

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
HALL OF FAME

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INCLUSION

*Creating Globally Inclusive &
Culturally Competent
Workplaces*

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AMAZON STUDIOS'S

Latasha Gillespie

Leading the Charge on
Implementing
Inclusive and
Equitable Practices



Latasha Gillespie

Executive Head of Global Diversity,
Equity & Inclusion, Amazon Studios,
Prime Video, and IMDB

Latasha Gillespie is helping to reshape an industry as she builds mechanisms to improve diverse representation of talent at Amazon Studios, both in front of and behind the camera. She is helping to dismantle longstanding barriers to success in the entertainment industry and tell stories that represent different communities around the world and are accessible and marketed to a globally diverse audience.

Prior to taking her current role, Gillespie led the Global Diversity and Inclusion Organization across Amazon Corporate, working with Jeff Bezos and the board of directors on Amazon's DEI strategies and progress.

Before joining Amazon, she spent 20 years living and working all over the world in finance and human resources positions with Caterpillar Inc. Gillespie was featured in *Forbes* in 2020; was named one of the 2019 Most Powerful Women in Corporate Diversity by *Black Enterprise* magazine; and was a 2018 *Ebony* magazine Power 100 honoree.

She regularly speaks before groups in the United States and around the world, such as Stanford University, the Hollywood Commission, the Recording Academy, the Television Academy, the NFL, and the American Black Film Festival.

Inclusion: Equity is now taking center stage over diversity and even inclusion. How can an organization best ensure equity?

Latasha Gillespie: When we talk about diversity, we are primarily talking about numbers and representation, which is important.



(Left to right) Latasha Gillespie as *Ebony* magazine's Power 100 honoree, with Olympic gymnast Simone Biles, and at the Emmy Awards.

When companies and organizations go a step further and start to adopt the intentionality around equity, they are forced to change systems and structures in a way that acknowledges that unequal efforts are needed to get to intersectional representation. It is appropriate to match the size of the solution to the size of the opportunity. And not all opportunities require the same solution. Organizations should look thoughtfully at the needs and partner with the community before building what they think are equitable solutions.

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

LG: Some of the conversations I have been having with my team are around the inertia in really moving the needle around DEI and making measurable progress. When you think about Newton's law of motion—"an object in motion remains in motion, or an object at rest remains at rest unless acted upon by an unbalanced force"—a lot of historical and systemic inequitable structures will stay in motion unless we are thinking big enough to counterbalance them.

After the murder of George Floyd, we assessed the opportunity we had to drive systemic change. We knew that mentoring programs, charitable donations, and listening circles—while all necessary—were not going to be an unbalanced force to meet this moment. We needed to think bigger. I'm really proud of the Inclusion Policy and Playbook my team launched. It takes a holistic approach to the hiring, development, and production processes. It goes beyond good intentions; it declares what good progress looks like and provides resources to help teams get there.

IN: What will be some of the most pressing issues and challenges in the coming years for corporate diversity and inclusion leaders like yourself?

LG: DEI as a function of HR is yesterday's thinking.

"I do... see challenges with us—those of older generations—if we don't listen to gen Z or are unwilling to modify our approach to meet their needs as customers and as colleagues. It's on us to adopt their healthy impatience and join gen Z in their big thinking."

While it's important you've created an inclusive environment for a diverse workforce, situating DEI in HR is limiting and misrepresents its true impact. When organizations don't prioritize DEI as a core business function as they would finance HR or IT, they are missing an opportunity to have long-term customer impact.

IN: How has COVID-19 changed your perspective and your work?

LG: COVID-19 has left a lasting impact globally. Looking ahead, especially living through the pandemic, we will see a rise in people with disabilities in a way that might look different than it does today. Think about the long haulers, those who have lost their sense of smell and taste forever, and what challenges COVID-19 will continue to present in the workplace. We will need to think differently about workplace accommodations, safety protocols, and aesthetics that signal we see and support all of our employees.

IN: What do you see as the challenges and opportunities posed by gen Z?

LG: Actually, I only see opportunities with gen Z—I do not see the challenges. I am fortunate in that I get to work closely with a group of undergraduate and law school students from Howard University, and I am so exhilarated by them. They are brilliant, insight-

ful, limitless, and consistently insisting on the highest standards for themselves and others. I do, however, see challenges with us—those of older generations—if we don't listen to gen Z or are unwilling to modify our approach to meet their needs as customers and as colleagues. It's on us to adopt their healthy impatience and join gen Z in their big thinking. **IN**