

Compliance Today – April 2021 Thriving in the American workplace: Tips for African Americans and their allies

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In 2020, SCCE & HCCA created a Diversity & Inclusion Committee made up of veteran compliance professionals, including a few members of our board. This group will discuss the role of the compliance and ethics profession, and therefore the role of this organization, in the ongoing battle for improved workplace environments in relation to race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, and all other aspects of diversity and inclusion. Two of the committee's members have written this article for Compliance Today that focuses on one of the most talked about diversity and inclusion issues. To learn more about the committee, please see Gerry Zack's column in this issue of the magazine.

Navigating the American workplace presents opportunities to anyone hoping to learn, grow, and thrive, but for African Americans in particular, there are unique challenges they must astutely and deftly identify and overcome to flourish. This requires intrinsic motivation, emotional intelligence, and perseverance. These attributes along with allyship and strong company support provide an environment where everyone benefits.

For anyone who believes in the many aphoristic musings that hard work and being prepared will create opportunities, we'd like to share some examples of real-life incidents that have taken place among some African American individuals that are drawn from our entire experience in the American workplace. All names have been changed.

- Donald, the star salesperson with a stellar record, having won the highest sales award for three years in a row, was told not to even apply to the next-level opportunity. To go even further, the job requisition would be changed to include one skill he did not have, and another, non-African American, person whose skills did not fit even half the requirements would be hired.
- Sheila, the strong junior executive whose skills and talents afforded her an opportunity to present a well-received project to senior leaders, was pulled aside afterward by a junior manager on the team and told the manager is pushing for Lisa (a non-African American woman with fewer qualifications and less education) to present next time and that Lisa would be the one she supports for any leadership roles.
- Tanya, a proven leader and successful team player, whose promotion created such resentment that a non-African American team member escalated it to management to discuss his issues despite the fact that Tanya was the most educated person on the team and had the most experience.

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