thinking when surrounded by people with similar moral values. Emily concluded by suggesting that by recognizing shared moral values, such as fairness, it is possible to initiate more productive conversations and foster empathy across ideological divides.

### **Reducing Political Polarization Through Curiosity**

Emily presents information on moral foundations theory and strategies for reducing political polarization. She emphasizes the importance of curiosity, empathy, and storytelling in bridging divides. Lisa shares insights from a related interview about approaching people with curiosity and moral reframing. Emily discusses the need for ground rules and good faith in dialogues, noting that a majority of Americans want to reduce polarization but struggle with how to do so. Kathy expresses concern about the lack of moral foundations in current government actions, while Emily suggests engaging in curious conversations to understand different perspectives on values.

### **Dialogue and Constructive Communication Principles**

In the meeting, Emily discussed the concept of dialogue, distinguishing it from debate and discussion. She emphasized that dialogue is a collaborative process aimed at seeking mutual understanding and personal experience, rather than a one-way exchange of information. Emily also introduced the Constructive Dialogue Institute, which aims to combat polarization on college campuses and in society. She highlighted the benefits of dialogue, including improved decision-making, increased connections, and a better understanding of others' perspectives. Emily also outlined the five principles of constructive dialogue, including letting go of winning and getting curious. She concluded by discussing the importance of storytelling in dialogue and suggested a breakout session for further practice. The group decided to stay in the large group to hear more from Emily.

### **Fostering Inclusivity Through Dialogue and Storytelling**

In the meeting, Emily and Charmen discussed the importance of dialogue and storytelling in fostering inclusivity and understanding. Emily emphasized the need for white individuals to engage in dialogue with their peers to support marginalized communities. Charmen shared a personal experience from her time in Maine, highlighting the power of storytelling in changing public opinion and promoting social change. Lisa added that sharing alternative stories can help counteract misinformation and promote empathy. The team agreed on the importance of seeking out diverse stories and perspectives to broaden their understanding and support for marginalized communities.

### **LGBTQIA Education and Support Discussion**

In the meeting, cfoxhoven expressed the need for more Dei programs to educate members about the LGBTQIA community, especially in light of the current administration's discrimination against them. LisaHoward raised concerns about prioritizing education for existing members over new ones, while charmengoehring emphasized the importance of supporting trans rights

in California due to the potential detrimental effects on all women. Bonnie shared a personal story of a trans individual who spoke to their group, highlighting the challenges faced by the LGBTQIA community. The team agreed on the need for general education on these issues for their members.

### **Intersectionality and Social Advocacy Discussion**

Emily concludes the meeting by summarizing key themes that emerged, including intersectionality, solidarity, and the interconnectedness of social issues. She emphasizes the importance of advocating for everyone's rights and suggests potential future sessions focused on specific topics of interest to the group. Emily also shares resources for facilitating dialogues and encourages participants to engage in conversations with people who have different views to help rebuild social and democratic fabric. The meeting ends with expressions of gratitude and an exchange of contact information for follow-up questions and resources.

### **Public Policy Website and DEI Committee**

Randa discussed the involvement of Amy and Missy in the public policy website, including an upcoming presentation by an intern. Emily expressed interest in learning more about their work. Randa also mentioned her role as an information disseminator and her involvement in the Board to Board initiative. Emily suggested using the 5 Calls organization to contact elected officials. Randa clarified that California has a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, which meets monthly. Emily emphasized the importance of being open to feedback and learning from others, especially in terms of language and terminology. Randa shared her personal experience of living with a disability since the age of 17 and her active involvement in various branches and states.

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Best,

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