CAMPUS DIVERSITY AGENDA

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JOHN FITZGERALD GATES, PH.D. BIO

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BACK COVER (contact information)
Campus Diversity Agenda is gearing up for our 2014-2015 Campus Diversity Leadership Tour! As part of the tour, our CEO, John Fitzgerald Gates, Ph.D., will spend a day with students and institutional leaders sharing the groundbreaking best practices in diversity management, host a seminar, and a preview of our video research and thought leadership series, “STRATEGY: The Evolution of Diversity and Inclusion Thought and Practice” featuring commentary from chief diversity officers from twenty Fortune 500 companies, nonprofits and sports organizations.

America’s foremost Strategic Diversity thought-leader and Huffington Post top contributor, Dr. Gates is shaking up practice of diversity and inclusion like no one else. He is inspiring students to open critical dialogues on race, gender, equality, affirmative action, microaggressions, unconscious biases, and LGBT engagement. Dr. Gates is an engaging, inspirational, and in-demand speaker, who is transforming the way we understand diversity. He is a former dean at Havard, chief of staff at the University of Vermont, and assistant provost at New York University who has authored celebrated articles such as “Pimping Diversity” and “Google’s Dark Ages Diversity Strategy Fails.”

The Campus Diversity Leadership Tour is the easiest and least expensive way to bring this cutting-edge diversity thought leadership to your campus. Importantly, to be most effective as professionals, students and institutional leaders need to know what’s happening in the broader world to reposition diversity around an idea of “excellence” that is rooted in organizational strategy. Dr. Gates is leading this national conversation. The tour also offers expert LGBT training and leadership development sessions facilitated by colleague Mr. Albert.

Tour dates are limited, so act today to include your campus!
John Fitzgerald Gates, Ph.D.
is a dynamic keynote speaker and workshop facilitator.

ABOUT DR. GATES
Dr. Gates is shaking up the field of diversity and inclusion like no one else, and transforming the way we practice diversity management. He is leading a national conversation on diversity as excellence. According to Dr. Gates,

"Diversity is excellence expressing itself as differences, similarities, complexities, and tensions. The issue is not how to achieve diversity, but, rather, how to recognize and leverage excellence."

Dr. Gates is author of “STRATEGY: The Evolution of Diversity and Inclusion Thought and Practice,” a diversity DVD research and thought leadership series featuring Dr. Gates and executives from a dozen leading companies. The STRATEGY series is a key tool to transform the practice of diversity and inclusion.

Dr. Gates’ engagements include
Fortune 500 Companies, Universities and National Organizations
- Citi
- Comcast
- Case Western Reserve University
- National PTA
- Prudential
- Purdue University
- Thomson Reuters
- U.S. Tennis Association

Writing in the Huffington Post with reprints across more than 100 additional platforms, Dr. Gates is celebrated for his insightful and frame-breaking articles on diversity:
- Pimping Diversity
- The Corporate Diversity Charade
- The Moment Is Now for Professional Sports to End LGBT Discrimination
- Do We Really Need Diversity Offices?
- Google’s Dark Ages Diversity Strategy Fails
- Black Colleges Must Change to Survive, Thrive

SPEAKING TOPICS:
- Pimping Diversity
- Reframing Diversity: Toward an Idea of Excellence
- Unconscious Bias and Microagression
- The End of Affirmative Action
- Making Diversity Matter: A Strategic Approach
- Inclusion Is Not Enough

PRAISE FROM HIS PEERS:
“As the world flattens and more companies/organizations embrace this ever changing landscape - Dr. Gates has been able to clearly separate and provide strategies to recognize those organizations that believe in the merits and business case for diversity from those who pay it lip service.”
-Fields Jackson, Jr., Founder & CEO Racing Toward Diversity magazine

Dr. Gates is principal and chief strategist of Criticality Management Consulting. He holds a bachelors degree in English from Morehouse College, a Masters degree in Administration from New York University, a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from the University of London, and a post graduate Certificate in Management from Harvard University. He has served as assistant provost at New York University, chief of staff and lecturer at the University of Vermont, and associate dean of Harvard College and Member of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University.

