

EXPERIENTIAL
IN COLOR

SHARING

DIVERSE

PERSPECTIVES

In our second annual Experiential in Color program, we talk with 16 rising stars across the brand and agency sides of the business about industry trends, inclusive campaigns, and what it really means to belong in events.

RECRUITING DIVERSE TALENT IS JUST THE FIRST STEP

In our inaugural Experiential in Color program last year, we explored the talent pipeline and some of the factors contributing to a lack of diversity at the middle management and leadership levels across the business of events. This year, the conversation turned to belonging, a necessary next step in not just hiring diverse employees, but fostering a culture that champions growth and advancement.

For marketers like Talib Abdullahi, national event coordinator at Tito's Handmade Vodka, actions speak louder than words when it comes to reaching equity.

"A lot of it comes down to listening and empathizing. I think when you're sitting in a room of your colleagues or your employees, you have to recognize that everyone has a different story to tell, and the story of how each of us got into that room can vary greatly," Abdullahi says. "Some people have worked pretty hard to get there, or are working a bit harder and not getting as far."

A phenomenon like the Great Resignation points to the need for companies to be intentional about their workplace culture, but especially in order to retain diverse talent. It's not enough to hire a diverse range of people. Companies need to **foster** a culture of diversity.

"You can really tell the difference between companies that are actually working towards equity versus the companies that

are checking a diversity box, because all of the diverse or inclusive hires are at the junior level," says Akosua Boadi-Agyemang, global experiential marketing lead at Microsoft. "The first step is in shifting the culture internally and to do that you have to, as a company, set your goals and establish the 'why' so that you're invested before you go out and practice 'inclusive hiring.'"

And it's a critical and exciting time for the industry to develop talent, according to our honorees.

"We need cultural and neural diversity, and we need to acknowledge that great ideas and great work is a representation of various communities," says Isis Arias, marketing manager-consumer product experiences at Netflix. "To say you can't find good people or you don't know how to source diverse talent is no excuse. In this day and age, we can source influencers on TikTok, so we can find anyone, right? We just have to be more vocal and more intentional about it."

This year's program features a slate of brand-side **and** agency-side marketers who were selected through a nomination process that took place in April. Our Experiential in Color recognition program is designed to share the perspectives of, and shine a spotlight on, Black, Brown, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander directors, managers and junior talent. Meet this year's honorees. —R.B.

TIARA JACKSON

Senior Marketing Manager

National Association of Broadcasters



A PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT OF WHICH YOU'RE MOST PROUD.

I'm proud of my work from this year's NAB Show at the Las Vegas Convention Center. This was my first year leading multiple key projects for the show, including designing two new lounge areas for the broadcast community, a new short-form content series called "NAB Sip and Speak Series," two happy hours and a reception, as well as the marketing pieces for our broadcast audience. On top of that, I worked with our chief diversity officer to develop our first in-person Diversity Symposium to help broadcast organizations develop and foster corporate DEI strategies and embrace diverse representation in media, which is a topic that I am quite passionate about. Not only did I help program these panel discussions, but I also had the opportunity to lead one of the panels as a first-time moderator.

HOW CAN THE INDUSTRY DO BETTER AT FINDING AND SUPPORTING TALENT?

By embracing candidates with non-traditional professional backgrounds and versatile skillsets, and removing biased job requirements, like "agency experience." Talent from smaller markets may not have access to very many agencies, so when agency experience is required or preferred, it creates a form of gatekeeping that only benefits those with access and/or in larger markets. It's a cycle that leaves many talented creatives out of this amazing industry. Hiring talent from underrepresented communities and empowering them to make decisions will ultimately help brands create authentic cultural connections with their audience.

HOW CAN ORGANIZATIONS FOSTER A CULTURE OF BELONGING?

Start with hiring a diverse team and then don't micromanage them. I've grown so much as a marketer in my current role and that's in large part due to having a team that believes in me and trusts and supports me. They're not concerned if I'm on a Zoom call in a turban and a sweatshirt or if

I change my hair color every week or if I start my workday later, they know what I'm capable of and that I'm going to make things happen. Embrace the diversity and uniqueness of your team to enhance the workplace culture and brand.

ADVICE YOU WOULD GIVE TO OTHERS BUILDING A CAREER IN EVENTS.

Go with your intuition, especially if you're a person of color. When I was younger, I never wanted to share my opinions with the team because I was always worried about being loud and wrong. More times than not, either someone else in the room said what I was already thinking, or I realized later that my idea could have been the solution to a problem. Trust yourself and bring your unique perspective and experience to the table.

WHO OR WHAT INSPIRES YOU MOST?

Issa Rae has inspired me the most, especially these past few years. She has done so much for Black creatives and really the Black community in general. From HBO's "Insecure," to creating very curated events for the Black creative community and even her MasterClass on TV writing. She's inspired me to not limit myself and continue pursuing other creative paths too, like screenwriting and storytelling.

A COMPANY THAT'S PUTTING OUT INCLUSIVE, FORWARD-THINKING CAMPAIGNS.

I really admire what Rihanna has done with her Fenty Beauty and Savage x Fenty brands. She's completely disrupted the beauty and fashion industry by tearing down beauty norms and featuring models of all colors and sizes and genders. Especially with the Savage x Fenty fashion show that she premieres on Prime Video every season, it's always so innovative and inclusive. I love that anyone can look at the Fenty campaigns and easily see themselves represented.

PODCASTS, MUSIC OR SHOWS: WHAT DO YOU TUNE IN TO?

Right now, I'm really enjoying the new season of FX's "Atlanta." It's one of the smartest series on TV right now. As far as music, I pretty much am stuck in the '90s and 2000s.

FUN FACT:

Having started her career in the television industry, Tiara's secret weapon is in copywriting and producing scripts; skills that have allowed her to deliver creative concepts for campaigns that revolve around storytelling and capturing a nuanced voice for brands.