



SERIES: Why Nonprofits Need to Have A Talk About “Diversity” (Part 2)

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In this special [three-part series](#) on diversity, See3 sat down with Joy Bailey and Derrick Dawson, the co-program coordinators at [Chicago Regional Organization for Antiracism \(ROAR\)](#) to understand how the social good industry could become more inclusive and more representative of our changing population.

In order to understand how organizations can become more “anti-oppressive,” we have to first understand the [history and undergirding of our institutions](#). Anti-oppression is an attempt to acknowledge that oppressions exist within a culture and society and the ways in which those influences can be removed. For more than 200 years, our institutions have not operated at full capacity, often neglecting the myriad of stakeholders that it sets out to support.

In the present, we’ve seen an increase in making a more just and civil workforce. But as we continue in our discussions, Chicago ROAR’s Joy Bailey and Derrick Dawson caution us on approaching diversity as on-trend, organizational culture banter.

Diversity is not just some buzzword.

Diversity and inclusion are words that often appear alongside organizations that want to distance themselves from having an analogous workforce. However, these words are not necessarily helpful language because of their various associations and meanings to people.

In the New York Times article, “[Has Diversity Lost Its Meaning?](#)”, writer Anna Holmes addresses this very notion:

“Why is there such a disparity between the progress that people in power claim they want to enact

According to Chicago ROAR’s Joy Bailey, people sometimes mean racial diversity, and they’ll say diversity because they don’t want to say the word “race.”

However, diversity includes other social identities and experiences.

“I think because we have differing definitions of what that means, people can get hooked and worried about being called an individual racist, and being blamed and shamed. We work really hard to not go to that blaming and shaming place and we set up all kinds of agreements and ways we’re going to have this conversation we help folks understand that we do have some personal responsibility, we’ve inherited. But it’s more than we’ve inherited these institutions,” Bailey explains.

We do all have some personal responsibility but we have also inherited a racist system; we can’t get stuck in individualistic analysis and solutions. Either way you slice it, diversity and inclusion now impacts us daily, and we are living it out whether we realize it or not.

Hiring a token employee is not the answer.

An often cited misbelief is that if institutions just hire more people of color, then they can check a box as complete. But what happens when new employees get to institutions? Do they stay there, and are they able to do their jobs successfully?

“You can be diverse racially and then not change anything about the way you actually operate,” Bailey warns. “That’s why you have all this — what’s sometimes called the revolving door people of color coming in and then leaving because it’s not working for them.”

This revolving door for people of color is apparent in every institution. In late 2015, Yale Daily News published a full feature titled [“In and Out: A revolving Door for Yale’s professors of color?”](#); where it explored the quick tenure of professors and discussed the institution’s announcement of a \$50 million/five-year initiative to recruit and develop an [“excellent and diverse faculty.”](#)

The Peterson Institute for International Economics and the accounting firm EY recently conducted a study that explored the [profitability of having women in leadership](#). While the report concludes that it is economically beneficial to put women in leadership positions, nearly 60% of the firms it surveyed did not have female board members.

“We often talk about how do you not just stay at the personnel level, but how do you look at all the levels of the institution — the personnel, the programs, products or services, the constituency, who are you accountable to, who are you serving? We think about all of those levels and what are the strategies for change, and that is what can bring about a cultural shift,” Bailey says.

Dawson adds, “Many organizations aren’t able to figure out how to really use the talent that they

job listings up, and we do the best we can, but because of the history and that legacy, and the way racism is baked into our institutions, we don't often have the tools to set things up in a way that serves not only the institution, but the constituents."

Diversity is everyone's responsibility.

Depending on the size of your organization, there might be one person assigned as the Diversity Officer, and they easily get marginalized or they don't have a lot of power in the institution.

"They get burned out. Sometimes small organizations may say that this is everyone's responsibility, and what we learned is that when it's everyone's responsibility, it's no one's responsibility," Bailey mentions.

Adopting a more inclusive mindset has to envelop the entire institution if there's to be lasting change.

Chicago ROAR and Crossroads helps organizations build "transformation team" of racially diverse people with different experiences and education that have the mandate to bring about change strategically and intentionally.

"They have the long-term goal of transforming the organization and they even make plans for how to renew and expand that team over time," Bailey says.

Admitting there is a problem does not mean you're anti-institution.

Many employees and stakeholders truly believe in the mission of their institutions, but at some point, acknowledgement of shortcomings need to happen.

Bailey suggests we ask, "How do we be critical lovers of our institutions?"

"We aren't anti-institutions. If you really don't care about your institution, you might want to ask yourself the hard question of why are you here? For many folks, they really do love their institution, they really believe deeply in the mission of it, and yet, there's ways that they're not living up to it," Bailey says.

Institutions and organizations need to ask what are the areas that are getting in the way to living up to their fullest mission and bringing what it's currently doing into alignment with their values in ways that they haven't necessarily thought about.

Dawson includes that Chicago ROAR invests significant time in understanding the culture of the

"We develop very specific ways of addressing the problem at hand, but that only works if you take into account that specific culture," he says.

Join us next week for the third and final part of "Why Nonprofits Need to Have a Talk About Diversity" as we discuss what makes a diverse institution and ways to affect change today.

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