

Reclaiming & Reframing “DEI”

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(she / her)



Current role:

JEDI & HR Manager at Worksystems

Professional background:

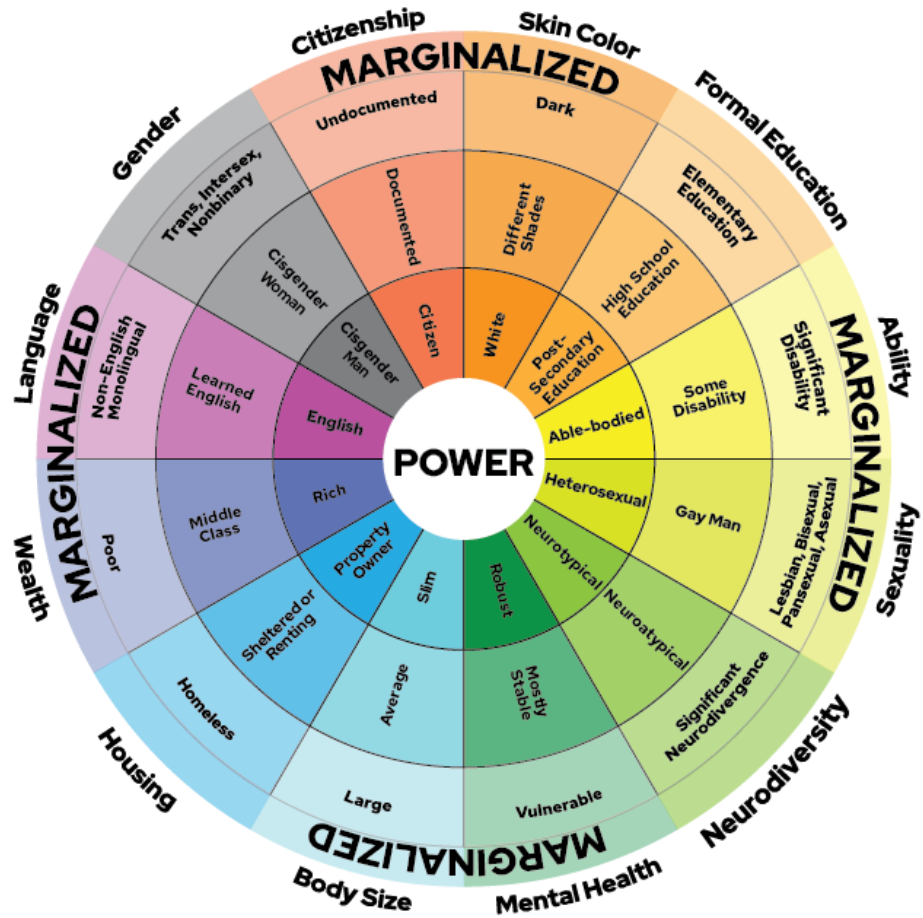
Over a decade in People Operations & Equity work across industries including healthcare, legal, tech, and clean energy. Experience scaling organizations, securing funding, and conducting due diligence.

Educational background:

- Master of Legal Studies - Employment Law
- M.B.A. - Human Resources Management
- B.A. - Women & Gender Studies

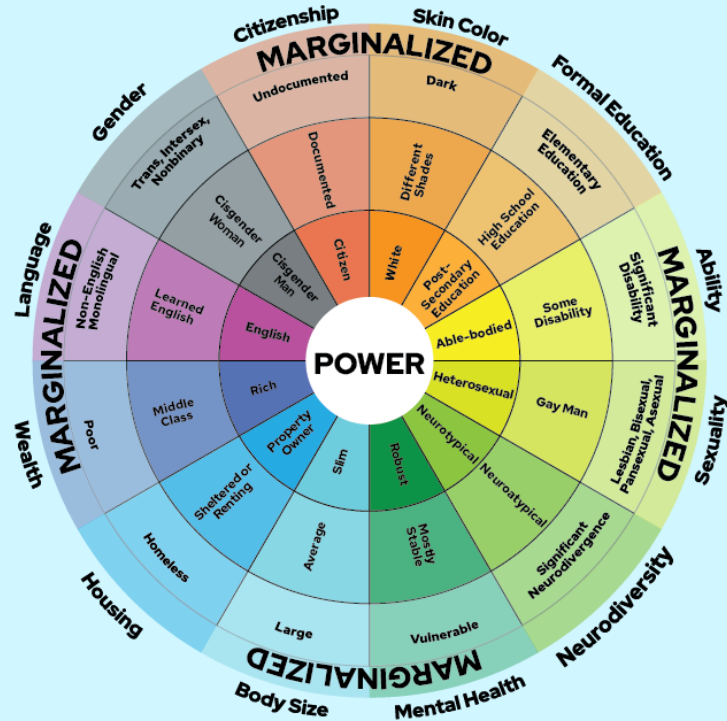
Certifications:

- PHR (Professional in Human Resources)
- Diversity & Inclusion for HR



Adapted from James R Vanderwoerd ("Web of Oppression"), and Sylvia Duckworth ("Wheel of Power/Privilege")

Turn to a neighbor and introduce yourself personally and through the lens of identity.



Agenda

- The Intent of DEI Movements
- Recent Resistance to DI
- Reframing DEI
- Equity-Centered Design
- Intentional Inclusion
- Diversity is the Outcome
- The Future of Work Is...
- Q&A

The Initial Intention of DEI Movements

The Alphabet Soup of DEI

A word cloud of DEI-related terms arranged in an alphabet soup pattern. The words are: JEDI (purple), Engagement (blue), Equity (green), DIBs (green), Accessibility (green), Justice (yellow), DEI (dark blue), IDEA (light green), Diversity (teal), Belonging (teal), and Inclusion (teal). The words are scattered across the center of the slide, with 'DEI' being the largest and most central word.

JEDI
Engagement
Equity DIBs
Accessibility
Justice DEI IDEA
Diversity
Belonging
Inclusion

The Importance of DEI Initiatives

- [91% of workers](#) said they have experienced workplace discrimination. 50% have experienced discrimination based on age and 40% based on race.
- The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is [about twice as high](#) as the rate for those without a disability.
- LGBTQ+ workers [earn about 90 cents for every dollar](#) a typical worker earns. LGBTQ+ people of color, transgender women and men, and non-binary individuals earn even less.
- Weight discrimination still exists. In fact, [1 in 4 workers say they've been discriminated against](#) because of their weight.
- Women [outnumber men in the U.S. college-educated labor force](#), yet are [underrepresented in leadership positions and earn less than men](#), especially Black, Asian, and Hispanic/Latine women.

Recent Resistance to DEI

Bill Ackman reposted



Elon Musk

@elonmusk

Subscribe

DEI is just another word for racism. Shame on anyone who uses it.

Bill Ackman @BillAckman · Jan 3

In light of today's news, I thought I would try to take a step back and provide perspective on what this is really all about.

I first became concerned about @Harvard when 34 Harvard student organizations, early on the morning of October 8th before Israel had taken an...

[Show more](#)

COMMENT

THE END OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The scale of what has been lost is difficult to assess in the moment. But not entirely impossible.

Harvard President Claudine Gay Resigns, Shortest Tenure in University History

DE&I

Elon Musk says diversity efforts are propaganda and 'DEI must die'

This type of rhetoric from executive leadership can further alienate employees from traditionally marginalized groups, one DE&I expert explains.

The Fight Over D.E.I. in the C-suite

Claudine Gay's resignation as Harvard president is adding to the wider debate in boardrooms over diversity, equity and inclusion policies.



Mark Cuban

@mcuban

Let me help you out and give you my thoughts on DEI

1. Diversity

Good businesses look where others don't, to find the employees that will put your business in the best possible position to succeed.

You may not agree, but I take it as a given that there are people of various races, ethnicities, orientation, etc that are regularly excluded from hiring consideration. By extending our hiring search to include them, we can find people that are more qualified. The loss of DEI-Phobic companies is my gain.