Audiences have said of Dr. Gates’ speeches: “Inspiring,” “Enlightening,” “Provocative and realistic,” “I learned so much!”
John Fitzgerald Gates, Ph.D. Says Strategic Diversity Isn’t Just About Personal Attributes; It’s About Excellence

New York, NY, May 23, 2014 - America’s most insightful and transformational diversity thought-leader, John Fitzgerald Gates, Ph.D. is blazing new trails in the practice of Diversity & Inclusion. He leads the Strategic Diversity Management Movement, which places diversity in the realm of organizational strategy rather than human resources as a lever to improve business performance. According to Dr. Gates: “Any organization that sees diversity as simply about human difference is woefully behind the curve. Diversity is an expression of excellence, which shows up as the differences, similarities, complexities and tensions that can be found in any complex situation, task, decision, group, or person. Accordingly, a Strategic Diversity paradigm includes everyone and everything.”

Dr. Gates is an internationally credentialed organizational scientist, the #1 expert in Strategic Diversity Management, a top contributor to the Huffington Post, and an in-demand corporate strategist. His engagements include a host of Fortune 500 companies, nonprofit organizations, and academic institutions. He teaches executives to reimage diversity management within the contexts of their business strategies, which is influencing how companies worldwide practice diversity management.

He is author of the groundbreaking research and thought leadership series, “STRATEGY: The Evolution of Diversity and Inclusion Thought and Practice,” featuring his two decades of research and practice in the field of Strategic Diversity as well as the commentary of diversity executives from a dozen leading companies, sports franchises, and nonprofit organizations. The STRATEGY series has been heralded as an authoritative word on contemporary diversity management.

Dr. Gates is Principal and Chief Strategist of Criticality Management Consulting, a full-service Strategic Diversity and Complexity Management Firm, and its subsidiaries, the Human Relations Group and Campus Diversity Agenda. Prior to founding Criticality, Dr. Gates was Associate Dean of Harvard College and a Member of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University, where he was chief diversity, finance and human resources officer. He served as Chief of Staff at the University of Vermont, where he led institutional diversity. He also served as Assistant Provost and Executive Director of Global Operations at New York University, where he led global diversity and operations in Great Britain, France, Spain, the Czech Republic, Argentina, and Ghana.

Dr. Gates holds a Bachelors degree in English from Morehouse College; a Masters degree in Administration from New York University; a Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from the University of London; and an advanced Certificate in Management from Harvard University.
There are three levels of pricing to bring the 2014-2015 Campus Diversity Leadership Tour to your campus. The tour consists of a combination of presentations, workshops, leadership training, and group discussions with student leaders and administrators on a range of issues related to diversity and inclusion. Through the tour, colleges and universities are able to secure Dr. Gates as a speaker for a one-third of the normal cost. **Tour dates are limited.**

**TO ENGAGE**

Dr. Gates  
$2,500

Mr. Smith, Jr.  
$2,000

Dr. Gates & Mr. Smith, Jr.  
$3,500

Outstanding opportunity for the next generation of global student leaders to hear and speak to John Fitzgerald Gates, Ph.D. during his Campus Diversity Agenda tour and series.

As the world flattens and more companies/organizations embrace this ever changing landscape - Dr. Gates has been able to clearly separate and provide strategies to recognize those organizations that believe in the merits and business case for diversity from those who pay it lip service.

If he is willing to share this valuable and time saving advice - seize the chance.

**FIELDS JACKSON, JR**  
Founder & CEO  
Racing Toward Diversity magazine

Tour prices include flight/s, where necessary, to the destination. Institutions are responsible for providing lodging, if required, and ground transportation to/from the airport.

For more information about the Tour, email us at info@campusdiversityagenda.org, or call us 212.878.8875.
Institutions may choose from the following seminar topics:

- Unconscious Bias and Microaggressions on Campus and in the Workplace
- Evolution of Diversity and Inclusion
  - Social Activism
  - LGBT Engagement
  - Race & Gender Issues
  - Affirmative Action
- Making Diversity Matter: A Strategic Approach
- Reframing Diversity: Toward An Idea of Excellence

Institutions have the option to choose from the following training and leadership development sessions:

- “And, When Do I Enter? Creating Inclusive Workplaces for LGBT Employees and Students”
- “Stuck Between A Rock And A Hard Place: Overcoming Cultural Barriers to LGBT Equality”

“Diversity is excellence expressing itself as differences, similarities, complexities, and tensions”

John Fitzgerald Gates, Ph.D.
Americans are rightly dismayed that Google, one of our most iconic technology companies, has possibly the worst "diversity" employment record of any Fortune 500 company. According to Google's workforce statistics, globally 70 percent of its employees are male, and in the U.S., 91 percent are white and Asian, 3 percent Latino and 2 percent black. Google's executive management is even less diverse.

