# What made Robby Starbuck such an enemy of the gay community?



In a move that has stirred angry debate, several prominent US companies have reversed their diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies. This shift has been significantly influenced by Robby Starbuck, a former music video director turned activist, who has spearheaded a campaign against what he perceives as the overreach of DEI initiatives.

For the past three months, Starbuck has focused his efforts on challenging the DEI measures implemented by various corporations. These initiatives, designed to address historical discrimination and promote inclusivity, have faced criticism from certain factions who argue they unfairly disadvantage white people and men. Companies such as Ford have responded to Starbuck's campaign by scaling back their policies.

In an undated memo that has since been confirmed by Ford and published by Starbuck, the automobile manufacturer declared it would no longer enforce quotas for minority dealerships or suppliers. This reversal is seen as part of a broader trend among companies reevaluating their stance on DEI measures.

Other notable corporations including Harley Davidson, John Deere, and Jack Daniel's have similarly adjusted their DEI policies. These companies previously promoted initiatives intended to support LGBTQ+ workers and racial minorities. Starbuck's strategy has involved the use of video exposés and a concerted letter-writing campaign, which have played a pivotal role in influencing these companies.

Starbuck argues that current DEI initiatives often impose a singular ideological perspective on employees, thereby marginalising other viewpoints. "People are entitled to their views, and we need to have a system that creates equal footing for everybody and doesn’t force any one ideology down everybody’s throats," he told AFP.

The pro-LGBTQ+ Human Rights Campaign (HRC), which previously assessed Ford as part of its corporate equality index, has labelled Starbuck an "extremist troll". HRC accuses him of manipulating corporate America for his agenda, describing the DEI policy reversals as a misuse of companies "as pawns".

Before his activism, Starbuck was a supporter of - surprise, surprise - Donald Trump and continues to criticise "woke culture" — a term often used to describe progressive policies aimed at addressing racial inequalities and supporting LGBTQ rights. His awakening to activism followed the police killing of George Floyd in 2020, which sparked a nationwide reckoning on race relations in the US.

Starbuck highlights that his campaign transcends any single political figure, including Trump. He believes the former president opened doors for outsiders in the political arena, allowing their voices to be heard.

From his farm in Nashville, Tennessee — famously known as the home of country music — where he resides with his wife and three children, Starbuck insists that his activism has already achieved more in a short period than previous social movements have with corporate America in decades. He cites the support of numerous followers and internal whistleblowers opposed to DEI policies as instrumental to his campaign's success.

The recent decisions by several US companies to roll back DEI initiatives reflect an ongoing contention over the role and scope of inclusivity policies in the workplace. The question is: could the Starbuck effect be felt in the UK corporate world?