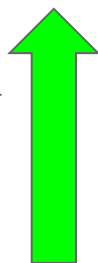
Cycle of Progress and Resistance



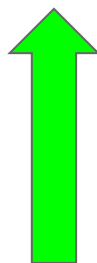
1863: Emancipation Proclamation
1865: 13th Amendment - freed slaves



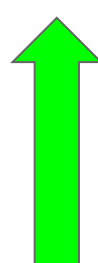
1870: 15th Amendment - right to vote



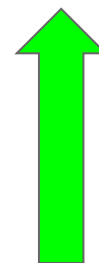
1900 - 1920: Immigration "Great Wave"



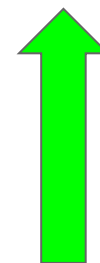
1964: Civil Rights Act



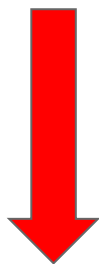
1990: "Hate Crime" begin to be tracked by FBI



2008: Barack Obama elected



2020: Black Lives Matter movement



1868: Former Confederate states start passing Jim Crow laws



1896: Plessy v Ferguson - "separate but equal"



1918: Rebirth of KKK
1921: National Origins quota-system created



1968: Martin Luther King Jr assassinated:



1991: LA Race riots



2009: Start of Tea Party movement



Today: Anti-DEI, Anti-Critical Race Theory, MAGA

WHITE BACKLASH

“The pattern is this: American reactionary politics is nearly always preemptive, predicting catastrophe and highlighting slippery slopes.”

– Lawrence Glickman



Types of Resistance

Status Threat:

The assumption that if members of minority groups make any gains – in opportunities, hires, the potential for promotion – members of the majority group will necessarily incur losses.

Merit Threat:

The feeling of advantaged-group members that recognizing the existence of bias, discrimination, and inequality “explains away” their own successes.

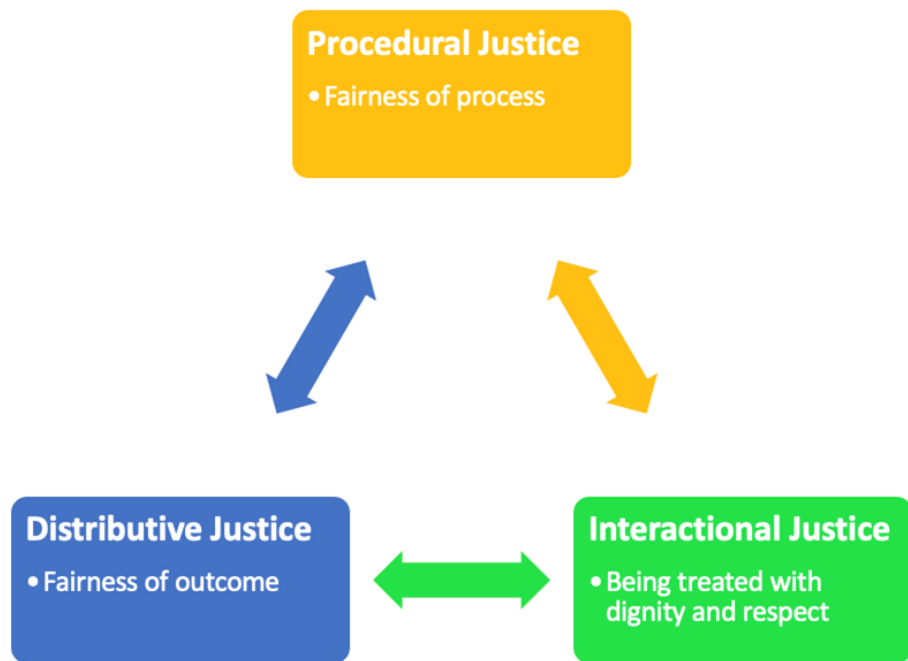
Moral Threat:

The sense that if you acknowledge your privilege, you tarnish your moral image by linking yourself to an unfair system.

