



# The Assault on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

## Old Biases, New Tools and Technology

Diversity Collegium Presentation

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# What's Diversity Practitioners to do?

- Changing landscape including AI and social media
- New methods, tools and narratives being used to distract
- Pre-existing fractures in ideology, preference and remedies amplified
- Old biases and preferences reframed – Reversity, Perversity, Adversity implications
- Strategies for navigating the growing polarities
- DEI Strategies for moving forward







# Why DEI Matters

**"Our world exists on many levels.  
Our relationships grow more  
interconnected and global.  
Survival cannot be achieved by one  
socio-economic level, one ethnic  
group or gender, it is intertwined in  
the destiny of us all.**

**Climate change has a significant  
impact on the ecosystem of our  
relationships with one another as  
we run toward safety, stability,  
peace and survival.**

**We must learn to co-exist, with all  
our differences and colors if our  
earthly home is to be sustainable.**

**Learning to co-exist means  
measured speech, respectful  
behavior, and systems that are  
built on inclusivity amid growing  
differences." - Effenus Henderson  
(2017)**

# The Context is a Game Changer

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## Macro, Mezzo and Micro Levels

- Polarities and disparities at different levels – personal, interpersonal, team, and organizational

## Cultural Identity and Tribalism

- Emboldened beliefs and values for and against inclusivity
- Disparities in selective identify clusters

## Leadership Mindsets

- Ideological differences by leaders and change agents

## Institutionalized and technological biases

- Technological engineering, AI, and persuasion architecture amplifying difference