Google grants that its lack of workforce diversity is a problem, which it attributes to "unconscious biases" within the company that cause hiring managers to act on unrecognized racial and gender preferences to the exclusion of candidates who do not fit their archetype. The company further states that there is an insufficient supply of Latino and black computer technologists to substantially increase their numbers. However, Google misstates the problem, which is not "unconscious bias" or inadequate supply but rather a culture of institutional discrimination and exclusion so pervasive in Silicon Valley that it trumps sound business practice.

Silicon Valley, the hub for technology innovation, has long lagged behind on diversity. The most recent diversity statistical analysis of Silicon Valley firms -- including Hewlett-Packard, Intel, Cisco Systems, eBay and AMD -- shows that while the collective workforce of the 10 companies reviewed grew by 16 percent between 1999 and 2005, the already low number of Latino and black employees at those firms declined by 16 percent during the same period, a double-dip net loss. Furthermore, nationally Latinos and blacks made up 12.4 percent of computer workers, but only 6 percent in Silicon Valley. Even more startling is a report by the AFL-CIO indicating that the Great Recession and other factors resulted in 20,000 fewer blacks employed as computer programmers and systems analysts in 2011 than there were in 2008, when black employment in the tech sector peaked.

These numbers come into focus as reflecting poor business strategy when considered in light of the shifts in U.S. demographics. Today, Latinos and blacks make up 29 percent of the U.S. population and represent a $2.8 trillion annual economy. By 2040, Latinos and blacks will increase to 42 percent of the population and minorities will become the majority, not just in terms of raw numbers but also in terms of intellectual capital, innovation, workforce supply, and the sustainability of our national economy. Given these realities, Google and other Silicon Valley companies reject diversity at their peril.

Many new technology companies look upon "diversity management" as antithetical to the cultures of merit they have created and adding little to their bottom lines or productivity. They see diversity as the "management of human differences," and the simplistic inclusion of women and minorities. They do not want to be saddled with the negative vestiges of "affirmative action" or to have their cultures altered. And why should they change who they are to accommodate a race- and gender-based idea of diversity? They have the right to want people to fit in, to assimilate. They have the right to hold high their standards and require all who would join their ranks to meet those standards. And they have the right not to see diversity as an obligation in business, but as a driver of productivity and innovation.

So what should these companies do? Develop a slew of ineffective, affirmative action-based programs to increase their women and minority headcounts? No. They should adopt a business model of diversity management called "strategic diversity," which is not just about increasing the numbers of women and minorities; it is about generating business value and facilitating business strategy from diversity management. Strategic diversity is about improving innovation, resource management, and technology optimization to drive performance. It is less concerned with political correctness than with adding business value. Companies that practice strategic diversity understand that diversity makes companies work better. They see diversity in everything they do -- from their products and services, to process design and business development -- and they seek to leverage diversity along all those vectors.

In a recent study of the diversity strategy of over a dozen Fortune 500 companies and national sports organizations, our team found that only 25 percent of the companies surveyed had a business-based diversity strategy. The best example of strategic diversity among these organizations is Major League Baseball, which has integrated diversity as a strategic element across all areas of operations. Unlike most companies, Major League Baseball has taken diversity out of the realm of human resources and put it into all aspects of business operations. The difference is that Major League Baseball does not see diversity as just about race and gender but about its ability to compete, attract a new and growing fan base, and deliver maximum return on investment. It has galvanized all thirty teams around an idea of strategic diversity that is driving productivity, resource allocation, and long-term strategy.

IBM is another company practicing strategic diversity. IBM has partnered with the New York City Public Schools to create P-TECH High School to give students in a poor section of Brooklyn an opportunity to earn their high school diploma and associate degree in computer technology with an option to join IBM upon graduation. IBM is building its technology workforce of the future by investing in strategic diversity now. The P-TECH model is being replicated nationally, garnering praise from President Obama as the future of workforce readiness. With a fraction of Google's seventy-four percent reach to U.S. consumers, IBM is setting the pace for diversity management in computer technology that Google and other Silicon Valley companies should seek to surpass.

The Google diversity problem is not one of unconscious bias but of poor business strategy that decouples diversity management from the long-term health of the company. But in breaking its silence, Google is demonstrating its readiness to forge a new way forward.
President Obama's executive order banning discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Americans in federal contracting should be a lightning rod for professional sports to do the same. Yet, notwithstanding the "coming out" of players in the NBA and NFL, the evolving views of the American public, and state courts' interpretation of the 14th Amendment to provide equal protection to LGBT persons, professional sports commissioners and team owners largely have been silent on their commitment to LGBT equality.

