



Diversity Without Inclusion **IS A RECIPE FOR FAILURE**

IN MY JULY COLUMN, I ASKED YOU TO TAKE A R.I.D.E. WITH ME THIS YEAR as we focus on Respect, Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity. I discussed my views on respect—for the rule of law, the judiciary, and each other. This month, I ask you to consider what it means to be inclusive and to embrace the many differences in points of view, culture, and life experiences that exist within our legal community. With respect for each other and the understanding and appreciation that comes from being truly inclusive, we will be better positioned to effectively represent the public we are called to serve.

Some might consider the discussion of inclusion before diversity out of sequence. However, inclusion is the path we walk to achieve diversity. Even the best intentions regarding the creation of a diverse organization will be derailed without careful consideration about how to support and sustain diversity. It is easy to find and recruit candidates for a job or a leadership position who are well qualified to serve in the role and who are diverse in gender, race, ethnicity, abilities, LGBTQIA, etc. Trust me, there are plenty of well-qualified, diverse individuals. However, finding and selecting the person is not the end of the mission.

Simply placing a person in a position just so you can check a box and call your organization diverse is not the answer. The organization must have a culture of inclusiveness for diversity to be sustained. What does that mean? It means there are mentors ready to help navigate through the system and advocate for the diverse individual if necessary. It means educating yourself about the person's culture, characteristics, or other features that make them unique in your organization. Making sure religious and other cultural holidays are respected when planning events. Dietary restrictions and other societal practices must be considered within the organization, and the diverse individual should be invited to participate in the creation of organization calendars and events. Lawyers raising families must be empowered to say when scheduling of events is not workable for them because of other commitments.

If the person is the “first of” their type in your organization they have the added pressure of wanting to be a success and fit in and may not tell you when they have been made to feel uncomfortable, less than, or even worse—a token. They may not tell you, but over time they will leave and your attempt at diversity will be a failure.

It is crucial for the future of our profession for all people to be able to see themselves in our bar. Young people of color must know that being a lawyer is a possible career choice. Not only that, but lawyers of color, LGBTQIA lawyers, and differently abled lawyers must see themselves represented in leadership positions because *they are* part of our bar. This should be a point of pride, not a scorecard.

Diverse perspectives in our bar help us improve not only the bar itself but also the quality of legal services and the administration of justice in this state.

So, we must walk the path of inclusion in every way. It's upon me, the other bar officers, board members, section members, and all Texas lawyers to reach out and extend that offer of inclusion to those with whom you share similar traits and to those with whom you don't. Our bar will only be better because of it. It is the path to our future.

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President, 2021-2022

State Bar of Texas