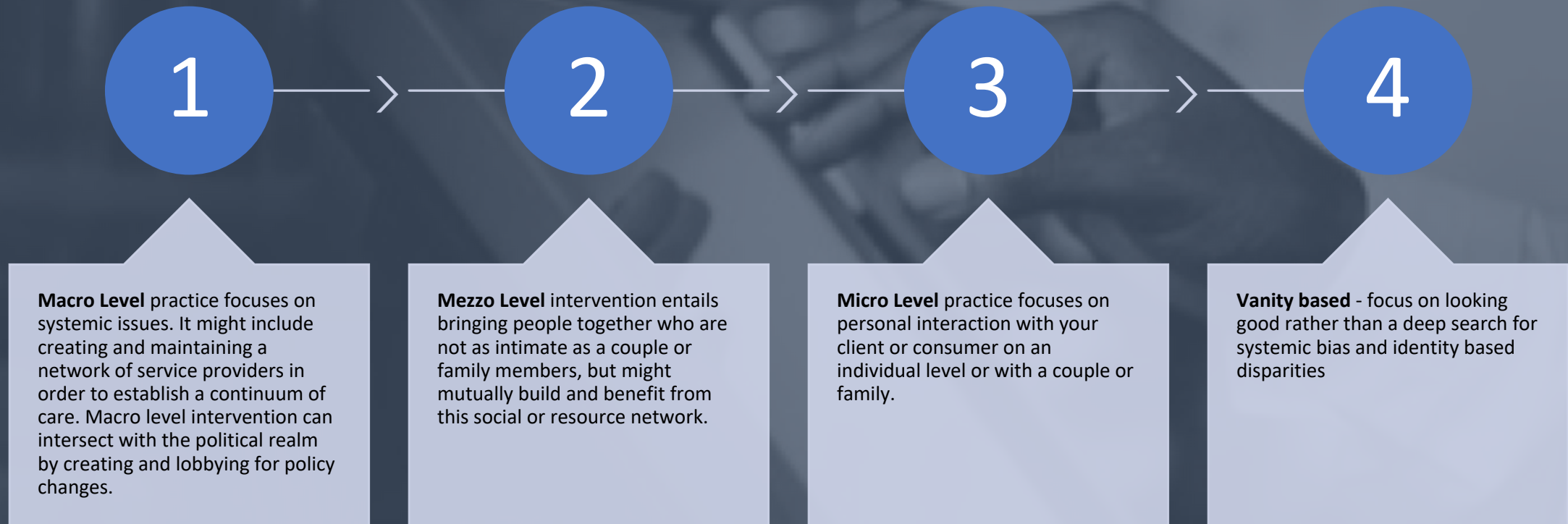


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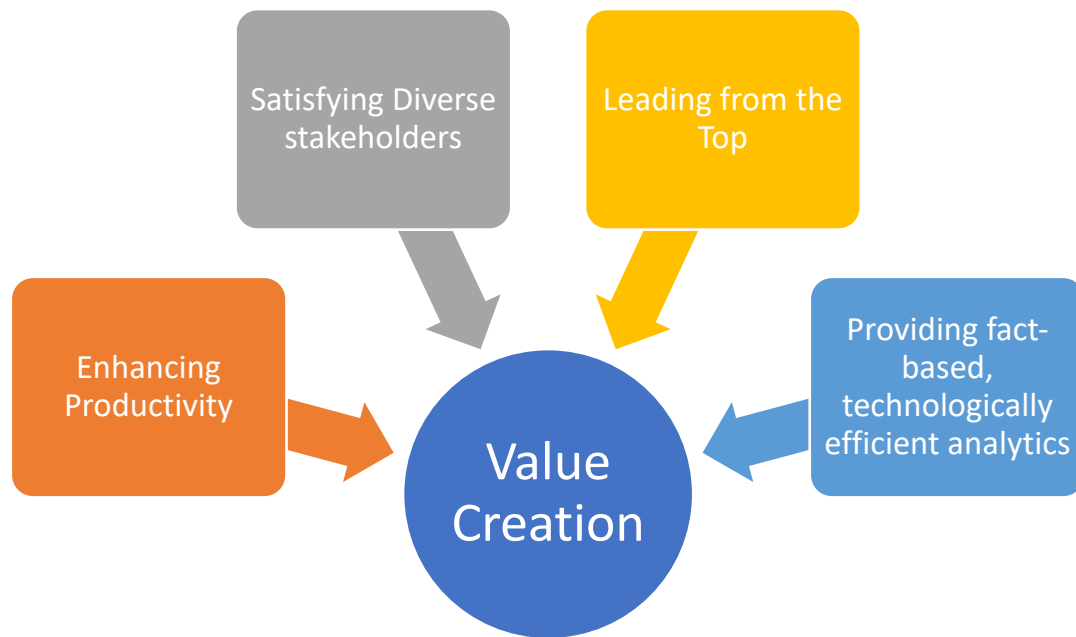


# Are Your DEI Practices Systemic or Vanity-Based?



# Monetizing Value Thru DEI Practices

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# Resisting the Assault While Enhancing DEI Practices

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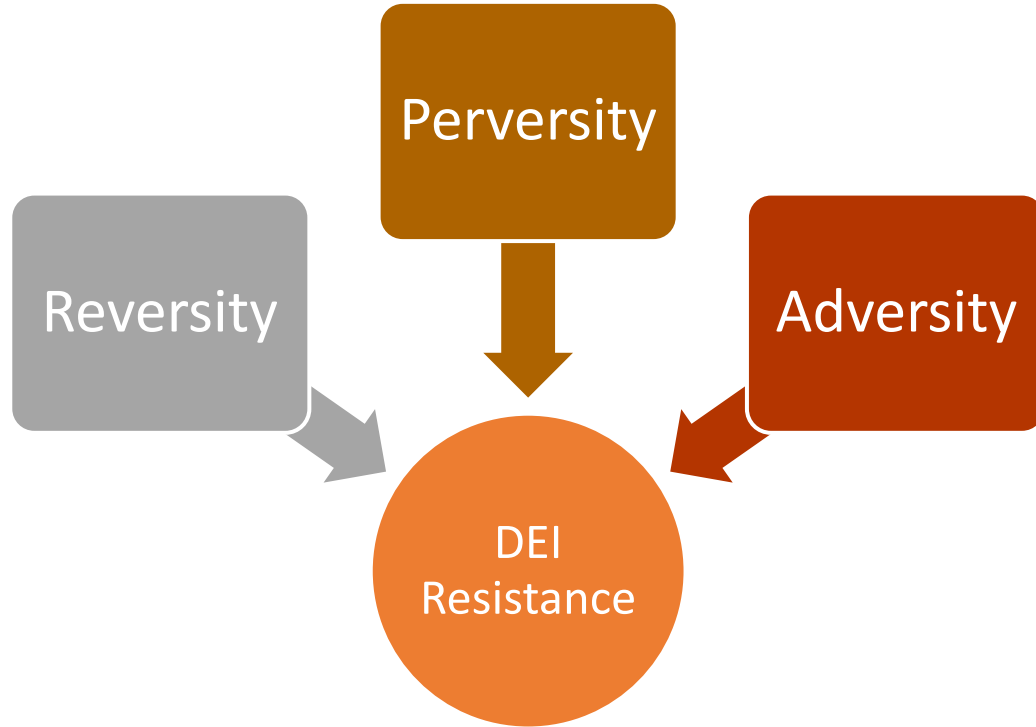
## Group Discussion

- What are the emerging values that seem to be in conflict?
- What are the disrupters that are reshaping work and relationships?
- What are the polarities impacting DEI work and how do we have respectful conversations about them?
- What are the thorny problems to be solved?
- What are the overall implications for D&I Practitioners and Change Agents?



