



**Workplace
Pride**

THE INTERNATIONAL
PLATFORM FOR LGBTIQ+
INCLUSION AT WORK

VISION PAPER

INTERSECTIONAL WORKPLACE INCLUSION

Co-Creating Resilient Change Through QPOC Voices

By Alex Huang

Workplace Pride POC Community



PoC Community



Erasmus University

Published by Workplace Pride Foundation
Amsterdam, May 2026

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex Huang (he/him) is a researcher and executive project officer at the Leiden-Delft-Erasmus Centre for Governance of Migration and Diversity, and a project officer at the Diversity and Inclusion Office at Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences. His research investigates how queer migrants experience and construct belonging within institutional settings, with particular attention to the practices that shape inclusion across cultural contexts.

Full author profile and reflection at the back of the paper.



ABOUT THE POC COMMUNITY

Launched in 2024, the PoC Community exists to address the unique, intersectional experiences of Queer People of Colour in professional environments. Our goal is to create spaces for connection, understanding, and progress : ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, feels empowered to succeed.

By tackling multiple minority stress and challenging exclusionary behaviours, we are building a future where every organisation can thrive through true diversity.

ABOUT WORKPLACE PRIDE

Workplace Pride has spent two decades championing LGBTIQ+ inclusion in workplaces across the Netherlands and around the globe. Our story is one of passion, expertise, and action: empowering organisations, teams, and individuals to create inclusive environments where everyone can thrive. We combine knowledge, research, and practical tools with personalised support, ensuring that inclusion is not just a policy – it is a culture of inclusion.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	P 2-4
Foreword	P 5-6
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• David Pollard, Executive Director & Christine Holtkamp, Director of Communities, Workplace Pride• Omar Badawy, Relationship Manager, POC Community Lead, Workplace Pride	
Introduction	P 7-13
Dialogue One: Leadership Accountability and QPOC Representation	P 14-17
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• QPOC representation in leadership and the limits of single-axis progress• The silence around race• Silence, avoidance, and the failure to intervene• The burden on QPOC employees• Representation without institutional safety• Envisioning inclusive leadership	
Dialogue Two: Workplace Community and Belonging	P 18-21
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is belonging temporal, relational and ... invisible?• The Absent Intersectional Community• Community as Organisational Intelligence• Envisioning an Intersectional Workplace Community	
Dialogue Three: Inclusive Policy Design and Support	P 22-25
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why current policy frameworks fall short• Unfamiliarity, not only resistance• Co-creating policies with the communities they affect• Structural embedding and the resilience of inclusion• Envisioning intersectional policy	
Conclusion	P 26-30
A Call to Continue	P 31
Acknowledgements	P 32
About the Author	P 33
Author's Reflection	P 33-34
Reference List	P 35-38
Appendix	P 39-41

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Across three community dialogues, Queer People of Colour (QPOC) workers working in Europe described workplaces that recognise only parts of their identities and the challenges they face. They navigate between being overly visible and experiencing institutional invisibility. The structures meant to support them were not built with them in mind. As one participant put it:

"The world is always happy to put people in boxes. You are a lesbian, then we are going to do something for that. But you are never one thing. You are always more things: a mother, or of colour, or neurodivergent."

[Dialogue Three]

This Vision Paper draws on these dialogues to highlight gaps in current DEI frameworks and to articulate a shared vision for intersectional workplace inclusion, grounded in the lived experiences of the people it concerns. The primary challenge is not a lack of intent, but rather insufficient knowledge and tools. While many organisations have inclusion measures, these initiatives often focus on a single identity category and overlook the intersections of race, ethnicity and queerness. As DEI commitments face increasing sociopolitical scrutiny in Europe and North America, the already limited support for QPOC employees is at heightened risk.

KEY FINDINGS

The dialogues revealed five interconnected findings, each explored in detail in the following chapters, where participant voices guide the analysis.

1. Race remains the most challenging topic of discussion in workplaces. Participants identified an implicit hierarchy of discussable topics: sexual orientation is increasingly acknowledged, gender identity occupies an intermediate position, and race provokes avoidance or silence. Where race cannot be openly discussed, the intersection of race and sexuality has no language within the workplace. [See Dialogues One and Three.]

2. Single-axis progress makes QPOC challenges invisible. Gender quotas have put more women in leadership, but these roles go mainly to White women. More openly gay leaders are visible, but most are White. Participants rarely saw people like themselves in senior roles. When leadership reflects a narrow profile, it signals who belongs at the top and who does not. [See Dialogue One.]

3. QPOC employees are marginalised in spaces that should support them. LGBTIQ+ employee networks, the very communities built for queer inclusion, often do not attend to race. None of the participants had access to a formal workplace community for intersectional identities. Several had tried to create one and found they lacked resources and institutional support. [See Dialogues One and Two.]

4. The gap between inclusion policies and lived experience is structural. Participants reported that policies often exist only on paper, failing to reach their lived reality. This gap takes several forms: avoidance, fragility (DEI being among the first to be cut under pressure), and circular reasoning (treating the absence of complaints as evidence that no problem exists).

Across all three dialogues, participants described managing inclusion efforts alongside their formal responsibilities, without dedicated time, budget, or recognition.

[See Dialogues One, Two, and Three.]

5. Belonging is built through everyday experiences, not symbolic gestures. Participants described belonging as the ability to show up without being marked as different: valued for their work, seen without being singled out. They drew a clear distinction between acceptance and belonging, observing that organisations may invest in visible diversity without fostering genuine inclusion. Because they embody multiple dimensions of diversity, participants were often asked to be visible representatives, yet their challenges were frequently overlooked.

[See Dialogues Two and Three.]

These findings cut across the three dialogues. The chapters that follow are organised thematically, around leadership, community, and policy, and each finding surfaces in different ways across them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on participant experiences from all three dialogues and are intended for employers, HR professionals, DEI practitioners, and the QPOC community.

1. Build the organisational capacity to talk about race. The silence around race will not close on its own. Facilitated dialogues, training that explicitly addresses racial dynamics, and leadership that models these conversations are necessary starting points.

2. Design inclusion intersectionally, not in silos. Audit DEI structures for intersectional gaps. Where LGBTIQ+ networks exist, ask whether they attend to race, such as people with a non-European ethnic background. Where cultural diversity programmes exist, ask whether they hold space for QPOC. Create spaces and policies that consider multiple identities simultaneously.

3. Close the policy-practice gap through structural accountability. Assign clear leadership responsibility for DEI processes and outcomes. Integrate intersectional indicators into organisational processes, such as performance cycles, HR training, and benchmarking (e.g., through tools such as the Workplace Pride Organisational Employee Survey), ensuring inclusion is embedded in daily operations rather than a standalone programme vulnerable to political and budgetary pressures.

4. Recognise and offer resources to QPOC employees: those who dedicate labour in fostering intersectional inclusion should be formally acknowledged in job descriptions, performance reviews, and career development. Relying on voluntary contributions from those most affected is unsustainable.

5. Equip leaders for intersectional intervention. Scenario-based training that addresses race alongside queerness, gender identity, and migration background can help leaders move from awareness to concrete action when exclusion occurs.

6. Co-create policies with the communities they affect. Meaningful policy requires input from QPOC employees and communities during design, not only during implementation.

7. Invest in QPOC workplace communities. These communities need structural budgets, leadership sponsorship, integration into HR policy and onboarding, and allyship. Even small forums or less active networks matter, as their presence can signal safety.

8. Diversify leadership pipelines with intersectionality in mind. Representation must be supported by genuine institutional backing. Without this, QPOC leaders may be present but unable to advocate or lead authentically.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKPLACE PRIDE

- Review the Global Benchmark to include intersectional inclusion indicators, creating measurable accountability across member organisations.
- Integrate intersectional challenges as a core component of the L&D programme, moving beyond single-identity modules.
- Embed intersectional awareness into Workplace Pride's own operations, ensuring that community interactions, relationship management, and programme design reflect intersectional knowledge and practice.
- Develop accessible, multilingual resources on employee rights and protections, particularly for QPOC employees with migration backgrounds who are unfamiliar with the Dutch (or relevant national) legal framework.

The next steps following this Vision Paper will focus on co-creating concrete instruments and practices to support intersectional inclusion.



FOREWORDS



LGBTIQ+ workplace inclusion is a constantly evolving story that adapts to changes in culture and societies over time. With this in mind, Workplace Pride has identified that a focus on Queer People of Colour (QPOC) has now become essential because their workplace experiences differ significantly, and often negatively, from other LGBTIQ+ employees. QPOC employees face overlapping discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and race, which directly impacts their psychological safety, their contribution to employers and their career progression. The **Workplace Pride QPOC Vision Paper** addresses this specific theme as an important part of the greater LGBTIQ+ story.

For queer people of colour, an intersectional approach is necessary to fully grasp their experiences. Unlike some members of the LGBTIQ+ community who can choose when to disclose their identity, many QPOC employees are visible targets for bias due to their appearance, name, or accent. In the current social climate, where LGBTIQ+ legitimacy is increasingly questioned, Trans+ people and people of colour must invest disproportionate amounts of emotional energy just to feel safe, much less thrive in workplaces.

Amsterdam, May 2026

David Pollard
Executive director,
Workplace Pride

To address this, including QPOC employees and their lived experiences in policy discussions is a necessity. It implies a responsibility for employers to implement targeted DEI policies, but it also presents an opportunity to improve retention and well-being for all employees while strengthening organisational performance. With geopolitical shifts weakening support for anti-discrimination frameworks, this type of intersectional and inclusive approach will prove to be a benefit not only to marginalised QPOC employees, but also to those that employ them.

Workplace Pride's QPOC Vision Paper acknowledges the need for reliable data to create meaningful change. We, as an organisation feel that it is timely and needed given the volatile situation currently for the LGBTIQ+ community in general. The paper acknowledges an urgency to assess the barriers QPOC employees face and highlights the unique resilience and perspectives they contribute to business success. Likewise, the paper aims to support QPOC employees in reaching their full potential, both at work and in daily life. Finally, it equips organisational decision-makers with practical tools to create more inclusive and equitable workplaces.



