

Extended Dialogue: Extending Research

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SPEAKERS

John Diaz, Valentina Castano, Ricky Telg, Phillip Stokes

Ricky Telg 00:04

This is Science by the Slice, a podcast from the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Center for Public Issues Education. In this podcast, experts discuss the science of issues affecting our daily lives, reveal the motivations behind the decisions people make, and ultimately provide insight to solutions for our lives.

Phillip Stokes 00:30

Welcome to Science by the Slice, I'm Phillip Stokes, and this is episode three in our extended dialogue series. This episode was reported by Valentina Castano, who works alongside me here at the PIE Center. And you may remember her from our Rural Mental Health Series from last year, where she led one of our conversations. I'm really excited for you to listen to this episode, titled extending research, where Valentina discusses with our guest how research can be designed to connect with all audiences and take into account the different cultural perspectives of the recipients of that research information. So without further ado, here's Valentina introducing the episode and our guest.

Valentina Castano 01:20

Hi, listeners, welcome back to Science by the Slice. My name is Valentina Castano, and I am excited to join you all today with an important topic, diversity, equity, inclusion and justice, or DEI/J for short. This topic is especially important to me because my family moved to Miami, Florida from Venezuela when I was just two years old. While I did not grow up in my home country, I always felt connected to my Latin roots through the diversity that filled my hometown. Growing up in Miami, I had friends who represented many different religions, ethnicities and nationalities. This had a huge effect on the way that I viewed diversity, equity, inclusion and justice. As an adult, I realized that we all have a long way to go in achieving true justice and equality across the board. In this episode, I will be interviewing Dr. John Diaz. Dr. Diaz is an extension specialist and assistant professor with the University of Florida's department of agricultural education and communication. His research focuses on

understanding the cultural factors that influence behavior change. Through this research, Dr. Diaz examines Equity and Inclusion among stakeholder groups and extension related activities, such as natural resource management, nutrition and wellness and local food systems. In today's episode, Dr. Diaz will discuss the role of DEI, and communicating important topics with minority populations, and why this benefits all of us regardless of our background. Thank you so much, Dr. John Diaz for being with us today. We'll go ahead and get started and have you introduce yourself and talk a little bit about what you do. So please go on right ahead and tell us what you do. What's your position at the University and how you are involved with diversity, equity, inclusion and justice.

J John Diaz 03:03

Awesome. Well, thank you, Valentina. My name is John Diaz. I'm an assistant professor and extension specialist in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communications. I'm actually physically located in Plant City as part of a Gulf Coast Research and Education Center, which is right in the heart of strawberry and tomato fields in the state of Florida. I have been at UF now for six years where my predominant focus is on community development and program evaluation. And so I lead to grassroots initiatives that speak to those different tenants. One is Cafe Latino, which is the Coalition of Florida Extension Educators for Latino Communities, and then AIDE which is the Alliance for Inclusion, Diversity and Equity. Essentially, these two groups are trying to put DEI issues front and center and make sure they're being integrated in a purposeful and intentional way into Research, Extension, and Teaching programs at the University of Florida, but then across the state of Florida in general.

V Valentina Castano 03:59

Excellent. Thank you so much. And would you want to tell us a little bit more about what these organizations do and what your role is in them?

J John Diaz 04:05

Yeah, so I serve as President and Chair of both groups. And so Cafe Latino is really a language access organization. So in the state of Florida, we have a very large and growing Spanish speaking population. Unfortunately, the resources both education and information really are lagging behind in their needs. And so Cafe Latino is a group to help to provide more culturally responsive education, in the form of things that are in their language, things that are in tune with their cultural and cultural needs and things that are different from their group's needs versus the traditional audience needs. So that's, that's Cafe Latino, and then the Alliance for inclusion, diversity and equity is really honed in on providing development opportunities for our educators and communities. So they're able they're better able to navigate cultural difference. So we really are in a time where culture is divisive, and folks are not able to take the strategies or approaches to be able to navigate those cultural differences. So us as an organization are trying to impart the skills and knowledge of both us as an organization, but our communities are better equipped to navigate those cultural differences. So everyone to come together and have conversations to address mutual issues that we're all dealing with. So COVID is one of those now, but you know, as time passes, there'll be something else that comes in the in the baileywick. So just making sure we're better prepared for those issues.

