

Publications & News

OK Voices

LaQuanda Brunson on Identity Inclusion and Impact

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How has your identity shaped your experience personally or professionally?

Being part of the LGBTQ+ community informs how I navigate the world personally and professionally. I have a very supportive family, which unfortunately is not always the case in this community. My parents affirmed me and respected me. Living in my truth daily, I tend to forget how in the margins I actually am. I am married, own a home, have two beautiful daughters, and now an adorable grand-daughter.

On paper, my family is very much like your typical American family. Very much like my mom and dad, I just have a wife. It is only when faced with people who hold onto close-minded opinions and beliefs that I am reminded of my placement in society. I've dealt with discrimination and hate speech, and it's caused me to have a bit of a tougher skin. However, I do address hate speech and discrimination in my presence. Hate has to be combatted head-on and immediately.

Professionally, I have always chosen to be out in work environments. I've had a myriad of experiences making that choice, but they have mostly been positive. I've been incredibly privileged in that way. Since I was a teenager attending my first DC Pride back in 1996, I've seen so many changes in the world regarding the LGBTQ+ community as well. People being more aware and accepting of us, as well as these spaces becoming more inclusive. I've had the privilege of working in organizations with leadership in the LGBTQ+ community as well.

"Be confident in who you are. Know that your sexuality does not define you professionally, your work does. Be willing to advocate and educate when the opportunity arises. Practice inclusion of all diverse backgrounds to model the desired behavior that will benefit each of us."

What does Pride Month mean to you?

Pride month to me, is a time of reflection and celebration. To look back where we've come from. There was a time where being an open lesbian in a corporate environment, especially one male dominated, was unheard of. This time each year, we get to celebrate progress, advancement, and love. We also remember those who came before us, during times of extreme violence that were lost to hate and divisive beliefs. It's also a time to look forward to the work left for all of us and to recognize the wins we've achieved together alongside our allies.

What changes — big or small — would you like to see in your workplace or community when it comes to inclusion and support?

I'd like to see Pride events that are more inclusive of the entire LGBTQ+ community, in all stages of life. Family-friendly events, programs, and things that include more of the + portion of LGBTQ+. Pride merch offered via our corporate gift site is a good thing as well.