



# Diversity, Equity & INCLUSION



By **Dr. Nancy Koury King**  
President, Senior Options

*This article is the fifth in a series on Diversity & Inclusion.*

*In this article, I speak with Jennifer Marañá, Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Broadmead.*

## Broadmead Diversity and Inclusion: The Journey Doesn't End

**Broadmead is a 40-year-old, Quaker-based life plan community. Quakers were some of the first abolitionists with a long history devoted to supporting social justice movements.**

Experienced in diversity, equity, and inclusion, **Jennifer Marañá**, is in her second year as the Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Broadmead, a life plan community in Maryland. Broadmead has shared these values from its founding. Yet even with that compelling link to anti-racism, Jennifer points out that there is more work to be done 40 years later. Broadmead is continuing its journey to more intentionally infusing diversity, equity, and inclusion into its organization.

Broadmead recognizes that the older adult population is growing larger and becoming more diverse and has taken concrete steps to prepare for this shift. An inclusion committee was formed in the 1990s. However, Broadmead didn't realize enough of an impact from its efforts. Broadmead established a new found commitment to diversity and inclusion in 2015 through the development of a Diversity and Inclusion Work Group (DIWG), which researched diversity efforts within the senior living industry and beyond and diversity-related demographics trends among older adults.

When executives at Broadmead heard **Suzanne Pugh**, CEO of Aldersgate, speak on the topic of her organization's journey promoting diversity and its hiring of a full-time Diversity and Inclusion Officer, they decided that this was a best practice to move their efforts forward. Like Aldersgate, Broadmead created a full-time position committed to diversity and inclusion efforts.





**Jennifer Marañá, Ph.D.**  
Director of Diversity and Inclusion  
Broadmead

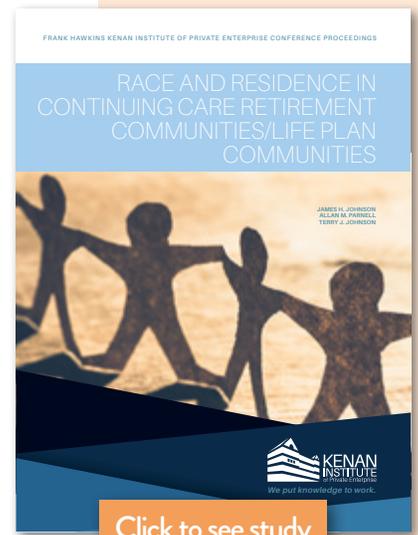
Enter Dr. Jennifer Marañá, who became Broadmead's first director of diversity and inclusion. The position and Jennifer are new to the organization. Jennifer shares that Broadmead's diversity and inclusion journey has required patience and taking one step at a time, **“Day to day, it's navigating what we are doing as an organization.”** Part of the journey is the work behind-the-scenes – networks developed, goals and objectives formed, and work to embed inclusion among all Broadmead community members.

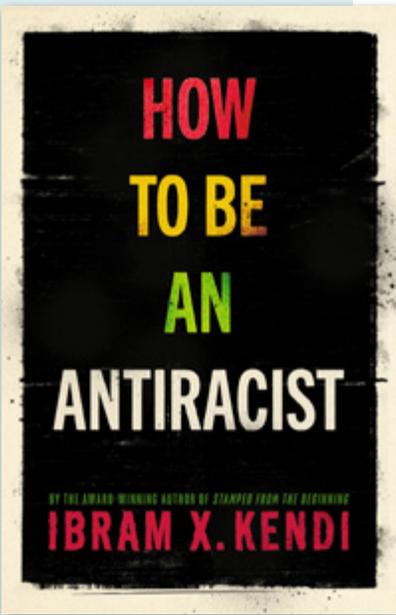
The primary activities have been conducting outreach, creating relationships, and building trust with people of color in the local community. Communities of color traditionally do not access life plan communities for a variety of reasons. Working with LeadingAge North Carolina, **James Johnson, Jr., Allan Parnell,** and **Terry Johnson** conducted a 2018 study on Race and Residence in Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRC)/Life Plan Communities that outlined several voiced by middle-aged and older African American adults for why they do not access life plan communities. These include a commitment to taking care of one's own family, even in older age; a lack of knowledge of and indifferent attitude towards CCRCs; and the cumulative racial fatigue of being the only or one of few people of color in predominantly white spaces.

