

EDITORIAL

Looking for Diversity in NYNP

Last month, *NYNP* got 2008 off to what we thought would be a positive, and not particularly controversial, start with our "Happy New Year" cover article. In it, we published a two-page spread with the "Hopes, Fears and Resolutions" of nine leaders of the local nonprofit community. Having put the paper merrily to bed, we settled in for the holidays, looking forward to a good new year ourselves.

Before long, we heard from some readers that they enjoyed reading these comments. To our surprise, however, we also heard something else:

"The individuals whom you featured were all white and almost all male. *NYNP* can do better!" wrote one reader and friend, himself a white male.

"I would like to talk to you about something," called another, this time an African-American woman.

Just as surprisingly, these reactions had taken me off guard. In our haste to

get this brief piece together, I hadn't even noticed the total lack of racial diversity among our panel of commentators.

My initial reaction was defensive. We originally had hoped to gather input from a broad range of people throughout the sector -- executive directors and direct care staff; social workers and development directors; white, black and brown -- by appealing for comments at our website's new *NYNP* Blog. That didn't work. Then, we changed course and blasted out an email request for comments to heads of various industry associations and umbrella groups. In fact, the majority of these 20-plus individuals are white, but certainly not all. Those who responded are the ones we published. As for those who didn't; they were busy. I understand. So, what do you want from me?

In fact, however, I have long been concerned about the exceptionally "white face" of *NYNP*. Our interviews tend to

feature executive directors and CEOs. Submissions to our "People Serving People" section tend to include agency heads and top management. It is not uncommon for the photos in these sections to be overwhelmingly white. Is it *NYNP*? I don't think so... at least not entirely.

In fact, while the nonprofit human service community predominately serves people of color, using front line staff with that same racial and ethnic make up, its top leadership is still largely white. I am not sure whether statistics are available for New York, but nationally an estimated 82% of nonprofit CEOs are white... despite the fact that only 67% of the overall population is white. Distressingly, a similar distribution exists for younger and newer CEOs as well. That would account for at least some of the photos in our People section.

Ironically, last month's issue also included the comments of Graham Windham CEO Poul Jensen who pressed nonprofits to be more aggressive in seeking

out people of color when gathering pools of candidates for senior level positions.

Clearly, based on the photos in our paper, the nonprofit community has to do better. Much is already happening. An Undoing Racism movement, supported by NASW, the Human Services Council, Black Agency Executives, Black Equity Alliance and other leading nonprofits, is helping us understand -- and be conscious of -- the role that race and systemic racism continues to play in society and even in our own sector. Much more, however, remains to be done.

And, *NYNP* must do better as well! Every day, talented and dedicated men and women of color -- executive directors, middle managers and line staff -- are making a difference in the lives of New Yorkers in need. *NYNP* needs to be telling those stories and hearing the comments and concerns from those leaders of the nonprofit community.

There is a New Year's resolution worth keeping.

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