Report: Greater Together Creative Industry Brainstorm

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"I've been in a room of 400 designers and 4 of them are black."

*"Even a whisper from my privileged mouth is louder then someone unprivileged
who can't get attention even when yelling."*

"I am one of only 8 licensed architects of color out hundreds working in Wisconsin."

Themes emerging from the discussion:

Recognitions:

- Diversity means creating economic equality in terms of opportunity
- Discomfort/Uncertainty:
    - "I was challenged to respond to a problem I hadn't considered in depth"
    - "We need to articulate that talking about race is uncomfortable"
    - Uncertainty of where to start; "How do we change the current dynamic?"
- Surprised and heartened seeing other creatives want to increase diversity in the industry
- We need to continue the dialogue; desire for more time to dialogue
- Diversity for the sake of doing favors is not helpful
- Expect resistance from huge power structures, individuals are ready for change but the industry has a long way to go
- Students need to see role models in creative industry (like they do in music industry)
- Diverse talent needs to be retained to stay and attracted to come to Milwaukee
- Important to define diversity; make "racial diversity" explicit if that's what we're talking about. We have a focus on *racial* diversity in Milwaukee's creative industries because that is where we are struggling
- Increase exposure to initiatives already started

Responsibilities:

- To create a welcoming environment so that diverse people can thrive in the industry
- To educate within our companies; be drivers of change; having dialogue with the more senior team who will choose the next talent
- To work to develop and support a pipeline from grade school to careers in creative industry, inspiring youth

- To reflect creativity and inspiration
    - My responsibility as an African American man is to retain joy among people in general and the African American community in particular. I am in the inspirational field. I believe that diversity is intimately connected with inspiration, and because I am interested in expanding the narrative of life, I am compelled to work on introducing more diversity in my environment.
- To be intentional about diversifying our work groups
    - My organization has tried to expand diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, sex, and age using project rotation. What we do is to rotate people through different projects to give them the opportunity to try new facets of their professional career.
- To step out of our comfort zone.
- To challenge the way the media portrays race.
- Conversely: There were several who didn't feel responsibility to diversify –
    - "Getting the best talent is the top priority."
    - "Professionally, I feel no responsibility. Discrimination in my industry can be seen in all forms. I have been laid off because I was the senior member with a big salary in favor of somebody younger with a family. I was happy that things went that way. However, this is an example of how the industry only cares about results."
    - "I don't care about diversity. I am only looking for the best team."

Roadblocks to diversifying:

- Pre-established idea of candidate outweighing actual qualifications: "'Will this person fit our team?' is a really problematic question." "Cultural fit is code word for keeping people who are different out."
- Too little focus on capacity building for minority students: "I struggle to find competence for roles, years in industry with specific knowledge is often key."
- Need a clear action plan: "I feel responsible and want to do something but what are the projects I can do? What are the specific goals? Who are the teams? Do I really have the time and energy to do them?"
- Stereotyping: "In my field there are a lot of stereotypes made about different groups that we work for. Everyone I work with knows this and most know and want to diversify, but there is a major lack of applicants.
- Frustration: "There's a lack of access to diverse talent for hiring right now"
- Exposure is key: "Getting to travel and network has helped me become even more diverse as I experience all the different people and neighborhoods."
- Power: Most decisions-makers come from place of privilege

Benefits of diversifying: (Beyond altruism)

- **Increase in productivity and creativity:** Greater racial diversity on a team increases the whole team's creative potential and productivity. It's easy to exclude people and make sure your work environment is comfortable, but it leads to all the same people hanging out having the same ideas. It's important to creativity to diversify on all levels.
    - "It's important at my job to hire diversely in order to have a wider breadth of understanding of our customers so that we know how to approach them."
    - "Across the board, my firm's creativity increased with the increase in diversity of people we hired."
    - "Homogenous groups provide homogenous ideas."

- **Increase in revenue:** Diversity benefits a company's profits by expanding customer base, establishing broader customer opportunity.

Suggestions to bring greater diversity to your industry:

Pipeline:
- Rely on Non-Profit partners working with youth to bridge gap between students and industry professionals
- Talent based acquisition not relationship based acquisition

Location:
- Internationally networking
- Scheduling meetings in new places: "In business, we have to be intentional about the networks that we keep. It's not just about the third ward. Hold our meetings at different places."

Education:
- Of senior team: About the economic benefits of diversifying; push against "cultural fit" hiring; being intentional about expanding the network
- Of industry: Industry panels discussing business practices, needs, processes (rather than design); Listening to professionals of color about the challenges they face working in the industry
- Of young people: Through mentorship, paid internships/projects, workshops, field trips; Building excitement
- Of our selves: Being open to being uncomfortable, trying something new

Opportunities:
We need to create more opportunities for diverse talent to:
- Compete in marketplace of ideas: "There needs to be more opportunities to present ideas in the creative industries, and get projects accepted. A pure ideas (blind) competition doesn't involve a presentation, just a proposal."

- Build their portfolios
- Network and make connections
- Work on creative projects with real companies

Stats:
87% of participants felt their industry lacked diversity
100% felt that the mission of Greater Together was important
 62% felt their industry was ready to engage on this issue

"What one word would you offer to the group as an important takeaway from this conversation?"

- Compassion
- Bravery
- Resist
- Awareness
- Do it.
- Urgency
- Intention
- Relevance