A diverse group of business professionals, including men and women of various ethnicities, are seated around a dark table in a modern office environment. They are engaged in a meeting, with some looking at laptops and others talking. The room has large windows in the background, letting in bright light. The overall atmosphere is professional and collaborative.

# How to Make Progress on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Your Organization

Kelly McDonald  
McDonald Marketing

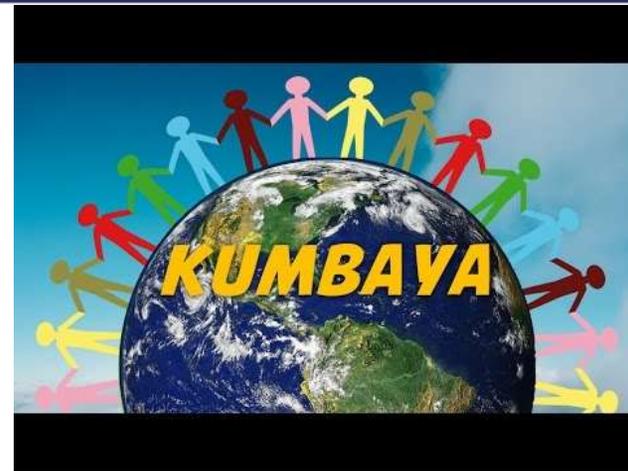
# What This Session Will Cover

- What bias is – and isn't
  - Hint: It's NOT prejudice
- How bias at work affects decision-making
  - And not in a good way
- How to build awareness of our own biases
  - And we ALL have them!
- Tools for having difficult conversations about diversity at work



## What This Session Won't Cover

- Activism
- Social injustice
- Racial injustice
- Singing “We are the World”

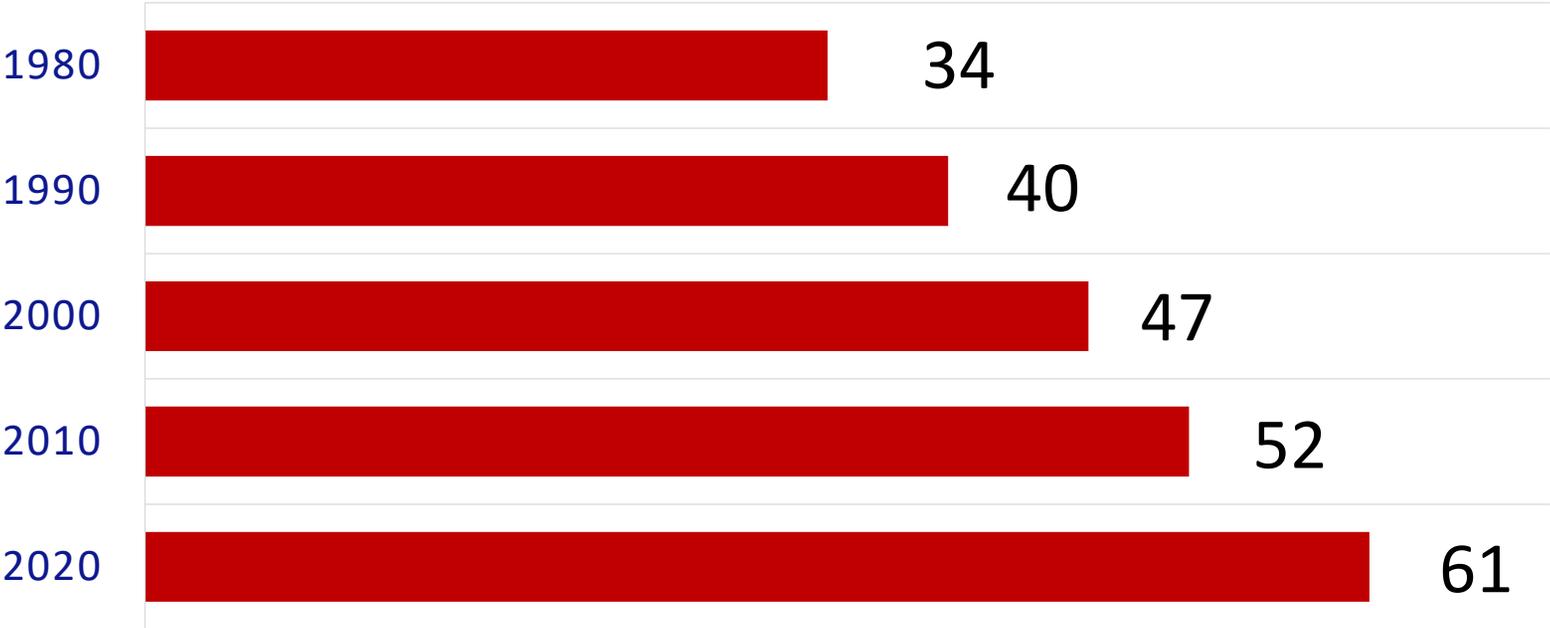


# THE BUSINESS CASE FOR DIVERSITY



# CLEAR TREND: THE CENSUS DIVERSITY INDEX

The probability that two people chosen at random would be of a different race and ethnicity on a 0-100 scale. The scale ranges from 0 (no diversity) to 100



