

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Jasmine Berry, Ph.D.

Background and Upbringing

I'm Jasmine Berry, a Neuro-AI Research Scientist, and this statement serves as my personal Pledge to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. I identify as a Black (African American) woman. I was born to a military family in California and have had the privilege of being raised in more States than I have fingers on one hand. Growing up in contrasting geographical regions across the United States, arguably one of the most ethnically diverse and multicultural nations in the world, aided in my ability to naturally appreciate the range of experiences and customs that people can exude. It demonstrated that there is not just one way to live, not just one solution to a problem, and not just one way to contribute value and excellence to society. I inherently carry this mindset with me today as a scientist and engineer. The bulk of my career and time as a trainee has been dedicated to advancing both the computing field and the core principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). My journey as an interdisciplinary researcher has been profoundly shaped by the diverse perspectives and collaborative efforts of colleagues and students from varied backgrounds – whether it be race, color, gender, disability, financial status, or place of origin.

Prior Contributions to Support Diversity in STEM and Medicine

In my past roles as a student, teacher, and executive member, I committed to fostering a learning environment where diversity is celebrated, different viewpoints are embraced, and every individual is provided with equal opportunities to thrive and contribute to our collective pursuit of knowledge in STEM and Medicine. The following is an overview of some of my past contributions to DEI.

University Efforts: During my undergraduate pursuit of computer science education I was fortunate to be selected for the Dozoretz National Institute for Mathematics and Applied Sciences (DNIMAS) scholar program which held the mission to increase the amount of Black students successfully completing higher-level graduate studies in the basic and applied sciences, entering occupations in industry, government and education. I served as the Vice President of the DNIMAS Student Association, Treasurer and Senator for the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE-local chapter), and member of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and Society of Women Engineers (SWE). While in these roles, I actively participated in initiatives to promote counseling, mentoring programs, and academic advising, that provide the necessary aid for both women and ethnic minority populations.

Upon matriculating to the University of Southern California (USC) for graduate studies, I ensured to keep the same mission active. At USC it was important for faculty, staff, and senior students to address the gender disparity between men and women that is normally seen in the STEM fields. I joined the Women In Engineering (WiE) Student Advisory Board to bring together women engineers in an environment that fostered community and support in a way that likely was not easily obtained solely from attending classes. While doing research for my dissertation I was elected Vice President of the Minority Engineering Graduate Association (MEGA) and served as a member of the Viterbi Global Committee. My roles included planning ways to recruit and retain underrepresented minority graduate students (e.g., Hispanic, Black, Asian, Pacific-Islander, and Indigenous, etc.) in the Engineering School. To support such efforts, the team and myself initially 1) conducted cultural assessments through surveys and 2) analyzed the composition of our departments in terms of race, gender, age, disability status, and other relevant

demographic factors. From these experiences, I learned how qualitative assessments, through focus groups and interviews, can provide nuanced insights into the perceptions of the workforce regarding DEI.

Public Community Efforts: In addition to contributing to diversifying the student talent pool at my Undergraduate and Graduate institutions, I have also worked to engage in many community outreach activities to positively impact K-12 students (along with their parents) to highlight the importance of their involvement in STEM. At the Limitless STEM Academy in Los Angeles, California, I mentored and taught urban community students robotics principles, focusing on practical applications of computer science. My community involvement extended to Inglewood Public Schools and assisting them in adopting a sustainable Computer Science curriculum through Microsoft's Computer Science Technology Education and Learning Support (TEALS) program. Additionally, I've been an active event speaker for USC Viterbi School of Engineering's Institute for Engineering Community and Cultural Competence (IEC3), Black Girls Code and their Local Chapter in Los Angeles California providing comprehensive programming education to girls of underrepresented populations.

Industrial Efforts: As a research scientist actively working to support DEI in industry, I have also contributed to several key initiatives. I've served on executive committees that strived to assist companies and their employees in overcoming barriers to inclusion. This role allowed me to influence and guide meaningful change at the corporate level. I have the privilege of being a corporate speaker for the Medical Innovation, Research and Entrepreneurship (MIRE) program for senior high school students in Orange County, CA. In this capacity, I engage with budding entrepreneurs and potential start-up leaders, sharing AI insights and strategies to biotechnology product development. Moreover, I am a proud volunteer for Black in Robotics, a role that allows me to bring industry professionals together to learn how to build working robotic demos via guided workshops. This commitment would later extend to me getting selected for a leadership role in assembling a diverse group of robotics volunteers for the International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS) in October. Such ongoing efforts underscore my dedication to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment in the tech industry and beyond. One of my most notable contributions in media outlets is a nomination for me to [interview with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers \(IEEE\)](#). Here, I speak on DEI-focused Excellence in STEM, addressing critical issues such as Tokenism, Minority Recruitment, and Retention. My aim is to shed light on these areas and offer solutions when DEI conversations may be seemingly uncomfortable.

Future Vision and Commitments

My comprehension of DEI is firmly rooted in both my personal experiences and through actively listening to diverse perspectives. As a researcher in the medical care field, I have observed firsthand the detrimental effects of bias and inequity on patients and users. Moving forward, I'm committed to being part of the solution for better health outcomes for all. Drawing from these experiences, I've pledged to:

1. Collaborate with community organizations and stakeholders to address systemic inequities, aiming to create more inclusive technologies and solutions.
2. Actively advocate for and implement policies that foster an inclusive and equitable workspace, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.
3. Mentor and support colleagues and students from diverse backgrounds, helping to build a more inclusive and equitable academic and professional community.