

On July 25, 2012, RACC hosted a panel discussion on equity, diversity, inclusion, access and outreach. More than 60 representatives from arts organizations, foundations, and other agencies attended the gathering hosted by the Portland Art Museum. This document includes key points from the discussion.

As RACC continues to convene these conversations, and work with the arts and culture community to ensure greater access for all of Portland's residents, we are reminded that there are a myriad of ways to go about this work. Every organization needs to focus on what is right and appropriate for itself, and we encourage all to engage leadership to establish goals in the weeks and months ahead. Don't be stymied waiting for a perfect plan to present itself – just dive in to this important work!

RACC is here to help along the way. Please contact RACC's Executive Director Eloise Damrosch (edamrosch@racc.org; 503.823.5400) if you have any questions or require assistance. You can also visit our equity page at www.racc.org/equity.

Facilitator: Lesli Mones, *Plural Consulting and Red Door Project*

Panelists: Freda Casillas, *Oregon Shakespeare Festival*; Sharifa Johka, *Oregon Shakespeare Festival*; Jason Jurjevich, *PSU Population Research Center*; Liza Morehead, *Greater Portland Pulse Institute of Portland Metropolitan Studies*; Reuben Tomás Roqueñi, *Native Arts and Culture Foundation*; Frank Stilwagner, *Seattle Men's Chorus*.

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FAST FACTS & DEMOGRAPHIC RESOURCES

- Between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population in the Portland metropolitan area went from 7.4% to 10.9%, constituting the fastest growing ethnic group in the metro region.
- In 2000, 61% of the American population under 18 were white. Within 10 years, the number dropped to 54%. It is estimated that by 2017/18, white non-hispanic individuals under 18 will no longer be the majority.
- In 2010, 1 out of 10 Oregon residents was born abroad.
- Households headed by foreign-born naturalized individuals earn roughly \$10,000 more than their native-born counterparts and about \$24,000 more than households headed by foreign-born non-citizens.

Population Research Center (PSU): www.pdx.edu/prc

Metropolitan Knowledge Network (PSU): mkn.research.pdx.edu

Greater Portland Pulse: www.portlandpulse.org

SUMMARY

[PLEASE NOTE: This is not a verbatim record of the panel discussion, but rather a summary of discussion points.]

Q: What were you tasked to do to increase diversity and access, and what was the greatest accomplishment?

Freda Casillas (Oregon Shakespeare Festival): It is important to acknowledge that diversity exists in many different forms. The question is: What does diversity mean to your organization? The Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) created an “Audience Development Manifesto.” Each organization’s manifesto looks different. When it comes to diversity and access, there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution. A sound bite from OSF’s manifesto:

“We acknowledge that as an institution we have created and continued to reinforce barriers that exclude people who are not part of our core audience and we commit to a constant examination and dismantling of such barriers.”

Frank Stilwagner (Seattle Men’s Chorus): Diversity for the Seattle Men’s Chorus is a flip. The chorus is the largest gay and lesbian chorus in the nation. Yet, it was clear to them that they will not achieve their mission if they are not reaching beyond the LGBT community. Everyone’s definition of diversity is different and can be based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, etc. For them, it was important to refocus their outreach and connect with audiences that are not LGBT.

Sharifa Johka (Oregon Shakespeare Festival): Sharifa manages OSF’s FAIR program: 40 – 50 join the OSF workforce for 2 to 3 months and work in a variety of areas, ranging from artistic production to administration. After their training, the FAIR alumni return to their communities and share with them what they have learned.

Reuben Tomás Roqueñi (Native Arts & Culture Foundation): Developing a diversity plan includes asking questions, such as: How do we identify where these diverse communities are? How do we develop relationships with them? How do we determine need and interest in the community? How do we organize arts activities in these communities? What are the opportunities for leadership and capital development? Where do we find diverse and qualified board members and staff? How do we measure ethnic participation and engagement? A diversity plan needs to be an integral part of the organization – a tool to create a culture of tolerance and inclusion.

Q: How long has OSF’s marketing department worked on diversifying OSF’s audiences?

Freda: OSF surveys its audiences every three years. Before 2010, only 9% of the audiences were people of color. At the last survey, it was already 10%, at a ticket sale rate of about 400,000 tickets annually. For Freda, it is important that OSF’s programming is culturally relevant to the communities they are reaching out to. Numbers are part of how they measure their engagement, but it is definitely not the only factor. OSF, for instance, engaged the Latino community by incorporating a Mariachi band into one of their Shakespeare plays. The responses from the Latino community were very positive.

Q: How do you get people in your organization excited about creating access and fostering diversity?

Sharifa: Excitement is part of who Sharifa is. Once an organization makes the conscious decision to be inclusive, you don't need a cheerleading squad. You do need a group of people who are willing to work on this. As people start to see results of bringing in new voices and ideas, enthusiasm comes.

Frank: It was more about strategic planning and deciding how to reach people outside the LGBT community. It was about building and maintaining partnerships, instead of reaching out only once. The chorus started working with these communities, reached out to community leaders (e.g. at community centers) and started meeting with them on a monthly basis. The organization asked about best practices in the community and shared their own experiences. Forming task forces which meet monthly and inviting speakers to these meetings are ways to get the conversation started.

Q: But how do you maintain this feeling of excitement? You can't always depend on the feeling itself, but need a structure or manifesto that keeps the momentum going.

Freda: When OSF first started working on creating an institutional structure of inclusion, it was only five people who took the lead and met regularly. Now it is about 50.