As significant as the president's executive order has been, it is merely a step in the right direction on a much longer road. Americans may be surprised that in 2014 there are no federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination against LGBT persons. And while twenty-nine states explicitly prohibit employment discrimination based on sexual orientation, none has enacted laws to protect LGBT workers. Eradicating LGBT workplace discrimination is the most significant civil rights issue of our time -- equal in weight to breaking color barriers, suffrage, and integration -- but it is an issue on which professional sports lag behind.

Commissioners like the NBA's Adam Silver, who have been stalwarts in the advancement of racial equality, particularly in light of racist remarks by L.A. Clippers owner Donald Sterling, have been silent on LGBT equality. While granting that the league has been less proactive in engaging the LGBT community than is preferable, Silver has offered no change in policy. In preparing for Michael Sam to join the National Football League, Commissioner Roger Goodell issued a memo to teams reiterating the NFL's code of conduct and banned use of the "n-word" by players and management, but left unattended discrimination against gays. He did nothing to assure that Sam would be treated with the respect and fairness accorded other players, or to protect him against being fired because he is gay. According to Goodell, "in the NFL, "we do things the right way: We will give them that education and training. I hope that will solve the problem." But Goodell's deducation is flawed, for if education and training solved discrimination we surely would have educated and trained our way beyond it by now. As with racial and gender bias, laws must be constructed and enforced to ensure equal protection to LGBT professional athletes. Goodell welcomed Sam onto the field of play without providing him the protection from discrimination that other players have, thereby leaving him uniquely and unfairly vulnerable. Goodell codified the NFL's right to discriminate when he should have had the courage, like President Obama, to ban it.

Both Silver and Goodell missed their "Branch Rickey moment" by not ushering in a culture change in the NBA and NFL, respectively. Branch Rickey was the Major League Baseball executive who hired Jackie Robinson to join the Brooklyn Dodgers. Rickey wanted the best players, and to make a difference in the game and country he loved. Knowing Robinson would be targeted for racial harassment as the first player to break professional sports' color barrier, Rickey set in motion a chain of events that would fundamentally reshape the MLB and the nation. He declared an end to racial discrimination in the MLB. He went on to hire the league's first Afro-Hispanic player, Roberto Clemente, and to develop the minor league farm system, which helped other minority players enter the game. Rickey, a white man and champion of civil rights, was to the integration of professional sports what Martin Luther King, Jr. was to the integration of lunch counters, stores, schools, and government. Professional sports commissioners and team owners have an opportunity now to continue this inspiring legacy by declining an end to LGBT discrimination in professional sports.

Our nation is undergoing tremendous, structural progress on a number of social fronts. The commissioners and owners should recognize the positive shift in public opinion on LGBT issues, particularly same-sex marriage, and the likelihood that the Supreme Court will strike down laws denying people equal protection on the basis of their sexual identities. They should understand the implications for professional sports that in 2004 same-sex marriage was supported by 38 percent of the American people; today that number is 59 percent, and 77 percent among 18-29 year olds; 19 states have approved marriage equality; state courts across the land have consistently struck down statutes advancing LGBT discrimination; and 50 percent of Americans now believe the U.S. Constitution guarantees LGBT Americans equal protection in the law.

Why should the commissioners and team owners be trailblazers for LGBT inclusion and protection? First, it's good business. There are 8 million LGBT Americans, many of whom support professional sports, with an estimated economic value of $800 billion, enough to grow the fan base of our national sports franchises for generations to come. Second, it is a vital moral issue. With LGBT youths four times more likely than "straight" youths to attempt suicide, often stemming from a sense of being shut out of the game of life, our national sports leaders can help reverse the scourge of lost hope and lives by embracing all youths, irrespective of their sexual orientation. Third, it is a unique opportunity to lead on social progress. Where religion and politics have failed, professional sports have historically succeeded in unifying disconnected people to an idea of excellence based on shared values that enriches our national culture. Fourth, it is a practical decision. There is little risk in banning LGBT discrimination, far less risk than Branch Rickey took on when he signed Jackie Robinson. The transition to acceptance of the gay community is well underway, the president has provided a roadmap, the American public is marching toward full inclusion, and the courts have hinted to the inevitability of LGBT equality.

