Chapter 1
Awakened Leadership as a Pillar for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Joan Marques

DEI[1]: How Did We Land Here?

As massively diverse as planet Earth is, and as many living species as we know, it remains mesmerizing that humanity still finds ways to cultivate internal segregation, often driven by the desire to establish and nurture a sense of superiority within one group over others. For many centuries there have been caste systems, distinctions between the rich and poor, gender-based demarcations, and a slew of other aspects varying from education, generation, or affiliation, to ethnicity, characteristics and skin color, to name a few. All these distinctions have been carefully woven into societal structures to create swift advancement for some and painful impediments for others. The roots of racial prejudice can be traced back to the history of European culture (Anālayo, 2020).

In 1958, Adams, a medical doctor and well-known figure in Chicago's psychiatric circles, explained segregation as follows,

> Segregation begets prejudice, but the relationship is reciprocal. Prejudice is the result of man's insecurity in relation to dangerous competition within his family, within his clique and his "ingroup." It also results from his feelings of helplessness in dealing with his forbidden unconscious inner impulses, as well as in dealing with nature and the universe. It is often an index to character weakness within the man. (Adams, 1958, p. 14).

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[1] Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

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          The twenty-first century has presented our human community with a number of emergences that seemed to be aimed at increasing our awareness regarding the need for change. The #MeToo movement, for instance, has been an eye-opener on a longstanding and unmentioned privilege of influential predators who did not think twice if they identified a prey that they wanted to entertain themselves with. The #MeToo moment was created by Tarana Burke, who has worked for many years with young women of color who survived sexual violence. To garner a sense of solidarity, she named her campaign, which she started in 2006, "me too" (Jaffe, 2018). Unfortunately, many have come to interpret the #MeToo movement as a means of shaming celebrities due to the Weinstein sexual allegations in 2017, which resulted in an immense surge of attention to this trend. Yet, shaming of the rich and famous is not the main focus of #MeToo (Douglas, 2018). Rather, it has become an undesirable consequence of more alertness and openness to this contemptible trend. Williams (2021) admits that the #MeToo movement encouraged millions at a global level to speak out against sexual harassment, sexual assault, and violence against women, and that this movement is now known as the most significant mobilization in the women's movement in decades. At the same time, Williams (2021) warns that, notwithstanding the movement's accomplishment of stirring some legal strides such as a stronger enforcement by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), increased lawsuits, and new legislation, women of color still seem to pull the short end of the stick when seeking justice, due to a large number of legal, organizational, and cultural barriers that impede their efforts to exercise their civil rights. Cantalupo (2019) underscores this unequal, racist-engendered approach by confirming that women of color experience greater vulnerability, not only in regard to the frequency of being harassed, but also in the victimization and setbacks that result from the proportionately poor attention granted to their plight.

     And then came the year 2020, throwing a wrench in our carefully and often deceptively manicured civilized landscape, not only by confronting us with a pandemic that turned our long-established notions of what our daily professional performances should look like upside down, but also by presenting us with several visible manifestations of blatant police brutality in the US that resulted in a global ripple effect of social unrest and surging understanding that something really had to change. Many will never forget the traumatic video of officer Derek Chauvin pinning George Floyd face down on the ground with his knee on Floyd's neck. The 8 minutes and 46 seconds in which he held him in that position resulted in Floyd first crying out that he could not breathe, then going unconscious, and subsequently dying while bystanders were shouting to the cops that the man was in severe distress (Hersey, 2020). Kennedy (2020) captures the troublesome truth of the US day-to-day reality in a clear statement, "Every day in every part of America, people of all backgrounds, but especially people of color, are menaced by poorly regulated police. Absent the fortuity of a video recording, the circumstances of George Floyd's death would have probably been effectively covered up and buried" (p. 6). While expressing hope that the Black Lives Matter movement will result in a real and sustainable change in the unequal treatment of minority members in the US society, Kennedy (2020) also remains skeptical about the possibility of actually and

structurally redeeming America. Steinberg (2020) reminds us that, "the murder of George Floyd is, of course, connected to the murders of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia in February [2020] and Breonna Taylor in Kentucky in March, along with the Central Park incident involving Christian Cooper the same day Floyd died" (p. 4).

