

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/in-brief/innovation-needs-diversity/>

Academic faculties continue to poorly represent the diversity of the student population, observes Carbon founder and executive chairman Joe DeSimone. It's just one example of the lack of representation in the American technology and innovation ecosystem. It takes relentless leadership, he says, to make diversity front and center. Diversity, he adds, may create discomfort. But that very difference provides the richness that drives the most meaningful innovation.



Transcript

- In the late 1990s.. 00:00:06,840 My group, very diverse group at Carolina, you now, graduated over 80 PhD students and half were women and others underrepresented in sciences and, (breathes heavily) and I had a very, I had number, a large number of African Americans in my group and I was given a talk in South Carolina in 1990s and the NAACP had a boycott on the State of South Carolina because of the Confederate Plag, confederate flag and I was a keynote lecturer and we decided we weren't gonna go, as a group.. (gasps) And what happened was they ended up moving the meeting to another state.. And, you know, now we hear about NASCAR finally addressing the Confederate flag, you know, I mean, it's just, I don't know, a lot has happened, but a lot hasn't changed and, you know, our faculties don't represent the diversity of our student population, and there are so many things that we need to keep working on and, and again back to the importance of it; this is where the richness of innovation is, right? The diversity of perspectives, the thinking and cultural values, all that comes together and if we don't get this, right, we're holding back innovation.. And it takes a relentless, unfortunately, it takes relentless leadership to keep making this front and center because I'll tell you, I see it so many times, that if you don't keep it front and center, it's easy not to do.. And, it's gotta be relentless, and people fall back to not thinking about it and, and you know, it's uncomfortable being with people that are different than you.. And that uncomfot is gotta be harnessed, right? That's where all the richness is, right? It's and...Early in my academic career, I got invited to a Innovation Group.. And not only was it all white guys around the table, but they all graduated from the same research group.. And they all knew the same stuff and they were at a structural disadvantage for driving innovation, right? Your community is...You've gotta think about your community, your groups at the onset, or you're not gonna be as innovative as you possibly could be.. And that's something you've gotta be relentless, it's great..

Ellen Coleman, this had been a big passion of hers, too.. And one of the great reasons why she's part of the team at Carbon and she's been a strong advocate and it's a really important thing for us...