**Jennifer learned that before talking to people about Life Plan Communities, they needed to raise awareness among communities of color of the options available for older adults.** Jennifer believes that as older adults become more aware of the options available, they can make more informed decisions related to where they might choose to live as they age. Should they decide that a life plan community is for them, the hope is that they will select Broadmead.

A vital piece of the outreach efforts is focused on relationship-building, visibility in the community, and strengthening relationships with individuals and organizations over time. Jennifer indicated, **“They aren't going to come if they don't know and trust you. They also have to know that you are authentic and sincere in how you serve older adults and that you aren't just trying to check off a box.”**

Jennifer emphasizes that the real depth and value of working with communities of color is doing it because it's the right thing to do. The greater community wants to be sure that Broadmead is where any older adult of any background feels welcome and included.





**One of the challenges in attracting residents is the lack of representation of people of color among the current residents.**

For the residents of color who are at Broadmead, Jennifer states that there is an appreciation for its commitment to diversity and inclusion. Some of them have been very active in assisting with these efforts. They have helped with outreach efforts, initiated educational opportunities, and have referred friends to Broadmead.

While such representation is essential for residents, it is also necessary for staff, particularly among leadership. While Broadmead’s staff is predominantly made up of people of color, the leadership team is primarily white. Jennifer states this imbalance is visible to people outside and inside the organization.

**“When people are looking for a job, they naturally want to see others who look like them,”** remarked Jennifer. “If you have a workforce that is predominantly people of color, and the leadership is not, we must be intentional about taking action steps to recruit and retain more leaders of color.” Broadmead has put together a diversity recruitment plan. “We have recognized that the turnover for leadership positions is infrequent, and diverse voices and experiences are valued. **Broadmead developed the Employee Advisory Council (EAC) to ensure that the opinions and thoughts of non-management employees are included in executive-level decision-making processes.** EAC members attend weekly executive leadership team meetings, share their insight and perspectives on the topics presented, and are integral to the top level’s organizational decisions.

As with some other organizations across the country, the Broadmead staff and residents had the opportunity to reflect on George Floyd’s death and racial injustice by taking a knee for nine minutes. As residents reached out seeking resources to learn more about racial injustice and ways to be part of the solution to address it, **Jennifer developed a Racial Justice Advisory Group. Residents came together to discuss what racial-justice-related activities they were initiating or taking part in at Broadmead and beyond.** Residents shared that the poetry group had been discussing the poetry of African American poets. Book groups were reading African American writers; one group, in particular, was meeting regularly to discuss Ibram Kendi’s “How to be an Anti-Racist.” Some members of the writer’s group had been writing about and sharing their experiences and memories involving race and race relations. Residents were inviting speakers to discuss topics related to the Black Lives Matter movement. **A resident who had been an educator, administrator, and counselor hosted a dialogue series on “Talking about Race and Ways White People Can Help.”**

An effort that has continued since George Floyd's murder has been a weekly Moment of Silence. Quaker worship begins and ends with a moment of silence to allow for participants to listen to the "still, small voice" within. While not everyone takes part, Broadmead offers this time to those who want it or need it. It is followed by a reflection question related to each person's life experience, learning, or other diversity-related topics, such as 'what have you observed, experienced, or learned since the start of the racial justice movement?' While some residents meet in small groups outdoors, others participate via Zoom, where participants have five minutes of silent reflection followed by conversation. These dialogues have deepened the opportunity for residents to connect. Residents have shared sentiments such as, **"I've heard of white privilege, but I never fully understood it until now."** "These past few weeks have opened my eyes," and "... I feel like the wool had been pulled over my eyes throughout my whole life," and many other sentiments that illustrate new learnings.