Given these factors, professional sports commissioners and team owners should follow President Obama's lead and ban LGBT discrimination on the field and in the locker room, in boardrooms and contracting, among fans and employees - and they should do it now, in this national month of Gay Pride.
Microaggression: The New Workplace Bigotry

Posted: 07/01/2014 10:18 am EDT

John Fitzgerald Gates, Ph.D.
National Diversity Expert; Principal and Chief Strategist of Criticality Management Consulting; Former Associate Dean of Harvard College

Ask any African American professional what a white person should never say to or about them and invariably the response will be: "You're very articulate." Why, you ask? Because such a statement assumes that African American professionals generally are not in command of "the King's English," a sentiment that would rarely be associated with a white professional. It is a contemporary way of saying: "You're a credit to your race." No less insulting, racist, or unacceptable as if the person had been called "the n-word".

This seemingly trivial slight is a form of bigotry called a "microaggression" -- a small act of non-physical aggression based on bias and stereotypes, usually against someone racially or ethnically different than the perpetrator. Microaggressions are the negative assumptions we make about people that limit their humanity and value. As progressive as many workplaces are, we might be surprised that our everyday interactions are filled with microaggressions that undermine our self-worth and productivity.

A stark example of microaggression can be found in CNN's recent interview with embattled L.A. Clippers Owner Donald Sterling. While ostensibly attempting to apologize for his racist comments, Sterling refers to African Americans as "the blacks," a phrase embedded in the lexicon of racism, and of "owning" the players. He talks about "those AIDS" in referencing HIV-AIDS. Of Magic Johnson, a pillar of the African American community, he says: "I think he should be ashamed of himself. I think he should go into the background. But what does he do for the black people? Doesn't do anything...I just don't think he is a good example for the children of Los Angeles." Sterling -- a white racist -- sought to discredit an African American icon in the eyes of the African American community, a tactic often used in the Jim Crow South. In doing so, he proffered a series of microaggressions that in a work environment would negatively impact employee engagement, organizational climate, output, and the bottom line.

Women are subjected to microaggressions when they are sexualized by their male colleagues, judged harshly by female colleagues, or subjected to standards different from men. Barbara Walters, who became the first woman co-anchor of an evening news program in 1976, recalled that Harry Reasoner, her co-anchor at ABC News, refused to accept her and instead subjected her to demoralizing ridicule. Nearly forty years later, women are still burdened with workplace misogyny. Following a recent interview with General Motors CEO Mary Barra, NBC's Today show host Matt Lauer was loudly criticized for asking Barra if she could be a good mother and effective CEO of a major company. In suggesting that Barra could not balance work and motherhood, Lauer made a judgment about the competence of female executives that would never be made about male executives, like him, who are celebrated for being power players in boardrooms and great fathers at home. He advanced an erroneous and bigoted narrative that women are inferior to men. In doing so, he demeaned working mothers and damaged his own credibility on such issues.

Even more insidious, however, is when microaggressions are in play long before one enters the workplace -- when hiring managers make judgments about a person's qualifications and fit for a given job prior to giving fair consideration to the person's candidacy. These microaggressions are more than blind spots, as some suggest; rather, they are attitudes and perspectives that must be changed. Microaggressions can inhabit entire sectors, such as Silicon Valley where reports indicate Hispanic and African Americans makeup 6 percent of the technology workforce, compared to more than 12 percent nationally.

Google recently attributed its poor workforce diversity demographics to "unconscious bias" that cause hiring managers to unwittingly give preferential treatment to candidates who fit a given profile. As a result, Google's U.S. workforce is 3 percent Hispanic and 2 percent African American. But Google fails to reveal that underlying unconscious bias is a series of microaggressions that individually may seem innocuous, but as a whole are detrimental to the company. To counter public condemnation of its diversity numbers, Google is offering free computer coding lessons to women and minorities, but it has done nothing to find work for the 20,000 fewer African Americans, employed as computer programmers and systems analysts since the end of the Great Recession in 2011. Google has, in effect, eliminated those workers from its consciousness, in what may be its greatest microaggression of all.

Microaggressions diminish and stigmatize people, contributing to a $450 billion to $550 billion per year loss in U.S. workforce productivity, according to Gallop. The good news is that we can cure microaggressions by being self-reflective, empathetic, and willing to address our biases and their impacts on others. We must own up to the fact that microaggressions are harmful. Here's the safe bet and most proper point of reference: if we would not assume something about, or say something to, a straight white male professional, we probably should not do or say such a thing to an African American, a woman, LGBT member or any other group. Here, the standard must be equality of respect in the workplace. We should accept nothing less.
Pimping Diversity

Posted: 07/24/2014 12:49 pm EDT

John Fitzgerald Gates, Ph.D.

