

INCLUSION MEANS TO ME TO BE PART OF THE TEAM, A DIVERSE TEAM THAT HAS ALL DIFFERENT PEOPLE INVOLVED AND ALL DIFFERENT SKILLS AND TRAITS. YOU KNOW LIFE STYLES, JUST TO BE TOGETHER AND EVERYBODY WORK AS A TEAM AND TO GET THE JOB DONE

DIVERSITY IS SOMETHING THAT WE DO AT THE SHIPYARD EVERY DAY. WE DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO PEOPLE'S SKIN COLOR, THEIR RACE, OR ANY DISABILITIES THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE. WE SHOULD GO IN TO A JOB KNOWING THAT HEY WE HAVE THIS PERSON ON OUR TEAM AND WE'RE GOING TO UTILIZE THEM TO THE BEST OF THEIR ABILITIES.

INCLUSION MEANS TO ME JUST TRYING TO MAKE EVERYONE FEEL INCLUDED AND ACCEPTING OF ALL PEOPLE.

DIVERSITY MEANS THAT YOU HAVE SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO HAVE SO MANY DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEWS, SO MANY WAYS TO LOOK AT AN ISSUE, AND SOLVING A PROBLEM.

INCLUSION MEANS TO ME THAT EVERYONE'S VOICE IS BEING HEARD THEY FEEL LIKE THEY'RE A PART OF SOMETHING, THEY FEEL LIKE THEIR VOICE MATTERS, LIKE THEY'RE NOT BEING LEFT OUT.

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JOHN WITHERSPOON II, SHIPBUILDER

GROWING UP DOWNTOWN NEWPORT NEWS, THAT'S WHERE THE LABELS STARTED. I HATED IT. "OH HE STAYS IN THE HOOD." "HE'S NEVER GOING TO BE ANYBODY." "OH LOOK AT THAT GUY THERE HE'S PROBABLY GOING TO TRY TO ROB SOMEBODY." OR, "BY THE AGE OF 21 HE'S PROBABLY EITHER GONNA BE ON DRUGS, SOME MESSED UP BABY DADDY DON'T TAKE CARE OF HIS KIDS." "HE'S PROBABLY GONNA BE IN JAIL." "HE'S PROBABLY GONNA BE DEAD."

WE MIGHT NOT HAVE THE BEST OF THINGS. OUR SITUATION, OUR ENVIRONMENT MIGHT NOT BE THE BEST OF ENVIRONMENTS. BUT I CAN RISE ABOVE. I CAN BE BETTER. I CAN SHOW SOMEONE, I'M NOT WHAT YOU THINK.

SO, MY PARENTS GOT DIVORCED WHEN I WAS REAL YOUNG. I WAS ABOUT FIVE, SIX YEARS OLD. MY DAD RAISED ME, BELIEVE IT OR NOT. I LONGED FOR MY MOM TO BE THERE, BUT THE SITUATION WENT HOW IT WENT. MY DAD, HE TAUGHT US THAT, HEY ALWAYS KEEP WORKING HARD. I HATED IT, BUT IT KEPT US OUT OF THE STREETS. IT TAUGHT US THE MEANING OF WORKING HARD AND HOW IT FEELS TO EARN SOMETHING. AND THAT STAYED WITH ME. IT STILL STAYS WITH ME TO THIS DAY.

I WORK IN MATERIAL FORCE SO, MATERIAL IS CONSTANTLY FLOWING. IT CONSTANTLY NEEDS TO GET HERE. STAGE, AND STORAGE, AND SHIP OUT BECAUSE THE BOAT AIN'T GETTING BUILT IF YOU AIN'T GOT THE MATERIAL. RIGHT? LET'S GO GET IT! DON'T LET IT SIT THERE, LET'S GET IT. WE GET IT BACK, AND YOU JUST SAVED SOMEBODY TIME, EFFORT, AND ULTIMATELY MONEY IN THE LONG RUN. AND IT WASN'T LATE WHEN IT LOOKED LIKE IT WAS GOING TO BE LATE. SO ME, I'M RUNNING ALL DAY.

THE THING ABOUT PEOPLE, WHAT THEY DON'T REALIZE IS THE MORE YOU GET TO KNOW A PERSON YOU'LL START TO SEE THAT THAT STEREOTYPE WILL START DISAPPEARING. BECAUSE EVERYBODY IS DIFFERENT. EVERYBODY HAS DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES AND SOMETIMES THE ONE YOU THINK IS THE WORST OFF BE THE ONE THAT BECOMES YOUR BEST FRIEND. YOU'RE LIKE, "WOW, YOU AMAZE ME!"

THAT'S BECAUSE HE IS AMAZING, EACH OF US IS AMAZING. A PERSON IS A PERSON. YEAH WE ALL HAVE DIFFERENT FLAWS BUT, WHO DOESN'T? A PERSON CAN GROW.

I'M NOT A PRODUCT OF MY ENVIRONMENT. NO ONE SHOULD BE FELT LOW. WE ALL SHOULD FELT LIKE, YOU KNOW WHAT, EVERYBODY'S OPINION COUNTS. EVERYBODY HAS SOMETHING TO OFFER, BECAUSE THEY DO! THEY DO! I DO! THEY DO.