Christine Holtkamp
Director of Communities, Relationship Manager
Workplace Pride



BUILDING INTERSECTIONAL BELONGING: JOURNEY AND VISION OF OMAR BADAWY, FOUNDER OF THE POC COMMUNITY



Growing up half Egyptian and half Dutch, I have always navigated multiple cultures and expectations, balancing my identity at the intersection of different worlds. As a queer person of colour, I regularly navigate the unique biases and challenges that come with it. In my work as a community representative for people of colour in Amsterdam and as a professional in Inclusion and Belonging, I see how these identity layers are deeply personal yet also shape wider systems, both within and beyond the workplace.

True inclusion challenges norms and ensures that all identities have a voice. Without an intersectional lens, workplaces risk isolation and unsafety. We must foster environments where people can fully express who they are.

Through my work at Workplace Pride Foundation, I have made it my mission to facilitate research and amplify what it means to be a person of colour in the West—especially in European workplaces. The findings are clear. Research remains scarce, and we are largely invisible and underrepresented, even in leadership. In 2024, during Workplace Pride's yearly international conference, I helped launch a community for LGBTIQ+ POC, marking an important first step. This initiative showed that when we can quantify our experiences and make them tangible, we start the debate and create real change. Building on our momentum, in 2025, we introduced a roadmap to develop our vision paper, aiming to produce the first concrete, quantifiable research on this subject in collaboration with Erasmus University. This pioneering initiative is the first of its kind for Workplace Pride. We are also extending our mission to international and targeted platforms, such as the Asian Pride gathering in Amsterdam. By 2026, our vision paper will serve as a practical tool for policy change, integration into learning programs, and ongoing dialogue among intersectional communities and their allies, a resource for leaders seeking to better support our community.

Ultimately, our goal is to create workplaces where we can be both professional and authentic. ***We all deserve spaces where we bring our full selves every day. When we do, we thrive, add value, and help build a more inclusive culture together.***



The POC Community

Launched in 2024, the PoC Community exists to address the unique, intersectional experiences of Queer People of Colour in professional environments.

Our goal is to create spaces for connection, understanding, and progress, ensuring that everyone, regardless of background, feels empowered to succeed.

By tackling multiple minority stress and challenging exclusionary behaviours, we're building a future where every organisation can thrive through true diversity.

Omar Badawy
Relationship & Community
Manager, Workplace Pride



INTRODUCTION

For Queer People of Colour working in European organisations, workplace inclusion often means being partially recognised by systems that were not designed with them in mind. LGBTIQ+ networks may not attend to race. Cultural diversity initiatives may not consider sexuality or gender identity. DEI frameworks treat these as separate streams, each with its own policy, training, and budget line. For employees whose lives sit at the intersection of these categories, this results in institutional invisibility: seen in fragments, fully reflected by none.

This Vision Paper responds to that invisibility. QPOC employees remain insufficiently recognised in workplace DEI strategies (Mor et al., 2025). Their experiences are shaped by intersecting systems of inequality involving race, sexuality, gender identity, and often migration background, yet organisational strategies frequently address these aspects separately or inadequately (Crenshaw, 1991; McCall, 2005). As a result, the lived realities of QPOC employees remain largely absent from workplace policy, organisational practice, and research (Collins, 2019; Cole, 2009).

At the same time, workplace structures, leadership, and organisational culture actively shape whether inequality is reproduced or challenged (Cortina et al., 2013).

Recognising intersectional experience is therefore essential not only for QPOC individuals to experience genuine belonging, but for organisations to develop workplace inclusion strategies that are meaningful rather than performative.

Drawing on research and community dialogues with QPOC workers, this Vision Paper highlights challenges that are overlooked in workplace DEI efforts. It examines how QPOC employees experience current DEI approaches and policies in practice, identifies the structural gaps that persist, and articulates a shared vision for more equitable and intersectionally aware workplace environments (Cole, 2009; Cech & Rothwell, 2020; Dennissen et al., 2020).



WHY

WHY IS A NEW AGENDA FOR INTERSECTIONAL INCLUSION NEEDED?

DEFINING QPOC

The term **queer (Q)** serves as an umbrella term for various sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions (Follmer et al., 2020). In the context of this paper, it is the preferred, more inclusive terminology that avoids narrowly defined Western identity categories.

In European contexts, **People of Colour (POC)** refers to individuals positioned outside the dominant white norm within a given social context (El-Tayeb, Haritaworn, & Bacchetta, 2015). The term acknowledges the social processes through which racial difference is constructed and experienced. It is important to note that this is not a fixed or universal category: some individuals may not be visibly racialised or may "pass" within dominant groups (e.g., bi-racial), while still identifying as people of colour. The term is therefore understood as encompassing both visible and less visible forms of racialisation, and can function as a form of self-identification (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008).

Within this Vision Paper, **Queer People of Colour (QPOC)** refer to individuals who identify within diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, or gender expressions and who are simultaneously racialised or self-identified as non-white within Western contexts. The term is used as a broad, community-informed descriptor to highlight shared experiences at the intersection of racialisation and queer identity, while recognising that terminology is context-dependent and evolving (El-Tayeb, Haritaworn, & Bacchetta, 2015).

DEFINING INTERSECTIONALITY

"Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated."

- Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1989, p.140)

The concept of intersectionality, originally articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), demonstrates how different social identities overlap within systems of power and inequality. Social categories such as race, gender, sexuality, migration background, and class do not operate independently; they intersect within broader structures of racism, sexism, and heteronormativity, which function concurrently and reinforce one another (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2019). Individuals such as queer people of colour experience overlapping forms of discrimination and exclusion on multiple grounds simultaneously.

In the context of this paper, the intersectional lens helps reveal the power dynamics, privilege, and structural discrimination embedded in European workplace cultures, and to understand the specific challenges QPOC employees navigate.

LIMITS OF THE CURRENT DEI APPROACH

Although DEI has become a familiar framework in European organisations, many approaches remain siloed, addressing gender, LGBTIQ+ inclusion, or cultural diversity as separate concerns (Mor et al., 2024). This creates structural blind spots. Employees may be recognised in one dimension while overlooked in another, and biases in evaluation, promotion, and access to leadership may persist even in organisations that consider themselves committed to diversity (Eaton et al., 2020; Cortina et al., 2013). When organisational policies treat identities as isolated categories, forms of exclusion that affect employees with intersecting identities remain invisible (Cole, 2009). Research consistently shows that LGBTIQ+ employees of colour face higher levels of workplace discrimination and marginalisation than their white LGBTIQ+ counterparts (Cech & Rothwell, 2020).

GROWING URGENCY

Addressing intersectional inequality is increasingly urgent. Much of the existing research and policy attention on intersectional workplace inequality has focused on the United States; comparable European work remains limited (Emejulu, 2014; Van der Toorn & Gaitho, 2021).

The political landscape has intensified this gap. This topic dominated the Workplace Pride International Conference (Jagadeesh, Zikry & Moussa, 2024). In the United States, the rollback of DEI commitments under the current administration has sent a signal that reverberates beyond American borders (Ng et al., 2025). Many European organisations, particularly those with US-based parent companies or funding structures, have felt pressure to scale back or deprioritise diversity initiatives. While European labour markets and regulatory environments operate differently, and many European countries maintain stronger legal protections against workplace discrimination, the political climate has nonetheless emboldened resistance to DEI and created uncertainty about its future. For QPOC employees, who already occupy a marginal position within existing DEI frameworks, this retrenchment compounds an already precarious situation. The supports that were insufficient to begin with are now under threat.

HOW CAN ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITIES BEGIN TRANSLATING URGENCY INTO MEANINGFUL CHANGE?

HOW

CO-CREATING A VISION WITH THE COMMUNITY

This Vision Paper distinguishes itself by building a more inclusive workplace with, rather than for, QPOC communities, through co-creation and community dialogues.

TOWARDS A SHARED VISION

Since the Workplace Pride POC Community was founded, a group of QPOC employees, HR practitioners, and DEI leaders have come together with the shared aim of challenging the status quo. Yet there are few established tools or documented good practices for intersectional inclusion in European workplaces, and existing inclusion practices may reproduce the very power structures they intend to address. Creating a shared vision is a necessary first step: it allows the POC Community, together with member organisations and QPOC workers, to identify and organise future goals and activities toward structural change (Grojean et al., 2004).

WHY A COMMUNITY-LED APPROACH MATTERS

Community-led visioning is essential for QPOC inclusion because existing organisational approaches often obscure QPOC experiences through single-axis frameworks. While initiatives may address sexuality, gender, gender identity, or race, they rarely address these identities together. This fragmentation leads to invisibility within both LGBTIQ+ and racial equity frameworks, a gap repeatedly voiced across the dialogues.

A community-led approach is essential because intersectional knowledge requires intersectional authorship. Those most affected by intersectional exclusion hold knowledge that cannot be fully articulated by individuals from dominant groups (Collins, 2019; Cole, 2009). QPOC experiences are highly contextual, shaped by specific organisational, cultural, and migration backgrounds, and require grounded, situated knowledge rather than generalised frameworks. When QPOC employees define the goals themselves, organisations are more likely to adopt changes that genuinely resonate, and participants are more committed to sustaining them (Costanza-Chock, 2020).

This paper positions co-creation not as a symbolic gesture but as a strategic methodology for building meaningful intersectional inclusion frameworks.

Co-creation here refers to a collaborative process in which QPOC community members, DEI practitioners, researchers, and organisational stakeholders work together to articulate a shared vision, grounded in the principle that those most affected by exclusion should play a central role in defining what meaningful inclusion looks like. This approach recognises QPOC participants as co-authors of knowledge rather than passive subjects of DEI policy, and elevates lived experience as a legitimate and essential source of organisational insight.

COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

Three thematic dialogues were organised, each focusing on one of three interconnected components of workplace inclusion:

- **Dialogue One: Leadership Accountability and QPOC Representation**
- **Dialogue Two: Workplace Community and Belonging**
- **Dialogue Three: Inclusive Policy Design and Support**

The dialogues brought together a total of 16 participants from a range of public and private organisations and diverse professional and social backgrounds, allowing for a broad exchange of perspectives on intersectional workplace inclusion.