# Top 5 Most & Least Diverse States

## Most Diverse States:

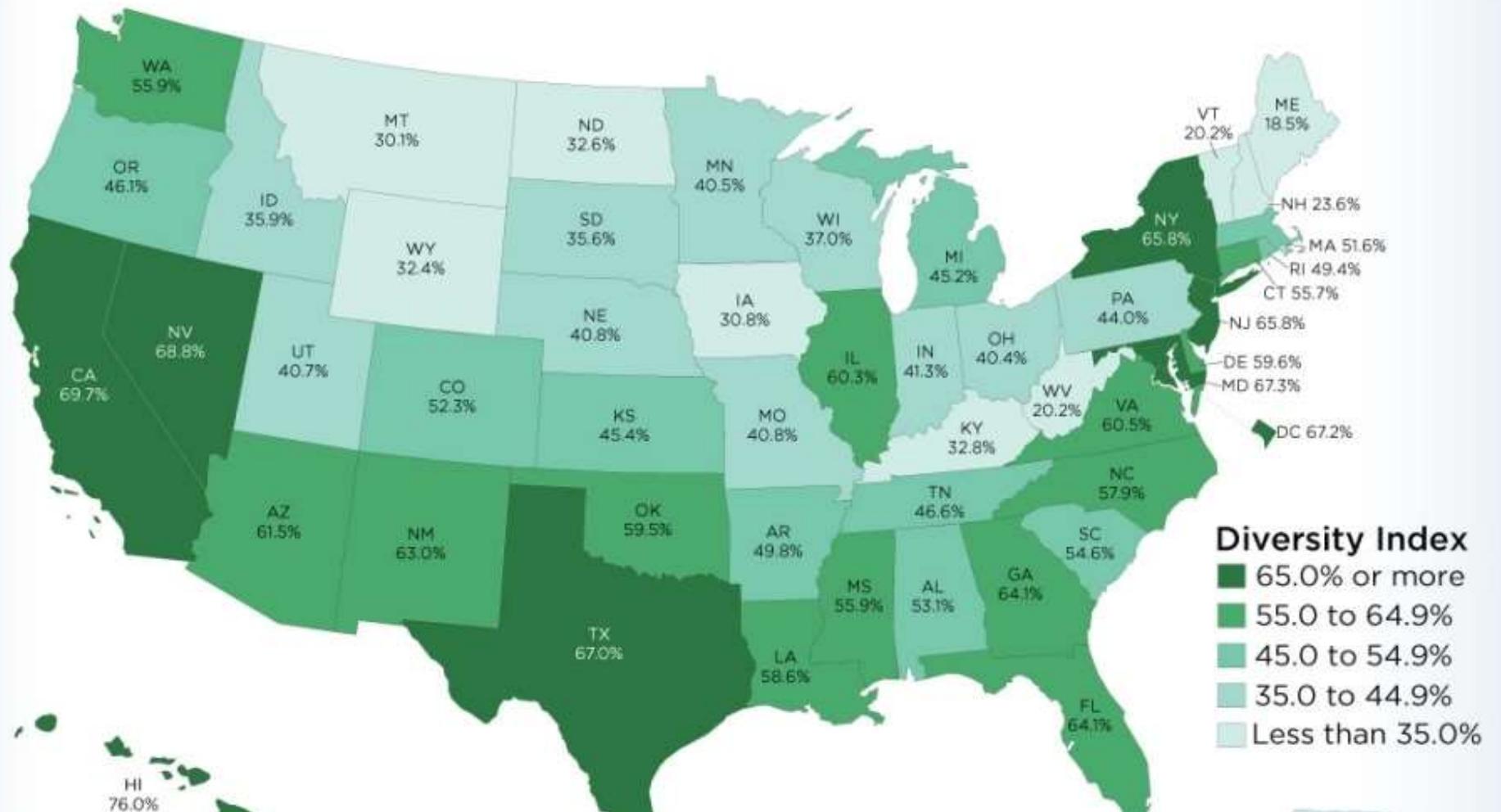
Hawaii	76
California	70
Nevada	68
Texas	67
New York	65

