

Guidehouse and American University Speaker Series

A Conversation on Equity from the Trenches: Perspectives from Federal, Private, and Academia

SHANNON WHITE: Good afternoon. My name is Shannon White and I am a partner at Guidehouse, where I lead our Department of Homeland Security Account Team. I want to welcome everyone here today to “A Conversation on Equity from the Trenches: Perspectives from Federal, Private, and Academia,” a panel hosted by Guidehouse and American University. Today, we are going to explore the topic of equity. At Guidehouse, inclusion, diversity, and equity are at the core of who we are. To solve tomorrow's complex problems and impact bold change, we must generate ideas from varied backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, and colleagues who see humanity in everyone. We are honored to support our federal clients as they are focused on advancing equity for all their stakeholders, clients, communities, and their employees.

Our firm's mission is to help our clients to solve big, important problems and that's why I'm so excited to serve, not only as a partner, but a platform that brings together the public, private, and academic sectors to tackle some of the most complex equity issues.

So today, on behalf of Guidehouse, our moderator, Bridget Bean, will walk us through an engaging and interactive panel to get us thinking about the importance and impacts of equity and the opportunity gap that can be resolved through dedicated work incorporating equity into emergency management. But before Bridget takes the podium, I'll pass it over to Sasha O'Connell for introductory remarks from American University.

SASHA O'CONNELL: Thank you so much, Shannon. It's a pleasure to be with you and with everyone rolling in. It's so wonderful to see so many people taking the opportunity to join us this afternoon for what promises to be a really wonderful and enlightening panel. So as Shannon said, my name is Sasha O'Connell. I'm an executive and resident at the School of Public Affairs at American University, where I teach U.S. cyber policy and I have the opportunity to lead our master's programs in both terrorism and homeland security policy and justice, law, and criminology.

Needless to say, a couple things happening today are extraordinarily important for us at SPA. One is the partnership with Guidehouse on, as Shannon said, convenings like this one. Opportunities to bring folks together from across the sector in academia, the private sector, and government to tackle some of the most challenging issues we face today. That's part of the ethos of the School of Public Affairs and we're really just thrilled with the ongoing partnership with Guidehouse to make events like this happen.

The topic of equity too, diversity and inclusion, couldn't be more important to us either, so it's a two for two for us today. At the School of Public Affairs and at AU, I feel confidently saying more broadly, this manifests in the trenches for us in three areas. One, the classroom, which is where we spend the bulk of our time, working with our amazing students, and your future leaders, through our research which happens across the university in all kinds of important and dynamic ways, and thinking about how that inclusivity has a role in the research itself that then informs policy and everything else down the road is extremely important. And then the last piece is of course partnerships, opportunities to collaborate,

again, with the private sector, with government, on the most interesting and compelling topics of the day.

So as a university, the trenches for us are all three of those areas and of course there's all kinds of interesting and dynamic challenges to making that inclusivity and that equity, assuring that up, and we're really excited to partner today. We have an incredible representative on the panel in the form of Patrick Malone. For those of you who aren't familiar with our Key Executive Program, I encourage you to check it out. Patrick and his team run just an incredible series of programs out of the School of Public Affairs for those adult and executive learners that cover, as you'll hear, all kinds of amazing, relevant, and dynamic topics that Patrick will talk more about today.

So again, with that, thank you to Guidehouse, thank you all for participating, and I'll kick it back to you Shannon to get us started.

SHANNON WHITE: Great, thank you Sasha. It's wonderful to partner with you and American University on this event and so many others. I'd now like to introduce our moderator, Bridget Bean. So, if Bridget Bean could virtually join us, she's going to lead us through this great panel. Bridget is a senior advisor to Guidehouse and the president and CEO of Via Stella and she's formerly served as the Deputy Administrator for Resilience at FEMA. Bridget, we're really grateful to have you here today. I will turn it over to you now.

BRIDGET BEAN: Thank you Shannon. It's a pleasure to be part of Guidehouse and American University's efforts in this important topic area. So thank you very much. I am pleased to serve as your moderator for this important discussion today on equity. As the title suggests, "A Conversation on Equity from the Trenches," we want to hear from experts who have spent decades working in federal, state, and academia on this important issue. They have spent years raising awareness and educating their colleagues and communities about DEI. They have worked tirelessly to embed practical and innovative EEO, civil rights, and diversity programs into their organizations' day to day operations.

How do we challenge people and organizations to prioritize and value equity, and translate that into real action? Well, that's our goal today. We are here and we want to have you leave motivated and challenged to be a change agent for yourself, for your colleagues, and for your community. So I hope you will begin to take notes and listen carefully. We have some amazing panelists.

Our three panelists are really trailblazers in the field, and they are recognized leaders in this space. There will be a link in the chat area with each of their bios. I encourage you to read them, but we didn't want to take away any precious time from the conversation, so we're going to ask them to do a brief introduction to themselves as we ask the first question.

So, let's introduce you to the panel, and we're going to start with Tinisha Agramonte, the Chief Diversity Officer for Motorola Solutions. Good afternoon, Tinisha.

TINISHA AGRAMONTE: Good afternoon, Bridget. First and foremost, I am so excited to be here with you today to discuss this very important topic. I want to thank everyone who helped organize this event. I really appreciate being here. Quickly just in terms of a bio, and I know everyone has one, I am the chief diversity officer currently for Motorola Solutions, so I'm excited to talk to you today about some things

we're doing in terms of improving diversity, equity, and inclusion. But prior to joining Motorola, I spent 23 years as a civil servant for the federal government, so I'll also share some of those experiences around just general DEI topics and how it helps in the area of innovation most importantly. So, I appreciate being here and I look forward to being on the panel with my esteemed panelists.

