

# Kelsey Fortune

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Step 1: Recognizing the need for inclusion, diversity, and equity initiatives, committees, and education.

For an advantaged, white, cis-gendered, heterosexual male, this is an important step. For anyone else, it is typically a given. As a woman in a male dominated field, I am often exhausted and frustrated by the lack of diversity. For example, during my undergraduate studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, there was one tenured female faculty member. As I began applying to graduate school, I had the pleasure of meeting with the only female first-year graduate student in the economics department. Even now, my dissertation committee is entirely male. The lack of diverse role models made it clear to me that there is a problem.

Step 2: Educating oneself.

As a woman, it would be simple to focus on the issue of gender diversity that directly impacts me. However, it would be irresponsible to ignore that I am privileged in many ways. I do not face the same difficulties faced by those of different identity, race, culture, socioeconomic status, educational background, or ability. I actively look for voices different from my own to educate myself on the ways in which others are silenced, excluded, stereotyped, and discriminated against. Most recently, this has come in the form of reading literature with characters or by authors from LGBTQIA+ and African American communities.

Step 3: Creating spaces for diverse voices and people.

I began a regular coffee hour for the female faculty and graduate students during my year as the president of the economics graduate student association. It only lasted for that year, but I am always searching for ways to create community. In addition to my passion for promoting community and encouraging women in economics, I also volunteer as assistant executive director for Purple Tree Café, a nonprofit focused on providing community-based employment to people with disabilities and creating community for all. Working with this organization has created important new relationships in my life, and the space we are creating where everyone is welcome is truly magical. Additionally, I began a podcast to create a space for survivors to share their experiences with sexual violence with a friend I met through a support group. I hope to grow a community based in this and create spaces for victims to connect with others who can relate to their journey. It has felt amazing to have a platform to speak about a part of my life that is often silenced. I plan to continue to fight for minorities in economics, work with Purple Tree, and empower others to share their silenced truth.

Step 4: Educating others.

This step is the most difficult. It often means having hard conversations and putting oneself in uncomfortable positions. Right now, I am focus on educating others on diversity and inclusion through my podcast and Purple Tree. A goal I have for the podcast is that it will provide insight for others whether they hope to help someone close to them or just want to broaden their understanding

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of the human condition. Similarly, I hope to expand Purple Tree Café into its first brick and mortar location to provide a focal point for our diverse community and provide a place for people in Davis to interact with and learn about this mission.

Step Always: Treat everyone with respect.

Significant time and effort are involved in an active journey of working to promote inclusion and diversity, but it is not always hard work. When I was teaching my own course, a visiting student from Spain needed a letter from me to their university confirming their success in the course at the end of the quarter. I used they/them pronouns in this letter having noticed that this student may not fit clearly into antiquated binary gender categories. They responded with such gratitude and confided in me, and I will never forget that. It was such a simple thing for me, but for them, it was a moment of recognition and respect.