Reframing DEI

**A just workplace is one where your identity is
not a predictor of your success.**

Moving from DEI to Organizational Justice



Components of Organizational Justice

PROCEDURAL
JUSTICE =
EQUITY

The guiding principle for
decision-making and policy-
setting

acknowledges systemic
oppression and distributions
of power to create balance in
access and opportunity

equity is not equality: our aim
is not to offer one-size-fits-all,
but to see people for who
they are and meet them there
to lift them up

INTERACTIONAL
JUSTICE =
INCLUSION

The actions we take to make
people feel welcome

is proactive, not reactive

distributes the burden to
those with privilege

DISTRIBUTIVE
JUSTICE =
DIVERSITY

The intended outcome

a workforce with varied
identities, backgrounds, and
lived experiences

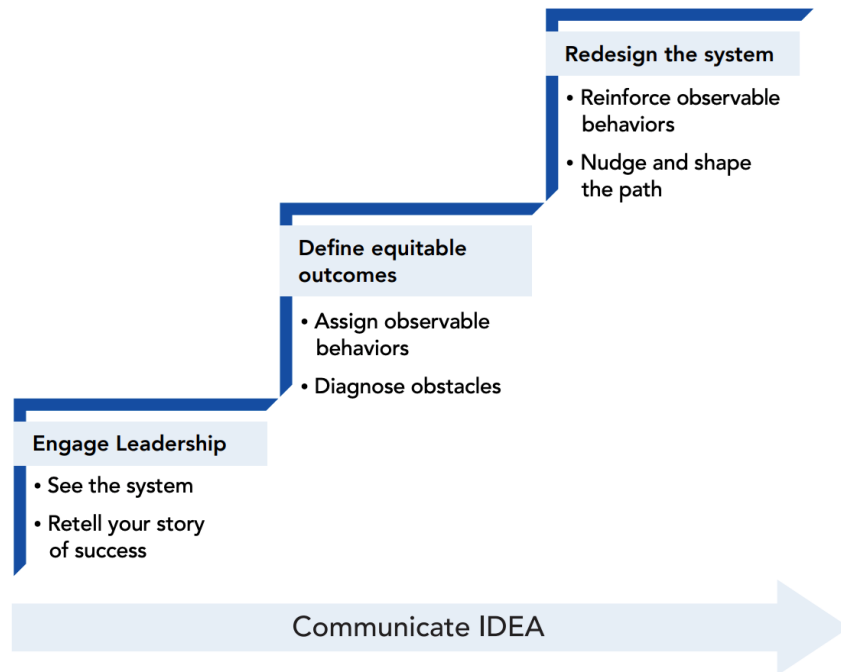
the ability to challenge status
quo in pursuit of progress

Embedding Equity- Centered Design

Three Preconditions of Equity

1. Differences between individuals and groups are valued, not demonized or minimized
1. People with power can see systems and how they influence opportunities for others.
1. People with power want to create more opportunity so everyone can thrive with their differences in tact.

Equity – Theory of Change



Opportunities for Systems Change



Examples of Workplace Norms in Recruiting

Job Ads:

- Salary Transparency
- Years of Experience

Application Requirements:

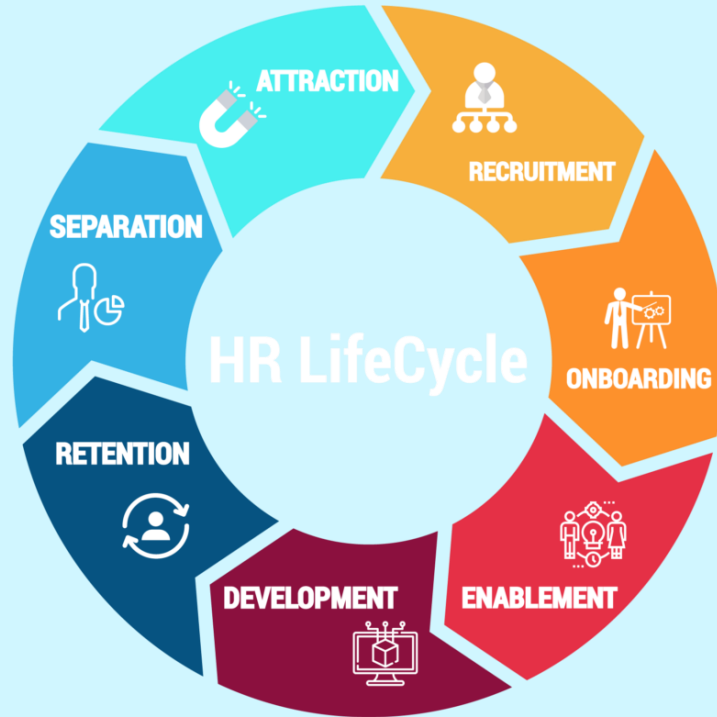
- Formatted Resume
- Cover Letter

Resume Review:

- “Overqualification”
- Gaps in Resume

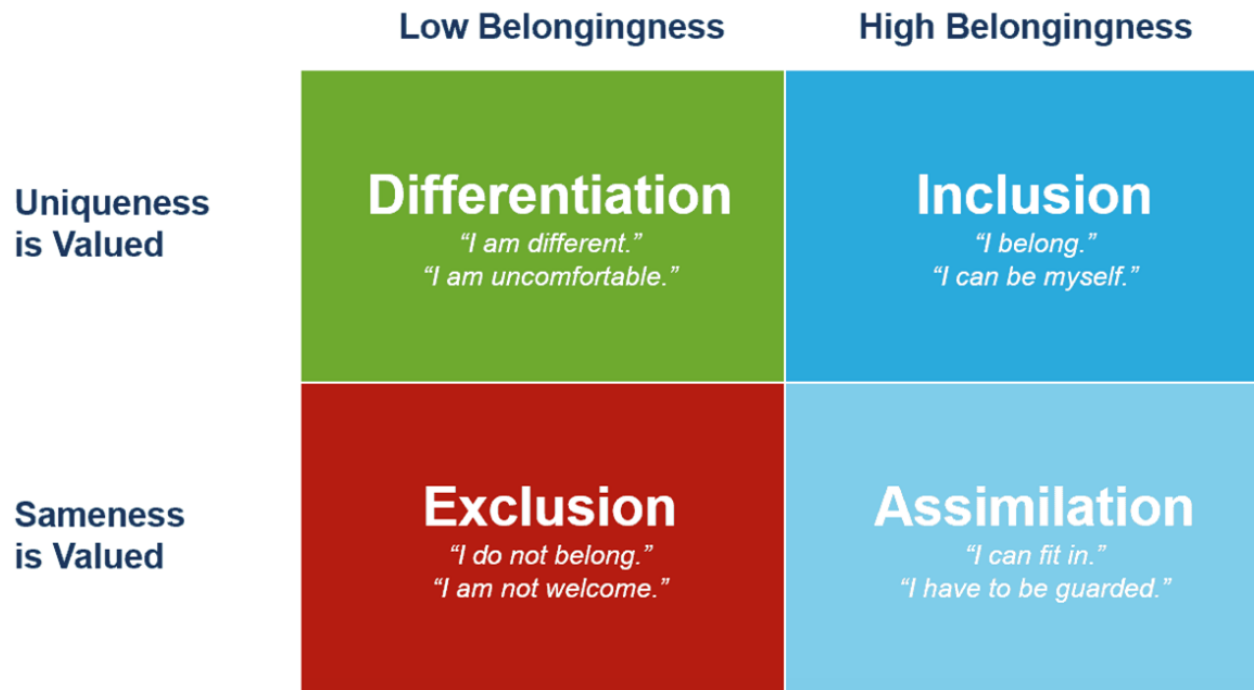


What other aspects of the employee life cycle could be reimagined to be more equitable?



Intentional Inclusion

A Framework for Belonging



Psychological Safety

Learner Safety

It's safe to:

- Discover
- Ask questions
- Experiment
- Learn from mistakes
- Look for new opportunities

Challenger Safety

It's safe to:

- Challenge the status quo
- Speak up
- Express ideas
- Identify changes
- Expose problems



Collaborator Safety

It's safe to:

- Engage in an unconstrained way
- Interact with colleagues
- Have mutual access
- Maintain open dialogue
- Foster constructive debate