V Valentina Castano 05:26

Absolutely. And serving as you said, chair, right, for both organizations, I imagine that keeps you quite busy. Is there anything that maybe you've come across, while you know serving in these positions that has surprised you? Is there anything that you've learned that really sticks out on your head?

J John Diaz 05:42

So it is, you know, being in a leadership position, you really see that the demand is out there, not only for resources, but for folks to be more culturally competent to, to have the skills to navigate cultural difference. We're really in a time where folks understand how their own lived experience influences the way they look at the world. And so they're really wanting to gain that lens and framework. So they're able to have that same set of awareness and reflection, based on the lived experiences of others. So it's just really, really cool and exciting to see folks that are engaged and wanting to be engaged to develop their own skill sets and develop themselves as people.

V Valentina Castano 06:21

Yeah, absolutely. Would you say that this movement that you've seen of people wanting to learn about different cultures? Is that something that's happened in kind of recent years? Or has it always kind of been that way? Has that changed at all? What does that look like?

J John Diaz 06:34

Yeah, so I think there's been momentum for some time, but the last couple of years really ignited the fire under folks, I think just with what's been going on in the world around us folks have taken time to reflect on themselves and the world around them. And it's manifests in a lot of different things, one of which is just being more in tune with the cultures around them, and how to better assimilate and connect with those cultures. So while it's been around for a long time, I think the last couple of years have really gained some momentum.

V Valentina Castano 07:03

That's so great to hear. That's such a nice, you know, piece of good news and, and hopefully, moving in a good direction when it comes to diversity and inclusion, just wanting to learn about different cultures. And I think just, that's wonderful. I'm gonna go ahead and pivot now to talking about your research. I know you've done some research on this topic, would you like to talk a little bit more about that?

J John Diaz 07:24

Yeah. So I think that when you think of diversity, equity and inclusion, as it relates to research,

it's essentially making sure that your research connects with and serves all audiences. And that's what I've done with my own research. So I make sure that when I'm doing research, whether it's applied research, thinking about program or evaluation or basic research, understanding behavioral nuances of our audiences, I make sure that I have culture and the cultural perspective brought to bear so that, you know, I understand how to potentially apply to everyone. So whether it's understanding how people adopt water conservation behaviors, or how they connect an extension more broadly, just thinking about all of my audiences and making sure that, you know, whether it's the research itself, the disseminations of findings, they're done in a way that is culturally responsive to their needs, and the way they communicate.

V Valentina Castano 08:12

That's so interesting. And so what do you think, for example, I think you mentioned water conservation, right, communicating water conservation needs? How does having a good understanding of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice, directly benefit communicating about these topics? Can you give me an example of what that would look like?

J John Diaz 08:27

Yeah, so I think in communicating water conservation, the values or the way that they look at it doesn't resonate the same with each group. So there may be some groups that, for example, I come from Cuba, it's an island country. And so there's more opportunities to connect with water and develop that emotional connection. So when we're looking at more urban audiences, there may not be that same opportunity. So again, leveraging the research tool to understand those different segments of the audience, and understanding, hey, in the, for example, more rural audiences in rural areas, it's a different set of demographics than in an urban coastal area where they have more opportunities to make that connection. And that then has implications for how they think through and act and engage with water. So that's just one example. And again, whether it's water, whether it's killing bugs, buying groceries, etc. Culture has a big component to that so

V Valentina Castano 09:22

And do you find that taking that culturally relevant and appropriate communications, you know, that framework or looking at it from that point of view, when you're making these decisions of how you're going to communicate important topics? Do you find that that makes a big difference? Have you seen, you know, compared both, I mean, I'm not sure exactly how it works, but how has that looked for you and your position?