THE ROLE OF DIALOGUE IN VISION-BUILDING

Dialogue was not merely a method for gathering input; it was itself a process of empowerment, community-building, and collective sense-making. The dialogues provided participants with a space to share and validate one another's experiences, to recognise that challenges they had understood as personal were in fact shared, and to articulate aspirations they had not previously been able to voice within their own organisations.

This collective process served a dual function. It generated the insights that underpin this paper's findings and recommendations, and it also strengthened the community itself. Several participants described the dialogues as the first time they had spoken openly about their intersectional workplace experience with others who shared it. In this sense, the method was also a form of intervention: creating the very conditions of intersectional community that the paper argues organisations should support.



WHAT

SCOPE AND POSITIONING OF THE VISION PAPER WHAT THIS PAPER IS ABOUT, AND WHAT IT IS NOT

This Vision Paper does not attempt to provide universal solutions or prescriptive policy recommendations. Rather, it aims to foreground intersectional workplace realities, elevate the voices of QPOC, and articulate a shared vision that can guide organisations, practitioners, and communities towards more inclusive and structurally grounded workplace environments.

The paper is written for practitioners, QPOC employees, and organisational leaders as well as academic audiences; the discussion of research is therefore focused and practice-oriented rather than comprehensive.

It focuses primarily on the European context, both because much of the existing research and available data are US-based and because the concept of POC is defined differently across geographical contexts.

The data are qualitative, because current quantitative methodologies cannot adequately capture the complexity of intersectional experience and social power (Bauer et al., 2021).

The paper discusses and critiques DEI policies, particularly those that focus on single identities. We are not attempting to diminish existing DEI efforts, nor are we arguing that enough has been done for LGBTIQ+ inclusion or women in leadership; the experience of QPOC employees has been overlooked even within these efforts. This Vision Paper highlights a group of people whose experience has been long neglected.

WHAT THIS VISION PAPER OFFERS

- Greater visibility of intersectional workplace realities, particularly the lived experiences of Queer People of Colour.
- Insights grounded in community dialogue, highlighting shared challenges and aspirations across organisational contexts.
- A framework for intersectional workplace inclusion, informed by both research and lived experience.
- A shared vision for organisational and community action, outlining pathways toward more equitable and structurally grounded workplace environments.

A full description of the methodology, including participant recruitment, dialogue format, and analytic approach, is provided in the Appendix.

INCLUSION REQUIRES A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

While the dialogues and chapters are organised thematically, the issues they surface are not isolated problems with separate solutions. As Kimberlé Crenshaw established, intersectionality shows that systems of inequality do not operate independently of one another (Crenshaw, 1991). This is why leadership, community, and policy are interconnected in this paper. Together, they show where intersectional exclusion is most felt: in who is recognised as a leader, in whether people experience true belonging, and in whether policies meet diverse needs. Meaningful change requires attention to all three dimensions in practice.

The chapters that follow examine these three dimensions in turn. Dialogue One explores leadership accountability and QPOC representation. Dialogue Two turns to workplace community and belonging. Dialogue Three addresses inclusive policy design. A concluding chapter draws the connections between them and articulates the shared vision that emerged.



DIALOGUE ONE

LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY AND QPOC REPRESENTATION

Five QPOC employees gathered to reflect on how leadership shapes their workplace experience and what a more equitable model of leadership could look like. Research on leadership ideals demonstrates that prevailing norms tend to mirror the characteristics of dominant groups: typically white, cisgender, and heterosexual (Eagly & Chin, 2010). For QPOC employees, leadership goes beyond representation. It determines who is seen, whose discomfort triggers action, and whose experience is treated as requiring a response. This chapter develops two of the five findings set out in the Executive Summary. It examines how race remains the most difficult topic to address in European workplaces (Finding 1) and how single-axis progress renders QPOC challenges invisible at senior levels (Finding 2). It also traces the structural consequences when leaders do not intervene, and how the resulting work transfers onto QPOC employees themselves.

QPOC REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP AND THE LIMITS OF SINGLE-AXIS PROGRESS

Participants consistently reported not seeing people like themselves in leadership, regardless of their sector or institution. One participant, reflecting on a global company's leadership landscape: **"99% it would be a German... it will be a global company but German-centric culture, mindset, et cetera."** They noted that management had recently made efforts to address cultural diversity at senior levels, but the starting point remains telling. Another participant from academia echoed this: **"We rarely see anyone in the upper management."**

Where inclusion efforts existed, they tended to operate along a single axis. One participant described how gender quotas at their company had increased the number of women in leadership, but almost exclusively white women: **"From those few women that do make it, they're all white as well. So that's even for gender bias, race is also quite an issue."** Others noted that while openly gay leaders have become more visible, most are white and cisgender. Progress in one area does not address the absence of intersectional representation, a known limitation of non-intersectional diversity strategies (Dennissen et al., 2020; Leslie, 2019).

When leadership consistently reflects a narrow profile, it shapes what QPOC employees believe is possible for them. The absence of people who share their intersectional experience at senior levels quietly forecloses aspiration (Eagly & Chin, 2010).



THE SILENCE AROUND RACE

Throughout the dialogue, participants described an implicit hierarchy of what can be discussed in their workplaces. Sexual orientation has become relatively speakable. Gender identity sits somewhere in the middle. Race triggers avoidance.

"We can openly talk about sexuality, but we cannot openly talk about race."

Another participant described what happens when the conversation turns to race in D&I settings: ***"The moment you want to talk about race... then they kind of just shut down, you know, and they avoid it. Or they're scared to ask something wrong."***

This silence has a specifically European character. In the Netherlands, what Wekker (2016) calls "white innocence" describes a national self-image in which the country is understood as inherently tolerant, a framing that makes it difficult to acknowledge racism as a present, structural reality rather than a historical problem belonging to other countries. Empirical work shows that LGBTIQ+ employees of colour and trans participants anticipate lower levels of inclusion regardless of diversity messaging, pointing to persistent structural scepticism among those most marginalised (Mor et al., 2025). Ahmed (2012) has shown how diversity work within institutions encounters resistance precisely because it threatens organisational self-narratives of openness and progress. Both dynamics were visible in what participants described.

One recounted pitching diversity initiatives to leadership and being told: ***"Everybody knows we're diverse. So why do we need to do this?"*** The response treats diversity as already accomplished, a settled fact rather than a structural condition requiring ongoing work.

For QPOC employees, the consequences compound (Van der Toorn, in press). When an organisation can discuss sexuality but not race, the intersection of these identities has no language within the institution. The silence extended into the DEI infrastructure itself. One participant noted that their workplace had 13 diversity and inclusion boards across faculties, none of which address intersectionality. Others described inclusive language trainings that treated identity categories separately, without connecting them.

The difficulty of discussing race also surfaced within the communities meant to support participants as queer employees. One participant was direct: ***"We are not just debating with heterosexual white men. We are also debating with gay white men. They also don't know what the challenges are... Even within the LGBTIQ+ Employee Resource Group, we have to again fight for our own place."*** The same participant captured the resulting fatigue: ***"We become like a minority of a minority and then it becomes a difficult task for us."***

This kind of internal marginalisation, being overlooked by the communities meant to support you, is a distinctively intersectional experience. Dennissen et al. (2020) describe how diversity networks can inadvertently reproduce the exclusions they are designed to address, particularly when intersectional identities fall outside their scope, a dynamic also documented in research on intersectional invisibility within women's diversity interventions (Wong et al., 2022).

The implication is that existing LGBTIQ+ networks, however well-intentioned, cannot be assumed to serve QPOC employees without explicit attention to race. QPOC employees cannot simply be directed to existing support structures as a substitute for organisational action on intersectionality. The communities built for queer inclusion are necessary, but not sufficient.

SILENCE, AVOIDANCE, AND THE FAILURE TO INTERVENE

The request that emerged most consistently from the dialogue was not for comprehensive programmes or visible gestures. It was for leaders to name exclusion when they see it.

"They see an uncomfortable situation when someone is being racist or saying something problematic, that they just let it slide. They don't really step in and actually say anything... they have to actually say, 'this is not acceptable in my team.'"

The force of this lies in its modesty. Participants were not asking for transformative courage. They were asking that someone in an authority position acknowledge what is happening. When leaders stay silent, the silence signals whose comfort the organisation protects. Participants described incidents being downplayed or reframed: ***"Or sometimes putting it under the umbrella of it was a joke."*** What was experienced as harm gets reclassified as harmless; the person who raised it is implicitly positioned as having overreacted.

The issue is not only passivity but a lack of practical awareness.

One participant explained that current leadership and D&I training programmes do not help leaders understand the cumulative impact of intersectional exclusion:

"Senior managers... I don't think they realise this mental stress. These daily things we encounter, whether it's the microaggressions, not being validated. Misgendered whatever it is. And that's a daily struggle that we face."

This participant further connected the daily toll to professional consequences: ***"People still expect you to fulfil that level, which, from what I see, is a level of a cis white man."*** QPOC employees are measured against performance standards calibrated to people who do not carry the same burdens.

Underlying the passivity was an avoidance logic that participants attributed not to hostility but to routine calculation: ***"I have to deal with it... this might cost me time, money and issues. So let me just not address it because then no problem exists."*** The reasoning is not malicious. It is something more ordinary: the judgement that ignoring a problem is less costly than confronting it. But the cost does not disappear. It shifts to employees who absorb what leadership has opted not to address.

A further concern was that even engaged leaders often treat inclusion as a finite task: ***"They consider this as a tick box. Once they have achieved it, once they have done something for inclusivity, then, I'm done."***

THE BURDEN ON QPOC EMPLOYEES

When leaders do not act, the work transfers, a dynamic Vincent et al. (2024) describe as the relational responsabilisation of marginalised employees. Several participants described carrying inclusion work on top of their formal roles without dedicated time, recognition, or organisational backing:

"My day job doesn't involve or unlock time for the activities. But of course, the challenge is what we see then as a group, or at least we try to put some effort."

This participant invested significant personal energy in building an employee resource group while receiving no structural support. The work occurred in the margins, invisible to the institution that benefited from it.

