

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO  
MUSLIM AMERICAN INCLUSION

THE ROI  
OF D&I

IS SYSTEMIC UNCONSCIOUS BIAS  
HOLDING YOUR COMPANY BACK?

# INCLUSION

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*Creating Globally Inclusive &  
Culturally Competent Workplaces*

CBS ENTERTAINMENT

Powering the Future:  
Diversity, Collaboration,  
and Innovation

TIFFANY  
SMITH-ANOA'I



# Tiffany Smith-Anoa'i

**Executive Vice President,  
Entertainment Diversity, Inclusion and  
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**T**he lack of diversity in Hollywood, both in front of and behind the camera, has been front and center for several years. CBS is tackling this challenge head-on, and leading the charge is Tiffany Smith-Anoa'i.

Her efforts are beginning to pay off. Since her promotion into the diversity and inclusion office in 2009 (she was promoted from a senior vice president to executive vice president in 2016), she has created and launched CBS On Tour, a community outreach program in which executives visit schools to educate and encourage students interested in entertainment careers, and which has led to a 40 percent growth in diverse interns who have applied and secured jobs. She has also expanded the writer selection process for the CBS Diversity Sketch Comedy Showcase; implemented an annual symposium with casting directors to strategize on best practices to diversify the casting process; partnered with GLAAD to host learning workshops; and joined forces with the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media to encourage roles for women in front of and behind the camera.

In addition to her executive duties, Smith-Anoa'i, who first joined CBS Entertainment in 2000 as a senior publicist for primetime series, leads CBS Entertainment's West Coast efforts on various projects and network specials, including the annual Grammy Awards.

Prior to joining CBS, Smith-Anoa'i led publicity and promotions for Image Public Relations. She also has worked for Nike Inc., where she was responsible for launching Niketown stores.

Smith-Anoa'i is active in the community, in particular with the Make-A-Wish Foundation and Girls Up. In 2013, her alma mater, Howard University, honored her with its Global Visionary Award for outstanding leadership in diversity and communications.

**INCLUSION:** What brought you to do this work? Is there a personal motivation, a story from your childhood or past, that inspired you in this direction?

**Tiffany Smith-Anoa'i:** When I was eight years old, I was watching a football game and I saw a sports broadcaster, Jayne Kennedy, come on screen—and I was mesmerized. I had never seen a female sports broadcaster in my life, plus she was a woman of color! Jayne was one of the first female sports broadcasters of color at that time, and at that very moment I told myself, "I want to do what she is doing!" Representation truly matters!

Fast-forward to me being a student at Howard University, and my first internship was with the CBS affiliate in Washington, DC. Once I was in the newsroom, I quickly realized I no longer wanted to be a sports broadcaster, but instead wanted to work behind the camera. Now I'm an executive at CBS Entertainment where diversity and inclusion are my passion, and my team and I are doing all we can each and every day to bring new, fresh perspectives and talent to the network.

**IN:** There is much greater emphasis in recent years on inclusion. Has that superseded diversity as the focus?

**TSA:** When an organization truly focuses on inclusion, it is empowering employees not only to have a voice and seat at the table, but actually to utilize their respective skills and include them in the process. As of late, diversity seems to be a catchall word that is overused and misused. I say almost daily that diversity doesn't mean black. In the root of the word, it means more than one. And people want to be more than whatever makes them diverse—they want to be valued as full human beings and not a "quota," a "mandate," or simply "diverse."

**"I was able to create a position that did not exist at a major network and I am really proud of it."**

**IN:** Tell us about your greatest success story.

**TSA:** My greatest success story is bittersweet, in that the death of my father in 2006 was the catalyst for my current role. I could hear his voice in my heart and in my ears asking me over and over, "What do you really want to do with your career?" For the first six years of my career at CBS, I served as a network publicist who moonlighted in diversity. While grieving the death of my father, I put all of my focus and attention into doing the job I was meant to do, so I created a PowerPoint presentation for my boss, pitching him a new position that would ultimately take me out of his department and into my own department, which I titled "Entertainment Diversity."

