I am a 34-year-old white male, a first-generation college student, and an assistant professor in a scientific discipline at a research university. In most circumstances, in one form or another, I am a member of an overrepresented group. Despite my inherent categorical status, I constantly feel the need to advocate for a more open-minded and civil work environment. Within my small physical space on campus, we have thousands of people of various cultural, ideological, social, and experiential backgrounds. Each individual perceives and interacts with the world around them based on who they are, the circumstances they find themselves in, and the paths they have taken, or endured, throughout their lives. These diverse paths make us each unique. More so, these paths make each of us valuable to each other.

I think interactions and conversations with people is my favorite element of my job. If this statement gives you the first impression that I am an extrovert, you would be wrong. However, learning about others and how the world feels and appears to them makes the social interaction well worth every moment. I learn from others every day. Their perspectives and opinions challenge my own thoughts on topics that range from social to scientific to philosophical. Even when I receive opposing views that make me initially feel awkward or stressed, the reflections I have later that day or week help me to improve upon my own viewpoints and make my perspective more informed. Individuals who are different from me make my workplace better and my efforts more impactful. A truly vibrant workplace, in all aspects, is one that builds and celebrates diversity and promotes an atmosphere of inclusion where diversity and acceptance interact and thrive as one.