BRIDGET BEAN: Tinisha, thank you, and it's an impressive career and we thank you for all you've done. I'm going to ask you this question. So borrowing from one of the most famous MBA admissions essay, please tell our audience what matters to you and why in the equity space and how has that shaped your career?

TINISHA AGRAMONTE: I will tell you, what matters to me most in terms of equity is first and foremost understanding the difference between equity and equality. I think that's where we have to start first. A lot of people get confused between these two terms and they think, "Isn't it just equality?" Equality makes the assumption that there are no historical policies, practices, or procedures that have created inequity in terms of access to those opportunities. Equity recognizes that there are those impediments to equality, and it seeks to break down those systems, those policies, practices, and procedures, so that everyone truly does have equality of opportunity.

So for me, being in this career field, it's personal to me, because I'm an example of what is possible when someone is truly provided equitable access and opportunities, and so I do not take lightly this work that I do, to make sure that everyone, regardless of humble beginnings in terms of their socioeconomic status or factors that they were born into like race, religion, gender, all of those things, do not impede their ability to get equal right access and opportunity so that they could fully participate and thrive in not only our workplaces but also in our general society. Did that answer the question? I hope so.

BRIDGET BEAN: Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. Thank you, Tinisha and I know you have an incredible story in your life and in your career and it's certainly worth hearing more about. But next, I want to jump to Jo Linda Johnson who is the director, Office of Equal Rights at FEMA. Good afternoon Jo Linda.

JO LINDA JOHNSON: Good afternoon, Ms. Bean, and good afternoon everyone. I'm thrilled to be here and look forward to the conversation.

BRIDGET BEAN: Great, so I'm going to pose the same question to you, ma'am. What about this topic and why is it important to you and how has it shaped your career?

JO LINDA JOHNSON: So, I think what matters about this topic most to me has evolved over the course of my career. I think Tinisha laid an outstanding groundwork from which we can build. When I started my career, I was a civil rights attorney with the EEOC and providing equal access was, and is, what the EEOC stands for. Equal rights is, and was, what the EEOC stood for, and stands for, and so that's what I was working towards. In my current role, I am much more focused on equity, I am much more focused on dismantling systems and processes that lead to inequitable outcomes as a result of unequal treatment, and so what matters to me in this space is people who have the ability to make change doing so. And from the seat that I sit in and from within the organization that I sit in, hoping to, and working towards, making our country writ large in all systems, and in all areas, more equitable. I firmly believe, and I believed this for a long time, that we all do better when we all do better.

BRIDGET BEAN: Words to live by, as usual. Jo Linda, thank you, and now I'd like to ask Dr. Malone, Patrick Malone, the director of Key Executive Leadership Program at American University. Patrick, if you would also take a minute or so and tell us why and what is important about equity and how has that shaped your career.

PATRICK MALONE: Oh Bridget, you're going to make me follow Tinisha and Jo Linda with those great answers, honestly?

BRIDGET BEAN: Yeah, I'm so sorry.

PATRICK MALONE: Why did I have to go last? No, thank you. Thank you so much and thanks to you and our fellow panelists and everyone at Guidehouse for making this happen today. It's a terrific topic, important topic. I was looking at our plan of the show today and this question jumped out to me more than any of the other ones. It's such a terrific question and I think that from my perspective, what really resonates with me with this topic is acceptance and grace, and when I say that, I mean acceptance and grace of not only who we are as human beings. When we're able to accept who we are and accept the biases and the things that we carry, then we can move to change them. But if we can't recognize them from the beginning, it's very difficult to change the way we think and that's a very difficult journey for many of us to take.

I saw a quote recently where the author said, "We don't grow by making ourselves better than others. We grow by making ourselves better than we were yesterday." So I think, in this space, one of the things that we need to try to do is to try to adopt the perspective of understanding why we think the way we do, what positions us, because the brain's a funny thing, it drives us down pathways that we don't even recognize, but being able to kind of get in touch with that, and this is what I've done for the majority of my career.

Prior to being the director of the Key Programs, I was a Medical Services Corps Officer in the Navy, I was Dean of Academics for Navy Medicine, and I spent a lot of time working with healthcare systems for disabled children and children with special needs, and in watching the inequity and the inequality that was surrounding families that had children with special needs was something that really, really drove me in terms of my early career, and since then, in working with the Key Program, and I'm going to borrow from what Jo Linda said, I love the way she said we need to dismantle the processes. One of the things that I think we do in our program, and I've devoted the latter part of my career to it, is dismantling the thinking that leads to inequity and inequality. So, looking forward to the panel and it's great to be here.

BRIDGET BEAN: Patrick thank you, and in full disclosure, I must tell you that I have learned from each of these people through my career about how to better look at myself, what I bring to the table, and how I continue to be a better person and partner in the improvement of equity in our communities. So thank you all. If this doesn't absolutely excite you about the next 30 minutes, I don't know what will.

I want to remind our attendees that there's an opportunity to put questions in the question box. On my screen it's the right hand side, the little kiosk, there's an area to add questions or you can put them in the chat box.

TINISHA AGRAMONTE: Bridget, if you don't mind me interrupting, and I do that often, but I want to underscore a point that Patrick made, especially in terms of our efforts to employ people with disabilities. I want to give a practical example of what equity looks like and equality looks like.