## Least Diverse States:

Maine	19
Vermont	20
West Virginia	20
New Hampshire	24
Montana	30



PENNSYLVANIA'S  
DIVERSITY INDEX: 44

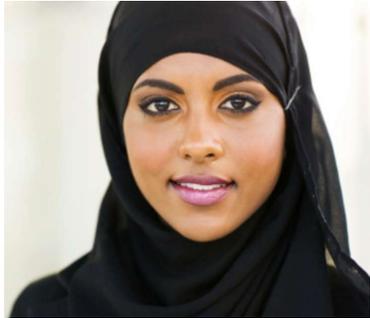


# The Evolution of Diversity & Inclusion



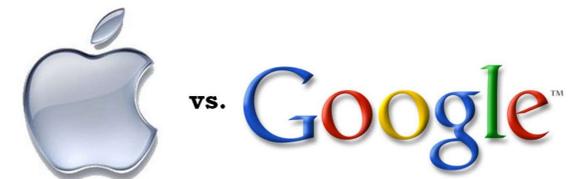
# DIVERSITY

*Comes in  
Many Forms*



## A Few Ways You Might Not Have Thought of as “Diversity”

- Introverts vs. Extroverts
- Creative vs. Analytic Thinking
- Morning People vs. Night Owls
- Generational differences & perceptions of “good service”
- Rural vs. Metro
- Communication styles: face-to-face or email/texting only
- Apple people vs. Google people



# DE&I is the Hottest Topic in Business Now



WHY?

Organizations of every size want to  
“do better and be better”

# IF WE ONLY WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE JUST LIKE US, IT CAN BECOME A PROBLEM

---

It leads to the same way of looking at things

We default to the same solutions

We don't develop or consider new ideas



# There is **Value** in a Diverse Workforce

- Better organizational reputation
- Enhanced organizational image
- Growth in new customer acquisition
- Higher customer satisfaction
- Greater customer loyalty
- Better customer insights & ability to anticipate customer needs
- Greater ability to attract & recruit talent
- Better quality of employee applicants
- Broader talent base with new and untapped perspectives
- Better problem-solving
- Better employee performance and productivity
- Higher levels of employee engagement
- Higher levels of employee satisfaction
- **Reduced employee absenteeism**
- Better employee retention
- Increased creativity
- Multiple solutions
- Increased adaptability
- Greater innovation



You're Not  
Racist, But  
You Have  
Blind Spots



# EVEN BABIES HAVE BIAS - YEP

- 6-8 month old babies are more inclined to learn information from an adult of their own race than a different race
- Babies of any age gaze longer and are more likely to follow visual cues of people of the same race
- *How can babies be prejudiced? Where and how do they learn such a destructive thing at such a young age?*



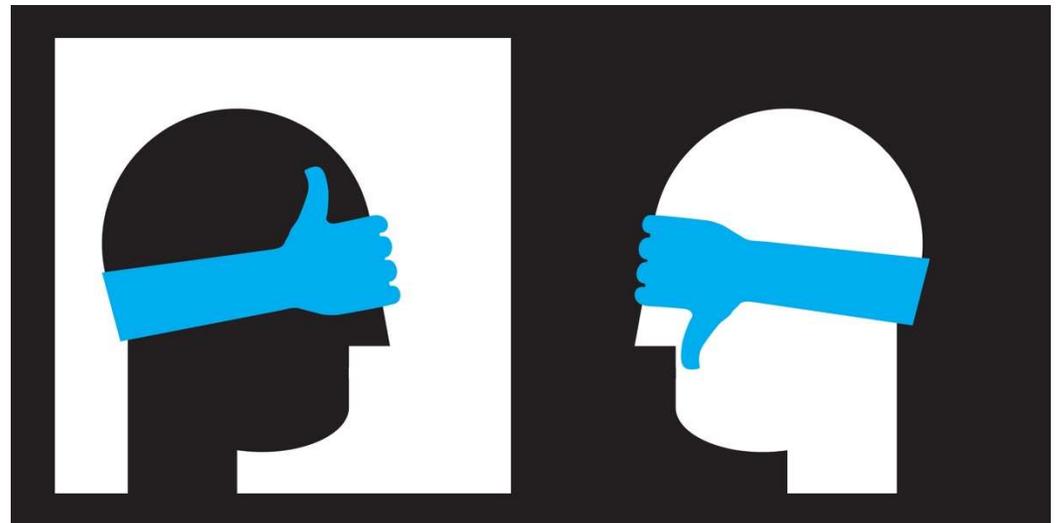
BABIES DON'T LEARN IT.

AND THEY'RE NOT PREJUDICED.

- They're *biased*
- Bias does not mean prejudice – it means *preference*
- Babies who are just 90 days old cannot possibly be prejudiced, but they can show preference toward own-race faces over other-race faces
- Collins Dictionary definition: “*Bias is a tendency to prefer one person or thing to another, and to favor that person or thing.*”