Reflecting on the ongoing racist mindset that keeps sweeping through the United States, Richeson (2020) laments, "The mythology of racial progress often rings hollow when it comes to, for instance, racial gaps in education. Or health outcomes. Or voting rights. Or criminal justice. Or personal wealth" (p. 10). Corroborating the above stance, Powell (2020) posits that change requires change, and then explains this as a necessary turnaround to an unjust system, requiring change of the structures that prevent black people from voting, improvement of a substandard education, shifting unjust laws that produce economic inequality, and reformation of the criminal justice system. Powell (2020) places an important call to us all to internalize the lingering injustice, and open our minds and hearts to the realization that each of the African American victims of police brutality were human souls, just like us, rather than statistics from which we can turn away.

The recent instances of racial injustice have stirred up our collective psyche. "The cries of protesters echo nationwide, joined by global allies as far away as Berlin, Germany" (Steinberg, 2020, p. 5). While there are no statistics available to support this, it seems that humanity has never before been so collectively and massively aware of the embarrassing reality of "othering" in its numerous nuances and shades. Othering happens when a person or a group of people is perceived or treated as intrinsically different from a person or group in charge. In management terms this could be compared to the in-group and out-group of a manager, whereby the in-group members undivided and willing attention receive, and the out-group finds little or no approvals or gets minimal attention from the manager. While being the subject of othering is never a pleasant experience, the following considerations can make victimization to this trend less troublesome:

– Defying biases (from those who engage in othering) through performance excellence.
– Identifying kindred spirits of high-achievers toward mutual motivation and growth.
– Shifting the internal paradigm about othering, for instance, by considering that it's far more interesting to be "different" than to be "the same".
– Conjuring up empathy and understanding for the biases of those engaging in othering, which may encourage them to face their ignorance and confront their biases.
– Embracing the increased awareness on social justice, which may contribute to greater awareness of the practice and negative effects of othering, and help create change (Marques, 2021).

Awakened Leaders: How They Fit In

> 2020 has forced humanity to rethink many of their basic assumptions, beliefs, and philosophies about the society we live in. In addition to many other revelations, a global awaking led to a more widespread understanding that pervasive racism, inequalities and racist violence never stopped being a prominent part of black, brown, and indigenous lives. It was found to be more than a passing prejudice—it is a systemic problem ingrained in our society. (Albright Ndikumagenge, 2021, p. 43).

Indeed, society at large is riddled with systemic problems that have been sustained for so long, that it will require a concerted yet mindful effort to soak them loose from its foundations. If we consider workplaces miniature replicas of society, we realize that many of the large scope problems also manifest themselves in these nuclei: minority members are still experiencing greater hardship in moving up the ladder than those who resemble top leaders in their features, backgrounds, or cultural fabric; othering is still very much alive, and sustained by a deliberate or unconscious endorsement of ingroups and outgroups, and toxic patterns are often maintained through perpetuation of outdated structures that protect some and harm others.

A foundational step towards change of the status quo is the identification and instatement of awakened leaders. Awakened leaders are individuals who have developed a way to keep themselves mindful and open to the needs and concerns of all stakeholders they interact with. They regularly reflect on their values as well as their behavior and question their actions in regard to the motives that may have lied at their foundation. Describing awakened leadership as a meta-leadership style that is multi-applicable, Marques (2010a) explains that awakened leaders practice leadership from their heart and soul. She affirms, "[a]wakened leaders practice a holistic and authentic approach in every environment and at every time" (p. 308). Marques (2010b) summarizes the following important traits of awakened leaders: "adaptability to different circumstances; drive; passion and commitment to achieve their goals; resilience; using failures as lessons for growth; clear vision of the bigger picture and the future; and clear formulation of their values" (p. 7). Successfully practicing awakened leadership is a gradual process.