Who is accountable for DEI in organisations matters. One participant drew a direct line: ***"In reality, a lot of times it's coming from the HR business groups that this is needed, that the policies are put in place. And leadership, like if we're talking about CEOs, they don't necessarily see that."***

When inclusion is perceived as an HR function rather than a strategic leadership priority, it becomes structurally vulnerable. And when financial pressures mount, as participants observed, "D&I is the first thing that they will cut." For QPOC employees, whose inclusion needs are already marginal within DEI frameworks, this creates a particular kind of precarity. The supports meant to serve them are the least protected.

REPRESENTATION WITHOUT INSTITUTIONAL SAFETY

One participant's observation, based on a single case, points to a broader structural pattern that research on tokenism has described: when representation is not matched by institutional conditions for the represented person to act, visibility can turn into constraint (Niemann, 2016). A queer person of colour in a leadership position at their organisation had remained cautious, unwilling to advocate visibly:

"I don't feel they're a big ambassador. I think for them to protect themselves and their career, they need to stay more accommodating."

Even where QPOC leaders exist, the conditions around them may not allow those leaders to lead on the issues that matter most. Representation without institutional safety can produce leaders who are unable to use their position to model inclusion. The presence of a QPOC person in a senior role may even function as a form of organisational alibi: evidence that the pipeline works, while the person occupying that role is constrained from acting on it. Organisational support for QPOC leadership must go beyond visibility to include sponsorship, protection, and genuine latitude to advocate. Without these conditions, representation risks becoming a ceiling rather than a foundation.

ENVISIONING INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

In the final portion of the dialogue, participants imagined what leadership could look like if redesigned. Their answers varied but shared a common orientation: toward leadership that is closer to the people it serves, more reflective of who they are, and sustained over time.

"I would design it a bit more diverse. Different types of people, different backgrounds and educational backgrounds too, so they can represent most of what the company consists of. I would also try to redesign in a way that people at a lower level can have a bit more one-on-one interaction with people high up, because I feel like they're so high up that there's a disconnection."

Another argued that inclusion should be measured with the same discipline applied to financial performance, that leaders should ***"quantify and measure it consistently over time and try to prove some action."*** The strongest common thread was sustainability. Participants were tired of gestures:

"Visibility should be there all the time... it's not a one-time activity that one time we included everyone. But that should be somehow maintained... they should also take the action. They should be ambassadors, so that way the message can be passed on to the entire team."

What participants described, taken together, is a model of leadership that is visible, sustained, and accountable. Not representation for its own sake, but representation that does something: that models inclusion, sets norms, and creates conditions for others. This corresponds to emerging frameworks for inclusive leadership that foreground belongingness and the active valuing of uniqueness as organisational conditions to be created and maintained, not simply declared (Randel et al., 2018; Shore et al., 2018).

TESTIMONIALS ABOUT LEADERSHIP



An inclusive workplace is crucial to me. It's a huge added value when an organisation actively focuses on diversity and inclusion, especially if this is embedded in its core values. Yet, recognition and visible role models are often lacking. Openly queer Asian CEOs and managers can be counted on one hand – and that applies not only to the corporate world, but also to other sectors such as entertainment, culture, and media. As long as there isn't a structured focus on inclusivity, diversity, and equal opportunities at all levels within an organisation, creating role models for minority groups, the need for communities like POC@WPP will continue.

Goos van Wissen (He/Him),
Former POC group member, GVB

*What pushed me most was the article *Leiderschap in Kleur* by Judi Mesman. While it is an important and thoughtful contribution, the absence of QPOC leadership in that discussion was striking to me. It reflects a broader pattern: QPOC leadership is rarely named or explicitly addressed, even though research consistently shows that people at the intersection of race, gender, sexuality and disability face higher levels of harassment, exclusion and unequal treatment in professional settings. At the intersection of multiple minorities, we often carry the heaviest burden, greater scrutiny, fewer margins for error and significant invisible labour that is rarely acknowledged or rewarded. These experiences shape how leadership is practiced, often in ways that remain unseen. At the same time, this intersectional position is also a strength. QPOC leaders bring perspectives that span multiple communities and realities, enabling bridge-building, empathy and more resilient forms of leadership when organisations are willing to recognise and value this contribution.*

Ajayshankar Jagadeesh (He/Him)
Former POC co-lead, TU Delft

As an Egyptian LGBTIQ+ person, helping to found the Queer People of Colour group at Workplace Pride was deeply personal for me. It was about creating a space where our identities are seen and valued. QPOC leadership matters because it brings perspectives shaped by resilience and diversity, perspectives that challenge the status quo and drive real inclusion. When organisations empower QPOC leaders, they don't just meet a target; they create workplaces that reflect the richness and complexity of the world around us.

Tamer Zikry (He/Him)
Former POC co-lead, Valmet



DIALOGUE TWO

WORKPLACE COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

Most workplace communities are built around single identity categories: an LGBTIQ+ network here, a cultural diversity group there. For employees whose lives are shaped by the intersection of race, queerness, and often migration background, these structures often reflect only a fraction of who they are (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Dennissen et al., 2020). Dialogue Two brought together six QPOC employees to explore what belonging means to them, where existing workplace communities fall short, and what a community built around intersectional experience could look like. This chapter develops two of the five findings set out in the Executive Summary: belonging as something built through everyday experience rather than symbolic gesture (Finding 5), and the marginalisation of QPOC employees within the communities meant to support them (Finding 3). It also develops an argument that runs through the second half of the chapter: that workplace communities are not only support mechanisms but sources of organisational knowledge. At the same time, HR departments can rely too heavily on community networks for policy design, and incorporating community input poorly can backfire (Mor, 2024).

IS BELONGING TEMPORAL, RELATIONAL AND ... INVISIBLE?

When asked what belonging at work means, participants did not reach for organisational language. One spoke of belonging as ***"the opportunity to just be. We can also be different and belong, and I just need the space for that."*** Another described it as cumulative and relational: ***"You can only feel it when you experience repeatedly positive experiences at work. It's not necessarily like I'll celebrate my Asianness or I celebrate my queerness. It's just positive experience through work."***

Belonging, for these participants, is not something organisations can produce through symbolic gestures. As one participant put it: ***"Maybe inclusion, you see a rainbow flag, you see people with a lanyard and then you feel safe. But I still don't have the sense of belonging."*** Safety, in this account, is a necessary condition. Belonging builds over time through repeated, positive, and at times ordinary, interactions.

The most striking observation reframed belonging as a kind of invisibility:

"As a minority person, you don't get to be invisible. You're very visible. And actually I think the sense of belonging is that you feel so comfortable and other people are so used to you being there that you don't feel like you walk into the room and people are like, oh, there's a different person."



This participant characterised their workplace as progressive and inclusive, yet remarked: ***"It's very clear that I am a minority. I would say that the aspect I still lack is the ability to simply be present without feeling that my difference is accentuated."*** Consequently, acceptance and a sense of belonging are not synonymous. While acceptance may coexist with an ongoing awareness of difference, what participants perceive as belonging aligns more closely with the concept described by Verkuyten et al. (2020) and Adelman et al. (2025) as the disparity between tolerance and authentic inclusion: the perception that one's presence is seen as unremarkable rather than merely tolerated.

Belonging (Jansen et al., 2014) also shifts over time. One participant, reflecting on nearly a decade in the Netherlands, described how their relationship to visibility had changed: ***"I forgot that it was different for me to be this queer POC person the first year, two years here. And then nine years forward, I'm like, I'm done. I don't want to have to celebrate myself. Can I just be invisible?"***

Not a rejection of identity, but of the labour of perpetual self-explanation. This participant also observed that belonging means different things to QPOC employees depending on where they are in their journey, a point that other participants confirmed.

Workplaces that treat belonging as a single programme rather than a changing, relational process overlook this.

THE ABSENT INTERSECTIONAL COMMUNITY

Before imagining what community could be, participants described what it currently is. Several were active in their organisations' LGBTIQ+ networks or diversity initiatives, and the picture they painted was one of partial recognition. These communities addressed one dimension of their identity while leaving others unspoken.

One participant, who had coordinated an ERG at an organisation of around 800 staff, noted the pragmatic limits: ***"What can we expect from a community from a minority group?"*** For QPOC employees, who sit at the intersection of already small populations, critical mass is hard to achieve. Another participant, co-leading D&I efforts at the organisation, described how trainings they ran surfaced experiences that had been invisible to the organisation: ***"you literally have people that I never met before coming up to me and saying, my God, I had this happen to me."*** What these interactions revealed, they reflected, were patterns: ***"You realise what's missing or what are the policies we need to work on."*** Community spaces were already generating knowledge. But none of it was happening in a space designed for QPOC employees specifically.

NAMING THE ABSENCE

The structural gap was named directly. One participant stated: ***"What I'm missing in my company is a POC or intersectional work group community because we only have the queer community and we have a young community."*** When networks are organised around single identity categories, QPOC employees must choose which part of themselves to bring into which room, a dynamic that research on diversity networks has consistently identified (Dennissen et al., 2020). None of the participants reported access to an institutionalised workplace community designed for QPOC employees. Several had attempted to create one and encountered a lack of resources and leadership support.

Scale compounds the problem. For QPOC employees, who represent a small subset of already small populations, bottom-up energy alone cannot sustain a community. This does not diminish the need. It implies that organisations need to take responsibility.

COMMUNITY AS ORGANISATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Participants were clear that workplace communities should do more than offer emotional comfort. One drew a sharp line:

"It's nice to have somebody that you can talk to about some challenges that you're experiencing at work, and then that sense of a support group, that's nice to have. But if that's it, if it ends there, just nice to have and you get together for a monthly drink and nothing's going to change... Then that's not enough."

What they described instead was a community with organisational influence: ***"We want to change the environment. We want to shift culture for us, but for other people as well."*** It was also argued that leaders often misread what ERGs are: ***"leaders think that we are, I don't know, just kind of random people, marginalised group of people talking about their problems and that's not what we're about."*** The implication is that community, when treated as a welfare measure, will be funded accordingly. When understood as a source of organisational knowledge, it changes what leadership is willing to invest. This dynamic echoes Dennissen et al. (2020).