Equality looks like there is a job announcement. There is some type of requisition for a job that someone is hiring for and they post that job. Anyone can apply to it. That's equality, everyone has an equal opportunity to apply for said job. But let's say people apply for that job, some of whom happen to have disabilities, and one who may be deaf or hard of hearing. After their resume is rated as qualified and it's time to conduct the interview, the employer does not provide an interpreter for the interview. What that does, is that disadvantages the person who is hard of hearing or deaf who may need an interpreter to fully participate in that interview process. Or if the interviewer, to Patrick's point, has some type of attitudinal bias that this is going to take too much work, it's going to cost too much money to accommodate this person if they hire them. Because of that attitudinal barrier, because of that sort of physical barrier or process that they did not provide an interpreter, that will lead to, as Jo Linda mentioned, inequitable outcomes. And that's the problem.

So that's what we're trying to tear down is those types of processes and practices that lead to inequitable outcomes. So, we're recognizing that on the surface it appears to be like everyone had an equal chance, but the reality is they did not have an equal chance to have equal outcomes.

BRIDGET BEAN: Part of this is for you to have tangible, practical things to walk away with. Some might be actions to take, the other thing is how to think about things differently. Tinisha, Jo Linda, and Patrick, I know you're all very much wallflowers, so please, try and jump in where and when you can.

JO LINDA JOHNSON: So, Bridget, can I jump in right here, right now? I want to follow up on what Tinisha said and push ourselves and the audience a little bit further.

BRIDGET BEAN: Okay.

JO LINDA JOHNSON: Equity, in that example that Tinisha gave, equity looks like providing preferential treatment to the applicant with a disability for that position. Which the federal government allows. We can, when we have a position that's open and we have a qualified applicant who also happens to be a person with a disability, we can affirmatively choose that person over all other candidates and select them because they're a person with a disability, and the equitable outcome we're trying to reach is to have the population of people that serve in the federal government, state government, local governments reflect the communities that they actually serve. We know that people with disabilities in this country are 60 million plus part of the population. We know, depending on the indices that you actually look at, when it comes to the actual civilian labor force, they represent somewhere between 20% and 40% of the labor force in terms of availability. But in terms of actual participation rate, the unemployment rate is sky high for individuals with disabilities. So equity means I'm going to affirmatively choose a person with a disability over a person who does not have a disability to balance the scales because we have had historical processes and systems that have disadvantaged individuals and the only way to get to equality is to bring those up who have been kept down and stop providing unearned advantage to those who are at the top.

BRIDGET BEAN: Jo Linda, thank you, and it's important because I think a lot of people might be fearful to take that affirmative action, but knowing that the federal government absolutely allows it and encourages it, is really important. So thank you for that. So we're going to jump to the second question, unless Patrick you have something else, but we have a special thing for you to talk about in the second question if you're ready.

PATRICK MALONE: I'm good.

BRIDGET BEAN: And Tinisha, you answered some of this in the first question but what do the terms diversity, equity, and inclusion mean? How do they fit together, or how are they different, or how should we deal with them individually or collectively? And Tinisha I'm going to go to you and then Jo Linda.

TINISHA AGRAMONTE: And I knew that would happen if I put that mute button on. I'm just gonna leave that alone, I was starting to talk. So yeah, I think we talked about equality and equity, but I will just briefly say, I think most people have heard the saying that diversity is being invited to the party, inclusion is being invited to dance, and maybe equity is looking at all, again, those systems and policies and practices that may impede people from actually getting into the room and actually participating in the room. So that's probably the quick way of saying it. Diversity is really just about representation of differences. That's what it boils down to.

But diversity is only empowered through inclusion, and if you have equitable practices. So we really can't harness the power of all of that diversity of thought, background, and experiences, unless people feel included and I'll give you a quick example, and I know we need to move on to disaster preparedness and recovery. Anyone who's ever heard me speak before knows that I'm a huge advocate for people who are first generation college graduates, first generation professionals. So those are people who were the first in your family to actually complete a four year degree. Your parents did not, and you're the first in your family, trailblazer, to traverse into sort of corporate, white collar type work. Not that that's better than blue collar, it's just that it's different and no one's navigated that space before you. So, you may not come in as prepared with the same tools as someone else whose parents have navigated it.

One quick example is I have an individual who identifies as a first generation professional, she's a PhD. She was working on a research project and this research project was to look at sleep deprivation and the impact for truck drivers. She said to her fellow researchers, "Hey, when you were talking to the truck drivers, did you ask for both sets of books?" And they were like, "Both sets of books?" She said, "Yeah, I grew up in a truck driver family and I know that there's a book that they keep for themselves and there's a book they keep to show the police."

Now this was back before GPS was tracking everything, but the point being here, if she felt ashamed of that background, she would not have readily disclosed her background. By her feeling like there's a sense of belonging, acceptance, she felt like she could be vulnerable and reveal that. But the point of it is in revealing it, look how that helped each and every one of us who drive alongside truck drivers on the highway. Had she not revealed that, that research could have been skewed, and skewed research creates a risk for the purpose of what they were trying to do.

So, it's about she was represented in the workforce, her diversity, right? But it was the inclusion that made her feel like a sense of belonging that allow us to harness that background for the outcomes of research.

BRIDGET BEAN: Thank you Tinisha, and Tinisha happens to be the architect of First Generation, it's really an interesting endeavor and important to highlight, and I think that you've been instrumental in some of the executive orders that have come out that have included this as part of it. Jo Linda, can you share your views on diversity, equity, inclusion. What do they mean, how do they work together?

JO LINDA JOHNSON: Yes. So I don't think that I can improve upon the definitions that Tinisha has offered, so I just want to offer another example to drive those definitions home. So, I mentioned earlier that prior to my current position, I was with the EEOC for a bit over a decade and I worked in the office. I worked in numerous offices as my old boss there said, I couldn't hold down a job. So I worked across the commission in a lot of different positions.