> [It] can be considered difficult and easy at the same time. Difficult because society, with its ongoing codes of conduct, and particularly its ingrained sense of individuality, may not yet be as widely prepared to embrace the awakened leader and his or her sense of unity and mutuality in moving ahead; and easy, because the awakened leader, once accepted, does not have to remember different behavioral patterns in different environments. This leader remains the same, whether alone, with a small or large group of people, in front of an audience, or among friends: Graceful, kind, empathetic, respectful, and down-to-earth. (Marques, 2010a, p. 320).

One important factor to keep in mind is that awakened leaders are not always the ones at the top echelon of organizations. Awakened leaders can be found at every level and in every environment. They are the ones that have acquired their mindful approach through a number of experiences and errors of their own, each of which contributed to an augmented sensitivity toward those who are subject to their

interactions. While they are human and therefore harbor as many flaws as any other, awakened leaders engage in reflective practices to continuously monitor and adjust their actions, and correct their behavior or path where necessary. The reflective practices could be meditation, long contemplative walks, deep conversations with mentors, or keeping and reviewing a journal.

Because their lives and careers have been shaped by both successes and failures, awakened leaders understand the capricious nature of everything, and harbor a deep level of empathy with those around them. They understand that workforces – and all other interactive environments for that matter - are comprised of people from a wide variety of backgrounds and mindsets, and that no two individuals could be completely treated the same way. Even amongst siblings – as well as twins – it has been established that there are differences in perspectives and interpretations based on character and other subliminal differences.

Awakened leaders have learned to distinguish amongst a variety of behavioral approaches aimed at setting others at ease. They can therefore be found in areas where responsible and sensitive human interaction is important for the progression of the institution they represent. Another important note on awakened leaders is that they don't attach a dollar value to their achievements. Rather than focusing on financial windfalls or major bank accounts, these leaders concentrate their perceptions on achievements in "creating something new or bringing a project or venture to fruition (professional growth), learning to understand themselves and their passion and focusing on that (personal mastery), and establishing constructive relationships, whether in the professional or private areas of their lives" (Marques, 2012, p. 113).

Wakefulness as a Foundation for DEI

Becoming an awakened leader is an enlightening, but oftentimes challenging path. It entails exposure to the same things many others witness, but requires deeper contemplation about the purpose and the origins of it all. It also requires a deep desire to bring about positive change, while nurturing one's authenticity and ensuring a steadfast connection to one's core. Referring to this core as "nirvana," the reflective path of awakened leaders could be explained as the following eight-step plan:

> (1) the past, and the lessons to be learned from there, […] (2) the present and the reflections to be made in that, […] (3) the core, where all factors are evaluated and weighted against values and morals. Thus creating a blend of self-confidence and humility, these leaders carefully base their decisions on (4) a win-win-win perception, which involves (5) empathy, compassion and understanding toward a broad community of stakeholders, and (6) establishes a great connection between all those involved. (7) The leader's mentality does not go unnoticed and oftentimes results in greater influence and improved performance toward (8) the future. (Marques, 2011, p. 21).

Many people take the things that happen for granted and fail to consider that there are always options. Just because something has been a certain way for decades or even centuries, doesn't mean that it still makes sense today or should be upheld for

the sake of tradition. In many cultures – including organizational cultures – there are symbols and behavioral patterns that held their ground for the longest time without being questioned, but this is exactly what lies at the foundation of the skewed relationships and influence hubs that exist in our world.

This may be the proper time and place to introduce the concept of consciousness within this context. Consciousness can be described in multiple ways, and occurs at multiple levels. Without diving too deep into this topic, it may be prudent to briefly explain reflexive consciousness, which dates back to the seventeenth century, when it was used in René´ Descartes' Principles of Philosophy to define the notion of thought in terms of self-awareness (Van Gulick, 2004). Reflexive consciousness refers to the distinctive structures of identity and reflection, and provides the answers on how individuals conceptualize, experience, and analyze all that is around them (Earley, 2002). Aside from reflexive consciousness, the concept of social consciousness may also be useful to briefly explain. "Social consciousness considers the relationship of self to others and is the means used by the "organism" to find its relationship with its environment and the rest of the world" (Pees et al., 2009, p. 507). Mustering consciousness to actually see what is going on around us, and finding ways within our circle of influence to adjust the wrongs we see, doesn't only take time, but it also takes creative and design thinking, and perhaps even more importantly, a meticulous process of questioning our notions of reality. These notions are oftentimes built on mental models and the unconscious biases (to be explained below), which serve as their foundational pillars.

