

# THE INTERSECTION OF COVID-19 AND DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION?

## The Power of the PAUSE!

by Vincent R. Brown



### *I TRUST THAT YOU, YOUR FAMILY, COMPANY AND COMMUNITY ARE WELL!*

Several people have asked me if I see any connection between the current COVID-19 pandemic and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. While what I share below may not be “the answer,” I think it provides a basis for a continued dialogue. I welcome your perspective.

At the core of diversity, equity, and inclusion is a desire to care for and treat every human with dignity, equity and respect. This is practicing both the golden and platinum rules. It is a recognition that too often because of our common humanity and because of nature, nurture and biology this is difficult, as we are all implicitly and unconsciously biased. Yes--you, me and each one of us--is biased.

### Internal and External Environment

IMPLICIT BIAS

Thoughts, attitudes or assumptions influencing our understanding and decisions which often occur at a subconscious level.

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

### Implicit Unconscious Bias

VUCA

<b>Complexity</b> Multiple key decision factors	<b>Volatility</b> Rate of change
<b>Ambiguity</b> Lack of clarity about meaning of an event	<b>Uncertainty</b> Unclear about the present

+ How well can you predict the outcome of your actions?

- How much do you know about the situation?

**The COVID-19 Virus has absolutely created a VUCA environment.** Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous. What we know for sure is that in this type of environment biases can, do and will thrive. Therefore, when we reflect on this situation three to five years from now, **we will be clear if it brought out the best in us; the worst of us.** Only, time will tell.

However, what I have noticed from my many conversations thus far is that **because of this threat to health, people are in fact “pausing” and reflecting more inwardly.** They are asking themselves questions such as “What type of person am I?” “How am I connected to a larger community?” “How can I help others less fortunate than I?” “Do my company values align with my personal values?” “What type of country and world do I want to co-create?” Very profound reflections. I too am asking the same questions. (Today, Ne my personal values?” “What type of country and world do I want to co-create?” Very profound reflections. I too am asking the same questions. (Today, New York Governor Cuomo introduced his plan called PAUSE!) **So where might there be correlation to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion?**



1. The **Power of the Pause** is essential to being intrinsically (naturally) inclusive. Unfortunately, not since the events of 9/11/2001 have I seen such

thoughtful reflection. In addition, the cancellation of so many personal, professional, school, social and community events—previously deemed important and indispensable--provide space for deep pauses.

2. Amidst this incredible challenge, people are engaging in some **Amazing Dialogues** (versus heated debates) with people different from themselves. People are proactively trying to gain new insights on this situation together, and not focus so much on who is right or wrong. This approach—dialogue, where multiple different perspectives are sought, shared, and appreciated--is at the core of an inclusive culture.
3. There appears to be a sense of **Collective Vulnerability** which can accelerate the **creation of trust**. Reciprocal and shared trust is fundamental to valuing diversity and creating equitable experiences for everyone. Trusting intentions without judgment is an essential element for genuine inclusion.
4. I am seeing so many people demonstrating **Respectful Empathy**. This goes beyond a concern about themselves, their families, their company, and their community. There is a recognition that **We are all essentially connected and most importantly belong to one another**. Further, there is a recognition that many of us share differences in resources, accessibility, support, care, and ability to cope. Further, there is a sense that “perhaps I am the keeper of my sister and brother”; though they may not be my next door neighbor, be in the same club, or look and act very different from me---whether they happen to be in Washington or Manhattan; China or Italy, Nairobi or Australia—we are all one humanity. As we often put it, **people are getting behind the curtains of others**.
5. I am experiencing a **variety of different communication styles and preferences** in how people are thinking about this epidemic. Diversity of thought is truly in play. From those who approach

this subject with data and analytics---to others focused on plans, policies, and processes that need to be in place, to others who are considering the strategic and connected implications of this event, and to those expressing their thoughts with abundant emotion and passion. **Cognitive Diversity is on full display.**

6. This is certainly a **Significant and Emotional Event (SEE)**. It is and will have an impact for us all for many years to come. Like 9/11, the Kennedy and King assassinations, Hurricane Katrina and other events---it will be forever be with us and will reshape our culture. For instance, after this event, will those in America ever go back to shaking hands? Or will we opt to bow or give each other "virtual high fives" without touching? SEEs can change norms and become the stimulus for new neural pathways providing us with alternative ways to do something different with others different from ourselves.

who served in the Korean Conflict, Bay of Pigs and Vietnam: **"Your attitude determines your altitude."** I am also reminded that **our mindset drives our behaviors**. Unfortunately, we are in a war against the COVID-19 Virus – but we will win!



It is my sincere hope that this unforeseen, unpredictable, and frightening series of events also creates an environment where there is more care, compassion, and concern can ultimately thrive. I am hopeful that the best in us, shows up. Surely in this type of environment, diversity, equity, and inclusion will continue to help each of us be the best person we can be--creating better homes, a better community, country, and world. **But it just will not happen automatically and will require intentional actions from every one of us, because we are all human. But only time will tell!**

## Inclusion Partnership TRUE Bias Disrupters



**Shared Trust**



**Respectful Empathy**



**Connected Understanding**



**Significant Emotional (Event) Relationship**

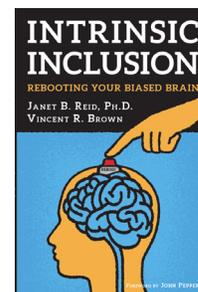
In sum, I am reminded of the wisdom of my late father, Chief Petty Officer, USN, Roosevelt Brown,

## Intrinsic Inclusion™:

Rebooting Your Biased Brain Challenge

1. Can't We All Just Get Along? Time for Inclusion and Diversity (April 2018)
2. The Potential of Intrinsic Inclusion™ (July 2018)
3. A New Approach to Diversity and Inclusion (September 2018)
4. A New Path to Diversity and Inclusion (November 2018)

Psychology Today



**You are our biggest priority and the best part of VRBC! Please don't hesitate to reach out if I/we can answer any questions. Take care of yourself and each other. Be well. E Pluribus Unum! Talk to you soon.**