

# Going Beyond “Diversity”

The Sierra Club is on a journey of self-transformation. On the other side of this transformation, we will be a thriving, healthy organization that attracts, retains and celebrates people from all walks of life.

In recent years Sierra Club has worked hard to attract talented applicants from all walks of life. We've been able to increase the racial diversity of our new hires just by widening our recruitment pool. But we've learned that it isn't enough to attract racially diverse staff if we haven't done the work to create a truly inclusive and welcoming environment that values the contributions of people from all cultures. In fact, we can actually do harm by bringing new people into the environmental movement, only to lose their passion and energy when we fail to provide an inclusive environment.

It's time to go beyond “diversity.” To attract and retain employees and volunteers who are diverse - which means much more than racial diversity - we have to grow as an organization, becoming a truly inclusive environment that is open to new ideas and unafraid to be challenged from within. To reflect our new theory of change and vision for this work, we're proud to propose a new name and become the Sierra Club's Department of Equity, Inclusion and Justice.

## Diversity: More than Just Race

Diversity means so much more than racial and ethnic background. We know that we need people from all different backgrounds in our organization so that we can understand and represent the perspectives of all the communities we serve. But race is one of many categories that shapes a person's lived experiences.

Gender expression and identity, (dis)ability, sexuality, immigration status, class background, experiences of trauma, neurological difference, religious affiliation, age - all of these things and more make up someone's intersectional identity. When we hide behind the catchphrase of “diversity” rather than naming specific identities, the term loses its meaning and leads us down the path of tokenism.

## Tokenism: the Flip Side of Highlighting our “Diversity”

It's important to lift up the voices of the people who have historically been excluded from public life and conversation. But all too often, our commitment to highlighting these voices leads to an unintended outcome: tokenism. Tokenism is the practice of placing a person of a “diverse” background - typically a person of color - in a visible leadership position to demonstrate commitment to “diversity” without actually doing the work to establish real relationships with communities.

When we use a stock image of a Latino child in our promotional materials because all the photos from a particular campaign are of white children - that's tokenism. When we hire a person of color who can't succeed in their position because they don't have the right skills,

setting them up for failure - that's tokenism. The mistakes we make when we tokenize people are deeply harmful to our efforts to make the Sierra Club a truly inclusive environment where people from all backgrounds are valued and supported.

### **A New Path: Equity, Justice and Inclusion**

Diversity should not be a goal in and of itself. That way leads to tokenism and harm. Instead, a diverse staff and volunteer base with varied and rich identities will be the natural result of our internal self-transformation.

We've learned from our work so far that focusing on our three key principles of equity, justice and inclusion is the next step along our journey to becoming an organization that attracts, retains and celebrates people from all walks of life. It is by keeping our focus on these three principles, and allowing them to guide all of the work that we do, that we can create the welcoming, evolving organizational culture that will make Sierra Club a true reflection of the communities we live in, work in, and love. By working together to create an equitable, just and inclusive environment, we will build a Sierra Club that welcomes, attracts and values the contributions of all people. That Sierra Club will be diverse indeed - and so much more.