

## **Giacomo Brusco**

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### **Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

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I grew up in a fairly multicultural environment. I was born in San Francisco, California, but I spent the first few years of my life in Italy, and then moved to Spain at age five. I attended elementary school at the Italian School of Madrid, which was autonomously run as a public school for Italian citizens but was attended privately by about as many Spanish citizens. Besides the Italian/Spanish divide, many families coming from South America took advantage of the institution because they had Italian citizenship through some ancestor who had migrated to South America. I remember those years fondly, growing up in a Latin mix of cultures and languages. Children that young can absorb languages very fast, and daily interactions with peers were always conducted in a fluid mix of Italian and Spanish. I remember without rancor when my family moved back to Milan as I was about to begin middle school, and at first other kids would make fun of me for the weird way in which I spoke Italian. I am grateful that my childhood experiences have made me value diversity more at large in my adult life. Even though I never experienced any real discrimination toward myself, I believe they have made me sensitive to the subtle difficulties that come with feeling or being perceived as different.

It wasn't until several years later that I was truly confronted with learning English. Even though I had spent a couple of long summers in the U.S. as a child, again because of my parents' work, I had never truly learned to speak English, other than what little is offered by the Italian public school system. I remember very well the challenge of learning new things while struggling to write and communicate articulately in English, during my year and a half of high school in the U.S. and the first years of college. While I am very proud of the progress I've made since then, I always empathize with students who I see struggling with language in the classroom. I find that the best approach to take when someone is struggling to express their thoughts is to be patient and kind, confident that all barriers can be taken down with enough creativity and understanding. It also helps to always keep a pulse of the room and look out for confused faces, talking slowly during key points, and pausing periodically to make sure everyone is on board with the material.

I am a staunch believer in gender equality, in the workplace as in life. My mother was the primary earner in my family while I was growing up, and it always seemed only natural that women would be fundamental contributors to daily work life. Whether in the classroom or among co-workers, I find that fostering an inclusive environment that holds everyone to the same standards makes working together not only more enjoyable, but also more productive. My experience as a tutor has taught me a long time ago not to make assumptions about who is or isn't qualified for a certain field, and that holding everyone to a high standard can be incredibly motivating. Indeed, I found that the students I had the most pleasure to work with were those coming from less privileged backgrounds, who often more than made up in motivation what they may have lacked in preparation.