J John Diaz 09:43

Yeah, so I, you know, I think what I've experienced is what you know, is more broadly experienced within the field where if you provide a message that speaks to their culture, their cultural values, and what motivates them as an individual, they're more likely to take that knowledge into action. And so When we're talking about adjusting irrigation schedules for your

lawn, you're not going to communicate that the same way to everyone. Because, you know, someone may be more concerned with the lush green area of their lawn where someone else may be more concerned with, can I grow mango tree so that I can provide some fruits to my family. So by testing messages, understanding what resonates, connecting that with values, and then using those key pieces of information to design your information campaign, you'll see that it increases that connection of knowledge to action, which is what an extension and in science communication, we want to create.

V

Valentina Castano 10:38

I think that's so interesting. So, as I mentioned, I'm Venezuelan, that's where I was born, that's where my family's from. And just this conversation now reminded me of a time when I had was doing the dishes with a relative, and I didn't turn the water off in between every dish that I washed, and my relative got really mad at me because they were like, You need to you're gonna run out of water, turn it off, like this whole water conservation point of view that they had was very strong. I was like, you know, we have low water running faucets, what's the big deal like it's, I'm not wasting that much water, not turning it off in between every cup. But I just thought it was interesting that this relative because of where she's from, and these notions that she has, where she if she leaves the faucet running long enough, she will run out of water. That's how she grew up. And then on the other hand, though, this relative also only ever drink bottled individual water, which wastes way more water than leaving the faucet on, you know, in between a cup or a dish. But it's just I think it's what you said it goes back to what their culture is and how they grew up and the notions that they have. And I think, you know, if I didn't know it at that moment, I would have responded, you know, with a smart comment about their water usage. But I didn't know that at the time. But I think now I wonder if I tell them, you know, hey, by the way, you know, you know how you're worried about running out of water will actually those bottles of water that you buy, and you don't drink out of a Britta No, no tap, nothing just strictly bottled water, you're actually using a lot more water that way, then, you know, this other way that you're very concerned about. So I just think that that's kind of one of those things where everybody has their culture everybody has where they're from, and all these things that you grew up, keeping in mind and knowing and, you know, lecturing someone about saving water, though, they could agree with that all day long, and not realize that some of the things that they've been doing their whole life, because of where they're from, are actually not helping the situation or making it worse. So that was just something that I thought of.

J

John Diaz 12:23

And that's a perfect example. And I've had colleagues who have been at UF and gone back to, you know, to places like Puerto Rico, where water availability is really a thing where you could potentially turn your faucet on and be out of water because the aquifers tapped out. So that that lived experience that has implications on the way they think about turning their faucet on at their cousin's house or their aunt's house, they're thinking through, oh, my goodness, the last time I turned on my faucet, it ran out or I started to run out. So you know that that's something that's in front of mind for them. So

V

Valentina Castano 12:55

For sure, and those experiences are so serious to them. I mean, they take it very seriously, you

know, running out of water is not something that they joke around with. But they're not connecting, maybe making that connection and how all their behaviors are impacting their usage of water. Because that's not something that we'd ever really think about, you know, but producing just a single plastic water bottle uses a ton of water in the grand scheme of things. So I completely agree. So moving on now, speaking about diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in agriculture. What do you think that looks like right now? What should it look like? And what are some things we can do to help get us there?

