

Diverse Trustee Reception: A History of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusiveness are core values and priorities of our work at the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation. The Diverse Trustee Reception was first organized by the Fry Foundation in 2012 to provide a place of fellowship and to highlight the work of diverse trustees in Chicago's philanthropic community. This reception, now co-hosted by Forefront, has become an annual event that welcomes all trustees and CEOs of foundations and offers insights and exposure to issues impacting Chicago's BIPOC communities and, indeed, the very fabric of Chicago.

Addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion has been a longstanding tradition for the Fry Foundation as reflected by its grant-making, composition of board and staff, and support of key organizations which are active in the pursuit of diversity in philanthropy. These organizations include Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE), Chicago African Americans in Philanthropy (CAAIP), Asian American and Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP), and Hispanics in Philanthropy. The Fry Foundation was an early supporter in the formation of the D5 Coalition, a national coalition of foundations to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in philanthropy. The Fry Foundation has also been a long-standing member of Forefront's Diversity and Inclusiveness Committee and active on its Trustee Subcommittee which seeks to engage foundation trustees in promoting diversity and inclusiveness. The Diverse Trustee reception and program series is an outgrowth of this history of involvement in diversity and inclusion efforts.

We provide below a recap of past programs of the Diverse Trustee Receptions. We hope you will be enlightened and inspired by the topics. We welcome your participation in future Diverse Trustee Receptions of the foundation.

2012

The first reception was held at the Arts Club of Chicago and provided an informal forum for networking and conversations where trustees of color were able to mingle, compare notes, learn about the different types of foundation structures and purposes and types of grant-making of the myriad foundations in the Chicago metropolitan area. A brief program facilitated by *Fry Foundation board member **Graham Grady*** encouraged dialogue on the importance of diversity on foundation boards, increasing awareness of women and minorities on boards who bring variety of experience and perspective in philanthropy, in addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with being, typically, the only trustee of color on the board of a foundation. Discussion ensued about the importance of being an excellent trustee in general, as well as focusing the attention of the foundation board on issues of concern to the diverse

communities served through grant-making of the foundation, the make-up of foundation trustees and grantee staff and boards, and utilizing vendors and financial managers which have diversity represented in their senior management and ownership.

2013

The reception and program in 2013 featured **Patrick Sheehan**, *Board Chair of the Woods Fund of Chicago* and was held at the Cliff Dwellers Club of Chicago (as were the receptions in ensuing years through 2017). Sheehan described how the Woods Fund strives to extend its grant-making philosophy of combating racism and inequality to its staff hiring, trustee selection, vendor selection and fund manager selection. Sheehan also described how the Woods Fund leverages its many assets to positively impact each ecosystem in which the Woods Fund is active. The host committee for this program was comprised of DeRondal Bevly, Social Venture Partners-Chicago and Bright Promises; Evette Cardona, Polk Bros. Foundation; Gloria Castillo, Field Foundation of Illinois, Inc.; Shelley Davis, Albert Pick Jr. Fund; Graham Grady, Lloyd A. Fry Foundation; Grace Hou, Community Memorial Foundation; Valerie Lies, Donors Forum (now Forefront); and William Lowry, Chicago Community Trust.

2014

In 2014, the program titled ***Bringing Diversity to the Portfolios of Chicago Foundations*** focused on tools and resources to assist foundations in utilizing diverse fund managers. Historically, the work of foundations on issues of diversity has been through its grant-making to communities of color, on policy issues so related and in convenings and collaborations—most always on the grant-making side. Most foundations make grants in an amount equal to approximately five percent (5%) of the value of its endowment. The dialogue at the reception and program in 2014 was about utilization of the 95% of a foundation’s endowment through becoming active in seeking out vendors and financial managers which have diversity represented in their senior management and ownership. This program was moderated by **Grace Hou**, *President, Woods Fund of Chicago*, and featured panelists **Erika Davies**, *Director of External Affairs, Association of Black Foundation Executives (ABFE)*; **Kristin Finney-Cooke**, *Senior Consultant, NEPC*; and **Lerry Knox**, *CEO, Unplugged Capital*. The presentations included the creation of a roadmap, establishing metrics, defining success, identifying women- and minority-owned fund managers, and determining the appropriateness of traditional measures for fund managers, such as years in business, assets under management, and benchmark performance in manager selection by a foundation in consultation with the advisor to the foundation. Following the panel presentation, Graham Grady facilitated a Q&A session and a “Call to Action” prior to the resumption of the reception.

