



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION | RACISM | DISCRIMINATION | THE DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD

By Sinead Kane | June 3, 2020

Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity make for an awful acronym: DIE. The word equity is associated with principles of fairness. Where is the fairness when one considers the recent events in the USA. Racism continues to be at the root of so much pain and ugliness in our world. From the streets of Minneapolis to the inequalities inflicted by COVID-19. As long as that stays like that America's twin ideals of freedom and equality will remain out of reach for diverse communities.

The terrible events in Minneapolis, together with too many others occurring around the USA and other parts of the world are tragic and heartbreakng. This reality, coupled with the COVID crisis, highlights the inequities black and other diverse communities have and continue to face every day.

The death of George Floyd has disgusted me to my core. No individual should be treated in this manner and such excessive force is inexcusable. I have listened and learned in recent days as I have seen anger spill out onto the streets of Minneapolis and many other American cities with devastating consequences.

The killings of George Floyd in Minnesota, Ahmad Arbery in Georgia, and Breonna Taylor in Kentucky are reminders of the dangers Black Americans face in living their daily lives. Black Americans are too often denied basic privileges that others take for granted. Privileges of wealth, education, or job opportunities is one thing. But from my research, I am more talking about fundamental human and civil rights and the dignity and respect that comes with them. I'm talking about something as simple as going for a jog.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Many businesses wonder is now the time to share racism guidance to their workplaces? Give information on racism. However, focusing on the company's D&I strategy and asking yourself is your organisation truly open to diverse groups is needed. Companies need to address the unconscious biases that exist especially among decision-makers in the company. Unless we all fundamentally address our biases nothing will change. Companies need to cherish diversity and inclusion and be willing to stand up for those values when they are threatened, whether it's the gender pay gap or calling out the violence of white supremacists. These systemic problems will not go away until we confront them head-on. So we must continue to speak up and speak out whenever we witness hatred, racism, or injustice. I know I will – and I hope you will too.

If we want to live and work in truly diverse, equal, and inclusive societies and workplaces, we need each and every one of us to stop being passive allies and become *active allies*.

This isn't an issue for the minority to deal with — it isn't an issue for women to deal with, it isn't an issue for minority ethnic groups or the LGBTQ+ or people with disabilities with — this is a human issue for **all human beings to deal with**.

Solutions

The death of George Floyd, as many recently have detailed, is one in a series of acts of violence toward black people. Solutions will require public and private partnerships and a total re-engineering of human attitudes, physical resources, and societal approaches to correct all the structural difficulties that perpetuate racism. We see these woes across the globe in the form of public housing practices that lock marginalized people in dilapidated housing for generations, the lack of health policies which leads to disparities and disproportionate mortality for black people, and the lack of an international/national plan to address the problem of the growing failure of public education. The challenge is that it will take sustained moral leadership and a permanent commitment to social justice to have lasting change.

So how can we make a difference?

1. **Become mindful of your own unconscious biases.** To become aware of our unconscious biases requires us to make sincere efforts to discover what our unconscious biases are and be mindful of how these unconscious biases affect what we say and what we do. When we start paying conscious attention to the possibilities of our unconscious biases creeping into our words and behaviors that's where real change in what we say and do begins.
2. **Call out Subtle and indirect biases.** These can be based on gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability, etc. These biases are usually mistaken for a casual comment and can even be brushed aside as humor or a 'slip of the tongue'. When we start observing ourselves and those around us, we begin to see these behaviors at play. If you put on a badge to show you're not racist but then don't speak up when someone is being ridiculed or outright harmed because of their race, your badge doesn't actually hold that much power.
3. **Review the D&I strategy in your company.** A D&I strategy should focus on **gaining** talent with a wide range of skills, expertise, and perspectives which would enable the organisation to reap the real benefits of creativity and innovation. This would in turn give a better understanding of customers and market needs and preferences. Moreover, it provides a rich dynamic workplace environment that would result in financial benefits.
4. **Do your research.** The most you can do is educate yourself on why black people are protesting for their rights.
5. **Sign petitions.** The George Floyd Petition calls for justice for his death.

6. **Donate** if you can to organisations that help black people.
7. **Talk to people**, educating others will spread the word even more. The more people aware of their privilege and how they can use their voice to enlighten others will help. Debate out the issues of racism with friends and those who appear ignorant. Addressing systemic racism in the midst of a global pandemic is a challenge of great magnitude for HR leaders, and there is no quick fix. Whether employees are working remotely or returning to workplaces, now is the time to do the work on diversity and inclusion. Have the tough conversations.
8. **Ask questions of Civil Leaders.** We must stand together to demand justice and work together to turn our pain into purpose. Nothing will change if those outside the impacted communities stand by and do nothing. We must be true allies, standing shoulder to shoulder, asking the tough questions of our civic leaders.
9. **Ask for help from Experts** on diversity—across organisations and industries. **Use technology** like AI to root out bias in hiring and other areas.
10. **Ensure diversity at all levels in the organisation especially at the board table.** Ensure there's room at the table for diverse voices.