So, the EEOC, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, is the federal agency that's charged with enforcing civil rights and employment across public and private sector, and it is full of lawyers, as you might imagine. And lawyers love to be right and we love to prove that we're right and we love other people to acknowledge that we are right. That is our system's thinking, Patrick, and so every holiday season, when I was at the commission, we would host our own internal version of Jeopardy and EEOC has a lot of brilliant folks who work there, including three former Jeopardy champions. So they all work in a particular office and they all have a particular background. I worked in an office that had an incredibly diverse workforce and we often won the Jeopardy championship with no Jeopardy champions because we represented different backgrounds, different perspectives from a race perspective, a gender perspective, an age perspective, a national origin perspective, a geographic perspective. Our office represented diversity in a way that no other office in the commission actually reflected, and we were quite proud of that and I was quite proud to be on those teams that beat the Jeopardy champion because we collectively knew more than that one person could know. I think that's a perfect example of why diversity and inclusion, as Tinisha pointed out, matters so much.

BRIDGET BEAN: Thank you, Jo Linda. Again Patrick, I hate for you to go after these really amazing women, but I really, because of your background, want to ask you, how does the brain process inequity?

PATRICK MALONE: You know, this is probably not an answer that you would expect, but the answer is the brain processes inequity the way it processes everything, which is unconsciously and subjectively. So, our brain depends on pre-established signals and experiences, schemas, that it connects to make sense of the world that it sees. This is why the brain is such an efficient and effective organ at protecting us because it's designed for survival. It's designed for judgment, it's designed for quick judgment. That's the way the brain is made, so equity and equality and inequity and inequality is only as good as our previous experiences allow us to see. There is somewhere around 14 million bytes of information that are coming at us at any given time, so for everybody on the call, right now around 14 million bytes of info, and it's the sound and the smells and the colors and everything that we see is all coming at us right now. But of those millions of bits of data that come at us, we only consciously process 16 to 40. That's it, not 16,000, 16 to 40. Out of the millions that are coming at us.

So, what that tells us is that the majority of the work we do, the majority of the thinking, the majority of the judgments we make are unconscious. Which is how the brain processes and so that doesn't mean that it's a foregone argument. We can definitely move beyond that but it takes active and purposeful steps to do so.

TINISHA AGRAMONTE: And Dr. Malone, can I also add to that, Bridget, sorry, jumping in again, in terms of neuroscience on this too, isn't there also some research out there that demonstrates that the feeling associated with exclusion, that pain, is similar to what one would experience with physical pain?

PATRICK MALONE: Yeah. Tinisha, I don't know if you're referring specifically to David Rock's work, but David Rock, who is a neuroscientist, he's done a lot of work on this and what he describes, and this is such an important point and I really recommend this reading to everyone. Just type in scarf, S-C-A-R-F model into Google, it will come right up.

But neurologically, what happens is, so let's say that I'm in a meeting, the four of us are in a meeting together, and at some point, I feel excluded. Or I feel like I'm not being taken seriously or I'm not being valued. The neurological pathways that fire in my brain at that moment of exclusion are the exact same pathways that fire if my life is in danger, and the example that David gives in a lot of his work is this idea of being chased by a tiger. You're running like crazy, you're in survival mode. Well, if we're in a meeting together and I am left out, I feel like there's not an equitable conversation, if I'm feeling like I'm being dismissed, those same neurological pathways are the ones that fire. The only difference is that I'm not physically running. But neurologically, the same thing happens. It's a neurological shutdown, which puts me into protective mode, and when I'm in protective mode, I can't be the innovative, creative team member that wins Jeopardy with Jo Linda, and I can't be the innovative, creative team member that pursues the mission of FEMA and our organizations in Motorola. I can't be that because I'm in protective mode, and it happens like this.

It's a fascinating dynamic, and when we realize that that's something that can occur, it kind of refocuses on the importance of being inclusive, of being accepting, of encouraging and creating these diverse teams because that's really how we succeed.

BRIDGET BEAN: Wow, this is good stuff, and again, things people can take away. When you're in a meeting, be mindful of that, we don't want to lose the wisdom and the insights that people can bring.

JO LINDA JOHNSON: Before you move on, can I just add another takeaway bit for folks? Something that I've certainly had to learn as a leader. It is, I find, incredibly useful when you're getting to know your teams or perhaps you've led this team for years, but you've never taken the time to do this. Ask people how they best show up in meetings. Ask them how they want to participate. I had a very trusted colleague who was a subordinate to me at the time who I didn't ask, he felt comfortable enough to take me aside and said, "Listen. When you call on me in a meeting without preparatory notice at the level that I want to and I know that you don't mind that, being put on the spot, but I do. It makes me very uncomfortable. So, if you know that there are questions you're going to want to discuss, can you send those out to me ahead of time? That would be terrific."

And that's no skin off my nose at all, and I don't know where that phrase comes from, so I'll think of another one, but it was an easy way to get really important, impactful involvement from that employee,

but I wouldn't have gotten it if he hadn't come forward to me and he taught me a lesson, which is I need to ask people that question. How do you best show up? What is the best way to get you to participate and bring your whole self to work?

BRIDGET BEAN: All right, I hope people are taking notes. I mean that's a very tangible thing to do, but I would also say that he must have felt included and valued to be able to be as a subordinate come to you and make that request. So awesome.

So, at FEMA, at DHS, and of course the Guidehouse line of business in the national security space includes DHS and FEMA and we often talk about and focus on resilience, and that resilience helps communities prepare for and recover from disasters. As we move forward, how and why is it important to include DEI into the disaster playbook, into the resilience playbook?