# The Three Fronts of the Polarizing Assault

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## Resistance Based on Underlying Bias, Stereotypes, Ideologies, and Beliefs

- Fear of the Other
- Loss of Position – White Genocide
- Tribalism
- Distain for multiculturalism
- Ideological beliefs (religious, cultural, ethnic)



# Reversity – The Fear, The Response

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*Unconscious and sometimes conscious (unexpressed) bias fostering a desire to eliminate, impede, discriminate, reverse and discount the challenges and systemic barriers to societal inclusion.*

- The Fear
  - Loss of position
  - Demographic diversity
  - Immigration
  - White genocide
- The Response
  - Eliminate progressive public policy
  - Reduce immigration patterns
  - Favor nationalism over globalism
  - Create explicit challenges to diversity and inclusion
  - Polarize and fray mindsets
  - Increase hate speech and physical harm

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# Perversity – The Fear, The Response

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*Persuasion strategies focused on diminishing support, distorting the truth and perspectives by false narratives and conversations that provoke and create polarizing fear.*

- The Fear
  - Increased diversity of leadership at all levels
  - Diminished power and privilege of white males
  - Too much emphasis on group-based identity
  - Freedom of speech and individual rights taken away
- The Response
  - Discredit and attack progressive leaders valuing diversity, equity and inclusion
  - Respond with emotionally charged rhetoric over fact-based solutions
  - Share and amplify false and misleading narratives about “the other”
  - Use AI and social media to spread and amplify these narratives

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# Adversity – The Fear, The Response

*Growing disparities in income, opportunity and privilege based on class, geography, immigration patterns, and life conditions.*

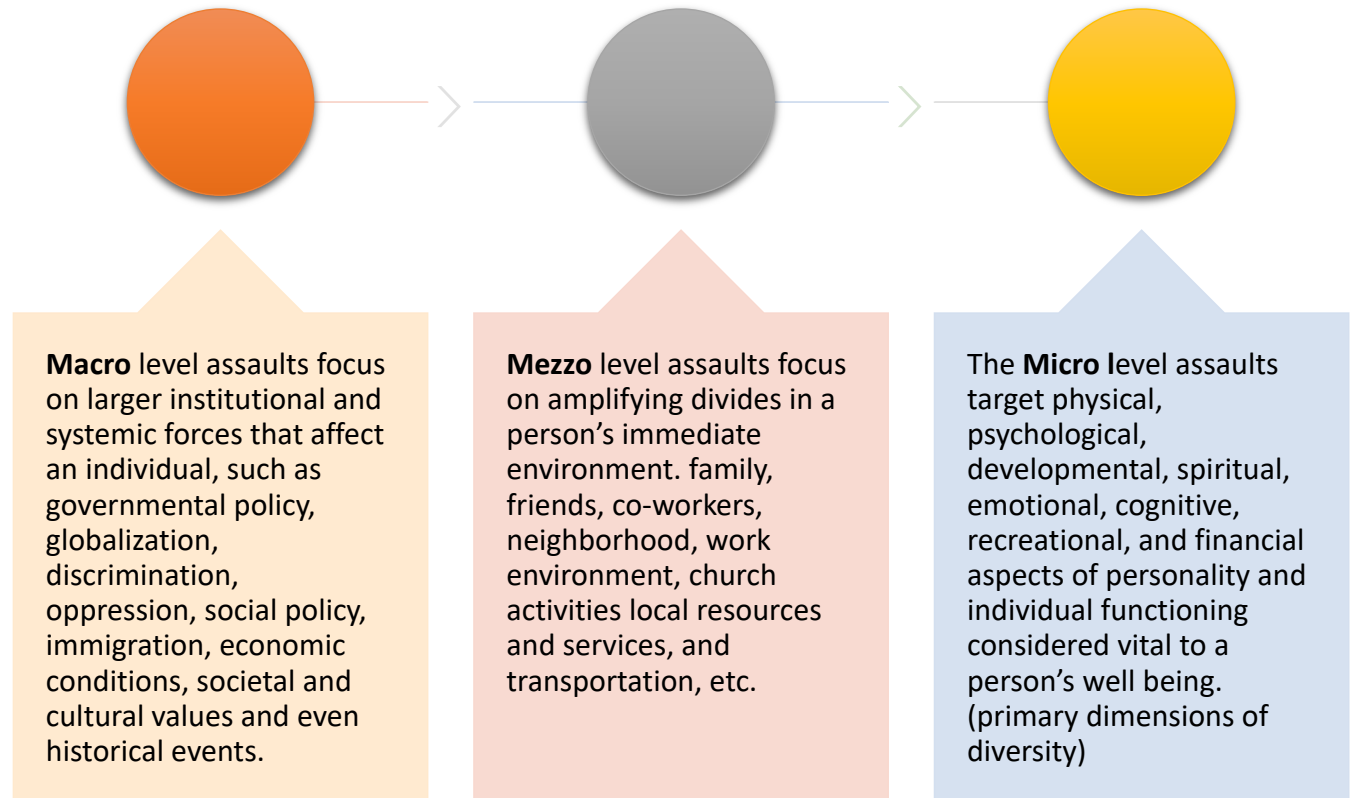
- The Fear
  - The diversity of urban centers vs the homogeneity of rural populations
  - The impact of collective intervention solutions over individual freedoms
  - Public policy solutions to close income inequality gaps
  - Disruptive migration patterns by those impacted by war, natural disaster, famine, disease
- The Response
  - Stoke the fears of the rural, white working class
  - Amplify the sense of loss to individuals and families
  - Blame personal situation on the immigrants, Mexicans, women, people of color and diversity initiatives
  - Attack identity and group based solutions
  - Amplification of these narratives through AI and Social Media
  - Resort to drug abuse, especially opioids, to passivity the pain and loss