National Diversity Expert; Principal and Chief Strategist of Criticality Management Consulting; Former Associate Dean of Harvard College

It has been said, "diversity management is a racket." Regrettably, there is a great deal of truth in this statement. In fact, "diversity management" has become a thriving industry with few bottom-line results that is in little danger of disappearing; we have all bought into a social construct that permits us to feel good about perpetrating a fraud. Corporations, universities, government agencies, minorities and "good white folks" alike -- we are all complicit in pimping diversity.

Much like affirmative action, diversity management was developed to advance a multicultural workplace. Today, diversity management is a billion dollar industry that is embedded in the mission statements of most large organizations in the U.S. For better or worse, the federal government has been the most significant driver of diversity management through requirements by federal agencies - from the Department of Labor to the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts - that large employers report their workforce demographics, and that recipients of federal grants and contracts meet particular diversity workforce or subcontracting criteria.

Corporate America has also been a substantial contributor to the practice of diversity management in order to identify and nurture diverse talent, reduce discrimination lawsuits, and enhance workplace cultures and outcomes. And universities have played a key role in advancing the field through their emphasis on ensuring diverse applicant pools in hiring, equity in pay and promotion, and quality programming in support of more inclusive and vibrant academic communities. As noble as the reasons for the existence of diversity management are, the practice has been so defiled that it is little more than a channel to service the needs of those of us who profit from it.

Undoubtedly, there are individuals and corporations with a sincere commitment to true diversity. However, it is equally true that diversity requirements have been cynically misused in ways that set our workforce development further behind. Companies pimp diversity when they tout inclusion and donate to minority causes but then reject qualified minority candidates in the second and third rounds of the interview process because the candidates "aren't a good fit." These companies skirt the requirement for a diverse applicant pool by including minorities on the front end of the process and systematically excluding them on the back end. Universities pimp diversity when administrators develop diversity goals that faculty have no intention of adhering to, and faculty gerrymander diversity programs to meet the requirements of grant applications, but have no fundamental commitment to the programs they proffer.

Minority applicants pimp diversity when they use race, gender, or sexual orientation as their calling card and means of entry to employment and then close the door of opportunity behind them to keep others out. Diversity practitioners pimp diversity when they lack the courage to be the change agents they are called to be and hide behind "programming" to obscure a lack of results. Consultants pimp diversity when they seek to make a quick buck and "keep the patient ill" rather than doing the work and bringing about healing for their clients. Finally, "good white folks" are implicated in the pimping of diversity when they contribute to minority causes to assuage "white guilt" and be recognized as contributors but then undermine diversity on the job, in business, at the dinner tables, and in the halls of justice.

Many of us do not recognize that we are culturally predisposed to the adoption of a "pimping mentality" because it is an unconscious bias that emanates from our life experiences. We have no idea that we are acting as agents of exclusion as we glorify inclusion. We think we're doing the right things, and we may be, but we are doing them for the wrong reasons. First, most of us do not want to be counted a bigot. Secondly, as a nation, we are afraid to talk openly and honestly about racism, sexism or homophobia because we are terrified of public recrimination. Thirdly, we have bought into an erroneous narrative that diversity is about difference when the truth is that diversity is about excellence.

So how do we stop pimping diversity? I believe the answer lies in a redefinition of diversity as "excellence expressing itself as differences, similarities, complexities, and tensions." Such an understanding permits us to think differently about diversity's value and place in our lives. It allows us to strive for a higher good that is built on attainable aspirations with equal possibilities to achieve them. It permits us to see all people for their potential rather than their perceived deficits. And it fundamentally changes the nature of corporate cultures for the good. But for this to happen, we must deal with the unconscious biases that undergird our prejudices and cause us to see excellence in some people but not in others. We must address the systems that give sanctuary to our biases--whether they are quota-based "metrics" masquerading as objective evidence, or "diversity awards" that have no meaning. We must empower, and expect, diversity officers not simply to check boxes, but to act boldly to move the cultures of their institutions forward.

