

Tucker and Townsend Will Inform and Infuse New AM&P DEI Initiative

2 Minutes

In the song titled “The Room Where It Happens” from the hit musical *Hamilton*, the lyrics challenge how decisions get made: “My God, in God We Trust / but we’ll never really know what got discussed / Click-boom then it happened / But no one else was in the room where it happened.”

AM&P board members **Kaylen Tucker** and **Randy Townsend** want to make sure that there is a mix of people in AM&P’s room where it happens. “For example, we’ve got an award for lifetime achievement and another one for emerging leaders,” says Townsend, director of publications operations for the American Geophysical Union. “We want to be thinking about those processes from an equity perspective. It’s easy to get used to the way we’ve always thought. Sometimes you need that person in the room to challenge that thought — to say, ‘You’re close, but you’re still missing something.’ It will take all of us on this DEI initiative, but every committee in every aspect of the organization should have these aspirations. Kaylen and I — and we hope others — will be encouraging that extra thought, that extra question.”

“We will know when we don’t need this initiative, when the extra questions are part of the existing questions,” Tucker adds. “Here’s when you know when it’s working: When I don’t have to be in the room, when it’s automatic.”



Kaylen Tucker



Randy Townsend

“Last year brought a tremendous amount of attention to social injustices that have been occurring for decades — centuries even,” says Townsend. “This has generated organizational letters and sounds of support. What I would like to do with the AM&P initiative is to take a look at those letters and say, ‘This is what you said, stand by, and believe. What’s the follow through?’ The commitment to the execution is going to be key. Are you going to stand by the commitment because it is who you say you are, or just the politically right thing to do at the time?”

For Tucker, it has been the start of a new era. “Ten years ago, the talk about race was too much about the individual — my individual actions, my experience,” she points out. “With the conversation taking place today, people are starting to understand the systemic and institutional biases and ideas — not just someone called a person a name. That helps us get to a different place.”

One area where they can make an immediate impact is on AM&P events — in panels, webinar speakers, keynotes, and organizing committees. It will take a belief that diversity is the best way to move forward. Diversity is also a business imperative, and leadership must be told by marketers and communications professionals that selling the same old thing won't work anymore.

Tucker pointed out that she and Townsend volunteered for this initiative because they are both “extremely excited” and interested in doing the work. “We happen to be Black, but white people need to do this as well,” she says. “To get to a safe place, it can't just be Black people championing the cause and offering solutions. That would be missing the mark.”

“Allyship is so critical,” Townsend agrees. “Not because it's popular or in this particular news cycle, but because it has real impact on the quality of organizational makeup, your lives, and the potential of what you can accomplish and achieve as a diverse group of professionals.”