This raised a practical question: what does a viable community require? One participant laid out the conditions plainly: ***"Accessibility of a community means they are visible, they are backed up by leadership, and there is a structural budget in place."***

In practice, this means a group embedded in HR policy and communication, backed by sponsorship, visible to new employees from their first week, and open to allies.

The alternative is a familiar pattern: ***"Sometimes we see some grassroots initiatives coming up and it's like one or two people doing extra time besides their jobs and then it kind of flusters because there is just not the right structure and there's not the right support there."***

How to secure that support generated a productive tension. One participant described their organisation's approach to transgender inclusion: ***"We deliberately not make it a business case. We deliberately not put any numbers or statistics. Because it must come from good employership and not the business case."*** Another countered: ***"We also have to be a bit business minded about this. How can we sell this to our leaders so that they see that if they invest in this, this will create more productivity, happier employees?"***

The group did not resolve this. One participant captured a pragmatic middle ground: ***"Ethically, I completely agree. We shouldn't even be asking. We shouldn't even be fighting for this. It should be standard. But unfortunately that's not always the case."***

A distinct point emerged around governance. One participant argued that management should support ERGs but not sit within them: ***"It should be bottom up. They should accommodate the ERG, and there could be a sponsor, but it should be external to the group."*** If leadership controls the community, the community cannot function as a space where employees speak freely about the organisation itself.

A related observation further complicated the picture. One participant stressed: ***"There should also be space for me to just do the job that I'm good at and then also contribute in some way, but not be responsible for changing the company."***

Community needs to hold exchange and influence as distinct functions, without requiring every member to perform both. In Dialogue One, participants described the burden of carrying inclusion work on top of their formal roles, without institutional recognition. The dynamic mirrors the same problem at the community level: when organisations rely on ERGs to drive change without adequately resourcing them, the labour of transformation falls to those it is meant to benefit. Co-creation works when different actors have distinct roles: communities bring experience, while organisations and HR retain responsibility for design and resourcing.

ENVISIONING AN INTERSECTIONAL WORKPLACE COMMUNITY

When asked to imagine what community could look like, participants described an entity that integrates functions typically regarded as distinct.

The most consistent idea was that community serves as a structural bridge between employees and management. One participant put it plainly: **"We should be, as a community, the translator to management, and they should, in an ideal world, come actively to us. We are the resource."** Others reinforced the point, emphasising continuous learning: **"It's not a static thing, it's evolving."** In this account, community is not only where marginalised employees find each other. It is also where the organisation learns what is happening in its own workplaces, provided it is willing to listen, generating insights that formal surveys and annual reviews consistently miss.

Community also functions as a signal, even when it is not actively doing anything. One participant noted something subtler: **"It's very nice to know that there is a network and there are people that you can call when something's going on. We don't need to be doing things, but we know there are people that can do stuff with me when the need arises. That kind of latent power is also very important."** For new employees, especially, being aware that a network exists can shift the experience of being at work before it is ever needed. A community matters not only when activated. Its presence is itself a form of psychological safety, or identity safety (Mor, 2024), for employees who are often minorities in their workplace.

Participants also described community as a vehicle for recognition. They wanted community events, speaking platforms, and leadership programmes specifically for QPOC employees, not because visibility is an end in itself, but because it creates the conditions in which people can see themselves reflected. One participant articulated this concretely: when a new employee sees **"somebody who looks like them being represented and being celebrated and being supported and being capable,"** that matters, because **"we need personal stories and we need personal heroes to lead us."** Recent work suggests that explicitly recognising identity categories supports inclusion more effectively than approaches that ignore them (Kirby et al., 2023; Mor et al., 2024).

In the picture participants drew, community serves three functions that exist alongside one another: exchange, influence, and recognition. What runs through all three is a shared orientation: participants envisioned community not as something appended to the organisation but embedded within it. Structurally supported, organisationally connected, and designed to hold the range of what QPOC employees need at different stages of their careers and lives.

TESTIMONIALS ABOUT COMMUNITY



Having a community at work goes beyond just feeling included, it's about having a common experience and building a sense of a mutual organisational identity. When that's present, work feels less like an individual effort and more like something we're part of collectively. In work environments where there's a strong peer-to-peer dynamic, it makes it easier for me to speak openly, ask questions, and learn from others without fearing to be judged.

That sense of emotional safety makes me want to contribute to building an even stronger community, which in turn builds a stronger sense of commitment and loyalty, not just to the work itself but to the team and the organisation as a whole.



Mariam El Chami (She/Her)
Communications and DEI Advisor | Crafter

DIALOGUE THREE

INCLUSIVE POLICY DESIGN AND SUPPORT

The final community dialogue brought together six QPOC employees to discuss inclusive workplace policy. The session examined the policies, processes, and accountability mechanisms that shape whether inclusion is meaningfully integrated into organisational operations or remains aspirational. What emerged was a consistent finding: the central problem is not the absence of policy but the gap between intention and implementation, and a further gap between implementation and lived experience (Wright & Nishii, 2013). This chapter develops the remaining findings set out in the Executive Summary. It examines the structural gap between inclusion policies and lived experience (Finding 4), and returns to the silence around race as it shapes how policies are designed and discussed (Finding 1). It also picks up Finding 3, the marginalisation of QPOC employees within existing inclusion structures, as policy reproduces these gaps when QPOC voices are absent from design.

WHY CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORKS FALL SHORT

Participants began by describing what they encountered in practice. One participant described how the DEI conversation unfolded at their company: ***"When we say diversity, everyone started thinking, we want to expand that from white German to another white somewhere. Or maybe the second focus would be women, but everyone forgot about other aspects."***

Others noted that, as described in Dialogue One, the increased visibility of openly gay leaders has largely been concentrated among white and cisgender figures.

In each case, organisations believed they had sufficiently addressed diversity by focusing on a single dimension. As Holvino (2010) argues, dimensions of social difference operate simultaneously rather than sequentially. Designing inclusion frameworks around single identity categories creates structural blind spots precisely because it treats as separate what employees experience as interconnected. This pattern, participants observed, extended to how policies were constructed: separate departments creating separate frameworks for separate identity categories, with no mechanism to connect them.



UNFAMILIARITY, NOT ONLY RESISTANCE

One participant from the public sector complicated the picture in an important way. They explained that their company's siloed policy structure was not the result of deliberate exclusion but of unfamiliarity:

"It's because of the complexity and because of the unknown. Also for us, intersectionality is new. I don't think it's new only for management, but I think it's also new for everyone in the company."

They added that while their ERG focuses on LGBTIQ+ policies, they try to keep the scope open to other minorities: ***"even though we talk about it, to really make it practical and include in the narrative is a hard thing to do."***

The absence of intersectional policy is not always a matter of institutional resistance or ideological opposition. Sometimes it reflects a genuine lack of knowledge, awareness, and practical experience with intersectionality as a lens. Organisations do not necessarily refuse to engage with intersectionality. In many cases, they lack the language, the frameworks, and the lived experience to know where to begin (Bell et al., 2011). The absence of intent to exclude does not diminish its effects. But it does change what closing the gap requires: education, collective learning, and iterative practice across the organisation, including within ERGs and diversity networks, not only among senior leadership.

CO-CREATING POLICIES WITH THE COMMUNITY

The dialogue surfaced concrete examples of how meaningful policies can be co-created. Notably, none of these examples concerned intersectional or QPOC-specific policy. No participant had experience with a policy explicitly designed to address the intersection of race and sexuality. This absence is itself a finding: even in organisations where ERGs have successfully shaped policy on gender transition, family definitions, or LGBTIQ+ healthcare, intersectional inclusion has not yet entered the policy design process. The examples participants offered nonetheless illustrate a principle that applies directly to the intersectional gap.

At one organisation, a gender transition policy was developed over more than a year in collaboration with external transgender networks, because, as the participant noted, ***"we are the big network, but we don't know everything."*** At another, ERG advocacy led to an expanded HR definition of "family" and the addition of transition-related healthcare support. In both cases, policies improved because affected communities were involved in their design. The participant who described the second example also brought all ERGs together quarterly to surface concerns that individual networks might miss, a practical step organisations can adopt as a starting point. The overall process was described as incremental: ***"Small, small changes. We may not have direct executive power, but we're trying to influence whatever we can."***

How to secure organisational commitment for this kind of co-creation generated a familiar tension. Several participants argued that intersectional inclusion should also be framed in terms of organisational value: attracting talent, reflecting client and student populations, and drawing on the full capacity of a diverse workforce. Others maintained that intersectional inclusion should not require a business case. What participants agreed on is that both arguments are necessary, deployed strategically depending on the audience and the organisational culture.

What these examples share is a recognition that organisations alone lack the knowledge to design inclusive policy. The gender transition policy required external expertise, and the family definition required input from employees whose lives did not fit the existing framework. In each case, the policy improved not because leadership decided to be more inclusive, but because affected communities were structurally connected to the design process. This raises the question of whether this principle can be extended to the intersection of race and sexuality, where no such co-creation has yet taken place, in part because intersectional QPOC networks barely exist as institutional structures from which co-creation could begin. A barrier to doing so emerged concretely in the dialogue. One participant described proposing a policy change at their organisation and being told that no one had raised the issue. The participant then responded: ***"But did you ever ask? Is that even a question that you asked your people?"*** When institutional structures have never been designed to surface intersectional needs, those needs remain unspoken, and their absence from formal channels is read as evidence that no need exists. Co-creation thus cannot begin with the question "who has complained?" It has to begin with the recognition that some needs are not yet hearable by existing organisational structures.

Participants also identified Workplace Pride as having a specific role in this process. A staff member described three existing instruments: the Global Benchmark, which provides a diagnostic and accountability framework for member organisations; the Learning and Development programme, which increasingly incorporates intersectional challenges; and the community infrastructure, which brings together different identity-based networks. Participants suggested these tools could be strengthened further. One proposed a cross-company forum where organisations working on similar policy challenges could connect and share approaches.