JO LINDA JOHNSON: So I'll start, but I think all of the panelists can really contribute to this because it's just about communities and it's about the differing groups within our individual communities, so if everyone who's listening simply thinks about the neighborhood that they live in, does everyone in your neighborhood have the same background as you? Does everyone have the same abilities that you do? Does everyone have the same financial resources that you do? Does everyone speak the same language that you do? These are all questions that I think from an emergency management point of view, local emergency managers have to answer, state emergency managers have to answer, and certainly as a national organization, we have to think about. It means that when we are thinking about changes in policy, it's imperative to actually ask the communities that are going to be impacted by that change in policy what they think about it. Because to the example that Tinisha offered with regard to the truck driver and the sleep study, if we don't ask the community that's actually involved on the ground about a potential policy or practice that we want to implement, we will never know. We will certainly make a lot of assumptions, but we will never know the ground truth of how those things are impacting different communities.

So, a tangible example and an easy example to offer, I work for FEMA and FEMA has been in the news quite a bit over the last year. Most of the media has been fairly critical of the work that FEMA has done, and a lot of that criticism is absolutely fair. One of the news stories that came out recently, and by recently it could have been any time in the last two years because time has no meaning to me anymore, the Washington Post had an article about the concept of heirs' property. Heirs' property is property that's passed down from generation to generation without an official transfer in title or deed at the county clerk's office. And this happens to be a practice that is fairly common in low income, minority, Southeastern communities, and there are a lot of historical reasons for that. Perhaps those low income, minority communities for example, were not allowed in the courthouse to actually make these transactions. Perhaps their fees were higher than the majority community to actually pay for the deed transfer. There are lots and lots of historical reasons. There are lots of systemic issues that are behind that.

But bringing us to present day, if I am a person who owns property but it is not titled and deeded in my name, and it's damaged by a disaster, in order to qualify for assistance with FEMA, I struggle to prove ownership, and proving ownership is actually one of the first ways that you qualify for assistance after a disaster when it comes to FEMA.

So FEMA decided that we are reaching inequitable outcomes in our individual assistance post-disaster, and this heirs' property issue is one area where we can, from a policy perspective, change how we allow people to prove ownership, up to and including simply a declaration from me or perhaps a bill for a major repair that I paid for or property tax bill. There are lots of ways to prove ownership beyond the deed that doesn't disadvantage communities that have been historically disadvantaged by government systems. There's a reason why those communities are in the state that they're in and it's important that current day, we do not continue to replicate those inequitable processes and practices that are leading to those inequitable outcomes. So we changed our policy. This is one area where it didn't require legislative intervention or regulatory intervention. We changed our policy, ahead of, by the way, the big hurricane that hit the Southeast this past summer.

That allowed thousands, I think the last number was... No, I'm not going to speculate because I'm going to get it wrong. Thousands and thousands and thousands of people to qualify for assistance who were previously blocked from assistance by a policy that was treating everyone equally, but was leading to incredibly inequitable outcomes, and that's something that I would hope that we see replicated across the federal government because FEMA is not the only player when it comes to recovering after a disaster. There are lots of federal agencies that are involved in that process. That's a long answer to your question, Bridget, but I wanted people to have a tangible example.

BRIDGET BEAN: Absolutely, and that is planning, right? That's preparing for disasters, that's doing things in advance, left of boom as we sometimes say, to make sure that we have more equitable outcomes. Tinisha, what can you add, what colorful commentary can you add to that?

TINISHA AGRAMONTE: The only thing that I can add to that, because I think in the private sector it's a lot different than what happens in terms of federal intervention and response to disasters. Obviously on Motorola Solutions we help support the customers, the public safety officials, who are responding to disasters with a lot of our products and solutions and services. But two things I want to talk about in terms of specific on the inequity or equity side of it, and that is through our foundation, the Motorola Solutions Foundation, which is our philanthropic and charitable arm of our organization, they actually... And I'm going to look down to make sure that I'm getting the numbers correct, but they actually donated \$2 million to COVID relief efforts, including supporting those on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic, but equally important, what they did was they helped... I think most people understand there is broadband inequity, right? And so COVID really illuminated some of the inequities that exist along socioeconomic lines, specifically children who did not have adequate WiFi in their homes to be ready and prepared to fully participate in a remote classroom environment, and so you heard stories where children, the parents were driving them to the school parking lot so that they could have access to the school's WiFi.

And so what our foundation was able to do was to provide money to non-profit organizations that enable them through grants to either improve the WiFi situation or the technology needed for children, so specifically we donated money to After School Matters Inc., and it's an after-school, virtual program and they help close some gaps with technology and also Big Brother Big Sister of Metropolitan Chicago. So I think that's one significant way that companies, through their charitable arm, can help with sort of leveling the playing field through grants and money that way, but then I will tell you on the other side, our business side, we actually offer something called Nitro, which is a solution that allows for a private

broadband network that organizations, schools, and companies can use to improve the broadband accessibility for communities where there are inequity issues.

BRIDGET BEAN: So, I think it's important to hear, both from private and public experts. We say whole of community response, right? And it is the mantra and the way it's set up that disasters, recovery, are locally executed, state managed, and federally supported. So, it's that whole of community which at the local, and the state, and the federal has the private sector as an equal partner. So Patrick, do you have something to add to that or do you want to move on?

PATRICK MALONE: Yeah, the only thing I would add to what Tinisha and Jo Linda said, I'm listening to their comments and I'm thinking of the importance of data. Data being data in terms of the communities we're serving and data in terms of the teams in our organizations that are serving those communities and I think one of the challenges right now, especially in government, is collecting accurate data about the populations that we're serving and then also looking at sometimes revealing data about the people in government that are delivering those services. So I won't add anything more than that but the data definitely matters.