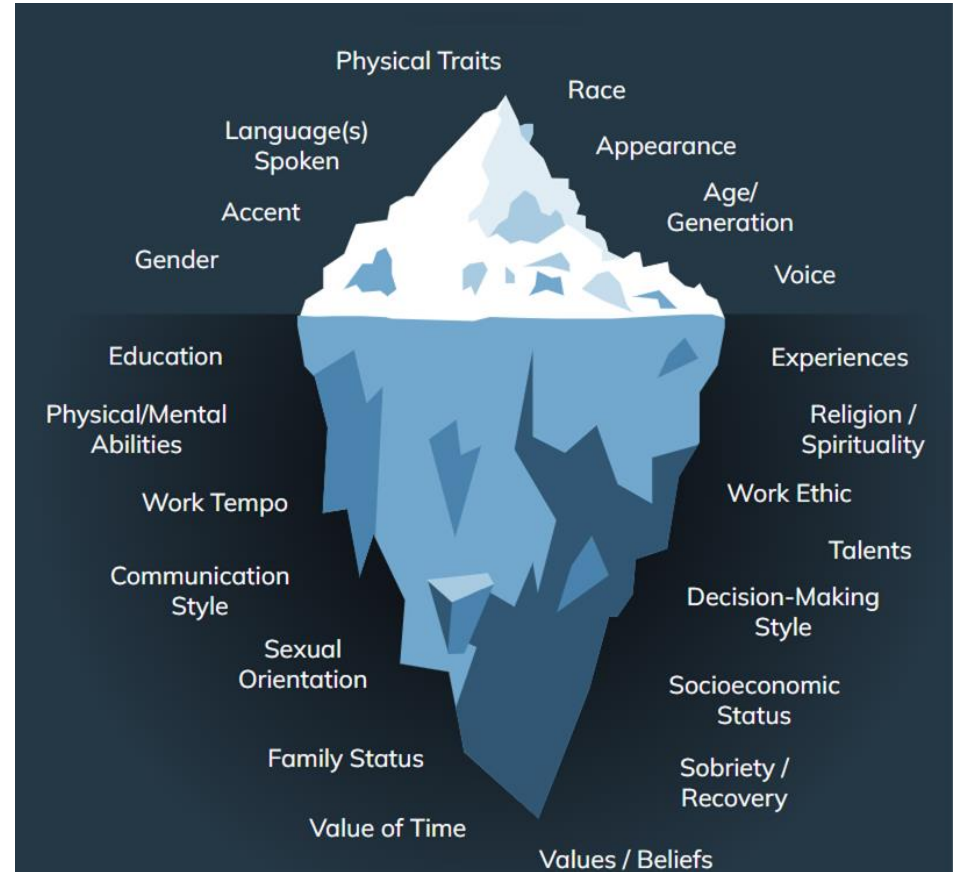
Inclusion Safety

It's safe to:

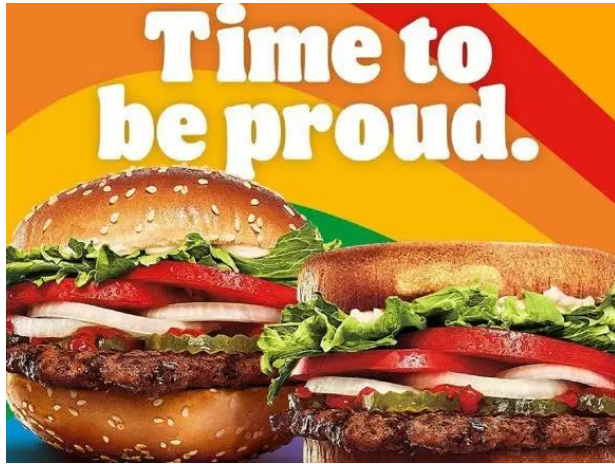
- Know that you are valued
- Treat all people fairly
- Feel your experience, and ideas matter
- Include others regardless of title/position
- Openly contribute

Diversity is the Outcome

Visible and Invisible Categories of Identity



Avoid Performative Efforts



De-Centering Yourself & Your Guilt



Carl Brunt: Like many American institutions, mine was recently rattled by the notion that our lack of diversity had led to a blind spot in our work. So, you know, we're kind of trying to remedy that.



Thelonious Ellison: Let me say first that I'm honored you'd choose me **out of all the Black writers** you could go to **out of fear of being called racist**.

The Future of Work is...



Q&A

Please reach out with additional requests, questions,
or simply to continue the conversation:

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