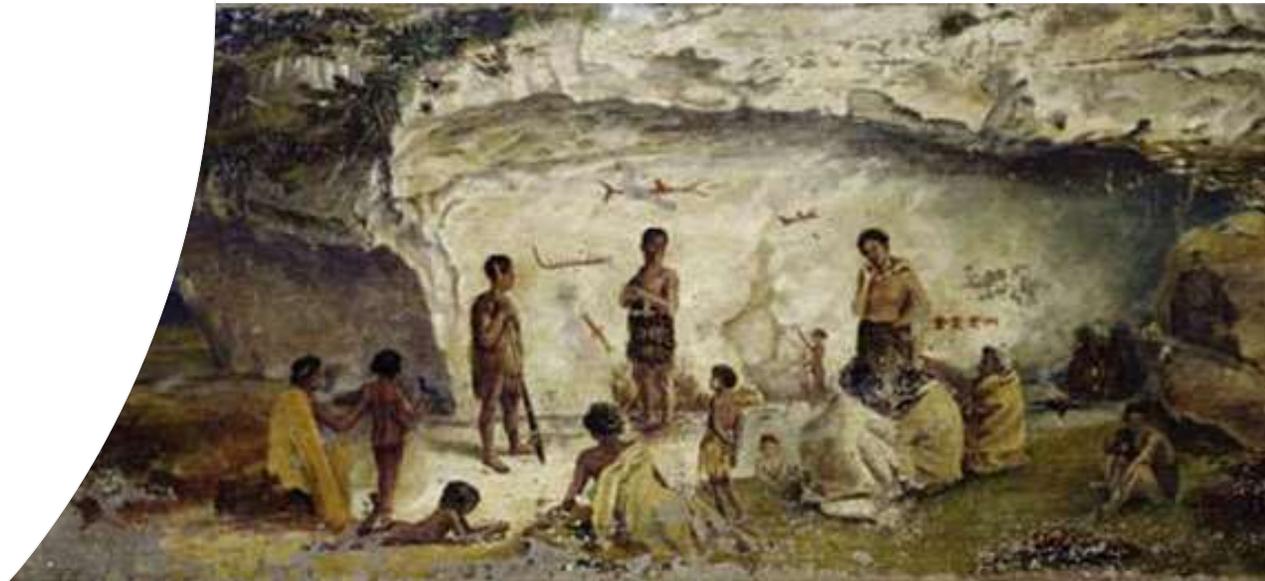
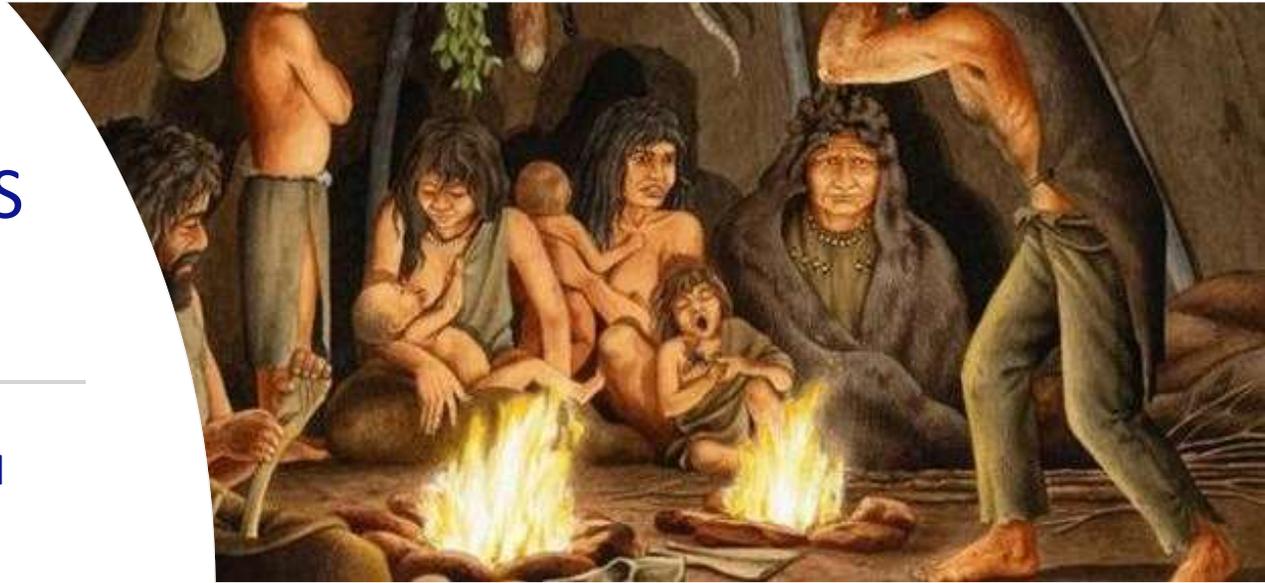
BIAS

PREJUDICE



## BIAS IS IN US – ALL OF US

- It does not mean we are born prejudiced
- It does mean that we have an *innate preference for people who are like us*
- From the human species standpoint, gravitating to - and staying with – tribes and communities of people who looked like us meant safety and protection.
- Our survival depended on it



# BUT WAIT! THERE'S MORE!

- Babies are not negatively biased toward other races
- They are simply *positively biased toward their own race* – they show *preference* for their own-race faces
- Bottom line: our brains attempt to categorize and organize the social world around us, and the result is unconscious bias
- *It's normal*





YOU'RE NOT A  
BAD PERSON

- You're not alone
- Your biases are normal

# IF WE ALL HAVE BIAS, AND IT'S NORMAL, WHY DO WE RECOIL FROM THE WORD?



- Because it's a **loaded** word and perceived to be so **negative**
- Many think that if you're biased, it means you **hate** others
- We equate it with "racist" or "sexist" or other negative "ist" words
- We feel **accused**
- We get **defensive**