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# The Assault challenges DEI at Multiple Levels



# Mckinsey Report: Global Disrupters are Reinforcing the Assault

The Age of Urbanization

Accelerating Technological Change

Greater Global Connections

Challenges of an Aging World

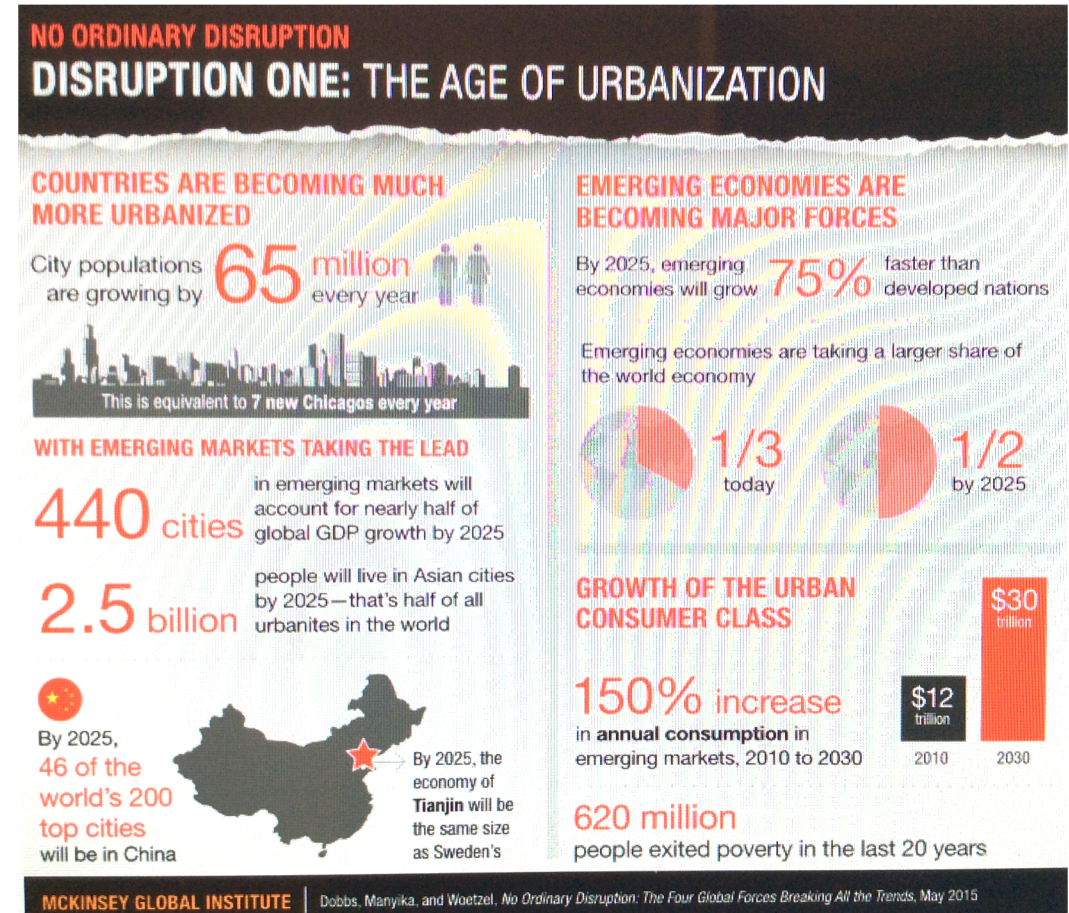




# The Age of Urbanization

**Urbanization** is creating greater polarity with those in rural areas

- Shifting of the locus of economic activity to emerging markets and urban centers
- Population in these urban centers has grown significantly
- Nearly half of global GDP growth between 2010
- ***This change is creating more progressive urban centers and more conservative (and white) rural environments***





# Accelerating Technological Change

- **Technology** is shifting the way people connect and communicate globally.
  - Acceleration in the scope, scale, and economic impact of technology.
  - Processing power and connectivity are part of the story but the data revolution is placing unprecedented amounts of information in the hands of consumers and businesses alike.
  - ***Brands and reputations can be impacted instantaneously by a growing set of global stakeholders.***

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# Greater Global Connections

- **People and supply chains** are becoming more diverse and global
  - The world is much more connected through trade and through movement of capital, people, and information (data and communications) – what McKinsey calls “flows.”
  - The world trading hubs have expanded into a complex, intricate, sprawling web.
  - More than 1 billion people crossed borders in 2009, over five times the number in 1980.
  - ***Global talent is needed by corporations to increase market penetration and to serve a more diverse set of customers and consumers.***

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- The **future talent pool** is much more diverse as more children of color are being born
  - The human population is getting older, fertility rates are falling (especially in industrialized nations) and the world's population is graying dramatically.
  - Currently about 60% of the world's population lived in countries with fertility rates below those needed to replace the generation before.
  - A smaller workforce will place greater onus on productivity (and diversity) for driving growth.
  - ***The war for talent will center on a much more diverse and global talent pool. This will create growing polarities with older, rural working class whites who may feel left out.***





# Quick Discussion

1

How do these trends and issues impact our work as diversity, equity and inclusion practitioners?

2

In what ways are the times unsettling?

3

How does this reshape the way we think about our work?

# The Emerging Context

- Global Demographic Explosion and Shifts
- Oppression, Privilege and Power Dynamics
- Migration, Religious Expression and Extremism
- Shifting and Polarizing Mental Models

# Global Demographic Explosion and Shifts

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- Shift to majority minority population in urban centers
- Identity patterns changing as people claim multiple identities
- The Socialist – Capitalism challenge grows as income inequality widens
- Workers become more networked and multicultural
- Growing frustration by the white working poor in rural communities who fear globalization taking their jobs





# Oppression, Privilege and Power

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- Growing intolerance of harassment, disparate impact and treatment (BLM, #MeToo)
- The tipping point of privilege and power is shifting – Majority Minority Urban Centers
- “Millennial” activists returning to grassroots organizing and non-violent protests
- Members of the white working class are exhibiting increasing resentment towards diversity efforts
- White nationalist sentiments are growing



# Migration, Religious Expression and Extremism

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- Cultural and religious polarities are growing (such as the Muslim Ban) and views of America as a Christian society
- Growing fears and concerns over safety, liberty and freedoms
- Increased interracial relationships and marriages are blurring cultural identity and expression
- Growing resentment is resulting in hate based retaliatory acts and violence



# Adverse Life Conditions Are Creating Polarizing Mental Models

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- War accelerating the movement of refugees and migrants
- Climate change forcing increased poverty and hunger
- Increased fear, anger and violence erupting at local and more systemic levels
- Traditional Euro-centric values now being shared with Asian and African values
- Diversity increasingly perceived as "white genocide"