J

John Diaz 13:32

Yeah. So I think when we think of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice in the frame of agriculture, typically I think of smallholder farmers typically are underserved and underrepresented audiences are those smaller farm operations that have either become farm workers and then transition to farm producers or immigrants that are coming to this country trying to find a livelihood for themselves. So a lot of the work that that the field is doing is trying to figure out what those unique needs for those different communities are that represent a very different group than our traditional white, Caucasian, typically male producer groups for the past. So a lot of the research that's happening, especially in my space, relates to everything we've been talking about is there's this new agricultural sector, the demographics are changing, as new technology is continuously developed. How do we then communicate this in a culturally responsive way, because whether it's Latino farmers, African American farmers, Asian farmers, they have a different culture, they speak different languages, they have different values than our you know, our traditional audience that has been in the past. So if we're going to continue to see this adoption of new innovations and technology, there needs to be an understanding of how to best communicate with these changing producer groups and agriculture so that we continue to make the same progress that we've made in the past. So that's what I see as being kind of the future of ag. I think we're lagging behind in other disciplines. So if you look at the field of medicine, when it thinks of cultures and underserved group, they're really at the forefront. So I would love to see the fields of Agricultural and Natural Resources really take a step in the, you know, in the direction of medicine and even private industry to start to move at the cutting edge of considering diversity, equity, inclusion and justice issues, and all of the things that we do in that field. So,

V

Valentina Castano 15:20

Absolutely. And do you think we're doing a very good job of that write down as is? Or Has this gotten better over time has it gotten worse?

J

John Diaz 15:28

So I think on an individual level, so it's really scholar to scholar, there are some scholars that are taking more time and intention of incorporating that I think systematically, there's a lot that's needed to help to advance the DEI, and justice in agriculture. So I would love to see places like the University of Florida prioritizing it with resource allocations, both financially and human resource wise, to make sure that these conversations are happening, and that diversity, equity, inclusion issues and solutions are addressed at a systematic way, not on a faculty or unit level. I mean, I think that from our field and the industry of Ag, that's typically what

happens is, there's a really passionate person or a unit. And that doesn't necessarily always permeate the full system or institution. So I would love for it to see a UF across the country, seeing this permeation of diversity, equity and inclusion in the fields of ag life sciences, natural resources, so that we're thinking through how to reach all our audiences, every single time we do anything, not just when there's that select few folks that are really prioritizing that. So.

V

Valentina Castano 16:36

So when you say, a systematic way, and we have to talk about these things in a systematic way, what exactly does that mean? What is the outcome that you're kind of looking for? When you say that? Or when you do that, right? Like, who does it benefit to do things in this kind of a systematic way? And why is it really important to make sure that it's not just a couple of scholars at the University of Florida that are concerned about this issue?

J

John Diaz 16:56

Right. So I think it's, it's, you know, use the analogy of putting together a puzzle, you know, if we were putting together if you and I were putting together a puzzle together, it would be a lot easier if I was putting together a puzzle, I had a certain set of pieces, you were putting together a puzzle in a different room. And we had to somehow, in separate rooms, with separate ideas, make our puzzle come together. And I feel like that's how diversity, equity and inclusion is handled in colleges of Ag and Life Sciences. And so, you know, one simple strategy that you see at some land grants is that hiring of a specialist, or some sort of faculty member, that's in charge of the this idea of coordinating research, extension and teaching efforts, so that it brings together like minded units like minded faculty, to address all components of an issue. So again, using the puzzle example, if we're both looking at the puzzle in its entirety, together, there's a lot more opportunities to complete it and completed quickly than if I'm in this room, you're in the room down the hall. And we're supposed to put together the puzzle in the same place, but I don't know what pieces you're looking at. A you don't know what pieces I'm looking at. I mean, that's, that's what we're doing right now. So just identifying the picture together and working on it together, rather than our own silos, which is what happens. So

V

Valentina Castano 18:12

and so, you know, once once you're working on this puzzle, and you're putting it together, what are the kind of real world implications of that? What how does that benefit, you know, people outside of academia, because I think sometimes when we get a little bit in this bubble of academia, we know the importance of it within its own context, right? We know why it's important. And we're talking about it here in this room right now. But what does that look like outside of the university? And why is that important?

J

John Diaz 18:36

Yeah. So we're going to, I'll use my ag example, just because we've been talking about the world of ag. And so you know, those smallholder farmers, if there's not a systematic approach to addressing their needs, what'll end up happening is, you know, faculty and staff, if they're

not those passionate folks, they're going to move towards helping those that are the easier to work with those that are more accessible, they already understand the needs, that will help them move across promotion, and stuff like that. And so we see that all the time in different states where there's not this systematic approach. They work with those audiences that they know they can connect with. They get the data, the stuff that they need to help their own career, and then we continue to propagate these issues. And so if there's a means for these folks to understand where they can plug in to be more meaningful support mechanisms for these underserved audiences, then it'll help to deter some of the old practices of doing what's what's comfortable and easily accessible.

