

Increase African-Americans & Hispanics in IT

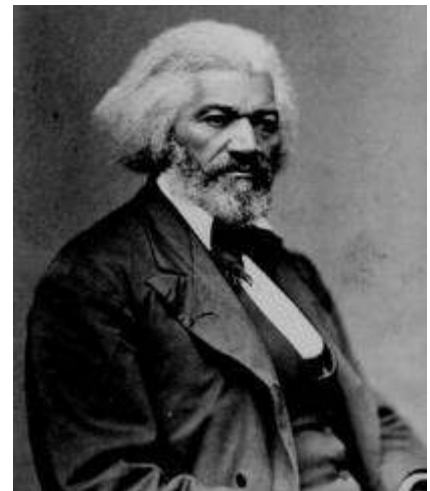
IT positions are sorely lacking among African-Americans and Hispanics not only within the federal government but also in business... however I don't believe that it can be said that is because of discrimination (defined as "the prejudicial treatment of an individual based on their membership in a certain group or category"). I think it is because how individuals think, how leaders coach, and how we promote opportunities. We all play three roles.

In fact I have seen first hand the amount of work and diligence and focus that is made within the federal government to ensure that our country is reflects our citizens and in business to make sure that they have innovative and diverse perspectives. I know of groups, associations, educational institutions and entities who have invested a tremendous amount of time, energy and money to ensure that our country develops the best of the best.

However...I firmly believe that you and I play roles which impacts this work and the outcomes we are having:

As Individuals:

As a Latina it is up to me.... and only me...(after the age of 18) to decide who I am and who I want to be. It is up to me...and only me to change my mind about how I think about me, my goals and my life. I have that power. As does everyone. I choose my role models and I choose to change those beliefs and thoughts IN ME that have strangled my opportunities. I know African-Americans and Hispanics in IT and cyber security that knew what they wanted, chose to believe what they wanted and are successful. I know white guys who could have been successful in the field and are not because of how they believed. What you think is what you get.... Every time. The teacher arrives when the student seeks.



"Man's greatness consists in his ability to do and the proper application of his powers to things needed to be done." Frederick Douglass

As Leaders:

We... all of us are responsible for educating, assessing ourselves and then coaching others. If you really believe that ALL African-Americans and Hispanics and Women are discriminated against then how do you communicate HOPE? How would you coach and talk to Obama (You'll never be president because THEY discriminate against you). Would you tell Ellen Ochoa, who invented optical analysis systems and was also the world's first Hispanic female astronaut "Don't bother you'll be discriminated against". People told her she couldn't because they didn't believe. People told her "you will NEVER be an astronaut".. Good thing she believed she would. As Leaders you communicate to others about the possibilities, the vision and share the resources. or not. You can easily influence how others see possibilities by the words you use. If you as a D&I professional believe that there are limitations for any group. You are right. You will seek confirmation of your beliefs.

"I had to make my own living and my own opportunity. But I made it! Don't sit down and wait for the opportunities to come. Get up and make them." Madame CJ Walker

As Organizational Representatives and Centers of Influence

There is a tremendous amount of work that people are doing around this country in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math to increase African-Americans and Hispanics Americans in these fields. The Gates Millennium Scholars Program <http://www.gmsp.org/>, QuestBridge connects the world's brightest low-income students to America's best universities and opportunities <http://questbridge.org/>.



Low income, high achieving students believe that they can't go to top tier schools. That is bunk. Top tier colleges can give them the boost in IT and there is money for them. As [Questbridge](http://www.Questbridge.org) (www.Questbridge.org) shares on their website ... 91% of low income, high achieving students do not apply for scholarships. These are FULL RIDE scholarships, BOOKS and materials, room and board. I've met with philanthropists and foundations from the TOP schools who want these kids to achieve, to go to their schools to become who these students want to be. We have to educate and promote these opportunities to our high achievers.

As individuals we must do our best for our lives. As leaders we must share that there is hope, that there are opportunities, that there is a way. Let's not make our children VICTIMS let them know that VICTORY starts with a step and an application. Even undocumented youth can get great educations. NEVER, EVER give up. As organizational representatives we must share resources.

You and I are in this together.