# Our Defensiveness Can Lead to Blind Spots

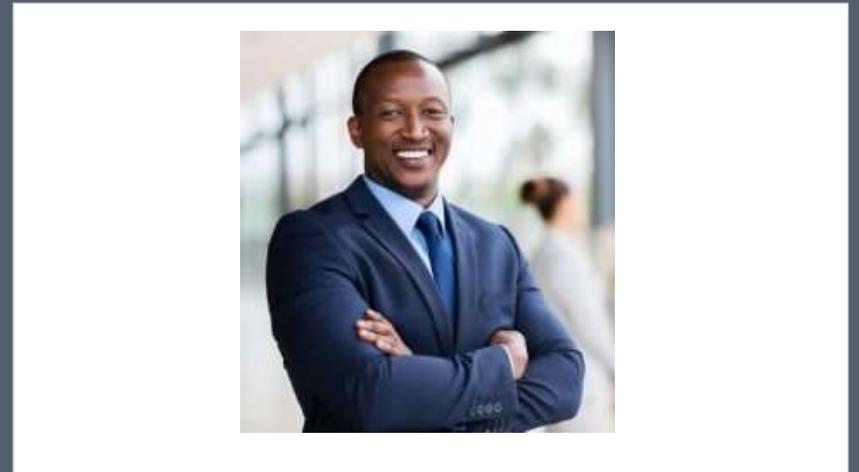
In business, our blind spots can be harmful

Example: White hiring manager interviews two equally qualified candidates

- One is White and one is Black
- The hiring manager hires the White candidate

The decision is unconscious. But it can lead to:

- Hiring more people who are just like all the rest of your team
- Or hiring the wrong person because you “prefer” them
- Or promoting someone who is not ready for a higher-level position
- “Siding” with people we prefer in disagreements or decision-making



# IT GETS EVEN WEIRDER – AND NOT IN A GOOD WAY

- Our brains like logic - and sensible, logical **decisions**
- So we rationalize our decisions - *after the fact* – to justify the choices we make
  - “post hoc justification”
- Example:
  - Yale study showed that people making hiring decisions actually *shifted the job criteria to fit the person they wanted to hire*



## Michael & Michelle:

### Candidates for Police Chief for a Hypothetical Police Department

- Hiring managers evaluated separate applications from a male (Michael) and a female (Michelle) applicant
- Michael was presented as having more “street smarts”
- Michelle was presented as having more “formal education”
- The evaluators’ subconscious impression of Michelle was negative, but they found “logical” reasons for justifying that impression after they made their decision to hire Michael (post-hoc)



# WHAT HAPPENED?

- Evaluators decided to hire Michael and stated that “street smarts” were the most important trait for police chief
- However, when the names on the résumés were reversed, and “formal education” was listed as Michael’s core strength, the evaluators decided that “formal education” was the most important trait and *that was the reason given* for hiring the male applicant
- Evaluators *shifted the criteria for the job to fit the candidate they wanted to hire*





## One More Very Weird Finding...

- Perceiving yourself as objective and unbiased is actually correlated with **showing more bias**
- Our **desire to see ourselves as unbiased is not enough** to overcome decades of cultural conditioning
- That desire can lead to more post-hoc justification:
  - We want to think of ourselves as unbiased, so we do think of ourselves that way
  - **But that doesn't mean we are**
- Not acknowledging our biases makes it that much harder to address it, because no one will admit it's there in the first place



## 6 Key Ways to Start Having Difficult Conversations at Work



## #1: Start Small – Acknowledge the Awkwardness & Difficulty

- Name the elephant in the room
- This validates others' feelings of discomfort, provides a sense of relief and creates shared camaraderie in the awkwardness
- Example: *"I've never talked about race at work before and I am unsure how to do it now. I feel a bit inept and clunky and I don't think I am going to be very eloquent. I hope you'll bear with me. I can imagine it feels awkward for you, too."*
- Those are *honest words*. People *trust* someone who speaks that openly and honestly

## #2: Seek New Perspective - Respectfully



- A discussion in a meeting about racial inequality may be a great time to ask diverse colleagues for their perspective. Or *not*.
- Don't put diverse team customers on the spot by asking them to share their experiences
- Do ask if anyone has any *business or life experiences to share that would help your team understand where and how to do better*



## #3: Express Sincere Interest

- Without a **sincere desire to do better**, a conversation about race at work will likely not go well
- It will come across as disingenuous, gratuitous and opportunistic
- You can't accomplish anything or make progress without sincerely being open to hearing and learning about others' views, experiences and suggestions for improvement
- Sincerity shows. Make sure your intentions are **genuinely focused on creating a better workplace for all**

