

Let's celebrate diversity!

Hello and welcome,

Today I'd like to talk about diversity. I think we have come far since the start of this century.

We see these films, we read these books. Wholesome clips of young children recognizing themselves in cartoons and I too, see myself. I see the stories of young Asian girls who I can look up to. It means the world to me, but I wonder, is it enough?

Is it enough to be in the spotlight when at the same time you know that in the face of a crisis the world will turn against you, in a matter of seconds?

Is it enough when every day you hear how your people are being threatened on the streets, not even safe in their own homes?

Is it enough when you hear how you are not welcome, your food strange, your language or accent a reason to see you as inferior? Is it enough when your very existence is treated as a debate in which people can pick sides and actively be against you? Is what we're doing, enough?

So, what would be enough? To start things off; diversity is not just black and white. Or men versus women. It's about intersectionality. It's about how all these different forms of discrimination and the effects that they have, is best understood as being something that influences one another rather than being isolated from each other. For example, as an Asian woman myself I know that statistically a man who has an English sounding name will have a bigger chance of being hired than me, given that we have the same qualifications. But if this man has a criminal record, the chances of him being hired would still be bigger than mine. And if I were up against an Asian man, he would be chosen over me. Isn't that unfair? But it's a world many girls will grow up in if we don't act now.

But diversity is not just important because it is the right thing to do, it is also economically beneficial. A more diverse workforce means fewer blind spots and makes for a broader perspective for the organization. It improves leadership by improving decision making. Plus, companies led by women are more productive, efficient, and more engaged with their surroundings and customers. More gender diversity also increases profit with 21% and for every 1% increase in girls educated, a country's GDP increases by 0.3%. That doesn't sound like a lot, but the GDP of the Netherlands is 912.24 **BILLION** US dollars. 0.3% of that number is 2.736.720.000 US dollars. Now it looks like a lot, huh?

Creating diversity is difficult and not an easy task to fulfil but it is not impossible. Representation in the media, acknowledging the power, the identity and the complexity of these different people and their cultures is the first step to not only creating diversity but **also** celebrating diversity.

One place where we can start is the Asian community. Violence against Asians has increased over the course of these past two years because of COVID we are once again confronted with how easy it is to be seen as an outsider after years of integration. But because or better yet, in spite of this crisis, Asians are finally standing up for themselves and raising awareness for the discrimination that they face. Creating a new sound for a new generation that coexists perfectly with the Black Lives Matter-Movement, united against a common cause. My hope is that this will not be where it ends but rather it will be a starting point for us to start creating the diversity that we seek to celebrate.

Diversity benefits us all. Be it economically by improving productivity on the workforce or socially by reducing racism and prejudices. The increase of diversity makes for a more balanced world, offers opportunities, new perspectives, it creates harmony.

Increasing diversity is our moral duty to fulfil, to ensure that everyone can have a role model, that everyone can be heard and that no one is left out, feeling alone in their struggle. This is why I am once again telling you something that you probably have heard a lot of times already, and you will likely hear it even more as the years go by and our society grows and learns to accept new identities.

We need to celebrate diversity.

Thank you for your attention.