



INCLUSION

Video : Inclusion by Vernā Myers

Topics
Inclusion

Module
Understanding

Territory
World - USA

Subject
Definition
Inclusion
Diversity
Cultural and
unconscious
biases

Text transcription of the video

This video summarizes the talk by Vernā Myers, President of The Vernā Myers Company.

This speech was delivered at AppNexus' inaugural Women's Leadership Forum, on December 10, 2015.

She explains that talking about diversity is not enough. Diversity, she insists, is being invited to the party. But inclusion is being asked to dance.

She points out that, despite progress, the numbers remain low: less than 20% of women are partners in law firms, only 4% of CEOs in the Fortune 500 are women, and even fewer are women of color. These figures show that diversity exists, but inclusion is still missing.

To illustrate the difference, Vernā Myers recalls that in 1953, when Harvard Law School welcomed its first female students, no restroom had been provided for them. As a solution, a toilet was installed in the janitor's closet. She emphasizes: this is a perfect example of diversity without inclusion.

So, what is inclusion ?

She explains that it is about creating an environment where everyone feels respected, reflected, and expected.

To be included is to be seen as legitimate, to be heard, and to have the same opportunities as everyone else.



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But Vernā Myers also highlights the obstacles :

- Organizational preferences: companies often create an implicit model of the “ideal employee,” excluding those who do not fit it.
- Cultural biases: everyone interprets the world through their own cultural lens, which can lead to misunderstandings.
- Unconscious biases: for example, when orchestra auditions became blind, the number of women selected increased dramatically.
- Prescriptive and descriptive biases: expectations about what women “can” or “should” do, and the habit of imagining leaders as men.

She stresses that moving forward requires being proactive :

- reflecting on one’s own experiences,
- paying attention to small everyday details,
- observing who is included and who is not,
- creating feedback loops,

and above all, building relationships with people who are different, even when it feels uncomfortable.

Finally, she insists on a key point: you cannot be passively “anti-bias.” You must act, speak up, and invite everyone to participate.

Because, as Vernā Myers concludes, when we promote inclusion, it is not only women who move forward—it is society as a whole.