# DEI strategies can amplify these growing polarities

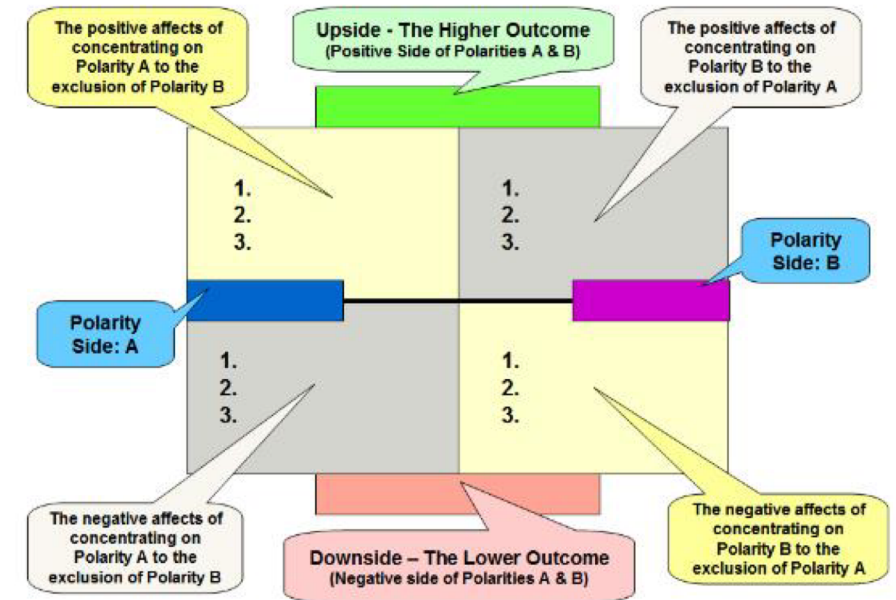
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“To succeed in an increasingly interconnected world, creative D&I leaders must avoid choosing between unacceptable alternatives. Instead, they must use the power inherent in these dualities to invent new D&I assumptions and create new models geared to an ever-changing world.”



# Polarities are Growing in DEI Efforts

- **Polarity:** a state in which two ideas, opinions, etc., are completely opposite or very different from each other
  - Paradox
  - Dilemma
  - False Narratives
  - Stuck in Echo Chambers
- *Polarities are two equally attractive possibilities (values) that exist in tension with each other such as a: “inclusivity” (for example a diversity) and b: “exclusivity” (for example, reversity).*



# Ten Polarity Principles

1. All values come in pairs and these pairs are interdependent.
2. When you actively work toward the upsides of both values in a polarity, you create a virtuous cycle leading to a higher purpose.
3. When you over-emphasize one value over time, to the neglect of its pair, you get:
  - a) The downsides of the chosen value
  - b) Eventually, the downsides of the other value as well.
4. When you're stuck in the downsides of both values, you create a vicious cycle leading to a deeper fear.
5. We will tend to make other individuals or identity groups "containers" for the values we disfavor.





# Ten Polarity Principles

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**6. There are two truths in every polarity, and neither is the whole truth.**

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**7. Solving problems and leveraging polarities are BOTH critical skills.**

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**8. Leveraging polarities well helps you solve problems better and more sustainably.**