V

Valentina Castano 19:35

Yeah, I think that's a great point. And do you think that access to some of these individuals makes it a little harder because I think you brought up a really good point of, right if you don't, if you don't know how to communicate across all cultures, you're going to communicate with those around you because it's just, they're closer to you and it is more convenient to communicate with them. And you know, how to communicate with them. But definitely when it comes to agriculture, too, I think physical distance is also a huge component right? It Because even the people who are quote close to you could still be a few miles away. So how does that kind of affect, you know, broadening diversity, equity, justice and inclusion?

J

John Diaz 20:11

Yeah. So thinking through what you're talking about, as far as a systematic approach is having the system understand the time and nurturing that's necessary to penetrate new audiences, and give your faculty the leeway to be able to get their boots on the ground, develop those relationships, so that they have that connection to then serve that audience. So I think that's one of the things and just being in tune with the amount of time that it takes, you know, you're not going to go from, hey, I want to work with, for example, Latino farmworkers. And then tomorrow, you're in there and you're putting on a workshop and everything's hunky dory, it's, you know, maybe you need to go and connect with a pastor of their community and explain what you want to do. And then they facilitate the relationship. And then it's, again, it's a nurturing process. So having a system that's aware of that, and in tune with that, and giving your faculty the ability to prioritize that over just hey, I need a I need to be teaching somebody something right now, otherwise, I'm not getting credit for it. So,

V

Valentina Castano 21:10


Of course, because I'd imagine that trust is a big component for this to write when you're talking about rural minority communities, especially that can be very close knit, maybe aren't always excited to have an outsider come in and tell them what they should be doing. At least I know, I would feel that way. If I was in that situation.

J

John Diaz 21:27

Yeah. And I think it's a little off putting when you've got a community that someone's coming to, and they come to that community as if they're a Savior, and that community has nothing to


to, and they come to that community as if they're a savior, and that community has nothing to offer. And so I think that a lot of times in academia, we are very guilty of that. It's like, Hey, we've got this new shiny thing, you need this thing, I have no clue who you are, but you need this thing. And that, that just that deters these audiences that exacerbates issues of mistrust. Because, you know, for me, if I've got somebody that I've never met in my entire life says, hey, here by the cell phone, who are you? So So I mean, I think it creates this this issue that you like, you mentioned, these, these communities already don't trust us. In academia, a lot of times, especially with public universities were viewed as the government. And so depending on what country you come from, they have positive and negative views. So you add that to, Hi, I'm Superman, I'm gonna save you, it just makes for a huge disconnect when there are so many different opportunities to to help these new audiences. So

 Valentina Castano 22:29

of course, yeah, and I bet that, you know, like, I like that cell phone analogy, right? The I'm gonna sell you the best cell phone in the whole world. But maybe you haven't listened to what it is that I need in a cell phone. And so you're offering me your version of the best cell phone in the world, but it's not what's going to benefit me or be useful to me. And I can kind of see that happening. If we're taking an approach that does not include culturally responsible communication, right? If we're just telling other people what we think that they need, what we think is going to benefit them, but we haven't taken into context, their culture, or their views, beliefs and their backgrounds, I can see how that would be kind of an issue.