2015

The 2015 program, ***Next Level Planning: Strategies for Beginning the Conversation in Your Foundation***, featured panelists **Scott McCue**, *Chair, Lloyd A. Fry Foundation*; **Ellen Martel**, *practice leader and financial advisor, Ellwood Associates*; and **Eric McKissack**, *Founder, Channing Capital*. **Unmi Song**,

President, Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, was moderator. The panelists discussed the process of diversifying the managers of the portfolio from their respective positions: as a board member, as the investment advisor, and as a money manager. The discussion delved into the range of resources available to research and identify firms led by people of color and women. It also addressed how commonly-used criteria for screening managers can perpetuate the biases created by historic structural, racial and gender discrimination (such as years of experience, assets under management). The panelists addressed how those criteria can be adapted in order to level the playing field for minority and women managers.

2016

In 2016, the Fry Foundation took a hiatus from hosting a diverse trustee reception and program.

2017

In 2017, the concept of the program was developed by **Amina Dickerson**, *board member of the Lloyd A. Fry Foundation*, and featured a presentation on groundbreaking research titled ***The State of Racial Justice in Chicago Report: A Tale of Three Cities***. The presentation of the report was made by one of its principal authors, **Amanda Lewis**, *Professor at the Institute for Research on Race & Public Policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago*. Also participating in the presentation was **Tyrone Foreman**, *Professor of Sociology and African American Studies and former Associate Chancellor and Vice Provost, University of Illinois at Chicago*. This report provides a comprehensive picture of the changing conditions of racial and ethnic groups in Chicago during the last half-century. The report offers accessible data and analysis on how racial and ethnic groups in Chicago are faring in relation to key measures of social equity: housing, education, economics, health, justice and services. The report also highlights gaps in the data and the challenges posed by the use of standard measures to assess racial dynamics. Although Chicago has many nicknames, “The Windy City,” “The City of Big Shoulders,” “The Second City,” and “Chicago: a city that works,” this report concludes that a more apt nickname may be “Chicago: A city that works...for some.” The Fry Foundation encouraged wide dissemination of the report to grant-makers and grantees alike. An executive summary of the report was distributed to each attendee.

2018

In 2018, **Ric Estrada**, *Chair of Woods Fund of Chicago*, and **Amina Dickerson**, *Vice-Chair of Woods Fund of Chicago*, discussed the process at the Woods Fund to refine and strengthen the Fund’s focus on racial equity. They discussed insights and lessons from racial equity training of staff and board members and from discussions with grantees as the Woods Fund strategy was developed. A key commitment of the Woods Fund is to listen to, respond to, and provide opportunities for grantee partners to increase their understanding of racial equity. To that end, Woods Fund actively works to build the knowledge and capacity of its staff and grantees by providing training and support, helping them to understand and engage in effective racial equity work. The reception was held at the University Club of Chicago.

2019

The following year, in 2019, a discussion led by **Dr. Na'ilah Suad Nasir**, *President of the Spencer Foundation* was featured. The Spencer Foundation has been a leading funder of education research since 1971 and is the only national foundation focused exclusively on supporting education research. Dr. Nasir discussed the implications of racial inequity in education as well as the opportunities that become possible when racial inequity is addressed. Dr. Nasir's extensive research has examined issues of race, culture, learning, and identity, with a particular focus on the experiences of African American students in schools and communities.

The reception was held at TASTE 222, the home of the Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education Group, an innovative leader in increasing diversity and equity in the educational philanthropic ecosystem and re-imagining how philanthropy intersects with Black leaders in education.