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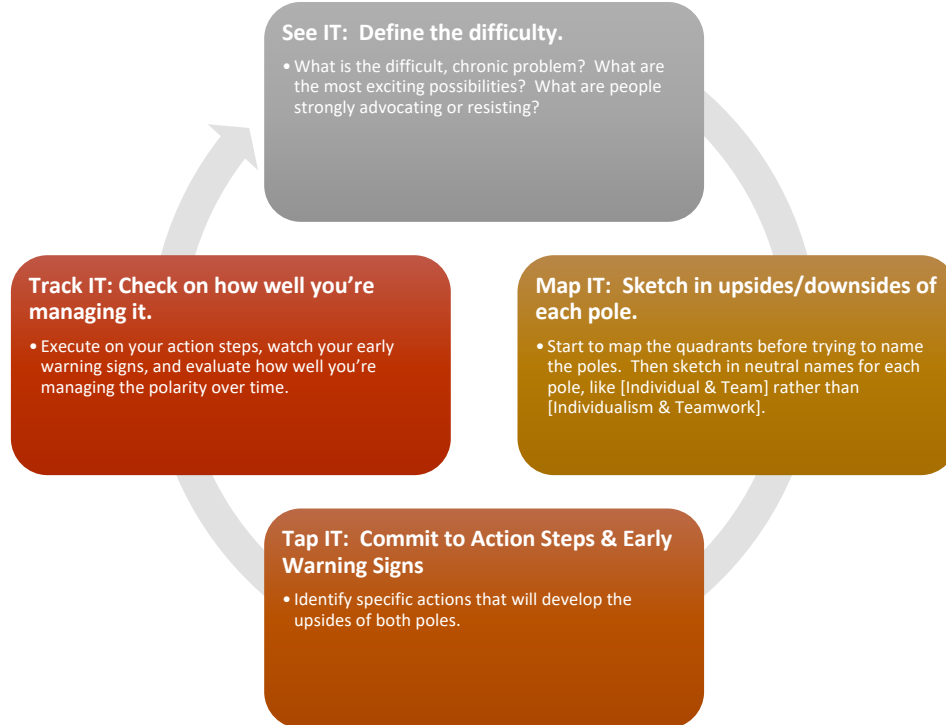
**9. We get stuck in the downsides because we see our values as the whole truth.**

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**10. Never stop at balance when leveraging polarities. Always go for optimization.**

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# Mapping and Managing D&I polarities



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# Discussion

- What are some polarities in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Change Work?
- Discuss the upside of each and suggest ways to optimize and energize the movement that reflects the perspectives of the both poles of the polarity.



# Disarming the Assault

- Foster a willingness to listen
- Consider intent and impact
- Consider the impact of the downside of both perspectives
- Show respect and empathy.
- Understand intrinsic drivers of trust.

# Jacobs Model of 8 Intrinsic Drivers of Trust

## Belong and Connect

- If people feel excluded in the workplace they feel threatened and it can affect their health and wellbeing. It is important to make sure individuals feel connected to their team.

## Voice and Recognition

- People should be encouraged to put their views and ideas across in the workplace so they feel that their contributions are recognized and appreciated.

## Significance and Position

- People are continually assessing their role within their organization and what contribution they are making. If people do not feel valued, they can feel threatened, which will negatively impact their performance.

## Fairness

- It is critical for an organization to treat its employees fairly and consistently. If employees feel they are benign and treated unfairly it can cause high stress levels and low productivity.

## Learn and Challenge

- Employees need to be continually learning so they can adapt to the ever-changing modern work environment. Research has shown that employees who feel challenged are more productive.

## Choice and autonomy

- Giving employees a degree of control and the ability to make their own choices can help them balance their work and homes lives more effectively, helping to improve performance.

## Security and certainty

- If employees aren't secure in their position then they can feel threatened which has a negative effect on their performance and productivity levels.

## Purpose

- If employees have a clear sense of purpose and are aware of exactly what their contribution to an organization is, they are more likely to be engaged and productive.



# Framing Sustainable DEI Responses to Assault

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Diversity and inclusion change efforts must be framed across multi-dimensional elements and polarities.

- Pre and Post Racial mental models co-exist
- Emergence of multi-racial, multi-cultural and pluralistic religious expression
- Identity is being framed across multiple diversity dimensions (comfort in mixing of identity dimensions) and mental models
- Global connectivity and intersectionality emerging reshaping perspectives and views (highly networked generation)
- Traditional command and control/hierarchical power eroding; information is power
- Cognitive diversity emerges as a critical component for innovation and problem-solving
- And, the growing fear of human displacement by technology





# Sustainable Responses to Assault

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Change efforts to build more inclusive environments should be based on a good understanding of the systemic and disruptive forces at play in society today.

These forces include polarities – those for progress and those against it.