Awakened leaders are particularly aware of the need to engage in the following practices to keep their minds open and continue expanding their mental and emotional horizons:

- They inspect and, where needed, adjust their mental models. Mental models are our explanation on how the world works, or, in other words, our own personal paradigm. Our mental models steer our decisions and behaviors (Senge, 1994). "Mental models can be simple generalizations, such as 'people are untrustworthy,' or they can be complex theories. But what is most important to grasp is that mental models shape how we act. If we believe people are untrustworthy, we act differently from the way we would if we believed they were trustworthy" (Senge, 1992, p. 5).
- They make serious efforts to confront their implicit biases. Unconscious or implicit biases are learned stereotypes that are natural, automatic, unintentional, and so deeply engrained that they can easily influence our behavior (Noon, 2018). "Unconscious bias, also known as implicit bias, occurs when we form a judgment or preference, based on previous knowledge that may or may not be correct, without consciously being aware of it" (Broflowski, 2020). Browflowski alerts us on the various biases that affect our decisions and interactions with others, such as:

  - *Affinity bias*, which relates to the preference for certain qualities one identifies best with. Affinity bias can become a strong determinant of an organization's culture.

  – *Gender Bias*, which simply entails a preference of one gender over another. Given the long history of male leaders in organizations, gender bias may be considered a strong contributor to a lingering manifestation of males in top echelons of organizations.
  – *Attribution Bias*, which affects the ways we perceive and judge our own accomplishments and failures versus those of others. Oftentimes, attribution biases may lead us to believe that others' successes are determined by favorable circumstances, while ours are based on our own merit.
  – *Conformity Bias*, which may easily lead to "groupthink". This is when we allow ourselves to adopt opinions from those around us without applying our own critical thinking. Conformity bias negatively affects diversity trends in work environments.
  – *Beauty Bias*, which is a very common issue amongst human beings, whereby a person's attractive looks may be a stronger determinant to prefer them over others who may be better performers, but have less appealing looks.
  – *Contrast Effect Bias*, which may happen when recruiters have to assess large numbers of resumes and unconsciously start grouping candidates, thereby potentially overlooking critical individual attributes.
  – *Confirmation Bias*, which is a form of sharpening one's attention toward attributes that confirm one's biases, and ignore attributes that defy those biases.
  – *Horns Effect*, which uses one negative feature to label an entire person and all they stand for negatively. as a negative
  – *Halo Effect*, which does the opposite of the horns effect by focusing on one favorable attribute and overlooking all the negative ones.
– Human beings develop their biases through groups, beliefs, or what they see and hear around them. Some of these biases can be very destructive to society and to ourselves.

• They are mindful of the in-group/out-group syndrome. In-groups and out-groups are a frequently appearing phenomenon, especially in workplaces, where members form mini tribes that support one another and maintain less favorable stances toward those outside the mini tribe or in-group. Within the context of social identity, this is explained as our human tendency to base our self-concepts on our group membership. In-group members support each other and have a tendency to provide one another privileges, which they tend to withhold those outside of the circle. The perception of in-group versus out-group membership can be extended to race, gender, generation, or other attributes we consider important at any given time. What this may bring is that recruiters may be more prone to give the benefit of the doubt to applicants they consider in-group members, and judge those they consider out-group members more harshly. Interestingly, in-group members often overlook the treatment they experience from their fellow in-group members as being preferential or discriminatory (Krumm & Corning, 2008). Yet, in spite of its downsides, our tribal instinct causes us to unconsciously create in-groups and out-groups, consisting of people we feel more comfortable with, versus those who look and behave differently from us. It may only be when we

become part of an out-group that we become more sensitive to the emotional downside of this tendency.