Another emphasised the need for accessible, multilingual resources on employee rights and protections, particularly for QPOC employees with migration backgrounds who may be unfamiliar with the legal framework. In the Netherlands, for example, many employment protections are embedded in collective labour agreements and contracts, but these documents are often lengthy, written in Dutch, and not designed to be navigated by someone unfamiliar with the system. There remains a gap between what QPOC employees with migration backgrounds need and what is currently available in an accessible form.

STRUCTURAL EMBEDDING AND THE RESILIENCE OF INCLUSION

The dialogue took place against a political backdrop that several participants named directly. One observed that organisations are caught between political pressure and societal change driven by younger employees and broader cultural shifts, ***"struggling how to respond to the current political, societal, not confusion, but like there are a lot of opinions and people pulled this way, that direction."*** Another was more direct about the consequences: if organisations wait for generational change, ***"we're going to lose another decade or two decades to have that change."***

The implication is that policy cannot rely on demographic shifts alone. It requires deliberate institutional commitment. This is an argument about structural design. Inclusion that is embedded in how an organisation functions, in its benchmarks, training, performance systems, and governance, is more resilient than inclusion that exists as a standalone programme. The question is not whether organisations will face pressure to retreat from inclusion commitments. They will. The question is whether those commitments are built to withstand it.

ENVISIONING INTERSECTIONAL POLICY

In the final part of the dialogue, participants articulated what intersectional policy could look like if it moved beyond the limitations they had described. **Their vision was not for more policies, but for different ones: policies that start from intersectional realities rather than adding intersectionality as an afterthought.**

Co-creation emerged as the central principle: policies designed without input from the communities they affect will miss what matters most, regardless of intent. Instruments such as the Workplace Pride Organisational Employee Survey can be used to assess intersectional experiences and complement the Global Benchmark. Cross-network collaboration featured prominently: rather than each ERG advocating in isolation, participants envisioned regular forums where identity-based networks discuss intersectional concerns together. And they consistently argued for embedding intersectionality in existing structures rather than creating parallel systems, so that intersectional considerations become part of how the organisation already makes decisions.

What runs through the dialogue is a recognition that intersectional policy is not yet a reality in any of the participants' organisations. The tools, the knowledge, and the institutional willingness are unevenly distributed. But participants were not describing an impossible aspiration. **They were describing the next step: from single-axis policy to intersectional awareness, from unfamiliarity to collective learning, from standalone initiatives to structural integration. The building blocks, in ERGs, external networks, benchmarks, and community knowledge, already exist.**

Across all three dialogues, a consistent pattern emerged in how participants described existing policy: designed in silos, shaped without input from those they concern, and embedded too weakly in organisational infrastructure to withstand pressure. The task is to connect what already exists, and to build what does not.



TESTIMONIALS ABOUT POLICY



Although we are often grouped under the umbrella of LGBTIQ+, each individual's experience is different. Those experiences also come with unique challenges shaped by intersectionality. As a person of colour and a member of the LGBTIQ+ community, I have faced distinct challenges throughout my 25 years of career development. At times, these experiences helped me connect with colleagues who were navigating similar situations. At other times, they pushed me to find my own path toward feeling included in the workplace.

While society has made meaningful progress in addressing racism and advancing LGBTIQ+ inclusion in many parts of the world, being that person in the workplace is still not always easy. Organisations have an important role to play in supporting these employees. Establishing clear policies that protect and affirm them helps create an environment where individuals feel safe to be themselves, reassured that they are valued for who they are and for what they contribute.



Yuli Kim (She/Her)
Director of Program Development & Relationship Manager
Workplace Pride

CONCLUSION

A SHARED VISION: TOWARD STRUCTURAL INTERSECTIONAL WORKPLACE INCLUSION

Each community dialogue concluded with an invitation to reimagine a workplace in which QPOC can fully belong and thrive. What participants envisioned was consistent across all three conversations: a fundamental shift in how organisations understand and practise inclusion, grounded in intersectionality, co-creation, and structural accountability. They called for workplaces that recognise, affirm, and actively support the full complexity of QPOC identities across leadership, community, and policy. The following vision reflects what participants collectively articulated.

Read together, the three dialogues describe a single arc. Leadership sets the terms of discourse and legitimises which concerns are prioritised. Community is where intersectional knowledge forms for institutional learning, when given space. Policy determines whether this knowledge becomes part of institutional practice or remains informal and marginalised. These elements are mutually constitutive. Leadership without meaningful community engagement risks inconsistency. Communities without policy pathways may experience fatigue and reduced impact. Policies developed without lived experience often lack relevance. Genuine intersectional inclusion is achieved only when leadership, community, and policy are intentionally aligned and reinforce each other. This results in sustainable, systemic change.



1. WE ENVISION WORKPLACES WITH BRAVE, ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP

- Leaders initiate discussions on race and intersectionality and model these practices for their teams.
- Inclusion practices and outcomes are integrated into leadership evaluations and defined as core responsibilities, monitored through tools such as the Workplace Pride Organisational Employee Survey and benchmark.
- Leadership pipelines are built with intersectionality in mind.
- QPOC leaders receive sponsorship and the autonomy needed to advocate and serve as role models.

2. WE ENVISION WORKPLACES WITH A CULTURE OF TRUE BELONGING, WHERE QPOC EMPLOYEES CHOOSE HOW THEY SHOW UP

- QPOC employees are able to participate fully without being singled out or positioned as visible representatives.
- A sense of belonging and authenticity is cultivated through daily interactions, inclusive team cultures, and responsive management practices.
- Organisations recognise that belonging and authenticity evolve and invest in them as an ongoing commitment.

3. WE ENVISION WORKPLACES WHERE QPOC COMMUNITIES ARE SUSTAINABLE, SUPPORTED, AND VALUED

- QPOC communities are structurally supported through dedicated resources, visible leadership backing, integration into human resources policies, early visibility from onboarding onward, and accessibility to allies.
- QPOC communities are recognised as sources of organisational knowledge, offering insights that formal reporting may overlook.
- The presence of a QPOC community signals safety and recognition, even when not actively convened.

4. WE ENVISION INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES WITH POLICIES CO-CREATED THROUGH THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF QPOC EMPLOYEES AND COMMUNITIES

- QPOC communities are meaningfully involved in policy design from the outset, helping to shape both content and implementation, while overall responsibility for design, resourcing, and execution remains with the organisation and HR.
- Identity networks collaborate across categories to identify both shared concerns and unique identity-based experiences, and collectively address intersectional concerns.
- Intersectional awareness is integrated into existing organisational processes and decision-making structures.

5. WE ENVISION WORKPLACES THAT STRUCTURALLY EMBED INTERSECTIONALITY ACROSS LEADERSHIP, COMMUNITY, AND POLICY

- Leadership allocates resources to communities where intersectional knowledge is generated.
- Community knowledge and experience inform policy development through established institutional channels.
- Policy anchors inclusion within performance systems, organisational benchmarks, and governance frameworks.
- Intersectionality is embedded in organisational culture and sustained through leadership transitions and shifts in political context.

6. WE ENVISION WORKPLACES WHERE INTERSECTIONAL INCLUSION IS RESILIENT

- Inclusion is integrated into organisational evaluation, development, and governance, ensuring it cannot be removed as a standalone programme.
- QPOC communities and their allies build collective capacity that endures beyond individual champions.
- Organisations commit to intersectional inclusion as an ongoing process of learning, adaptation, and structural transformation.



LOOKING AHEAD: FROM VISION TO RESILIENCE

The six visions above describe the workplace QPOC participants articulated. The Recommendations set out in the Executive Summary translate them into concrete starting points for employers, HR professionals, DEI practitioners, the QPOC community, and Workplace Pride. Read together, the visions and the recommendations form one map: the visions name the destination, the recommendations name the first steps.

This Vision Paper marks the beginning of a shared journey. While there is a lack of knowledge, data, practices and intersectional awareness, the dialogues captured in these pages represent a collective effort to articulate what has long been experienced but sidelined. Now, with community visions, innovative ideas, and collective aspirations, we have a unique opportunity to set a research agenda to deepen our understanding. At the same time, these shared visions and insights can be translated into concrete instruments, practical tools, and enduring organisational practices, turning aspiration into impact. As participants articulated, the value lies in translating ideas into action.

Workplace Pride stands at a crossroads in its efforts to shape intersectional inclusion. Its Global Benchmark can set new standards by integrating intersectional indicators, making accountability real for its member organisations, including the possibility for organisations to assess intersectional employee experiences through the Organisational Employee Survey (OES). By making intersectional challenges central to Learning and Development, these issues become essential to organisational success. The organisation's community networks can drive the cross-organisational collaborations needed for lasting change. As a leading global employer network, Workplace Pride can spark cross-organisational learning, connecting those facing similar challenges, sharing effective strategies, and building the collective knowledge essential to intersectional policy and practice.

At the heart of this endeavour is the Workplace Pride POC Community. As demonstrated throughout the process of creating this Vision Paper, the POC Community provides a brave space for connection, inspiration, expertise, and awareness-raising. The community that contributed to the dialogues informing this paper is a powerful example of how a vision can be both deeply personal and widely resonant. Looking ahead, and through co-designed policy research projects with Leiden-Delft-Erasmus partners and Academia@Workplace Pride members, QPOC employees can continue to lead as co-creators, guiding the change they have envisioned. We aspire to engage even more POC allies, knowing that our collective resilience has the power to create lasting impact.

What the dialogues consistently demonstrate is that the intersectional lens reveals gaps in existing DEI frameworks. It generates knowledge that single-axis approaches cannot. The participants in these dialogues offered that knowledge: a more comprehensive picture of how inclusion works and where it breaks down.

"We want to change the environment. We want to shift culture for us, but for other people as well."

QPOC demonstrate a commitment to fostering change and building communities that generate knowledge and create true inclusion. When organisations listen, engage, and act on this knowledge, they develop the capacity to embrace complexity, reflexivity, and impact. The intersectional future described by QPOC participants is purposeful and resilient.