We need a new account of diversity as a manifestation of excellence in which all people are able to participate equally. Only then can we get about the real business of advancing diversity for all of us.
The debate around the relevancy of historically black colleges (HBCUs) is at least as old as the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education that "separate but equal" educational systems are inherently unequal. The data and experiences of countless HBCU alumni like me tell a much different story: HBCUs play an invaluable role in educating often underprepared students successfully, and without HBCUs, the hopes and dreams of thousands of capable African-Americans would go unrealized.

While HBCUs enroll only 15 percent of African-American collegians, they award 30 percent of all degrees obtained by African-Americans. Hence the relevancy of HBCUs is unassailable. But we can ill afford to leave the debate there. Today, like never before, colleges and universities must compete for students, faculty, money and public recognition. HBCUs are in a position to reaffirm their significance by graduating a preponderance of their students, distinguishing themselves academically and ensuring that they are expertly managed.

For many reasons, including historic under-resourcing, HBCUs are challenged to deliver the sort of outcomes required in our changing and more demanding society. The debate does not move either them or our nation forward. Rather, it is time to ask whether HBCUs are sufficiently self-critical and adaptive to transform into the institutions they will have to become if they are to be sustainable. Self-critical institutions intentionally adjust their thinking and behaviors based on examined awareness of their own missions and outcomes. They seek self-improvement.

Given their long-standing mission to educate underprepared students, HBCUs should be at the forefront of curricula, teaching and student-advising innovations. Given their century and a half of underfunding and having to do more with less, HBCUs should be leaders in institutional efficiency, cost-sharing and partnerships. And given their reliance on public funding, HBCUs should be experts at garnering federal support for their initiatives. But none of these is so.

HBCUs must challenge themselves to achieve higher levels of excellence and sustained outcomes by transforming their self-understandings. Doing so requires placing these institutions under critical self-scrutiny. To improve their outcomes, HBCUs will have to undertake a process of critical self-reflection in which their institutional stories, myths and assumptions are laid aside in a search for truth. Fundamental questions about institutional effectiveness will have to be addressed in order to develop accurate knowledge about their strengths and weakness.

And then HBCUs will have to take self-corrective action. These measures are internal to institutions and require internal leadership, but President Barack Obama recently gave HBCUs a much-needed lift. In an unprecedented acknowledgment of the importance of HBCUs, Obama has ordered that every agency within the federal government actively seek out opportunities for HBCUs to participate in federal programs. Importantly, the president did not call for affirmative action for HBCUs. He called for the engagement of HBCUs, which will be based on their merits.

The problem is that many HBCUs have been ill-equipped to be full participants in solving the nation's problems or helping it reach the president's educational goal for America to have the most educated citizenry in the world in next decade. Many HBCUs have neither the internal managerial capacity nor institutional outcomes necessary to take full advantage of the president's mandate, which should be a wake-up call to all of us who value HBCUs that their sustainability rests in great measure on how well they are managed to achieve their aims.

Yet, some HBCUs stand out as models, not just among other HBCUs but among institutions nationally, for their insightfulness. For instance, Spelman College has long been the envy of HBCUs for garnering private donations and public support, for enrolling well-prepared students, for being a leader in student success and for having the highest graduation rate among all HBCUs. But Spelman did not get there without a persistent effort.

Under the leadership of President Beverly Daniel Tatum, Spelman has done and continues the hard work of explicating its outcomes and ambitions in a quest for self-improvement. By removing their presuppositions -- good and bad -- about the institution, Spelman's faculty, alumni and staff were able to continue to value the institution's heritage while pursuing a progressive agenda of self-learning that is resulting in improvement in all major areas of institutional effectiveness.

There is great hope that the new generation of black college presidents who have taken the helm of institutions like Howard and Tuskegee universities will follow Spelman's example. Indeed, it is time for all HBCUs to adopt self-critical mindsets and make the changes necessary to thrive.
What Corporate America Should Learn From Ferguson, Missouri
Posted: 08/25/2014 12:29 pm EDT

John Fitzgerald Gates, Ph.D.
National Diversity Expert; Principal and Chief Strategist
of Criticality Management Consulting; Former Associate Dean of Harvard College

The racial tensions in Ferguson, Missouri ignited by the shooting of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown have captured the nation's attention and opened conversations across homes, workplaces and boardrooms that are often difficult. For the five decades since the race riots of the 1960s, tensions grew in Ferguson, finally erupting two weeks ago in mass demonstrations and civil unrest that brought to the fore the problems of systemic racial conflict in all sectors of America society. But more than the protests, or even the killing of Michael Brown, the militarized stance of the police toward American citizens has opened wide the fissures of race relations.