Q: What was required specifically from your leadership to create equity, access and diversity in your organization?

Sharifa: The leadership's role in this process is significant. It is important to be strategic about dismantling misconceptions, biases and barriers. The leadership needs to clearly articulate what they want to achieve. As a leader in your organization, you have a significant role in being an ally to people of color, people with limited access, people of different ages, etc.

Freda: It was important to have a diversity consultant assist them in the process. The consultant at her organization comes in four times a year and is always accessible via phone and email, and takes individual appointments. At OSF, the consultant helped their leaders to personally learn, without the staff having to make suggestions. An external consultant removes the awkwardness when starting conversations about internal barriers and biases, and has the ability to mediate conversations. Especially as a leader, sometimes it is difficult to make yourself vulnerable. The consultant creates a safe space for leaders to go to and start asking questions.

Frank: Not all organizations will be able to afford a consultant. However, organizations can find people who are passionate about these issues from within.

Q: What do small/medium-sized organizations do?

Reuben: Forming strategies is part of the process. It is not just about bringing in diverse performances, it is also about participation. For small and medium-sized organizations, it is vital to go to the communities, listen to them, pay them respect, and only later bring the programming to the table. It is important to develop relationships and friendships. It does take organizational commitment to make time for this type of outreach.

Q: What tangible things can I bring to small organizations? How can I explain to them why they need diversity when they are barely keeping their doors open?

Frank: Plainly, it can help them keep their doors open. Small organizations can work together and build relationships. Frank meets with leaders of other organizations and the community for lunch on a regular basis to keep the conversation going.

Sharifa: It is important to know how to make your pitch to an organization when speaking about introducing an equity plan. However, each organization has to make the final decision on its own. An outsider cannot make it a priority for them.

Frank and Sharifa agreed: Diversity is one aspect of audience development and audience development is part of the marketing. If there is no room for audience development, you don't have a complete marketing plan. You don't necessarily have to change the core of your organization or your programming, but you do have the ability to refocus and bring in new perspectives. Once you extended the invitation to a group and once you have established a relationship, you want to continue extending that invitation – whether your current programming is culturally relevant to that group or not.

Q: How do you discuss the need for institutional change with the leaders of your organization? There is always the danger that your leadership accepts addressing diversity, but only on the box-checking level. Are there structures to use to make change happen?

Sharifa: An internal tool that helped OSF was creating 'affinity groups', which consist of like-minded individuals from any given organization who share an interest in the same issues. They meet to discuss, strategize and move forward. In such a setting, it is possible to troubleshoot in informal ways.

Q: How did you come to a greater institutional understand of words such as equity, inclusion, diversity, etc.?

Freda: It goes back to the diversity consultant, with whom OSF has worked to define all these words. Part of the discussion has also been defining what "white privilege" means and how to face your own biases.

Q: In terms of funding, foundations are very focused on demographics served. Has your marketing group found a way to ask the same questions as required by foundations?

Frank: Frank is on the steering committee for the [Cultural Resource Collective](#), which "enables arts and cultural organizations to better understand the Northwest patron, to build the culture of collaboration, and to perform detailed research for growing audiences, fundraising, tourism, and advocacy purposes."

Freda: It helps to start focus groups, which meet on a regular basis, provide feedback and especially help to determine whether the organization is *culturally* relevant to the community.

Q: How do you face resistance in a way that is constructive?

Reuben: Sometimes you have to push through the resistance and send an example to the rest of the community. It is important to create and engage in a civic dialogue. Denial that inequities exist is often part of the resistance.

Q: How do you effectively avoid tokenism? How can you make the first engagement happen in a genuine way?

Freda was approached by many organizations who were looking for a board member from the Latino community. She personally only took requests seriously from organizations that were very open and honest about their reasons to reach out to her. To her, it was important that the organization was able to acknowledge the fact that its members have been neglecting and ignoring certain communities, and openly asked for her help.

HIGHLIGHTS

- When it comes to creating an equity plan, there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution.
- Creating a culture of inclusion requires genuine commitment from the leadership.
- To start the process of developing an equity plan, it is helpful to have a clear vision of what your organization wants to achieve.
- Questions that your organization may want to take into account: How do we determine need and interest in the community? How do we identify where these diverse communities are? How do we develop relationships with them?
- An equity plan needs to be(come) part of the organization’s culture.
- In order to build relationships with the communities you want to reach out to, some initial steps may include: Finding leaders and connectors in these communities, listening, paying respect to their culture, and building a connection (“sit at the table”).
- Diversity is one aspect of audience development and audience development is part of the marketing plan.
- Invite. An invitation is different from marketing.
- **Remember:** Once you extended an invitation to a group, you want to continue extending the invitation - whether your current programming is culturally relevant to this group or not.
- The process of creating institutional change involves making yourself vulnerable.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Plural Consulting (Lesli Mones): www.pluralconsulting.com

Oregon Shakespeare Festival (Freda Casillas & Sharifa Johka): www.osfashland.org

Portland State University, Population Research Center (Jason Jurjevich): <http://pdx.edu/prc>

Greater Portland Pulse (Liza Morehead): www.portlandpulse.org

Native Arts and Culture Foundation (Reuben Tomás Roqueñi): www.nacf.us

Seattle Men’s Chorus (Frank Stilwagner): www.flyinghouse.org/smc/season2012-13.asp

Cultural Resource Collective: <http://www.artsfund.org/Programs/Program-Services/Cultural-Resource-Collective.aspx>