With my father's voice still ringing in my ears, I marched right into his office and said, "I don't think you realize how smart I am. You are not managing me in the most effective way, and this is where television is going." "I think he was a little taken aback, but I could see in his eyes that he respected that I had a clear vision that would ultimately benefit the company. I was able to create a position that did not exist at a major network and I am really proud of it. Now, don't get me wrong: it took two years to come to fruition, but I was relentless, and I know my father is smiling down upon me.

**IN:** What are some of the recent thought-leader topics in the world of inclusion that organizations are learning about and implementing?

**TSA:** Implicit bias, unconscious bias, and micro-aggression presentations and symposiums have become commonplace, and numerous companies are investing in them and seeing ultimate change. One of my favorite books is *The Hidden Brain* by Shankar Vedantam. I think I have put the author's kids through college with the number of books I have purchased and given out to various colleagues, all of whom have come back and said that it gave them a lot to think about, or that they are now looking at situations differently than they had in the past. More than anything, I believe that in the world of inclusion, people are actually talking and learning from one another. When you know better, you do better!

**IN:** Have your colleagues asked for your help in being more inclusive of transgender people? What do you recommend, and what are some of the challenges you have seen?

**TSA:** In the entertainment industry, I've noticed when it comes to diversity and inclusion, people will often look at it as taking a risk. This way of thinking applies to hiring not just transgender people, but also people of color, as well as performers with disabilities. I would never want to hire someone who isn't the best for the role or job. I only ask that those in the hiring position be open to looking beyond what and who they already know and also to go beyond hiring people to fill stereotypical roles. The path of least resistance is not authentic and does not benefit anyone. Bottom line, transgender people are . . . people. Treat them as you would want to be treated—seems easy enough, no?

**IN:** As more and more millennials join the job force, and as baby boomers are slowly aging, has this phenomenon provided challenges for your colleagues? What are your suggestions for addressing them?

**TSA:** My advice is that if you really want to get into this industry, you need to make sure you are doing your homework and becoming what we call a student of the business. That means you know the ins and outs of the industry overall. In this day and age, nearly everyone has a cell phone, so there is no excuse not to be able to research specific people and corporations. Internships are also a great opportunity in the industry because people hire who they know. That is why I created CBS On Tour in 2009. To this day, we take our executives to colleges and universities across the country to speak with students about their careers and expose them to the numerous opportunities in the entertainment industry that go beyond actors, writers, and directors. As a result, we have witnessed a direct return on our investment, as students of color who applied for and secured internships have increased by 40 percent, and of that percentage, 23 percent secured entry-level positions across CBS upon completion of their internship!

**“Diversity makes good sense and ‘cents.’ There is a whole segment of the population that has tremendous buying power. If you are not tapping into that, then you are not going to be sustainable.”**

**IN:** How will the CDO role change in the next five years? Will more be expected of CDOs—and how so?

**TSA:** The role of a chief diversity officer is ever evolving and will continue to evolve as business perspectives and needs change and grow. More will be expected of CDOs to find innovative ways for creating more inclusive environments and new pathways of opportunity for all.

**IN:** How does a company best cultivate a diverse talent pipeline?

**TSA:** Most people hire people they know or people who look like them, and it is a systemic ongoing cycle. My team connects executives to a group of talent they might not normally come into contact with, and this has been successful in building relationships. That is what the entertainment business is all about: relationships. We encourage executives to go out of their usual comfort zone and make new connections and start to build a broader pipeline to select from. When it comes to entertainment, we want to reflect the audience that we serve. It's not solely what you see in front of the camera. We want to make sure we are bringing new writers and actors and fresh directors into the room so they can be provided the same opportunity as others.

**IN:** For a number of years, practitioners of diversity and inclusion have been making the business case for D&I. Do you think this message is sinking in?

**TSA:** Not only is the message sinking in, but there is now action and implementation. I always say that diversity makes good business sense and “cents.” There is a whole segment of the population that has tremendous buying power. If you are not tapping into that, then you are not going to be sustainable. I'm able to convince people that are skeptics with hard facts and data. Numbers don't lie. I also think I'm a good communicator who not only listens but also responds so I can learn. Listening and respecting one another are truly the start of being able to convince someone who is stuck in their ways. As a result, I've been successful in broadening the lens. **IN**