

More than lip service: Stand in the way of equality and you stand in the way of innovation, progress and profit

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In an about-time conversation held by the Loeries' Open Chair, CEO of Kantar South Africa Ivan Moroke and creative consultant Ahmed Tilly were honoured to be the only two 'woke madalas' allowed entry to the lionesses' den in the final session of Women's Month 2020...



The essence of true diversity means going far beyond lip service, as it relies on being empathetic in paving the way for those who haven't had an easy path up to now. We do so by serving as mentors and creating a space for everyone to shine but first, we need to introspect. But from a personal perspective, just how conscious are you of your own unconscious bias?

Once you think you know it all, you need to humble yourself and acknowledge that there's more to learn. Our worldview is shaped by several blind spots from our upbringing and how we've been conditioned over the years – but becoming conscious of this only comes when you're in the presence of those who've been excluded.



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Jessica Tennant 10 Aug 2017



Looking at the industry overall, marketing by its nature is quite gender neutral, as is the advertising strategy pool. Yet it's frequently reported that just 3% of creative heads in the country are female. So, are we just not seeing the wood for the trees? Because make no mistake, the world is sensitive to this injustice.

Historically, in our industry this has been based on the white male privilege best depicted in *Mad Men*, where you needed a certain type of machismo to be appreciated as a creative leader. Times have shifted slightly but this still largely applies as much to race as it does to gender.

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Leigh Andrews, Kantar 12 Mar 2020



But how do we shake up the picture? To impact change, we need to be more conscious of our own word choice, of the language we use every day. We need to open the doors without being asked to do so, as it's our responsibility to offer up those seats at the table.

As the imbalance is weighed down by privilege, it is those with privilege who need to lead the conversation as there's so much power in genuine allyship. But what's the motivation to change if the system works for you? Are we being too optimistic? That's the question.

Simply put, we can't move forward based on philosophy. We can only move forward with deliberate, public action. So do the work, on yourself and your industry. Think about the current status quo. Can you live with yourself? Do you feel you've done enough in your own career to empower others? We need to step in and shake things up to give the underserved the boost they need to get ahead in the industry.



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Some of us have only the position, the will or the power to make a difference – but you need all these elements to truly make an impact as we strive for equality. We've seen time and again that talking about transformation doesn't make it happen. So, let this serve as a call to action to work together towards equality, as leadership is based on belief more than it is on titles. Raise your voice in allyship and do the self-analysis needed to put pressure on your own agencies.

You learn and conscientise yourself by being present, so keep bringing yourself back to reality. There's no better time than now for us all to say we don't accept current representation in the industry. That's the only way we'll see a radical shift forward.

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