BRIDGET BEAN: Well it's funny because the next question was can individuals and organizations leverage science to break through and expand our thinking capacity to increase equity, and I think one piece of that might be data, but I'll open that question up and see if anybody has more that they would like to add to the leveraging science piece.

PATRICK MALONE: I would add to the data, the good news is that these relationships that we talk about, we talk about expanding thinking capacity. These are learned competencies; these are things that we can grow and develop ourselves and we spend a lot of time in our professional careers developing technical skills. That's how we get hired, that's how we get promoted, and all those things are fine. But it's the adaptive skills that really allow us to connect with other people and to see things in a different way. So many good people out there simply do not see what we are talking about. It doesn't resonate with them, and it takes a lot of hard work to do that. I think strong self-awareness, strong self-management skills, and what the science says is that if interim relationships with one another, whether it be colleagues or the people that we're serving, if we are cognitive of the individual need for status and the individual need for certainty and autonomy in their decisions and fairness, if we're cognizant of those things, then we can build the bridges, and there's not one piece of referred journal science that does not support that that is absolutely crucial to leading today.

TINISHA AGRAMONTE: Yeah. The piece that I would add to... And I think what Patrick is speaking to, to some of these opportunities to increase awareness, education, training, in ways that build cultural competency for individuals to lead and work with diverse teams, but also diverse public constituents. So I want to build on that a little bit. I think in terms of talking about equity, not only understanding the data that shows some of the inequities in the public that we serve, but also Jo Linda had made a point about listening. Motorola Solutions just recently commissioned a report called Consensus for Change, and that was done through a university and interviewing like 50 public safety organizations and we got some good data from that.

One data point was that the public will trust technology if they understand how it's being used, and then that will enable them to trust it, and I think for us, one side is making sure that we're able to help with

bridging building... Building bridges, thank you, the coffee clearly is not kicking in, between public safety officials and the communities that they serve. So part of that is around that cultural awareness and that training and all of that, and we partner on that.

But the other thing I think that is really important is making sure that more people in the community have an opportunity to serve in those public safety capacities. So, I'll tell you one way we're doing that through our inclusive product solutions. So I'm just going to give you two quick examples, one on gender and one in terms of disabilities. We learned from going out and observing our public safety officials at work that some of the women public safety officials were clipping our devices, the two-way radio devices, to their bra strap. Clearly that's not ideal, that's not the optimal way for them to wear our devices and so our team went back, our inclusive solutions team went back, and they designed lanyards. They designed magnetic clips so that you can put it on any way, right? They also made sure that for our customers who are colorblind, we had red and green lights, but they did a different solution that would enable them to understand which one was for the red and the green without relying on the color. So I think that's really important, to make sure that you're doing inclusive design in your work, whatever you're doing for our command center software and other products, so that we can hire more people that reflect the communities and part of that is making sure everyone can use products and solutions that are used for disasters.

BRIDGET BEAN: Jo Linda?

JO LINDA JOHNSON: You know, I'm a huge data nerd, despite going to law school. I'm a huge data nerd and I couldn't agree more that we need more data and we need the public to trust us so that they provide that data so that we can actually evaluate not just based on anecdotal information from one to two parties, but we can evaluate across large swaths of people and communities what the outcomes are that are being reached and who is benefiting and who is not, who is left out of that process. We need data to do that.

FEMA is actually actively working on collecting data, just a fun fact and not to make this a FEMA commercial at all, but I mentioned earlier that there's been a lot of media about the efforts of FEMA over the last 18 months to two years, mainly because we were so involved in the vaccination effort, but really FEMA has been called on over the last 12 months to address lots of issues that don't necessarily fall squarely into our mission set of responding to disasters. That includes helping with the southwest border, helping with repatriating individuals. There's a lot that we've been called on to do, and one of the things that we have been accused of, in particular with our disaster assistance, is favoring one community over another, intentionally favoring one community over another.

Well, we don't actually collect demographic data on people who receive our assistance. So it is in fact impossible for us to do that from a systems perspective. It doesn't mean that the outcomes being reached are not inequitable and that's certainly not what I'm suggesting. But one of the things we want to try and do is start collecting that demographic information so we can find out who is getting access to our programs and who is not, who is benefiting from our programs and who is not, and what does that look like across the country? What communities need our help and they're not actually receiving it and what do we need to do about that to bridge that gap?

BRIDGET BEAN: Great, I want to take, just one sec. I just want to remind the audience that they have the opportunity to put their questions in the question box. There's that list of options on the right of my screen, and it says chat, and above that is questions. So click on that, put your questions in. You have some of the most authentic, honest, fearless people here who will answer every question you've got, so please put some questions in the question box. Tinisha, I'm sorry to interrupt. Please continue.

TINISHA AGRAMONTE: No worries at all because I was just about to probably hit the third rail, but I'm perfectly fine with doing that. I'm seasoned enough in my career where I think I can be very authentic and transparent about something. One of the things that keeps me up at night as a chief diversity officer, as an equity practitioner, is the very real feeling that some people have, that this is unfair. That sometimes when we focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, that we're giving handouts as opposed to we're extending a hand, and so going back to the data, that's why I think data is really important because we can't even begin to convince people that there are inequalities, inequities, unless sometimes they can see the data and so for me, it has been part of the resistance and apprehension to accept the need for DEI is the denial of inequality, and so data goes a long way with demonstrating that. Then I think once people understand that inequities exist, they are fine with embracing the opportunities to dismantle the systems, policies, practices. Jo Linda gave some examples of where we found them and I gave one, but I think once people see that, then they're like, "Oh, okay. This is not about creating inclusion to the exclusion of me." When people realize that we are just looking at those practices and processes that advantage those who already may have an advantage, while disadvantaging others. I think the majority of people are okay with that, and they understand why we need to do the things we're doing to create equality of outcomes.