A suburb of St. Louis, which, according to the 2010 U.S. census, is the ninth most segregated city in the United States, Ferguson has long been a placid, all-American town. With a majority African American population, Ferguson, in addition to St. Louis, escaped both the civil rights era race riots, and the overt racial tensions that have polarized the nation since, owing to an ingrained culture of civil obedience that decried public protests. There was an unspoken understanding in Ferguson that left issues of race muted, even as they simmered. So the news that Michael Brown had been killed by a white police officer shocked the conscience of Ferguson's African American community, which finally protested, permitting a decades-old communal outrage and hurst over racial mistreatment to explode with such force that it shook the nation.

Ferguson is not alone in our nation, and neither are its issues confined to cities. Many companies have adopted diversity strategies reminiscent of the Ferguson police department: Keep minorities pacified but disengaged from the process of meaning-making; promote just enough minorities not to be deemed racist; and silence discord. Corporate America, and the nation as a whole, mirrors Ferguson in its avoidance of serious conversations about race, prejudice, unconscious bias, and microaggressions that harm morale and productivity. Companies prefer to ignore "climate" issues that indicate racial discontentment, adopting instead an "ignore it until it goes away" strategy that ultimately leaves them unprepared to countermand the racial bias that weakens their organizations. As a consequence, these companies are more vulnerable than ever to the sort of race discrimination lawsuits that have tarnished Bank of America, Merrill Lynch, Wal-Mart, Macy's, and Abercrombie & Fitch, all of which have lost or settled race bias claims brought against them by their employees and customers.

The "Corporate Diversity Report," produced by the United States Senate, indicates there is much room to improve in racial representation at all levels of corporate America. According to the report, when it comes to corporate boards, Hispanics, who make of seventeen percent of the U.S. population, have one of the lowest representations at three percent of boards and three percent of executive teams. While African Americans, who are thirteen percent of the U.S. population, fare better in board representation, garnering eight percent of board seats, they are only four percent of executive teams. These dynamics are not significantly different from those of Ferguson, where African Americans have no representation in City Hall or on the school board, and are effectively shut out of public safety jobs.

Companies should learn four lessons from Ferguson:

1. Racial tensions do not disappear by not addressing them. They simmer just beneath the surface until an event happens that disrupts conformity to corporate norms and then they erupt.
2. Just as there is no "great white hope," there is no "great black hope" -- whether it's President Obama, Missouri State Highway Patrol Captain Ron Jackson, Richard Parsons who replaced Donald Sterling at the L.A. Clippers, or a company's "chief diversity officer." Racial tension abates when issues are addressed openly and self-reflectively.
3. Poor performance on issues of race is harmful to a leader's credibility and erodes the trust constituents have in the leader.
4. The costs of suppressing racial tensions are far greater than the costs of addressing them.

The reality is that companies want a shortcut to positive race relations. When it comes to issues of diversity, companies generally do not want to hear bad news or admit their complicity in adding to the climates of distrust and bias. Yet, the only way for companies to truly get beyond race is to weed out racial bias continuously.

What should companies do? Here are six strategies.

1. Reaffirm their commitment to diversity through active engagement of minorities in the areas of corporate strategy, positioning, and revenue generation.
2. Convene internal, structured, "safe-zone" conversations led by senior executives about race and culture that permit employees to articulate and work through their concerns.
3. Implement company-wide training on "unconscious bias" and "microaggressions" to help employees be aware of the hidden prejudices they hold that could undermine them and their companies.
4. Develop a broader understanding of diversity that permits the company to move beyond the isolation of race to a more inclusive paradigm of "excellence."
5. Recognize that diversity is not about "them versus us," nor is it black and white. Diversity is excellence expressing itself as differences, similarities, complexities and tensions. Integrate excellence across all business units rather than sequestering it in human resources, and hold executives accountable for its continued development.
6. Rather than thinking of diversity as "the elephant in the room," try seeing diversity as the room. Diversity is central to everything a company does -- from people management, to process design, to market segmentation.

While we will not likely see racial protests in corporate C-Suites as we did on the streets of Ferguson, we will see more race-based lawsuits in light of admissions by companies that "unconscious bias" has for years caused their hiring managers to discriminate against African American and Hispanic job candidates. Companies need to recognize that there is a bit of Ferguson in many of their management ranks, boardrooms, and stores that needs to be eradicated for the well being of their businesses and the people they serve.