For Jennifer, hearing residents say these things is a reminder that the journey doesn't end. She finds commonalities in their emotional reactions. For some, it's anger – why didn't I notice this? For others, it's frustration – why did no one tell me? Still, others experience sadness – what a missed opportunity – I could have made a difference earlier in my life. What has been of most value is recognizing that whatever missed opportunity existed, there remains an opportunity for continued self-reflection, more in-depth dialogue, and learning across different perspectives. Jennifer reminds residents and others, **"While it's happening nationally, individually, we are all impacted in some way, shape, or form."**

I asked Jennifer what advice she would offer other leaders wanting to start or build on diversity, equity, and inclusion conversations and initiatives in their organizations. **"I do believe in the power of leadership. If we want to engage these conversations across the organization among staff and residents, then we need to be willing to do so among leadership."**

It is also essential to have a group of staff, residents, and board members engaged in its diversity, equity, and inclusion journey. Jennifer notes that staff, board members, and residents voiced their interest and desire to engage in this work. Jennifer appreciates the many partners she has in this work, "I have partnerships among the executives, staff, the diversity and inclusion work group, board members, and among the residents. I do not have to do this work alone." Last, she advises, **"Whatever you do, it should be authentic to the organization."** For example, the moment of silence is a Quaker friendly tradition. Do what will resonate with your community.

**"You lift me  
and I'll lift  
thee and we'll  
ascend  
together."**

– Quaker proverb

**"I've heard of  
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– Broadmead Resident

**"Whatever  
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– Jennifer Maraña, Ph.D.

## What's next for Broadmead?

In addition to continuing its community outreach efforts and various staff initiatives, the organization is pursuing SAGECare certification. This credentialing was a part of its Diversity and Inclusion action plan to provide LGBTQ competency training so that employees can better serve LGBTQ and other diverse residents.

*Dr. Jennifer Jimenez Marañá is a nationally recognized diversity expert in fields ranging from higher education to healthcare for more than 15 years. Her insight and engineering of strategic initiatives have been incorporated at some of our country's most prestigious organizations. Dr. Marañá currently serves as Broadmead's inaugural Director of Diversity and Inclusion. Despite an educational pedigree that includes a bachelor's degree in Linguistics from the University of California, Santa Barbara; a master's degree from the acclaimed Counseling and Personnel Services program at the University of Maryland, College Park; and a Ph.D. in Education from Claremont Graduate University. Dr. Marañá's proudest accomplishment has been raising three children, poignantly blessed with her oldest having spastic quadriplegia cerebral palsy. This profound experience deepens her empathy for others' diverse lived experiences.*

**During Jennifer's first year at Broadmead, while many residents were supportive, some expressed ambivalence for her role and questioned why it was necessary.** Wisely, Broadmead expected obstacles and resistance but has committed to pursuing its diversity and inclusion journey despite this. "Even if we get push-back or negative feedback, as an organization, we have to stand up and say this is who we are, and it's not about hate and division. It's about unity, inclusion, and ensuring that everyone who is part of the Broadmead community feels a sense of belonging. They should know that we see them for all the diverse identities, experiences, and perspectives they bring to Broadmead and that we care about them."

While talking about diversity, equity, and inclusion can be uncomfortable for some, it can be scary. Before facilitating diversity-related dialogues, Jennifer shares guidelines and ground rules for "brave space" conversations.

**A brave space allows for healthy discussion, so no matter their differences, people can respect each other and not invoke those differences for hatred or division. The guidelines enable the group to hear all the voices, so no one is shut out.** "Yes, it can be scary, particularly when it involves vulnerability, but it's about being brave. We do it because we know it's right".

With diversity sometimes being an emotionally charged issue, leaders may worry that they will say the wrong thing or accidentally offend someone. Jennifer assures us that we all will make mistakes. "We are going to misstep along the way. We've all stubbed our toes and said things that aren't appropriate. If I step in it, I can have a conversation and learn from it."

Given the potential for missteps, mistakes, and offending people, it is easy to understand why leaders may not want to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in their organizations. So, what is the consequence of leaders doing nothing? "Not doing anything may convey a lack of caring and a lack of support for diversity, equity, and inclusion. It may not necessarily be true, but that's the message that's being sent. That silence speaks volumes to the community that's looking up to leadership to say something and do something to support racial justice, respect diversity, and create a community that is equitable and inclusive," Jennifer underscores.

**As Broadmead continues its diversity, equity, and inclusion journey, Broadmead recognizes that this work "takes a village."** While Jennifer, in her role as Director of Diversity and Inclusion, helps bring these efforts together, it is the part that everyone in the Broadmead community plays that makes for its success.

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