



## Q&A Follow Up

**What do you think is the role of corporations in these issues compared to the role of society at large? How to determine what are the issues that corporations can address and which ones should be acted on a larger scale?**

**THEO:** For me, the main differentiator here is thinking about things we can control, and things that we can't. Within CPM or Omnicom, we have the potential to really effect change on the lives of our employees – who spend a significant portion of their waking hours working. So rather than considering what society needs to do, which individually is something that's very hard to reasonably have an impact on, we should focus on ourselves, our learned behaviours and how we can make a change in our smaller spheres. That way, our changes will not only improve the working lives of our colleagues but also be a driving force behind change in the organisation as a whole. The more people (and organisations) that start to adopt DE&I initiatives, the more change will come to society as a whole as a result. But we shouldn't start by thinking about that, because ultimately it takes this kind of ripple effect to really see a wider mindset change in the public.

**KATYA:** I think we need to be much more demanding of corporations, as they have generally accumulated a great amount of power. To start with the organisation must be frank and honest about the impact it has on society. The first question here is what industry are you inhabiting? As a media organisation, you are a creator and promoter of narratives, this is huge in the way people form their thinking, so if we are changing minds and hearts, surely a media organisation has a huge role to play. Secondly, the organisation must take time to establish a position on issues. If that has not been done, they automatically continue to promote the status quo. And then in terms of prioritisation of issues, that can be wrapped around the work that is being done – if you are working with a lot of athletic brands, there must be time set aside to think and act on gender and disability issues in sports, if you are working in fashion, having an opinion and acting on racism, cultural appropriation and fatphobia would be very important. This is where you need a dedicated EDI strategy on your activity, to see what the opportunities for action are and how can they be balanced with the work being done and the zeitgeist.

Hosted by:  
**Stef Tudorascu**  
 She / Her



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 They / Them



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**Theo Southgate**  
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## Q&A Follow Up

**A question for Katya – in your experience, how have you seen ERGs work well collaboratively, playing into, acknowledging and celebrating intersectionality?**

I will never get tired of talking about the intertwined nature of oppression. Many of the -isms we want to address really just start with eugenics and racism. We are too dedicated to crystallising issues and establishing clear singular goals, but having the courage to have complex, sometimes messy intersectional conversations is the only way to go at this stage. I can recommend a couple of books here – "Fearing the Black Body" by Sabrina Strings and "The Geopolitics of Feeling" by Dr. Kyla Schuller – brilliant reads, one on the racist origins of fatphobia and the other on the connection between the reinforcement of the gender binary and eugenics. So to get back to the question, ERGs who are well educated on the topic won't find it hard to collaborate and support each other.

Have a look at this Daniel Kaluuya video – <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2nTGxVID3Q/> where he explains how despite his experiencing the symptoms of racism, he was not "allowed" to diagnose it because it was affecting him, and supposedly, he was not objective about it. This is an excellent way to explain what often happens to people experiencing many types of oppression, when something is affecting you, you have "bias", so your opinions on it somehow are less valuable – artful gaslighting. Here is another video by Safe Space Vids (Emma and Hester) – <https://www.instagram.com/p/C2kMpovCK2K/>, in which they speak about Queer people supporting a Free Palestine. They crystalize the simple empathy that emerges when you have been oppressed, simply for existing, and how you can recognize that immediately when it happens to someone else. They also speak about the beautiful ways in which queer people supported the mining strikes in the UK in the 80s. With both of those, it is quite clear how we can lend each other presence and credibility. Maybe the simplest answer is to show up for each other.

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**I'm the parent of a nonbinary, gender fluid teen who is just about to enter the workforce. If you had to give your blossoming self one bit of wisdom for handling your first day, what would it be?**

**KATYA:** "Find your tribe". Inevitably there will be uncomfortable, at best and hostile, at worst, situations and environments ahead of your child. Finding ways to balance that out with community and affirming experiences is the way to go. There are a lot of beautiful metaphors about grief and how it never diminishes, you just build a bigger brighter life around it, and I think this is the best way to approach this. I remember seeing this one video, where someone was showing how it's futile to try and pick out the dirt from a jar of water, it's super hard and it muddies the water often, but if you just start pouring clear water in there and allow it to push things out of the jar, eventually you get a much clearer jar of water. Yes, ideally we want to clean all the bad bits, but realistically this probably won't be in our generation, so focusing on creating a bit of clean water for ourselves is helpful.

**THEO:** Don't feel guilty or inconvenient just for being yourself. You might find that there are certain boxes you don't tick or certain processes that someone has to find a way around in order for you to be accommodated in a workplace. You might find that there are colleagues who are uncertain around you or don't address you with your preferred pronouns. This isn't your fault and it isn't your problem; it's down to the company to make adjustments to their own processes, and down to your colleagues to examine their own internal biases and behaviours. If something isn't right, speak out and say so; there's no reason to hide or to feel like you don't want to make a fuss, just because you're the only one it matters to. It still matters! This is how people learn to be better.

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**In your experience, what can People in the HR function do to help places be as inclusive and feel safe without putting it on a someone to have to ask ?**

**THEO:** I think it begins with communication. It can feel isolating to be in a position where you're the only queer or trans or non-binary person in your team or on your campaign, and ensuring that colleagues are aware of the support channels available is really important. Also, as I mentioned in the panel, being on top of the process from first contact right through to induction is so, so important for the employee experience, ensuring that IT/recruitment/HR/operations are all on the same page when it comes to login emails, display names, aliases etc. and any specific requests or requirements that this employee might have, which we need to accommodate in advance without making it feel like it's a problem for the employee to deal with/report. Finally, ensuring that colleagues are aware of how to report grievances, what they can do in difficult situations, and that there is a place they can go outside of their direct campaign or management if they have problems with their immediate superiors is very important and often overlooked (I feel), where currently agents are usually directed to their TL or OM without any interaction with shared services.

**KATYA:** Fighting for a separate EDI function for the organisations, The HR function is already a full-time job and will always keep prioritising the organisation. Inclusion is an entirely separate strand of work, that will always prioritise people, so we need to start by acknowledging that.

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