# #4: Talk Less. Listen More.

**Listen** with your full attention.

**Don't judge** others' feelings.

**Don't interrupt** to refute their experience.

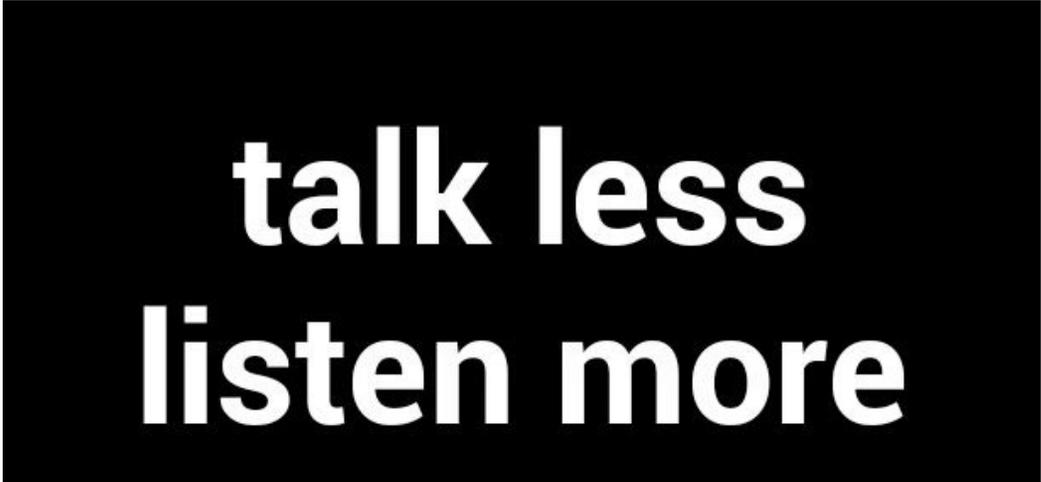
**Ask questions** to better understand the other person's viewpoints.

**Validate** their emotions and show compassion.

Doing so allows the other party to speak without fear of judgment.

In surveys, *almost 50% of Black employees say they don't feel safe sharing their thoughts on race-related issues.*

By talking less and listening more, you'll create an environment in which people feel free to share their true feelings and experiences.



talk less  
listen more

## #5: Discuss, Don't Debate



- The purpose of having a professional dialogue is to discuss, ideate, explore and collaborate.
- Debates drive people into different camps or “sides” of an issue.
- Refocus the conversation on your goal, which is to develop a plan.

Example:

*“I don’t want to debate this with you. I want to discuss it with you. The reason we’re talking about this is to **figure out a course of action**. Tell me your point of view. I’m listening and I want to understand.”*



## #6: Push the Pause Button if You Have To...

- If a conversation has gotten out of control to the point where everyone is upset, **don't try to force a resolution** - that's the time to pause and step away
- It's in the best interests of *everyone*, so that no one says something they'll regret, which can be disastrous for someone's career
- Say, *'I don't think we're communicating effectively now, and this is too important to not have a constructive conversation. Let's take a break and pick this up again tomorrow.'*

14  
Do's & Don'ts



**DO'S**



**DON'TS**

## Do's & Don'ts

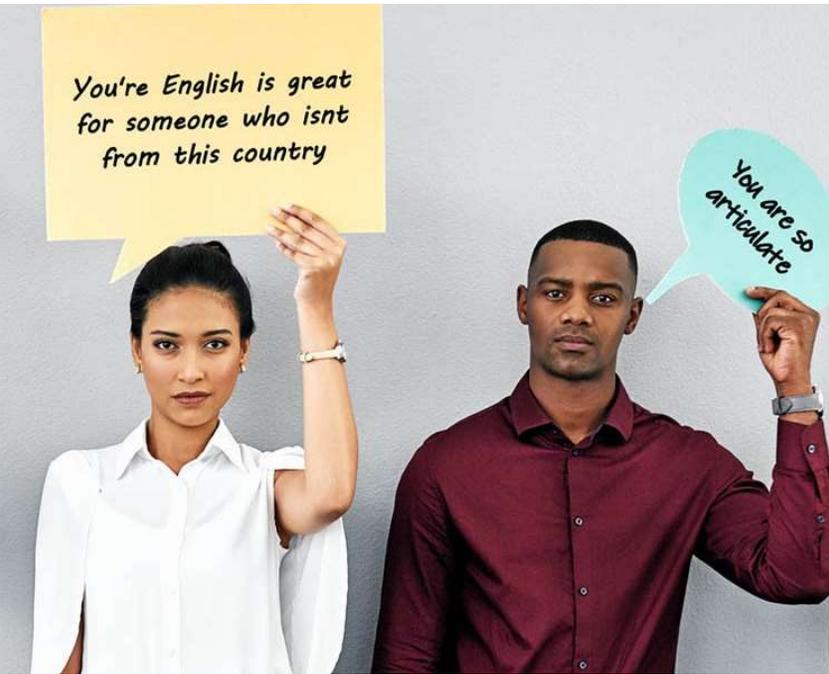
1. DO be sensitive to the fact that employees of color may not feel comfortable discussing race with you. Or even if they are, they may not want to. They may just want to do their job and get through the day.
2. DON'T expect your employees of color to explain racism to you. It's not their job to help you understand racism. One friend said to me, "I didn't realize I am supposed to be the official interpreter of bias and racism for my boss. I think she thinks I am the on-demand "Help Desk of Diversity."
3. DO educate yourself and learn as much as you can about racism and inequity and how diverse groups are negatively affected in the business world. Broaden your lens.

