

# Sending out the invitations: Developing diversity in mining

by Claire Kincaid and Emily Dieckman

When most people think “miner,” they picture an older white man in a dusty shirt and suspenders. He’s holding a gas lamp and a pickaxe, peering at the walls of a dimly lit cavern. This image, while steeped in heritage, is no longer representative of what mining is: a global, increasingly diverse industry.

It’s an industry made up of individuals like Zambian-born Chushi Mwewa, PE, president of Southlands Engineering, LLC in the United States and managing director of Southlands Engineering Limited in Zambia; Navajo tribe member Peter Denetclaw, manager of environmental programs and Navajo relations at Freeport-McMoRan; and Chinese and Jewish Alyssa Hom, a project engineer at McCarthy Building Companies.

According to the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economics, 168 out of the world’s 195 recognized countries have some mining or mineral resources activity, and the mining industry directly employs more than 25 million people across the globe.

However, according to McKinsey & Company’s 2017 “Women in the Workplace” study, white males hold 67 percent of C-Suite positions and 70 percent of senior vice president positions in the corporate world, and mining is no different. This uniformity among leadership has been tied to lower levels of employee engagement, innovation and business growth. The bottom line is this: Diversity is good for business. The question industry leaders must now ask themselves is not “Will we promote diversity?” but “How will we promote diversity efficiently and permanently?”

More than 80 industry professionals, consultants and students gathered to discuss this question and share stories at the “Developing Diversity in Mining” workshop organized by the University of Arizona’s Lowell Institute for Mineral Resources (IMR), held during the 2017 SME Arizona Conference in December 2017.

Brad Ross, co-director of the IMR and one of the facilitators of the workshop, said he felt diversity was important to discuss because he has witnessed its benefits throughout his career in the mining industry.

“By creating a team of people with different experiences and perspectives, a company is better equipped to see the big picture and to creatively tackle problems,” he said.

Speakers from industry and

academia, including Mwewa, Denetclaw and Hom discussed the challenges surrounding achieving diversity and inclusion as well as the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders.

Mary Poulton, co-chair of IMR and professor emerita of mining and geological engineering at the University of Arizona, opened the workshop with a quote from author and diversity consultant Verna Myers:

“Diversity is an invitation to the party. Inclusion is the invitation to dance.”

Simply put, diversity is the state of being comprised of various elements. It’s a measurable state that, in an industry or company workforce, entails inclusion of people of different ages, nationalities, genders, races, orientations, physical abilities or beliefs.

Inclusion involves an actionable plan that companies can execute in terms of their culture, hiring and promotion practices. By focusing on diversity, a company can attract an array of talent, but without creating an inclusive environment, that talent will never have the opportunity to reach its full potential — never be invited to the dance floor. Diversity is not beneficial without inclusion, and inclusion has no purpose without diversity.

## Why does diversity matter?

Because any significant movement toward change within an industry represents hundreds of thousands of dollars’ worth of time and effort, industry leaders moving toward more diverse, inclusive environments must ask themselves why the change is important. Leigh Freeman, chairman and co-founder of Fondo Santa Barbara and principal of Leigh Freeman Consultancy, argued that, while promoting diversity is ethical, as everyone deserves equal opportunity, the more impactful and motivating argument for diversity is that it improves performance and business.

Greg Boyce, director of Newmont Mining Corp., co-chair of IMR and former chief executive officer of Peabody Energy, compared diversity in a workforce to diversity on a playing field.

“At the end of the day, we all want to play for a winning team — one where

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**Diversity in the mining workforce was the focus of a workshop at the 2017 SME Arizona Conference in December 2017.**

we're included rather than isolated, respected rather than disregarded," he said. "It's hard to imagine any team succeeding if every player brought the same skills to the field."

According to studies by Deloitte Development, employees who believe their organization is both diverse and inclusive report an 83-percent uplift in ability to innovate and 42 percent uplift in team collaboration efforts. A 2015 McKinsey and Company study found that companies in the top quartile of racial/ethnic diversity were 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their national industry median.

"When people spend time trying to fit in, they don't achieve their full potential," said speaker Beatrice Opoku-Asare, director of global inclusion and diversity at Newmont Mining Corp.

### Leading the charge

Instituting diversity and inclusion in a large organization requires visible commitment from top leaders, the driving forces in establishing organizations' goals. Boyce emphasized that incremental goals are not enough: The industry needs lofty goals to implement lofty change.

The De Beers group, for example, has committed to gender parity at all levels by the year 2020. Newmont works with host communities to create timelines for transferring leadership to local managers and to provide work-training programs for locals. Measurement of diversity and inclusion over time is also imperative, as what gets measured gets done.