PATRICK MALONE: Tinisha, I love the way you said that and that is so true. I think when people realize that this is really something that's used to bring folks up, to give them opportunities they didn't have, people will wrap their hearts and their minds around that.

TINISHA AGRAMONTE: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

BRIDGET BEAN: Yeah, I was just going to say the same thing. Tinisha, if everyone could hear the way you just described it in a very simple, non-threatening way, I just think there would be much more acceptance of it. So if you want to put that quote in the chat, I think people might value being able to have that, if you don't mind them using your words and to that point, I really want to just jump right now and say let's get practical. So what works and why? If you could provide our audience with some tangible recommendations on what they can start doing today to advance equity in their own sphere of influence, whether it's their community, their work organization, their volunteer communities, whether they're in the emergency management, national security space, whether you're in academia. It doesn't matter but can you give them what works and why so that they can take away something and make a difference starting today? JLJ, you want to start?

JO LINDA JOHNSON: I do. I was deep in the questions and there are some good ones in there and I hope we have a chance to get to one or two. So what can you do? I think... I hope I'm not stealing your thunder Patrick, but I actually want to go back to something you said earlier. I think the first thing all of us as individuals can do is become more self-aware. We all have biases. There's the Avenue Q Broadway show with the song that has the line "everyone's a little bit racist." I think there are people who still think that's not true, that they think, "No, no, I'm the one human on Earth who doesn't have these

neurons firing so quickly that, I notice everything and I am not processing any biases." You're deluding yourself if you're sitting there thinking that, so please stop doing that, and actually sit back and do some self-reflection, do some self-analysis, so that you can become aware. Not subconsciously, but consciously, of your biases, and once you become conscious of them, you can work to mitigate them. We as human beings form biases for lots of very good reasons but sometimes they are put to not very good practice. That's the best thing I think all of us as individuals could do. Let's just start being deadly honest with ourselves.

PATRICK MALONE: You know, one of the things that we do Jo Linda, I think that's great advice, what we do with our executives that come into the Key Program, there's a couple very simple exercises that you can do. You can go out and get a list off Google of kind behaviors and unkind behaviors. Take that list, send it out to your team, and just have them check off the ones or rate you one to five on what... I mean a little self-360, in a non-threatening way, completely anonymous, but Patrick, did you realize that you tend to interrupt people? Do you realize that you're not always the best listener? Just hearing that and being able to kind of wrap our minds around that is a good start.

I saw an exercise one time as well, it was a beautiful exercise, where you draw a big circle and in the big outside circle you write the names of just kind of all the people that are in your social world, all the people that are kind of around you, friends and neighbors and maybe even relatives. And then in the next inner circle, you draw another circle, and then you write the names of the people who you would invite to your home for dinner. And then you write another circle in the middle and in that inner circle put the names of the people that you would tell your deepest secrets to. Once you get those three populations identified, just take a look at them and ask yourself, "Do the people in that center circle all look like me? Do they all have the same education as me? Are they all the same socioeconomic status as me? How alike are we and how diverse is that group?"

And it's not meant as a criticism. It's just meant as a way to self-examine and to ask ourselves some questions and I think when we do that kind of thing, mindfulness practices, meditation practices, very simple examples that we're talking about here, they help to create psychological safety in our organizations but it does begin, it so begins with self. And this is one of the biggest problems with leadership development programs that are all over the city right now, all over the country. They want to give you the latest acronym, they want to give you the latest cool thing to do. No, no, no, no, it starts right there. Heart, soul, our own biases, our own histories, what we bring to the table. We have to get in touch with that first, and then we can move on to do things with other folks.

TINISHA AGRAMONTE: I love that. I want to add two examples. One has to do with disaster preparedness and recovery, so that is the topic. One of the things I've been thinking about recently and at Motorola Solutions, we recently held a workshop to talk about biases of volunteers. So when volunteers are working and doing service for non-profit organizations that are serving marginalized communities or communities with underrepresented populations, it's really important not to have a savior mentality when you go out into these communities and do some self-reflection of how you're showing up in these spaces to help, and also doing an inventory of your own cultural competencies and are you being mindful of the belief systems, the values, the customs of the people that you are there to actually assist in any way and are you showing up in ways that may actually exacerbate the marginalization of those groups when you think you're helping.

So, I want to talk about something Jo Linda taught me, is like starting from a place of curiosity. We always talk about this and Patrick talked about giving grace. Let's say you show up in these communities and you have great intention, but it's your impact that's incongruent with your intent. So if someone tells you that the impact of your behavior offended them, hurt them, one being open and receptive to that, that it may not have been your intent, but recognizing what the impact was, and then for the person on the receiving end, giving grace. Starting from a place of curiosity, asking questions.

So, one example I always share is let's say Bridget, you and I pass each other in the hallway in the morning, I waved at you, you did not wave back at me. Those are fact, but then what happens is there's the story of the facts that I tell myself, and I'm like, "Bridget still has an attitude because of that meeting we had last Friday where I countered a point she made and I think she's still upset about that." But pause, let me get more information before reaching that conclusion because absent information we fill in the gaps, right?

So, I go to you and I say, "Bridget, the other day, we were in the hallway, we passed. I waved, you didn't wave back to me. Is something going on?" And you say, "Oh my god Tinisha, I didn't even realize I passed you in the hallway. That's probably about the time that I got a call from my kid at school that said they were sick and I was trying to figure out how to reschedule all my meetings so that I could get to the school on time to pick up my child." "Oh, okay. Thank you." Right? But otherwise without seeking that additional information, I have reached my conclusion. Now that's just going to perpetuate itself somehow down the line, and I know we have questions so I'll stop there.