4. DON'T ask a person of Hispanic or Asian or Middle Eastern descent "where are you from?". It implies that they are not a "real American" and that they are perpetual foreigners in their own land.

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5. DON'T expect diverse employees to "represent" or "speak for" an entire minority population. A gay employee does not represent the entire LGBTQ community, a Black employee does not speak for all Blacks, A Muslim employee does not speak for all Muslims and a female employee does not represent all women.
6. DON'T ask someone "how they got their job". It implies that some quota was in place or that the person didn't earn their job or truly "qualify" for it. When White people get a job through networking with Whites, no one criticizes them for it.
7. DO ask instead, *"Tell me about your background. What were you doing prior to this role?"* This is a fair and valid question and implies that the person has experience that made them qualified for the position they now hold.

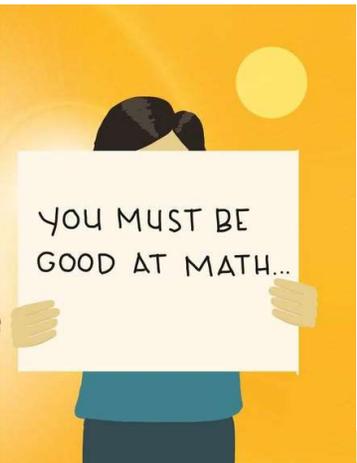




*You're English is great  
for someone who isnt  
from this country*



*You are so  
articulate*



YOU MUST BE  
GOOD AT MATH...

- **DON'T** comment on how “well someone speaks English”. Doing so implies that you didn’t expect them to speak English well because of their “otherness”
- **DON'T** tell a Black colleague that they are “articulate” or “well spoken”. It implies that you didn’t expect that they would be
- **DON'T** mock someone’s accent or native language.

Example:

Saying “Sí, señor” to someone who is Hispanic or Latinx is insulting

11. DON'T change someone's name because it's too difficult for you. My friend Asif shared with me that a client, upon meeting him for the first time, said, "I'll just call you Al". Similarly, a friend named Róisín, (pronounced ro-SHEEN), said a vendor to the company she works for told her, "That's too hard to pronounce. I'll call you Rosy."

Names are important and they're very personal. It's not up to you to just change someone's name and give them a new moniker.

Sometimes people will offer an easier option for people they do business with, e.g., "Hi, my name Anais, (pronounced "Ah – nah -EES), but you can call me "Anna.", but it's not up to you or anyone on your team to demand or expect that.

It's a name. You can learn it.

Words have  
meaning  
and names  
have power

12. **DO** ask for someone to repeat their name if you didn't catch it the first time. It's OK to say, "Please tell me your name again". And then listen hard so you can commit it to memory. If the name is challenging for you to say and you're not sure you'll pronounce it correctly, repeat the person's name back to them and ask them, "Did I say that correctly?" Don't be embarrassed – some names are hard to pronounce. **Trying to say someone's name correctly shows respect.**

13. **DON'T** mock someone's name or ask them what the "American" version of it is. My coworker, Diego, attended a client meeting for the first time. Introductions were made, and the client asked him, "What does Diego stand for?"

Diego was bewildered by the question.

The client persisted and said, "Does it stand for David? Or Donald? Or what?"

Diego smiled and said, "It's just Diego. It's my name."

The client then said, ***"I don't know why you people can't just have regular names."***

## #14: Don't Say "You People". Or "Those People". *EVER*

It implies "otherness" in a demeaning, insulting way. Even when wrapped in a compliment, as in, "I love the way you people have such strong faith and family values", it doesn't build a bridge between people, it suggests a divide: me vs. you. Or us vs. them. It communicates "you're not like me" or "you're not like the rest of us".

Example:

Don't say, "What do you people eat at Hanukkah?"

Say instead:

"What are the traditional foods served at Hanukkah?  
Tell me about how your family celebrates the holiday."



# HOW TO RECOVER WHEN YOU'VE BLOWN IT

## **Apologize & Acknowledge:**

Acknowledge that you said something out of line. Don't make excuses or try to clarify what your intentions were – it will only come across as justification.