2020

In 2020, the pandemic was in full bloom, and the country was deeply engaged in protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd. The reception's panel discussion was held via zoom and discussed how foundations are addressing racial equity and some of the challenges philanthropic institutions face in so doing. For this gathering, panelists from the Grand Victoria Foundation, and the MacArthur Foundation were featured. The panelists included **Sharon Bush**, *President & CEO of the Grand Victoria Foundation*; **John Palfrey**, *President of John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*; **Juan Salgado**, *Chancellor for City Colleges of Chicago and Board Member at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*; and **Dr. Ushma Shah**, *Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools, Instruction and Equity for School District U-46 and Board Member at the Grand Victoria Foundation*. At the Grand Victoria Foundation, a strategic planning process is underway to result in a new funding strategy that centers racial equity and racial justice. The MacArthur Foundation, similarly, is exploring ways to center more of its grantmaking in racial justice. The panelists engaged in a lively and open conversation about the opportunities as well as challenges in redirecting and adopting new perspectives and strategies for addressing racial equity more directly and effectively.

2021

The 2021 program was delayed a few months and took place via zoom in January 2022. It featured a panel that discussed the imperative of closing the racial wealth gap in Chicago. The panelists included **Dr. Helene D. Gayle**, *President and CEO, The Chicago Community Trust, a non-profit leader*; **Audra Wilson**, *CEO of the Shriver Center on Poverty Law and an artist/activist*; and **Bruce Orenstein**, who was *Artist in Residence at the Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity at Duke University and founder of Chicago Video Project*. Anchoring the discussion was Orenstein's powerful documentary series "Shame of Chicago: The Segregation of an American City," notably "The Color Tax" episode that vividly described

the origins of the modern day racial wealth gap in housing policies that discriminated against African Americans and how Chicago's early patterns of segregation persist today. Ms. Wilson described the work of the Shriver Center to advance policies that address such long-standing disparities, fuel opportunity, and improve quality of lives. Dr. Gayle described the initiatives of the Trust advancing policies and practices that will increase economic prosperity for Black and Latinx households in a multi-pronged effort to eliminate the historic racial "wealth gap." Dr. Gayle noted that household wealth in Cook County's wealthiest communities, which are largely white, is more than 200 times greater than household wealth in the poorest communities, which are often comprised of people of color.

2022

The 2022 Diverse Trustee Reception returned with much enthusiasm and joy to an in-person event at Taste 222. It featured an engaging and dynamic keynote address by **Dr. Ngozi Ezike**, *President and CEO of Sinai Chicago, and former Director, Illinois Department of Public Health*. Dr. Ezike was one of the most familiar public representatives associated with the pandemic in Illinois and provided constant updates about caseloads and Illinois' response to COVID-19. She was known as a "beacon of stability." Gov. J.B. Pritzker called Ezike's work "heroic" saying, "She will go down in the Illinois history books as a woman who saved lives and changed our state for the better." Dr. Ezike's address, titled "Bringing Action to Health Equity," discussed how long-standing health inequities in the city of Chicago were magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic in the city of Chicago, what kinds of issues continue to confront Chicago's low-income communities and communities of color, and what the city and foundations can do to help. She also answered numerous questions from the audience, including questions about her impressive language skills. Fry Foundation board member, Graham C. Grady, commented, "Dr. Ngozi Ezike was a fabulous (and truly hilarious) keynote at the annual Lloyd A. Fry Foundation Diverse Trustee Reception. She is gifted and totally committed to community health."

2023

The 2023 Reception featured an inspiring panel discussion with two CEOs who have led major transitions at their foundations to focus on racial equity: **Karen McNeil Miller**, President and CEO of Colorado Health Foundation; and **Kevin Walker**, President and CEO of Northwest Area Foundation. Karen and Kevin shared helpful lessons and bracingly honest advice for board members and CEOs, including discussion about the value of board members learning as a group together and sharing their stories with each other; ensuring that values and expectations of board and staff are aligned; and to be prepared for major hiccups (and to know that you won't be prepared for all hiccups, but can take a breath and return to those conversations after you have had a chance to reflect on constructive next steps.) And perhaps most importantly, they gave pointed examples of what it means for boards to be prepared for uncomfortable conversations and advice on how to persist. "Embracing discomfort is one of the roles for board members."