BRIDGET BEAN: So, I just want to ask, Shannon, are you on the line?

SHANNON WHITE: I'm here. Do you want me to ask a couple questions?

Bridget Bean: Yeah, Shannon is such a strong leader for Guidehouse but also in this area. So I really wanted to bring her in, yeah. You want to pick a few and see if we can't get them answered?

SHANNON WHITE: That's great. Thank you guys. As consultants and practitioners in the disaster response and recovery space, what are some tips you have for us to integrate equity into programs as opposed to thinking about them as a layer to be placed over existing programs and methods, and maybe Jo Linda you can start?

JO LINDA JOHNSON: Thank you, Shannon, and I was perusing some of the questions in the chat and I think actually I can answer that question as well as one other one which is about community engagement because the answer to the first question is the second question, which is community engagement. And the second question about community engagement, about how do we do that effectively, I think for a lot of communities and I mean this with all due respect, but for a lot of communities, it means just start. It means actually start having meetings with your community-based organizations, any national organizations that you have that happen to be located in your city, your county, or your state, but simply engage.

So, if I am... I grew up in California, so if I worked for Cal OES, which is their emergency management organization out in that state and I'm going to put out a new policy on fire mitigation and prevention. I think before I put that policy out, I'm going to announce that to the public and then I'm going to hold

probably 15 to 20 public meetings to receive input. What do you think should be in this policy? It means just starting. Sitting down with individuals and with groups and asking them for their thoughts. How is this going to impact you if we decide X versus Y? What does that mean for you?

Another very practical way to do this, and apologies for the governmentese of it all, but in the government, we do what's called requests for information, or RFIs, we put them out through the federal registrar. States and localities have the ability to do the same thing. It may not look like the federal registrar but perhaps it will look like your local newspaper or your local media. Going out and saying, "Hey, we want to do x in our community and we'd like everyone who is going to be impacted to share their opinions with us." It doesn't mean you're going to take all those opinions and implement them, but it does mean you're going to hear everyone and I guarantee you, you're going to learn things that you didn't know that if your team isn't representative of everyone in the community and that's what actually matters.

SHANNON WHITE: Great, thank you, and I know it's 1:30, so I also want to be respectful of everyone's time but I want to thank all of our audience, if you're able to stay on, maybe we'll ask a couple more questions if that works for everybody. But Bridget, did you want to ask any final questions?

Bridget Bean: Yeah, so if there's one thing you can leave them with. If they're leaving and you wanted them to take one thing with them, what would that be? Tinisha?

TINISHA AGRAMONTE: I'm going to go back to something Jo Linda said earlier, and I can't state it as eloquently as she did. She asked a series of questions and I think first it's important to identify not only what your communities are saying but where are the inequities, and so one question I always say is "Whose hand is being acknowledged and whose hand is being ignored?" That's kind of like the starting place to determine who is being provided access and opportunities and resources and is that disproportionate to another group of people or community.

JO LINDA JOHNSON: Just to pick up where Tinisha left off, I would say once you uncover the answer to that question, be brave, be courageous, and lean forward in actually reaching the communities that are not being reached, the individuals that are not being reached.

I'll give two very quick examples. So FEMA led the national response to the pandemic and between February and June, thousands of people across FEMA worked incredibly hard, twelve hours a day, seven days a week to ensure that vaccines got to the communities that needed them most, and what that looked like practically speaking was that when we went to a state to talk about setting up a community vaccination center, or a CVC, the conversation with the state started with data on our part. Here are where your black and brown communities are, here are where your individuals with disabilities are, here are where your rural communities are, and these are the communities that are most impacted at this point by the pandemic, so that's where we're going to start. You got to lean into those conversations, as uncomfortable as they might be, to bring us all up, and I guess Bridget to your question, I would go back to something I said at the start. We all do better when we all do better, so ensuring that those communities, those underserved communities, got shots in arms as soon as possible before people who had better access in other ways actually helps the entire country. It's not an us versus them. We are all in this together, we are intrinsically bound to one another. We all do better when we all do better, we've got to stop thinking about this as us versus them.

BRIDGET BEAN: Patrick?

PATRICK MALONE: Bridget, my final thought would be stay on the self-awareness journey. In order for all of this to work it requires interaction with other human beings, and the only way that interaction, true authentic interaction happens with other human beings is for us to be aware of what we bring to the table, what we don't bring to the table, being comfortable with who you are and being able to help ourselves get better every day.

Bridget Bean: Well clearly, this has been an incredibly valuable hour and what we've learned is that advancing equity requires a lot of learning, a lot of listening, a lot of self-reflection. These cultural shifts don't happen overnight. We at Guidehouse and American University and Via Stella, we're committed to being part of the solution, and we're grateful that we're able to host today's event.

By hosting this panel, it was our hope that you have something tangible to take away, to better understand the issues, and to become change agents in all aspects of your life, and I just encourage you to continue to foster the awareness. Have those bold, courageous conversations. Educate yourself on other equitable practices. Infuse them into your day to day life. Don't worry if no one else is doing it. You start.

Our panelists have done so much. They continue to make progress and we need to continue to learn from them and work alongside of them. Remember we all have a role and a responsibility to ensure equity of opportunity exists and then we will have equity of outcomes.

So please, I ask you all to join me in thanking our panelists and taking a step away from today's events so that we can better individually, collectively, and as a community. I want to thank our panelists very much and I hope everyone has a wonderful day.