 John Diaz 23:06

And I think to taking a step even farther, you know, not allowing, not allowing yourself to have the perspective that you can also learn from these communities like there, we have to throw things aside that, okay, from academia, we can only teach these communities now these communities have as much to teach us as we have to teach them. So we've got to create this environment where there's opportunity for co-learning, co-development of knowledge, so that it's, it's some empowerment of these communities, they feel like they're developing their own solutions with us, rather than being told what the solutions are for them. So hey, there's the cell phone, I didn't make phone calls, but you're gonna show me how to use the video function, right? I don't even get on tik tok while you're showing me this

 Valentina Castano 23:49

exactly. But it's the best cell phone ever Well, maybe not for me, maybe for someone else. And maybe for someone else, it is fantastic. But, you know, it's it's not all Latinos don't have the same cultural background either. So you can't say, you know, I think oftentimes, I've seen that some organizations will say, you know, the Hispanic minority population feels this way. Well, I mean, that's, you know, there's many, many countries in Latin America, this is not the Hispanic population is not one culture. It is many, many different beautiful cultures combined into one. And so I think that's something to that, that, you know, comes to mind when we're talking to these communities.

 John Diaz 24:20

J John Diaz 24:30

And that's an important point and something that we and I say, we mean, the folks that I like to collaborate on workshops and stuff with is just letting folks in to understand that there is more difference within a cultural group than there is a cross cultural group. So you mentioned Latinos, it's, you know, I'm Cuban. You know, I know that you know, there's there's a lot of other different types of Latinos and we're not all the same. We eat different foods. We have different dialects and the way that we talk we listen to different music, we, you know, we appreciate time differently even within my own family. So I think it's really this all circles back to the original question what is DEI mean to you, it's looking at each person and individual and taking time to live that person up rather than push them down. And if we are able to do that, then science communication, life COVID recovery, insert issue here. And we'll we'll be able to overcome that as a collective.

V Valentina Castano 25:25

And then I do just out of curiosity, I'm curious with the organizations that you work with, and all the people that you've come in contact with, is there. Are there any stories that really stick out to you of maybe someone who's come to CAFE Latino needing some kind of translation or help with language? And maybe they worked with the organization and there was a really positive outcome? Is there anything that comes to mind in that way?

J John Diaz 25:48

Yeah, so I think so COVID being what it is, there was a lot of need for information for our Spanish speaking audiences, there was a lot that the CDC and others were doing for English speakers, but there wasn't that same proactive increase in the amount of Spanish speaking resources. So our group, cafe Latino, thrusts ourselves in the middle of that and started to create educational resources, we partner with Michael Lazaretto, to do town halls to provide information in Spanish. And so it was really we were a key cog and getting the information as related to COVID, mitigation, vaccination, etc, to the Spanish speaking audiences. And we had folks that you know, circled back and let us know how appreciative they were of it, just because without that it was up to them to find the limited amount of resources that existed, which were very few and far between. So

V Valentina Castano 26:37

of course, yeah, because not everybody has someone who can translate those materials for them. Right. And I think a lot of that language could easily but get very complex, even for a native English speaker, right? We've had to make sure that we tailor a lot of these materials, even to native speakers, in many different ways. Because it's so important. And it doesn't, we don't want to make it too science heavy. Of course, we want to reach a lot of audiences. And so I can only imagine if you are someone who is not a native English speaker, to be in a different country in a pandemic, and not have access to this information, just how critical that is.

J John Diaz 27:09

Yep. So and we tried to serve as much as we could. and we did every everything that we could

that was relevant. So even food safety type of stuff, we were putting out educational resources, so folks understood what food safety look like in the in the middle of COVID. So,

V Valentina Castano 27:23

so looking towards the future, what do you think are some future steps that should be done to improve DEI? And do those look a little different, maybe at the university level, at the industry level, or at the consumer level?

J John Diaz 27:35

Yeah. So I think from an agricultural standpoint, you're starting to see some diversity, equity, inclusion and justice initiatives being set up. So a lot of the black farmer support that you're seeing is being put out in the state of Florida, I think the future is really refining those processes, making sure that those that need the support are getting it in a timely manner. So I know, for example, again, that that support mechanism for the black farmers, there are some lessons learned. So continuing to learn from that process, I'm making sure that it moves forward. from an academic standpoint, I just reiterate, what I mentioned earlier, is making sure that these institutions are continuing to allocate resources so that diversity, equity, inclusion and justice issues are handled systematically. So I would love to see, you know, diversity, equity, inclusion and justice be incorporated into tenure and promotion packets, and its consideration and how we do research, having positions put in place to help to be, for lack of a better term, a puppet master to make sure that all of us are putting together our puzzle in the same room and are communicating with each other. So again, it's it's a systematic, synergistic approach to make sure that the momentum that we've seen in the last couple of years doesn't fizzle out and we go back to status quo.

