

It feels as though I have always been aware of challenges associated with diversity—I grew up connected to a conservative religious community, so my interests and goals conflicted with many cultural expectations for women. My first formal education in diversity, however, was in college; I was trained to facilitate diversity workshops for freshmen and to be a Resident Assistant. These experiences taught me to look beyond my own gender and religious-related challenges to see similar and often more difficult challenges experienced by persons of diverse ethnicities, sexual orientations, physical and mental abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. All inequalities of opportunity should be addressed, but my personal efforts have focused on increasing opportunities for women and Hispanic Americans in STEM.

The Women in Machine Learning (WiML) Workshop is an annual technical workshop held in conjunction with a large Machine Learning conference. For the 2014 WiML workshop, I was the Program Chair, one of four organizers. I handled the invited and student speakers, the formal mentorship program, and a career and advice session; the workshop had over 150 attendees. I remain involved in the WiML community.

My other contributions to diversity have been smaller in scale. For example, I mentored a group of four students this past summer, three of whom were women. These students were part of Princeton's "Summer Programming Experiences," which is intended for freshmen who would like to major in computer science, but would like more programming experience in a supportive environment.

I also mentor teenage girls in my local church congregation. For two years, I was a formal Youth Leader; even though I have moved on to a new role, the girls still come to me with homework and ask for college advice. I encourage them to pursue challenging careers, and am pleased to work towards greater gender equality in my religious community—I have seen positive cultural shifts, even if we are far from parity.

While serving as a Youth Leader, I transitioned to a Spanish-speaking congregation which meets in the same building. My current role there is Employment and Education Specialist. As part of my transition between roles, I designed and taught an SAT class for youth from both congregations. Now, I give career counseling to Hispanic Americans, and help Hispanic youth with college applications.

Correcting for systemic inequalities of opportunity is challenging. My personal efforts have focused on increasing opportunities for women and Hispanic Americans, especially in STEM fields and within my conservative religious culture. Being an example of a female scientist is one way of breaking down some barriers, but it is not enough; I must continue working actively to improve opportunities for others. I plan to continue my involvement with the WiML organization and with local church communities wherever I am located; I also plan to engage with on-campus diversity programs at my future institutions.