

Carlottia Scott

Chief of Staff, Representatives Ronald V. Dellums and Barbara Lee of California

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Diversity in the House

Carlottia Scott explains why it is important to have women of color working in the House.

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I think it's important because women of color bring a different perspective that the majority of Members may not have even considered, thought about, understood. Women of color bring, I want to say, a broad perspective, a diversity that includes that of being a woman. If more women of color had been in the decision-making process as folk were developing legislation, a lot of the discussions that we're having today would be moot. I know I recently did a class on racism and diversity, and the one thing that folks don't understand is that if you could walk in a person of color's shoes, you would see the world differently. The example I used was I asked a young woman who was in the audience with a young son, I said, "Do you have a conversation with your son in the mornings before he's going to school about how to walk down the street?" She said, "No, why should I?" I explained to her that, as a grandmother sending my grandsons out the door every morning, I have to remind them that they are young men of color, and this is how you have to conduct yourself in the street, around police people, etc. The entire audience gasped and said they never realized that that conversation has to take place among families of color. It's the same thing with the institution. The experiences and the culture and the diversity bring just that to offices who don't necessarily know. I'm just saying, women of color can help do a whole bunch of things.