

TACKLING DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IN THE CREATIVE SECTOR

For a long time the creative sector has generally believed that it should embrace all forms of diversity but in respect of race and ethnicity it seems that real improvement has only been marginal. How is it that the sector that has communication and behaviour change as its fundamental purpose cannot address an issue at its heart?

Now that racial diversity has become a priority, does the industry really understand what it needs to do?

According to Paprika Client Engagement Consultant India Quow, **change needs to start early**, at home and in schools, to remind everyone how important diversity is and to give all children the confidence to know that they can be whatever they want to be and that they will have an equal opportunity to achieve their goals.

India's own experiences as a Mixed White/Black Caribbean girl growing up in a small town in Kent and then as she started to make her way in her chosen career, have left her determined to do anything she can to make the world a more diverse and accepting place to live:

"I think black people are generally given fewer opportunities for progression into senior roles and you can see this just by looking at the senior members of most agencies, but I have been very fortunate to have worked with some pretty impressive black people in senior roles. Fortunately, I had a fantastic support network among my family. My dad always told me that I could be anything I wanted to be, my mother was an English teacher in secondary schools, and my nan was headteacher of an elite secondary school, so education wise I was blessed."



INDIA QUOW
**Client Engagement
Consultant at Paprika
meets up with her
mentor Ete Davies,
CEO at Engine**



ETE DAVIES
CEO at Engine

Standing up to racism

Recently India met up with one of the people who had inspired her, her former Managing Director, Ete Davies, now CEO at creative agency Engine.

“Ete Davies was the first black person I ever came across in a senior management team and he opened my eyes to a lot of things, and seeing his success and with his input, I now have the confidence to take action when I think I’m being discriminated against.”

Ete explained how he hopes that him overcoming some of the challenges faced by those from a BAME background will help others do the same, simply by showing them what is possible:

“We need to change the way society views diversity. We face racism and negativity on a daily basis but by facing that and succeeding anyway, people like me, who’ve reached senior positions, show those coming up behind us what they can achieve. It shouldn’t be that way, but it is and it is the way we are going to change the make-up of our industry... There are far too many people of the same colour, from the same backgrounds, who went to the same schools, and that has to change.”

“Not everyone feels they can speak out, because they fear discrimination,” India continued. “Those at the top and in HR roles should be doing more to make sure everyone can deal with racism and discrimination in the right way without feeling threatened.”

“Things are changing, there’s no doubt about that, but there is still so much more to be done. I was the only black kid in my school and I suffered racism not just from other pupils but from teachers. They definitely treated me differently because of my skin colour and that’s not really that long ago. There is nothing I can do about being black.”

“I hold my head high and know I’m a good person. Sadly, that strength can only come once you’re actually in the workplace. You can make your point and call people out. The problem is often getting into the workplace that you want to be in. I know, almost for a fact, although you can’t prove it, that at interview stage I have failed because of my skin colour.”

Increasing **D&I** in our industry

Ete is committed to changing the culture within his own agency and further afield. Through a new focus on diversity and finding and nurturing talent from new areas, then making sure that talent has set targets and KPIs by which their progress can be measured, it is hoped the agency's diversity aims will continue to be met.

Ete went on: "Externally we support things like Brixton Finishing School, which provides a free 10-week learning programme for young people looking to get into advertising; and Creative Equals, which promote inclusion as being a key factor in business transformation. It's important to target school leavers, apprentices, graduates and change the recruitment pipelines.

I'm also a founder of Culture Heroes, a leadership development programme to support the next generation of BAME leaders in advertising, design and technology. When you succeed as a black person, or a person with disabilities, or from a disadvantaged background, you make it that little bit easier for those coming up behind you to succeed too."

India also remains cautiously optimistic: "Improvements have been made in terms of diversity, whether that is women's rights, LGBTQ or ethnicity and race, there's certainly more awareness. Steps are being taken to promote more diversity and equality, and we're talking about things a lot more. But sadly, I don't see an end to these attitudes and issues in my lifetime. Humanity is humanity and there are problems and unless things change drastically, we will have them for some time yet."

Ete acknowledged, "I just feel that you can't always change entrenched attitudes, and that I am the better person. If people have to try to knock you down because of your success, then you know you're doing something right."

THE DESIGN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (DBA) ANNUAL SURVEY REPORT 2020* INDICATES:

"94% of those in the design industry who responded to the survey are white, highlighting that there is a long way to go before the UK design sector is properly representative of society as a whole."