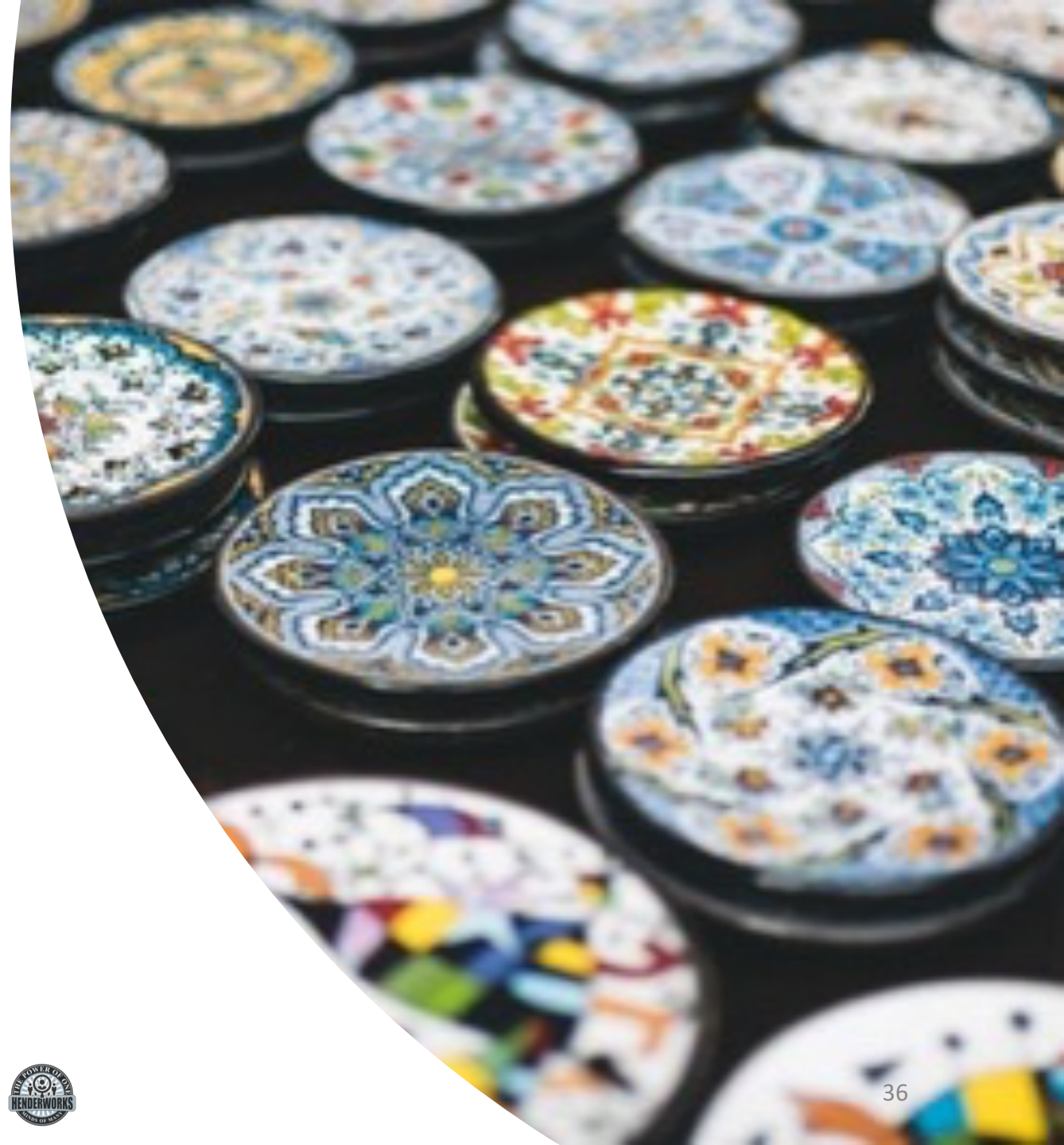
The intervention strategies must not only consider the narrower dimensions of this work but the economic, subversive, and reactionary dimensions as well.

*“Diversity and inclusion is a must for many, but a threat to some who want to sustain privilege.”*

# Sustainable Responses to Assault

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- Inclusive excellence requires diligent focus and practice
- The practice of inclusion must be agile, adaptive and networked
- Competence is required across cultural, multi-racial, generational, sexual, philosophical and political similarities and differences
- The actors coming to the work place expect that shared similarities do not diminish or disparage difference
- Leaders and change agents will need to learn how to navigate a growing array of difference
- The players in emerging supply chains will be global, and bring a variety of cultural and linguistic challenges to traditional western management models





# In Closing

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- Incremental changes will not suffice.
- A comprehensive agenda will be needed.
- A note of urgency – decisions today are important.
- Change efforts must carefully consider the forces for progressive change and the forces against such efforts (polarities).
- Behavior, practices, and systems that impact inclusive outcomes should be understood and where necessary, challenged.

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