TESTIMONIAL

ENVISIONING WITH POC CO-LEAD MIRA MOUSSA



In my role as co-lead of the PoC community, I am honoured to represent the multifaceted identities of non-binary queer Arabs. I have experienced firsthand, but also through others, the challenges faced when coming from a multicultural environment in navigating life and work in a system predominantly led by Western culture.

Through this first-of-its-kind initiative, the vision paper serves as a beacon of hope amid the daily challenges the world is currently facing. In such difficult times, it was heartwarming to read this paper and feel validated and represented.

The vision paper aims to strengthen the inclusion of QPoC employees through a range of initiatives. It is vital to continue this research to create the right inclusive language and DE&I frameworks that address intersectionality within the workplace.

We will continue our collaboration with our Leiden-Delft-Erasmus partners and Academia@Workplace Pride members to further advance DE&I efforts toward more inclusive and intersectional frameworks, turning our conversation into action, and action into meaningful, systemic change.



Mira Moussa (They/Them)
Co-Lead of POC Community,
FrieslandCampina

A CALL TO CONTINUE

The sociopolitical climate for QPOC workers is increasingly challenging. Anti-DEI sentiment is gaining traction, and political protections are being reconsidered or rescinded. In this context, the workplace remains one of the few environments where structural inclusion can be meaningfully established and maintained.

The dialogues revealed something that formal research methods are still developing tools to capture: when QPOC employees have space for honest exchange, collective intelligence emerges on alternative approaches to systems. This intelligence is valuable but often remains informal. I encourage the broader QPOC community to continue these conversations in organisations, networks, and public forums, where they can shape how inclusion is understood and practised. We need more knowledge. There is a significant gap in data on intersectional workplace experiences in European contexts, and qualitative research centring the voices of those most affected remains limited. This paper begins to address that gap. Current DEI frameworks, often built around single-identity categories and compliance metrics, do not adequately address the experiences of QPOC workers. The co-creative approach in this paper, using dialogue as both research method and community intervention, offers one possible model. I hope to continue this research, deepen the evidence base, and co-create knowledge with QPOC communities and practitioners in ways that are meaningful and grounded in lived experience.

This paper was made possible by a community that chose to participate, share, and collectively reimagine. If you are a QPOC worker, researcher, practitioner, or organisational leader who identifies with the content of this paper, you are welcome to join our community and this ongoing conversation.

The visioning dialogues have ended. The vision and the work they set in motion have not.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was made possible by the participation of QPOC employees from various organisations in three dialogues. I appreciate everyone who shared their experiences, insights, analysis, and critique. Your collaboration shaped this work. Your voices echo throughout these pages and will inspire and empower QPOC communities.

My sincere thanks to the Workplace Pride POC community, Christine Holtkamp, Mira Moussa, and Omar Badawy, for your engagement, trust, and commitment. I also appreciate Workplace Pride and the institutional support from David Pollard, Michiel Kolman, and Jojanneke van der Toorn (Academia@Workplace Pride, Leiden University).

Thank you to the representatives who shared their personal testimonials and experiences. Yuli, Tamer, Mariam, and Ajay provided valuable perspectives. These insights enriched this paper and enhanced its credibility beyond the academic context.

Thank you to Laura den Dulk for moderating dialogues and reviewing content. Your leadership and commitment to inclusion and belonging have been invaluable to me and to this work. I am grateful for your lasting contribution.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alex Huang (he/him) serves as a researcher and executive project officer at the Leiden-Delft-Erasmus Centre for Governance of Migration and Diversity, and a project officer at the Diversity and Inclusion Office at Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences. His research investigates how queer migrants experience and construct belonging within institutional settings, with particular attention to the practices that shape inclusion across cultural contexts.

Originally from Taiwan, Alex relocated to the Netherlands to pursue his academic studies. His experiences navigating belonging as a queer person of colour with a migration background inform his work in diversity and inclusion, reinforcing his commitment to research that amplifies the voices of underrepresented communities.



AUTHOR'S REFLECTION

WHY THIS WORK IS PERSONAL

As a queer migrant from Taiwan who relocated to the Netherlands to pursue education and greater personal freedom, I am familiar with the process of navigating belonging in new environments. Throughout the three dialogues, I recognised patterns that mirrored my own experiences: participants described workplaces where they developed heightened awareness of organisational cultures, engaged in the often-unseen work of navigating between different worlds, and realised that challenges once perceived as personal were structural and widely shared. My dual positionality as both researcher and community member influenced every aspect of this project, and I approach the trust participants placed in the process with care.

WHAT THE DIALOGUES REVEALED

What stood out most was the clarity and rigour participants demonstrated. They analysed systems with precision, engaged with complexity without oversimplification, and fostered understanding across diverse contexts. While the dialogues surfaced significant challenges, they also revealed a community that thoughtfully considers alternative approaches to inclusion. The intersectional position that makes workplace navigation more demanding is also a source of distinctive insight. QPOC employees who move between multiple communities develop a fluency in reading organisational cultures, in recognising what is absent, and in imagining what could be different. This perspective strengthens how organisations think, design, and lead.

A NOTE TO QPOC WORKERS

This paper is for you. If these experiences resonate, what you are navigating has a shape and a name, and a community of people working through it alongside you. A consistent moment across all three dialogues was the realisation that participants had been carrying as personal what was, in fact, widely shared. Your experiences and perspectives have value beyond business justification for inclusion.

A few things participants offered each other across the dialogues that you may find helpful:

- **This paper belongs to you.** It was shaped by your community's voices. Use it to advocate in your organisation, support QPOC networks, or show a colleague or manager that these experiences are documented and shared.
- **Seek and build intersectional communities.** Existing networks matter, but single-identity groups often reflect only part of who you are. Where intersectional spaces do not exist, this paper supports creating them. Even small, informal connections with other QPOC colleagues can shift the work experience before any formal structure is in place.
- **Pay attention to the cost of inclusion labour.** If you are doing this work on top of your formal role, it is worth asking whether your organisation is investing in what you are building or relying on your goodwill to do what it should be funding. Protecting your energy is not a retreat from the work. It is a condition for sustaining it.

As one participant shared when the final dialogue closed, the community holds the capacity to create a powerful collective vision. Let this paper not only mark the beginning but also inspire you to act, contribute your voice, and lead the work needed to shape your future at work and beyond.

REFERENCE LIST

- Adelman, L., Verkuyten, M., & Yogeewaran, K. (2025). Being tolerated as a minority group member: An experimental study with virtual teams. *Journal of Social Psychology, 165*(5), 624–639. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2024.2351036>
- Ahmed, S. (2012). *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life*. Duke University Press.
- Bauer, G. R., Churchill, S. M., Mahendran, M., Walwyn, C., Lisotte, D., & Villa-Rueda, A. A. (2021). Intersectionality in quantitative research: A systematic review of its emergence and applications of theory and methods. *SSM – Population Health, 14*, 100798. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2021.100798>
- Bell, M. P., Özbilgin, M. F., Beauregard, T. A., & Sürgevil, O. (2011). Voice, silence, and diversity in 21st century organisations: Strategies for inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees. *Human Resource Management, 50*(1), 131–146. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20401>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(4), 589–597. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806>
- Cech, E. A., & Rothwell, W. R. (2020). LGBT workplace inequality in the federal workforce: Intersectional processes, organisational contexts, and turnover considerations. *ILR Review, 73*(1), 25–60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019793919843508>
- Cole, E. R. (2009). Intersectionality and research in psychology. *American Psychologist, 64*(3), 170–180. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014564>
- Collins, P. H. (2019). *Intersectionality as critical social theory*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478007098>
- Cortina, L. M., Kabat-Farr, D., Leskinen, E. A., Huerta, M., & Magley, V. J. (2013). Selective incivility as modern discrimination in organisations. *Journal of Management, 39*(6), 1579–1605. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206311418835>

- Costanza-Chock, S. (2020). *Design justice: Community-led practices to build the worlds we need*. MIT Press.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989, 139–167. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1393318>
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241–1299.
- Dennissen, M., Benschop, Y., & van den Brink, M. (2020). Rethinking diversity management: An intersectional analysis of diversity networks. *Organisation Studies*, 41(2), 219–240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840618800103>
- Eagly, A. H., & Chin, J. L. (2010). Diversity and leadership in a changing world. *American Psychologist*, 65(3), 216–224. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0018957>
- Eaton, A. A., Saunders, J. F., Jacobson, R. K., & West, K. (2020). How gender and race stereotypes impact the advancement of scholars in STEM: Professors' biased evaluations of physics and biology post-doctoral candidates. *Sex Roles*, 82(3–4), 127–141. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01052-w>
- El-Tayeb, F., Haritaworn, J., & Bacchetta, P. (2015). Queer of colour formations and translocal spaces in Europe. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 33(5), 769–778. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775815608712>
- Emejulu, A. (2014). Institutionalising intersectionality: The changing nature of European equality regimes. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(8), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2014.894202>
- Follmer, K. B., Sabat, I. E., & Siuta, R. L. (2020). Disclosure of stigmatised identities at work: An interdisciplinary review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Organisational Behavior*, 41(2), 169–184. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2402>
- Grojean, M. W., Resick, C. J., Dickson, M. W., & Smith, D. B. (2004). Leaders, values, and organisational climate: Examining leadership strategies for establishing an organisational climate regarding ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 55(3), 223–241. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-004-1275-5>
- Holvino, E. (2010). Intersections: The simultaneity of race, gender and class in organisation studies. *Gender, Work & Organisation*, 17(3), 248–277. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2008.00400.x>