- They terminate sexism and bigotry. Awakened leaders are aware of how easy it is to fall prey to the preference of those that look and think like us (see section on implicit biases above), but this is exactly what prevents us from rising above limiting structures and stagnant performance.

- They respect and embrace, rather than avoid, differences. Schoenfeld (2021) points out that, while the lack of diversity may not be intentional for most workplaces, it's important to be aware that inclusion of diversity amongst stakeholders is good for business at every level, and not in the least for collective insights and performance. A diverse community -in or outside the workforce- is a cause worthy of support, because it induces more creative outcomes, gives access to a wider range of society, and it's simply the morally right thing to do. Awakened leaders make it a specific part of their task to secure diversity at every level. Diversity in race, gender, abilities, and other regards, is often limited to lower and mid-levels. It should also be manifested at the top level of any organization.

Awakened Leaders and DEI: Some Practical Reflections

In this final section, three DEI-focused leaders are profiled, in order to illustrate awakened leadership in practice.

Caroline A. Wanga

Ms. Wanga has experienced many of the challenges that are listed as derailing aspects toward professional success. Yet, as a Black woman, single mother at 17, and Kenyan immigrant, she refused to let stereotypes define her. Rather than allowing her challenging circumstances to withhold her from succeeding, she defied all odds, and worked her way up the corporate ladder at Target, starting as an intern and ascending to executive positions including vice president of human resources and chief culture, diversity and inclusion officer (Subin, 2021).

Caroline began her Target career in supply chain, and engaged in a variety of transformational leadership roles, among which the upgrade of the company's Supply Chain, Business Intelligence, Digital and Strategy capabilities, all the while raising her daughter and fighting the stereotypes that unfortunately still epitomize contemporary society.

In her culminating years at Target, Wanga led the organization's strategic intent to advocate an inclusive society with accountability for inclusive stakeholder experiences, a diverse and inclusive work environment and societal impact. She was instrumental in fueling Target's business objectives through the company's

first-ever performance-based diversity and inclusion goals, significantly improving areas including Supplier Diversity, Marketing, Philanthropy, Retention, Hiring, Representation and Engagement. She also had the responsibility for reshaping Target's organizational culture (Caroline A. Wanga, 2021).

In 2020, after about 15 years with Target, she embarked upon a new challenge: helping a half-century-old Black media brand reinvent itself. Ms. Wanga is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Essence Communications Inc. and Chief Growth Officer of Essence Ventures, an independent Black-owned consumer technology company focused on merging content, community, and commerce to meet the evolving cultural and lifestyle needs of people of color (Subin, 2021).

Meanwhile, Ms. Wanga did not underestimate the importance of education: she earned a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from HBCU Texas College and has developed herself into an inspirational thought leader and public speaker. She prides herself on honesty, openness and authenticity, a skillset she says can drive company success and relationship building (Caroline A. Wanga, 2021).

Miss Wanga believes in sharing her personal experiences and insights, in order to invite others to do the same. She considers this a critical aspect of being approachable as a leader. Amongst her recommendations to future leaders, she includes, (a) Never allowing unexpected events to derail success; (b) Formulate a goal, but remain flexible on the path. The worst thing one can do is be too rigid on the goal set, as this hardly ever materializes. It is therefore important to welcome the capricious turns that life presents, and discover the opportunities for growth therein; (c) Remain authentic. She solemnly believes that being yourself is not an option, but a given. Within that picture, hard work and walking the talk are definitely prime aspects. Congruent to her sense of authenticity, Wanga also recommends finding a different work environment if the current one is not supportive of one's whole self (Subin, 2021).

Amanda McCalla-Leacy

Mrs. McCalla-Leacy is the Global Managing Director of Inclusion and Diversity at Accenture, an Irish-based multinational professional services company that specializes in IT services and consulting. A Fortune Global 500 company, Accenture reported revenues of $44.33 billion in 2020 and had 569,000 employees. The company has major employee bases in India, the US, and the Philippines.

