

# Video\_Transcript\_Vernetta\_Walker\_Colorblind

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By Vernetta Walker

**Vernetta Walker** 00:13

So colorblind, I actually remember when people started using that term it felt it made people feel good. It was like, "Okay, we're not going to call you out for being different." But as we have learned over time, it is important to recognize differences.

**Vernetta Walker** 00:30

So there were a lot of well-intentioned, well-meaning people who switched their language or changed up the language to this term colorblind. But one thing's for sure is that we're not colorblind. And when I say that there is enough evidence that says that actually, we see color before we even see gender slash sex. We detect color in a millisecond. I know I have some in 100 milliseconds to be exact. This is what researchers and scientists show with gender about 50 milliseconds. So yeah, a tenth for color and a little bit longer to detect gender. So we definitely see it.

**Vernetta Walker** 01:18

And one of the problems with trying to be colorblind means that we can never really get to the conversation of addressing the issues that we see that are related to race, racism, structural racism, if we can't talk about it. So we have to acknowledge and also appreciate the unique differences that come with individuals' lived experiences.

**Vernetta Walker** 01:45

I work a lot with boards of directors and CEOs. And when we have these conversations around race, equity, diversity and inclusion, I say isn't, it's very important to see people for who they are, to appreciate the unique differences that they bring to the table.

**Vernetta Walker** 02:01

And also, let's be aware of our biases. I always say if you're human, you're biased. We're all susceptible to it. It's an automatically triggered reaction. And if you have spent any time here in the United States, you have been exposed to biases and stereotypes that have been perpetrated, or perpetuated I should say, over the years, whether through TV, even in schools, friends, family, etc. This is why it's really important to learn how to be an inclusive leader. And that just means really trying to identify and address obstacles or barriers to how people are able to show up in the workplace. To really get take advantage of the benefits of diversity, equity and inclusion, we have to create spaces where people can show up as their authentic selves. We want to be able to benefit from diverse perspectives, viewpoints, and as I mentioned previously, lived experiences. We can't do that if we continue to try to minimize the role of race and how it shows up in our society.

**Vernetta Walker** 03:14

One thing that I was thinking about when I was asked to do this presentation. Recent news articles actually, they've been going on for years, but I'm not going to name the financial institution, but they have paid out millions and millions of dollars based on discrimination bar against their wealth managers ... . And it was racial and gender discrimination, several lawsuits, including a lawsuit filed by their global chief of diversity. That means this organization has a lot of changes to make. And some of these lawsuits have been recent.

**Vernetta Walker** 03:56

So as I think about our current climate, our current environment, we have everyday opportunities to talk about diversity, equity and inclusion: headlines in the newspaper. Certainly in the financial space, there's a lot to pay attention to, and a lot of history that we can talk about.

**Vernetta Walker** 04:17

Recent analysis, Berkeley University looked at nearly 7 million 30-year mortgages. And they found that Blacks and Latino applicants were charged higher rates and heavier refinance fees when compared to white borrowers. This really just perpetuates income gaps, wealth generation, etc., over a period of time. This is nothing new. This has been going on, but now we're actually seeing and paying attention to the data and is being documented.

**Vernetta Walker** 04:53

And that same study, they took a look at the applicants who were rejected and 1.3 million creditworthy Black and Latino applicants and this was between the period of 2008 and 2015. They said they would have been accepted if they just omitted the race identifier because in terms of the qualifications, the applications met the criteria.

**Vernetta Walker** 05:21

So there's a lot going on. Coming back to the original question, why shouldn't we be colorblind? This is why: because we'll never take a look at the data and disaggregate it to see where we have big improvements that needs to be made in terms of just dismantling some of our processes, systems and practices that are continuing to perpetuate disparate outcomes related to race.