- Jagadeesh, A., Zikry, T., & Moussa, M. (2024). Intersectionality: The reality of race, ethnicity & queer identities. International Conference on Workplace Pride: The Future We Choose. <https://research.tudelft.nl/en/publications/intersectionality-the-reality-of-race-ethnicity-amp-queer-identit/>
- Jansen, W. S., Otten, S., van der Zee, K. I., & Jans, L. (2014). Inclusion: Conceptualisation and measurement. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 44(4), 370–385. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2011>
- Kirby, T. A., Tabak, J. A., Ilac, M., & Cheryan, S. (2023). The unique experiences of women of color in stereotypically masculine domains. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 27(3), 197–222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10888683231151778>
- Leslie, L. M. (2019). Diversity initiative effectiveness: A typological theory of unintended consequences. *Academy of Management Review*, 44(3), 538–563. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2017.0087>
- McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 30(3), 1771–1800. <https://doi.org/10.1086/426800>
- Mor, K. (2024). *LGBTQI+ inclusion in organisations* [Doctoral dissertation, Utrecht University]. <https://www.uu.nl/en/research/organisational-behaviour/lgbtqi-inclusion-in-organisations>
- Mor, K., Gündemir, S., & van der Toorn, J. (2024). Celebrating the invisible: How identity-conscious approaches signal inclusion to LGBTQ+ employees. *Journal of Business and Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-024-09975-2>
- Mor, K., Gündemir, S., & van der Toorn, J. (2025). “Are they just putting up with me?” LGBTQ+ employees’ anticipated experiences of tolerance versus inclusion. *British Journal of Social Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.70006>
- Ng, E., Fitzsimmons, T., Kulkarni, M., Ozturk, M. B., April, K., Banerjee, R., & Muhr, S. L. (2025). The anti-DEI agenda: Navigating the impact of Trump’s second term on diversity, equity and inclusion. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 44(2), 137–150. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-02-2025-0116>
- Niemann, Y. F. (2016). Tokenism. In A. Wong, M. Wickramasinghe, R. Hoogland, & N. A. Naples (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*. Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118663219.wbegss678>
- Purdie-Vaughns, V., & Eibach, R. P. (2008). Intersectional invisibility: The distinctive advantages and disadvantages of multiple subordinate-group identities. *Sex Roles*, 59(5–6), 377–391. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-008-9424-4>

- Randel, A. E., Galvin, B. M., Shore, L. M., Ehrhart, K. H., Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., & Kedharnath, U. (2018). Inclusive leadership: Realising positive outcomes through belongingness and being valued for uniqueness. *Human Resource Management Review, 28*(2), 190–203. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.07.002>
- Shore, L. M., Cleveland, J. N., & Sanchez, D. (2018). Inclusive workplaces: A review and model. *Human Resource Management Review, 28*(2), 176–189. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.07.003>
- Van der Toorn, J. (in press). Advancing LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion: Barriers, opportunities, and strategies for progress. In F. Fasoli & A. Carnaghi (Eds.), *Exploring identity, diversity and stigma in LGBTQ+ lives: Social psychological perspectives*. Routledge.
- Van der Toorn, J., & Gaitho, W. (2021). LGBTIQ+ workplace inclusion: A global issue requiring a transdisciplinary and intersectional approach. *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies, 24*, 376–387.
- Verkuyten, M., Yogeewaran, K., & Adelman, L. (2020). The negative implications of being tolerated: Tolerance from the target's perspective. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 15*(3), 544–561. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691619897974>
- Vincent, S., Lopes, A., Meliou, E., & Özbilgin, M. (2024). Relational responsabilisation and diversity, equality and inclusion. *Work, Employment and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170231217660>
- Wekker, G. (2016). *White innocence: Paradoxes of colonialism and race*. Duke University Press.
- Wong, C. Y. E., Kirby, T. A., Rink, F., & Ryan, M. K. (2022). Intersectional invisibility in women's diversity interventions. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.791572>
- Wright, P. M., & Nishii, L. H. (2013). Strategic HRM and organisational behavior: Integrating multiple levels of analysis. In J. Paauwe, D. Guest, & P. M. Wright (Eds.), *HRM and performance: Achievements and challenges* (pp. 97–110). Wiley.

APPENDIX I : METHODOLOGY

This paper draws on qualitative data from three focus group sessions referred to here as Community Dialogues. Each session focused on one of three themes: leadership and visibility, community and belonging, and inclusive policy design. These themes were identified as priorities during Workplace Pride POC community sessions in 2024.

16 participants took part in the three Dialogues. They were recruited through the Workplace Pride POC community network and by snowball sampling. To ensure a diversity of organisational voices, some were approached directly. Participation was voluntary. Participants worked across public and private sector organisations in Europe. Identities reflected a range of intersections of sexuality, gender identity, race, ethnicity, and migration background. The Dialogues were moderated by Professor Laura den Dulk, with questions and summaries led by the author, Alex Huang of Erasmus University Rotterdam. Sessions were conducted in a hybrid format, combining in-person and online participation via Microsoft Teams, and each lasted 60 to 75 minutes. All sessions were established as safe and brave spaces, guided by Chatham House Rules, with consent to record obtained at the outset.

A semi-structured interview format was used, beginning with general workplace experiences, moving to the session's main theme, and ending with a visioning exercise. All sessions were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019), starting with repeated readings for data familiarity. Codes were developed to identify key features and grouped into initial themes. Themes were refined by ongoing comparison with the data, treating patterns as actively constructed meanings. The analysis drew on intersectional scholarship, prioritising participants' voices and experiences. Findings are presented to ensure anonymity; no quote or account can be traced to any specific individual or organisation.

APPENDIX II : FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS FOR ALL DIALOGUES

All three dialogues used the facilitation principles and tools below to create conditions and an environment in which participants could speak openly and authentically about experiences that can be uncomfortable to discuss.

Safe & Brave Space Agreement

A safe and brave space temporarily suspends workplace hierarchies, allowing participants to speak truthfully without fear. It is brave because participants share difficult experiences openly. It is safe because moderators protect against power imbalances, intervening if dominant voices take over.

Chatham House Rules

Insights and knowledge could be shared and used; statements were not attributed to specific individuals or organisations. This allowed insights to circulate within organisational change work without exposing participants to risk.

Consent & Confidentiality

Explicit informed consent and guaranteed anonymity in transcripts and analysis protected participant agency. Participants understood how their statements would be used and that their identities would remain protected.

Participant Introductions

Each dialogue opened with introductions that included self-identification. These introductions established a shared understanding that identities are expressed in different ways and manifest in different work and life experiences.

Probes and reflective prompts

Each question was supported by example-eliciting probes such as "Could you give some examples?" Each visioning question was supported by reflective prompts on shared responsibility, structure, values, practices, and impact.

DIALOGUE ONE: LEADERSHIP ACCOUNTABILITY AND QPOC REPRESENTATION"

Date: 15 May 2025 | Moderators: Laura den Dulk, Alex Huang

Purpose: Create a safe space for Queer People of Colour working as professionals to share experiences and insights related to current workplace challenges, visibility, and leadership.

Key Questions

1. Current Challenges (15 min)

What are the most pressing challenges you face as a Queer People of Colour in your workplace?

- How does the current sociopolitical climate affect your sense of belonging at work?
- How do organisational policies and practices help (or fail) to address these challenges?

2. Leadership (15 min)

How does current leadership affect your workplace experience as a queer person of colour?

- What actions or qualities would you expect from inclusive leaders?
- How visible are queer people of colour leaders? Can they be visible?
- To what extent are leaders (or DEI managers) visible on the topic of inclusion of queer people of colour?

3. Visioning Leadership (10 min)

If you could redesign leadership in your organisation, what would it look like?

DIALOGUE TWO: WORKPLACE COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

Date: 28 July 2025 | Moderators: Laura den Dulk, Alex Huang

Purpose: Create a safe space for Queer People of Colour working as professionals to share experiences and insights on belonging and community. Core question: How can workplace communities (e.g., ERGs, mentorship programs) foster a sense of belonging and support the inclusion of QPOC employees?

Key Questions

1. Sense of Belonging in the Workplace (15 min)

What comes to mind when you think of 'belonging' at work?

- How do your racial/ethnic background and queer identities interact when you navigate workplace culture?

2. Experiences with Workplace Communities (15 min)

How do workplace communities impact your experience as a queer person of colour?

- Are there specific communities that contribute to your sense of belonging?
- What communities outside work matter to you?

3. Visioning Communities (10 min)

If you could create an inclusive workplace community in your organisation, what would it look like?

DIALOGUE THREE: INCLUSIVE POLICY DESIGN AND SUPPORT

Date: 3 December 2025 | Moderators: Laura den Dulk, Alex Huang

Purpose

Explore why QPOC-focused and intersectional policies are needed, how organisations can implement them, and what Workplace Pride can do to support this work.

Key Questions

1. WHY: Individual Level

Drawing on your own experiences as a QPOC employee or DEI/HR practitioner, why do you believe workplaces need measures that explicitly address intersectionality?

- Why are general LGBTQ+ or DEI policies insufficient for QPOC employees' needs?
- What challenges have you faced regarding language, microaggressions, hiring, promotion, visibility, representation, safety, leadership, and accountability?

2. WHY: Organisational & Systemic Level

Why is it important for your organisation to focus on inclusion measures for QPOC employees?

Probes (Organisational Context):

- How does the current political and societal climate increase the urgency of QPOC inclusion?
- How does intersectional inclusion relate to organisational performance, culture, talent retention, and psychological safety?

3. HOW: Conditions for Change

How can policy measures help address challenges, and how can they be effectively implemented in organisations?

Probes (What is Needed):

- Are there existing policies or practices that support QPOC employees? Where are the gaps?
- What organisational structures, leadership practices, and cultural shifts would enable meaningful implementation?

4. ENVISION: Including Workplace Pride's Role

What can your workplace and Workplace Pride (POC community) do to translate QPOC experiences and community visions into meaningful and sustainable inclusion measures?

- What types of support or tools would be most impactful?
- How could Workplace Pride help organisations commit to and sustain intersectional inclusion?

PUBLISHER

Workplace Pride Foundation, Herengracht 575-577, 1017 CD Amsterdam
www.workplacepride.org

CONTACT

info@workplacepride.org

AUTHOR

Alex Huang

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Lisa-Marie Di Maggio and John Ryan

COPYRIGHT © 2026 Workplace Pride Foundation

Huang, A. (2026). Intersectional Workplace Inclusion: Co-Creating Resilient Change Through QPOC Voices. Amsterdam: Workplace Pride Foundation.



**Workplace
Pride**

THE INTERNATIONAL
PLATFORM FOR LGBTIQ+
INCLUSION AT WORK

Join POC community
poc@workplacepride.org



PoC Community



Erasmus University

www.workplacepride.org