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# What Happens When White Women Become The Face Of Diversity



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Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

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Valerie Irick Rainford KIMBERLY TAYLOR, KIMAZING PHOTOGRAPHY

Recently, Goldman Sachs made an [announcement](#) that they will only approve an IPO if it has a woman on its board. This raised the question of where would they find these women? And what women exactly? Between

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2016 and 2018, there were a total of 230 new board seats within Fortune 500 firms. Across these openings white women obtained 124, black women 32, asian women 17, and hispanic women only 4 seats, according to [Catalyst](#), a research organization. Some worry Goldman's requirement is another way for white women to benefit, yet again, from diversity efforts. If white women continue to be the face of diversity, then what is diversity? Is it just about hiring more white women? If it is, then how are women of color benefiting?

In addition, if a company is not looking for women of a certain color then women of color, are rarely considered to fill the woman "quota". Platforms like [TalVista](#) have emerged to decrease bias in recruiting, but may not be enough to fix what's already broken. Four diversity experts below share their thoughts on the implications announcements like Goldman Sachs have on women of color.

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Melissa Majors LASHONDA SANDERS PHOTOGRAPHY

Neuroscience tells us that our brains unconsciously prefer familiarity. The hiring process is, unfortunately, subject to the influence of these thoughts. Including a gender requirement, is the start of significant progress. However, women of color may be under considered due to intersectionality [or] the cumulation of difference as compared to those who hold the power. The more different you are from the dominants, the more likely you are to experience exclusion.

Given that most dominants on corporate boards are white men, if the choice is between two qualified women, one white and one of color, unconscious bias suggests the hiring committee will favor the white woman because she is less different.—Melissa Majors, executive coach and CEO of Melissa Majors Consulting

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**Women of Color Get Left Behind**



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Companies have become comfortable rallying behind “women” writ large as a focus of overarching diversity efforts. Unfortunately, broad references to women, coupled with the collapse of diversity representation, can hinder the progress of women of color, as large data sets mask the reality that white women are advancing while leaving women of color behind. Not only would disaggregation expose this reality—it would also show that black talent in particular is the farthest behind and, in some cases, even regressing. Like any other business metric where companies are failing, managers should be held accountable for turning around these results for the company along the entire continuum of recruiting, hiring, developing and advancing diverse talent.” —Valerie Irick Rainford, CEO of Elloree Talent Strategies





## History Repeats Itself



Lisa M Gill, Ph.D. LISA GILL

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White women have benefitted from diversity initiatives since the inception of Affirmative Action Programs. Since the Third Wave of the feminist movement arose from the Civil Rights and Black Power era, white women,

who were entering the workforce in droves for the first time, were counted as part of the legislative movement to make corporate society reflect the membership of the larger society. Early quota programs, that often targeted people of color and black men and women specifically, became problematic in the eyes of whites who felt like reverse racism was now being perpetuated on them. Certainly, the Regents of the University of California v. Bakke 1978 case illustrates this point... Often, women of color, especially black women are racialized before they are even included in the same category of women as white women. Hiring managers can improve their efforts by looking specifically for women of color and seeing them as diverse hires and not racial hires.—Lisa M Gill, Ph.D., university lecturer at the department of African and African American Studies at Fordham University

### **Selection Process Takes The Brunt**





Xochitl Ledesma CATALYST

I can say that hope is not lost, but falls in the hands of those involved in the selection process. All involved in the selection process should be responsible for highlighting the implicit biases by taking the following three actions. First, by establishing a shared meaning of diversity, a definition that spreads across experience, age, geography, and other “invisible characteristics.” Secondly, an intentional outline of desired diversity characteristics should be conducted in conjunction with timely metrics for obtaining them. Lastly, all recruiting and interview processes should be updated to mitigate bias and standardized across all candidates. All of these steps also require for a diverse set of decision makers, it is only through increased diversity of decision makers that we will see improvement of diversity across all areas. —Xochitl Ledesma, director of learning and advisory Services at Catalyst

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I'm an author (St. Martins Press) and founder of Alphanista, a career platform for multicultural women in management.

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