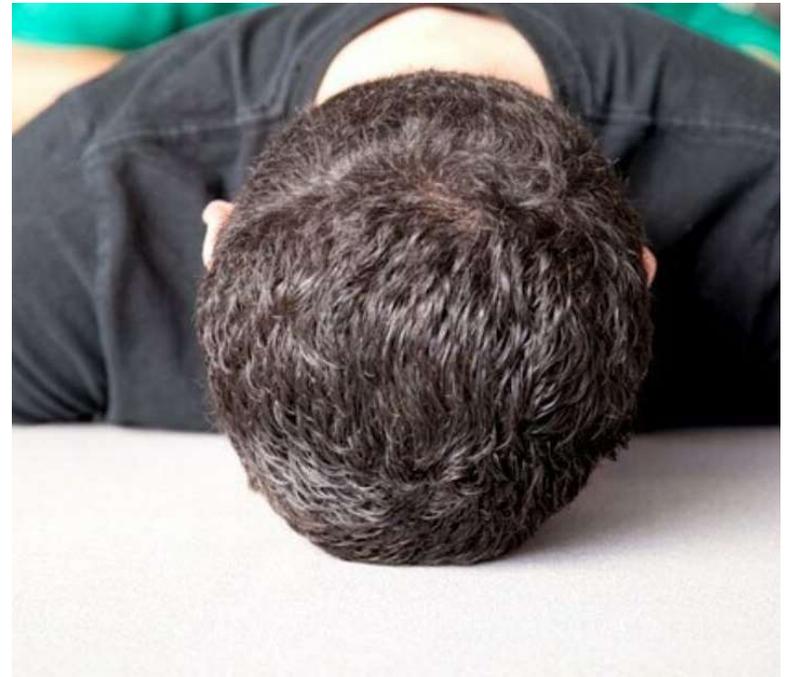
Just apologize: *“What I said was out of line. It was wrong and insensitive. I’m really sorry.”*

## **Ask & Learn:**

Sometimes, we sense that something we just said is wrong or insensitive, but we don't really know why. It's OK to follow up your apology and acknowledgement with a sincere question: *“I know I messed up, but please help me understand. Why did that offend?”*

## **Keep Talking & Learning:**

Don't let your mistake keep you from talking to people who are different from you. The goal is to build bridges to have a better understanding of your team's collective perspective. Keep trying. Through continued conversations, you'll learn more and be an even better coworker.



# THIS ISN'T EASY



- Most of us were **never taught** how to have conversations about race, diversity, equity and inclusion
- We **lack skills** in this area
- **Skills can be acquired** – and honed. It becomes easier with practice
- But it requires work. And **consistency**.
- If you take it one step at a time, with sincerity and a desire to learn, **you and your team will make progress**
- And progress feels *good*.

Keep Going  
Keep Trying

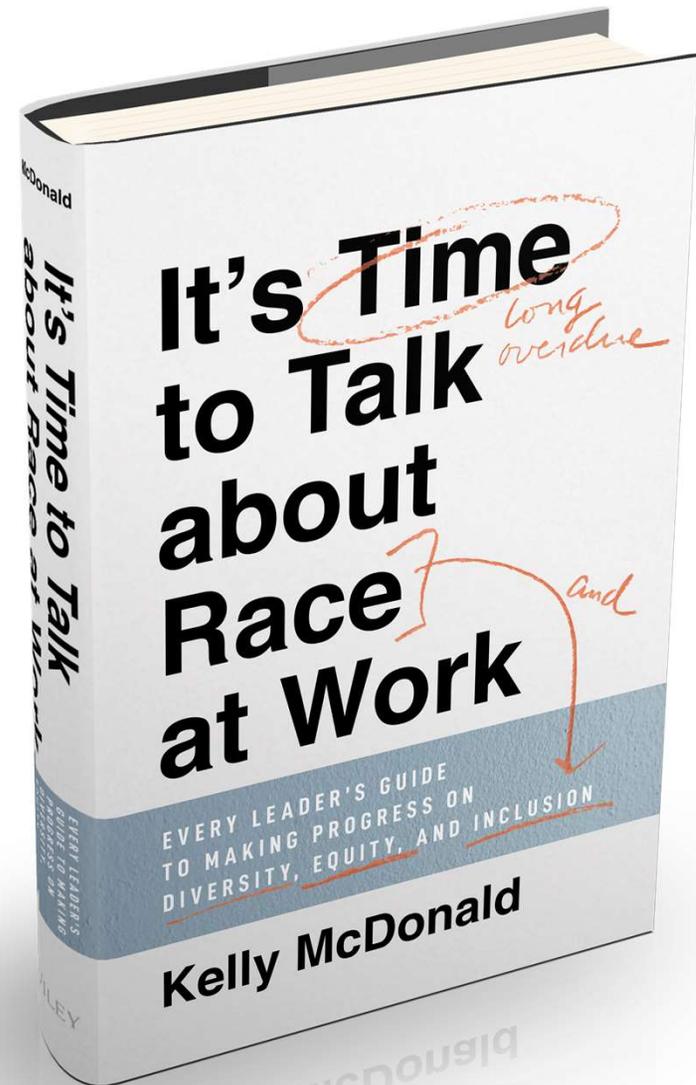
**SMALL  
PROGRESS  
IS STILL  
PROGRESS**

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“Do the best you can  
until you know better.  
Then when you know better,  
do better.”

*Maya Angelou*

# My New Book Can Help



For more information about  
consumer trends, contact  
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