"You can't improve what you can't measure," Boyce said. "Not setting any kind of metric is not going to work."

Defining the appropriate metrics requires care and thought. Freeman pointed out that

existing matrix models used for annual reviews and promotions do not account for diverse experiences or intercultural leadership styles. To retain and attract talent, the matrices need to be adjusted to provide equal access to leadership opportunities.

### Implementation

"Action precedes awareness," said Malebogo Mpugwa, head of human resources for the De Beers Group. "If you wait to understand everything before you act, you'll never get anything done."

Management can actively work toward an inclusive environment before achieving desired metrics by recognizing and mitigating obstacles, such as personal and employee bias.

Explicit biases can be addressed through a "no-tolerance" policy. Implicit biases are unconsciously formed social stereotypes that may influence an individual's decisions about minority groups. Companies can minimize this bias by requiring exercises and training to help employees recognize and overcome their own biases.

Boyce spoke about how white males at Newmont have expressed fear in exit surveys that a commitment to diversity will limit their opportunities. This focus on the differences between different groups is one reason why Boyce believes it is important to change the diversity paradigm. Opoku-Asare suggested a focus on similarities and unique talents — she called them superpowers — rather than differences.

"Don't think, 'because I'm in the majority, I'm not diverse,'" she said. "Draw upon your minority experiences — times in your life where you have been the odd one out."

Mpugwa reinforced the idea that inclusivity starts with listening, which leads to better understanding.

"Just like raw diamonds, people have shining qualities beneath a rough exterior," she said. "They just need to be discovered."

It's also important to communicate company commitment to diversity to stakeholders, especially employees and potential employees.

Hom encouraged people to change the conversation surrounding diversity and inclusion, emphasizing the importance of clear communication and reaching out to young people, and using the IMR's recent efforts to promote diversity in STEM education as an example.

She also spoke from personal experience about the importance of reaching out to minority organizations, such as gender and culture-specific

STEM clubs, when looking for interns. To retain these diverse hires, she suggested encouraging participation in meetings from all participants, and critiquing, rather than dismissing, novel ideas.

“When employees’ skills are recognized, they are more engaged in a company’s success,” she said.

Several companies, including Freeport-McMoRan, Newmont and Southlands LLC, have implemented successful tools for increasing diversity and inclusion. At Newmont, employees can find support from similar or likeminded people through Business Resource Groups, or BRGs. Denetclaw is heading a groundbreaking Native American Affairs program at Freeport-McMoRan that fosters intercultural communication and understanding between Freeport and surrounding tribes and nations.

## Looking forward

It is important to remember that diversity and inclusion — like many worthwhile endeavors — take time to implement properly. Ross likened the challenge of achieving a diverse workforce and inclusive company culture to the industry’s decades-long journey toward achieving a culture of safety. Culture change is never a short-term goal.

Boyce agreed. “These cultural and embedded biases take a long, long time to change, and it takes a real positive momentum to make it happen,” he said.

He added that he is encouraged by younger generations who simply “look at people as people.” For their part, the young professionals at the event were eager to receive and to extend their own “invitations to dance,” by further discussing and promoting diversity and inclusion in the industry.

“Listening to these groups was very eye

opening,” said Miguel Pugmire, president of the University of Arizona’s SME Student Chapter. “I would never have thought that this workshop would instill the passion in me to make change happen that it has.”

Edson Guebe, another student chapter member who is originally from Angola, said that the knowledge that a company is actively promoting diversity would influence his decision to become a part of it.

“My fight is my company’s fight,” he said. “It is easier to join a company where my cause is their cause.”

He also linked inclusion, and an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, to safety.

“We all have to look out for each other,” he said. “This is how we do it.”

Now, the responsibility for action falls to you: the professionals of the industry. How will you contribute to developing diversity in mining? How will you use this information to promote positive change in your organization, and the industry as a whole? What invitations will you send?

## Looking ahead

Based on feedback from attendees of the Developing Diversity in Mining Workshop, there is significant interest in holding a diversity-focused event at least once a year, ideally in conjunction with the national SME Annual Conference. The Lowell Institute for Mineral Resources (IMR) at the University of Arizona is committed to making this happen. Additionally, the IMR is exploring the possibility of conducting mining industry-focused research and potentially developing course curriculum to help the industry address this evolving challenge. If you would like to get involved, please contact Jodi Banta at [jhbanta@email.arizona.edu](mailto:jhbanta@email.arizona.edu). ■



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