

FROM AN ALIEN TO A DIVERSITY REPRESENTATIVE

I was born and raised in Brazil, more precisely, in Rio de Janeiro, the city where everything is mixed. At the cultural capital of Brazil, you can see blacks, whites, rich's, poor's heteros, and gays sharing peacefully the spots at the beach.

Thinking about my own social bubble, I always had friends of all races, sexual orientation, and religion, so I really felt that I understand about diversity. Besides that, I'm a designer, I know about human-centered, and empathy, right?

This is was my blindness make me believe that was true. Honestly, until 2015 when I moved to the USA I had never thought deeply about diversity. I just start to understand about minority when I became one.

This new experience opened my eyes to start to see clearly the importance of a diverse environment and to feel more connected with all my students.

After three years studying and teaching at the KU Design Department, I can say that I had the opportunity to help and be part of the story of some of my students. People that faced challenges for being Transgenders, Afro-Americans, gays, etc. But, I want to highlight one moment that happened at the graduation of the class of 2018.

After the Commencement celebration, one of my students asked to introduce me to her parents. They are simple people, that immigrated to the USA from Mexico and at that time, was celebrating the first family member that was graduating in the university.

She introduced me and said that I had an important role in her academic success and very excited she complemented saying "and he is brown like us."

At that afternoon on May 2018, I finally realize the importance of representation at the university level, and as part of a minority, I felt the responsibility to take an active leadership role in furthering diversity in the academy.