Amanda was able to build leadership support from the very top and used innovation to drive change. Under her leadership, Accenture made a very public commitment to achieving 50% women by 2025 and has seen the number of women rise from 115,000 to 190,000. The company launched a powerful campaign titled, #InclusionStartsWithI, with the aim to continue the conversation about the importance of a positive, inclusive world and work environment. Thus far, the campaign has engaged more than a million people around the globe (*UK's Most Influential…*, 2020).

Being the mother of a young daughter herself, McCalla-Leacy offered some useful suggestions toward grooming girls into successful members of the professional world: (1) Reward bravery and risk-taking: girls (and women) should realize that there is no success without making mistakes and learning from failure; (2) Help her find her true identity: it is important to help girls discover their unique talents, and 'Strengthsfinder' is a great tool to help with this; (3) Praise hard work and a growth mindset: Stay away from a fixed mindset that will tell you what you cannot do, and adopt a tendency of praising girls when they strive and try harder toward developing a growth mindset; (4) Encourage her to give back and 'choose kind': instill the habit of being socially aware and giving back. It will not only plant a seed of wellness, but will also instill confidence and a positive outlook within the giving person (McCalla-Leacy, 2016).

Binna Kandola

Dr. Binna Kandola is a Business Psychologist, as well as a Senior Partner and co-founder of Business Psychology firm Pearn Kandola. Over the past 35 years, he has worked on a wide variety of projects for public and private sector clients both in the UK and overseas. What sets Dr. Kandola apart is his quest for diversity, equity and inclusion, with a specific study interest in gender bias and unconscious bias in organizations. Dr. Kandola has authored several books, three of which are on the subject of bias and critically acclaimed, with a strong focus on bias identification and elimination in work environments (Kandola, 2021a, b).

A member of numerous organizations that focus on equal opportunities and diversity advocacy, Binna also serves in academia and media. He is visiting Professor at Leeds University Business School and at Aston University Business School, while he also regularly appears on Sky News, BBC Breakfast, Channel 4 News and the Radio 4 Today Show. Dr. Kandola creatively uses all tools at his disposal to support the case of diversity, equity and inclusion. He blogs, and conducts presentations on global conferences to raise awareness on the need to confront implicit biases.

Dr. Kandola acknowledges that this is a critical time to ensure inclusion in the workplace, and feels that understanding and reducing unconscious bias in the workplace should be core pillars, not only of his speeches, but of organizational performance in general. Kandola is a major advocate of inclusive leadership. He is concerned about the fact that we seem to be living in a time of increased polarization, and asserts that we are daily reminded of the things that make us different rather than those that connect us. While he admits that this is a heightened awareness of diversity, he also admonishes that it is not the correct way, as it often happens at the expense of inclusion (*Why we need inclusive leadership*, 2021).

Key Chapter Takeaways
– Humanity seems to persist in finding ways to cultivate internal segregation, often driven by the desire to establish and nurture a sense of superiority within one group over others.
– The #MeToo movement has been an eye-opener on a longstanding and unmentioned privilege of influential predators who did not think twice if they identified a prey that they wanted to entertain themselves with.
– The year 2020 presented us with several visible manifestations of blatant police brutality in the US that resulted in a global ripple effect of social unrest and surging understanding that something really had to change.
– Othering happens when a person or a group of people is perceived or treated as intrinsically different from a person or group in charge.
– A foundational step towards change of the status quo is the identification and instatement of awakened leaders. Awakened leaders are individuals who have developed a way to keep themselves mindful and open to the needs and concerns of all stakeholders they interact with.
– Awakened leaders inspect and, where needed, adjust their mental models; make serious efforts to confront their implicit biases; are mindful of the in-group/out-group syndrome; terminate sexism and bigotry, and respect and embrace, rather than avoid, differences.

Reflective Questions
1. Review the statement, "Segregation begets prejudice", and explain in your own words why you agree or disagree with this statement.
2. Why was the #MeToo movement created, and how has it been misinterpreted in recent years?
3. What is the philosophy behind the "Black Lives Matter" movement?
4. What, in your opinion, would be needed to bring about a structural and lasting change in the still strongly driven racist mindset within the US?
5. How do you feel that the concept of awakened leadership could be useful toward greater DEI awareness in work environments?

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