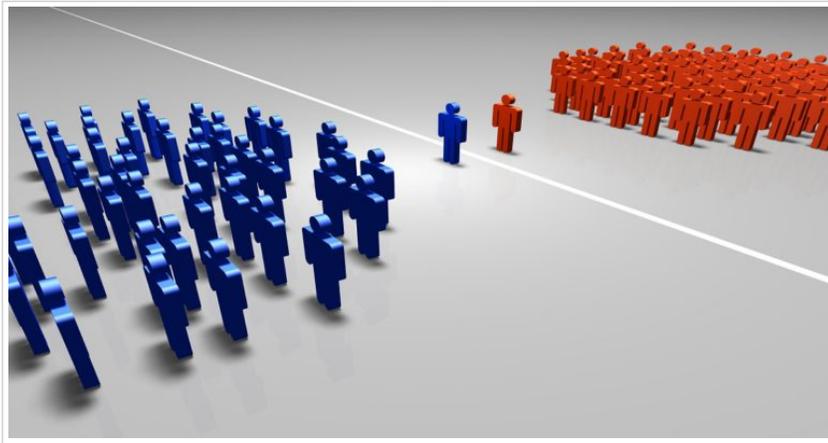




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# Making it Real: Does equity mean taking a side?

Posted by: Brittany Harris in Features, Making It Real, Recent Posts June 14, 2018 0 758 Views



### Does equity mean taking a side?

I would assert that the short answer is yes. But as with everything else around the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion—the answer is way more complex and nuanced than that.

Throughout this series, we've introduced organizations, case studies and scenarios that make equity a little more 'real'—that is, examples of strides towards equity, how organizations and leaders are impacting various levels of systems in service of true inclusion. This week, we want to introduce a recent news story that we believe gets to the heart of the question—does equity mean taking a side?

The story involves an Indiana-based school teacher who resigned (or was forced to resign) after refusing to refer to a transgender student by their preferred name. The high school has a policy that mandates teachers call transgender students by their preferred name, instead of their birth name. The teacher suggested the mandate went against his religious, personal beliefs, therefore, requested he be able to refer to the student by their last name instead. In honoring the student's humanity and right to be referred to as they choose, the school gave the teacher the option to either follow the policy, resign, or be fired. The teacher is no longer employed by the school.

So, if we take this back to the original question—yes, equity does require taking a side, and, as we have shared in previous series, it often requires creating limitations around inclusion. One of the defenses used by the teacher was his right to freedom of speech, and that the policy was at odds with his religious beliefs—an aspect of his identity that (rightfully so) is important to him and influences his worldview.

However, the school system's policy, ultimately centered (perhaps, even prioritized) the humanity, respect, and identity of the student. The school was not asking him to go against his religious beliefs; they were asking him to respect his student's preferences. Those are not the same, and the intent of the policy likely took into account the psychological and emotional toll of micro-aggressions experienced by transgender youth from being mis-gendered. It likely considered the suicide rates of transgender youth who may experience perpetual exclusion and trauma in their personal and school lives—just for being who they are.

And that is what equity requires. That is how we continue to make equity real. It involves taking bold stances and affirming those stances with policies and practices that center the experiences of those who have been at the margins of our systems, our society. Making equity 'real,' requires creating honest boundaries to 'inclusion,' and thinking critically about how we may need to prioritize the safety and dignity of some, over the personal preferences of others. True equity and inclusion will never manifest if we're in our individual (or organizational) comfort zones of neutrality... we must take a side.



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MOVING BEYOND EQUALITY Moving Beyond Equality Perspectives on Achieving Inclusion and Equity in Our Organizations & Businesses THE WINTERS GROUP INC. Caroline Bekken, Brittany J. Harris, Sarah Nabors, Kevin A. Carter, Tracy

'True equity and inclusion will never manifest if we're in our individual (or organizational) comfort zones of neutrality... we must take a side.' Do you agree?

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ABOUT BRITTANY HARRIS



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