

## WE HAVE A DREAM: A WORLD WITHOUT RACISM

### **MAY, 2021 - Why Doesn't My Brain Listen to My Heart?**

We opened with prayer.

We discussed evidence from the science community showing if we want to move to a radically different and better place of equity in this country, we have to pay attention to IMPLICIT BIAS. We began by closing our eyes as some scenarios were presented, then paused to recognize what we automatically pictured. We discussed how our brains are efficient and instantly evoke thoughts and images from a cumulative effect of everything we have been exposed to, whether we want those images or not. This is implicit bias. If we have brains and live in this world, we have bias. Bias is a preference for or prejudice against a certain person or group, and these automatic thoughts can be completely contrary to what we desire, but still govern our responses. These unconscious biases don't make us racist, just human, but they can certainly have racist effects. We have only to look at income, incarceration and health disparities to know that we have much work to do.

To understand implicit bias better, we looked at the four top biases in our country: age, weight, gender and race. We saw many examples of how these biases play out in our society. Here are some that we discussed.

- One study showed a young Asian girl who literally performed better on a math test when she was reminded she was Asian, but her score lowered when she was reminded she was a girl.
- Blind hiring studies in multiple cities in this past decade, showed that being black was more of a detriment to acquiring a job than being white and having a prison record.
- More people are killed during hurricanes with female names than those with male names. Why? Hurricanes are named before the season begins, using consecutive letters and alternating between male and female names. The bias of women being weaker than men, has people associating that lack of strength to female named hurricanes, causing them NOT to evacuate.
- Buyers were willing to pay more money on Ebay when the identical products were in white hands rather than black ones.
- In a video of a black and white boy playing, viewers categorized "play" when the white boy shoved the black boy, but "fighting" when the black boy did the shoving.
- Judges who claimed to be impartial gave longer prison sentences for like crimes in proportion to the darker skin color of the defendants.
- In a lab test where participants were flashed a black or white face and then a gun or hand tool, and asked what they had seen, the mistakes were biased by race. They mistakenly saw a gun more often when the object was preceded by a black face than a white one. Results were the same whether whites or blacks were tested; because in our culture, violence is associated more with black males.
- When auditions for orchestras were held blindly, the hiring rate of women went up.

We discussed what was presented and then spent some time on how we can interrupt bias, and align our responses to our values. We recognized that good intentions are not enough. Some shared these ideas to reduce our biases:

- Recognizing we have bias and intentionally looking for examples that disprove our stereotypes.
- Creating diverse decision making groups.
- Increasing our exposure to groups and individuals different from us.
- Giving gifts of books and events which celebrate individuals from other cultures.
- Making hiring practices more equitable by deciding priorities first, reading resumes without names or pictures, holding blind auditions, soliciting from diverse pools.
- Giving decision making focused attention in order not to fall back on spontaneous reactions.
- Taking the Implicit Association Test (Google IAT).

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We will continue our bias work in June, focusing on some specific brain biases and the bias in artificial intelligence.