V Valentina Castano 28:43

And do you think there's anything also that can be done maybe at the classroom level or at the individual level? For those who are not currently students at a university?

J John Diaz 28:52

Yeah, I mean, I think it's just helping folks to understand what the value of diversity, equity and inclusion is and how everyone fits within that mold. So I think a lot of times, especially now that we're amidst kind of this division of cultures, when we speak to diversity, equity and inclusion, if you're not a minority, or you don't consider your unstuff, underserved and underrepresented, a lot of folks won't see themselves in that. And everyone has a place in diversity, equity and inclusion. So I think in the classroom, helping, whether it's little kids, middle school kids, high school kids, college kids, etc. Allowing them to see those connections, and what their role is to help to promote diversity, equity and inclusion. So that's what I would envision. And I think that helping folks to see their their pieces is that first step,

V Valentina Castano 29:20

 Valentina Castano 29:59

And I know that you've talked about this a little bit already. But if there was anything else you'd like to say, what do you think are some of the obstacles currently in place keeping us from improving in this regard? And what are some things that maybe we could do to overcome them?

 John Diaz 29:54

Yeah, so I really think that last comment is a humongous obstacle. Letting everyone see how they fit into diversity, equity inclusion, and why everyone benefits from diversity, equity and inclusion. And so you'll see in the landscape of policymaking that there's just a disconnect in what the benefits are, and why diversity, equity, inclusion training, education is offered. And so providing that needed information and understanding is pivotal to ensure that our current policy barriers don't stick around and new barriers get put in place. So that's what I would envision. There's obviously more to it than that. But I feel like that's a central cog in the wheel that it without that the rest of the wheel will not turn. So.

 Valentina Castano 30:41

And finally, just want to talk a little bit more. I know that you also did preferences earlier, but in case there was anything else you'd like to say, what is the impact of improving DEI? Why is it important? Who does it benefit? I know, you said that it doesn't only benefit these minority communities, it benefits everybody. Could you talk a little bit more about that? And what that looks like?

 John Diaz 31:01

Yeah, so we're a system as much as we think we're not connected to each other we are. So we're only you know, the the analogy of the chain, we're only as strong as our weakest link. So if we figure out how to bolster all the links in our chain, that is the system of humanity, then we're all going to be better for it. So you know, more educated folks, less crime, higher GDP, healthier people, happier people. That's the goal of it, I mean, is making sure that we're doing research and education that better the quality of life of everyone. So if we include DEI into that, then everyone's quality of life will improve. And I see that as the role of science, the role of academics, the role of communicators. So we're doing it right. That's what should happen. So if we're doing it right. Right, right.

 Valentina Castano 32:14

Gotta get it right. Excellent. Dr. Diaz, thank you so much for joining us today. It's been a pleasure to have you. Thank you.

 John Diaz 32:22

Thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

P

Phillip Stokes 32:30

That concludes Episode Three in the extended dialogue series. I want to thank Dr. John Diaz for being a guest on Science by the Slice. We have one more episode in this series. And that's with Dr. Scott angle, Vice President of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Florida. That episode is available. Now. Be sure to subscribe to Science by the Slice on your preferred podcast app. If you have any questions about the podcast or if you'd like to share any feedback, you can email us at PIECenter@ifas.ufl.edu. That is pie center all one word at IFAS.ufl.edu. I want to thank everyone involved with science by the slice, Valentina Castano, who you heard from in this episode, Michaela Kandzer, Rachel Raybon, Sydney Honeycutt, Ricky Telg, Ashley McLeod Morin, and Alena Poulin. I'm Phillip Stokes. Thanks for listening to Science by the Slice