



BREAKING BREAD, agency heads gathered over dinner to have an honest discussion about the lack of diversity in Philadelphia's advertising community. Convened by David W. Brown, President of BrownPartners Multicultural Marketing (second from right), the executives include (from left) Ed Tettemer of Red Tettemer; Diana Bald, Chairman of the Ad Club and General Manager of Univision; Brown and Mary Stengel Austen, President and CEO of Tierney Communications.

A FAMILY TALK ABOUT RACE

everyone invited was able to attend. However, several were able to lend their insight in separate interviews.

Marc Brownstein, President of The Brownstein Group, provided the perspective that every ad agency takes on an organizational culture that defines the character of work each agency produces. "We're in a creative business and that

By David W. Brown

They say there are a few things you never bring up in polite conversation: politics, religion and race.

Well, over the past several weeks, a few folks in Philly's ad community have stepped past those boundaries and engaged in an honest discussion about race and the lack of diversity in our industry.

First, let me admit that this dialogue was by no way intended to be scientific. I didn't issue a survey that would capture the sentiments of a statistically significant sample. Nor did I do a series of focus groups to gather the thoughts of a demographic reflective of a larger cohort.

Instead, I simply reached out to friends and friendly colleagues to tackle this sensitive issue. They included **Marc Brownstein**, President of The Brownstein Group and a Past Chairperson of the local chapter of the AAAA; **David Lane**, Principal of LevLane Advertising; **George Beach**, President/Principal of Beach Advertising; culminating a dinner discussion with **Ed Tettemer**, Founder of Red Tettemer; **Diana Bald**, Immediate Past President of the Ad Club and VP/General Manager of Univision and Telefutara; and **Mary Stengel Austen**, President of Tierney Communications.

As a professional of color and as President of a multicultural firm, I've worked with most of these folks over my 20+ years in Philadelphia's ad community. We typically talk about race in the context of how we might use our collective resources to reach and influence consumers in a campaign. Outside the campaign arena, however, digging into a candid dialogue about race can be admittedly dangerous territory. But we dove in.

First, every one of us agreed that the lack of

diversity in our industry remains a problem that affects us all. "We create messages that shape our society," Ed Tettemer of Red Tettemer said. "Racism is still very much a part of the fabric of this country. If it wasn't, we wouldn't be here talking about it."

Like most agencies, Tierney Communications as the region's largest, is getting more pressure from clients who are requiring them to have a diverse staff to service their business, according to Mary Stengel Austen, Tierney's President and CEO. "Ultimately all of us are responsible for meeting the needs of our clients' customers and those needs are getting more diverse every day. That means being diverse in all areas—from ethnicity to culture to experience."

For Diana Bald of Univision, challenge of diversity focuses on both culture and language. "Fluency is no longer good enough," Bald said. "We need to find communications professionals who understand—not just marketing—but how marketing needs to adapt based on whether we're reaching audiences with Spanish heritage or Mexican or Puerto Rican...whether they are within the U.S. and outside of it."

Although the gathering enabled these top executives to share their thoughts, not

creativity comes out of a culture that uniquely distinguishes one agency from another," Brownstein said. "The more diverse an agency can be, in terms of background, experience as well as ethnicity, the more creative that agency can expect to be."

Without exception, each agency head admitted that we are not as diverse as any of us would like to be. Most of us have collaborated as agencies on multicultural marketing campaigns.

Over the years and even today, many professionals of color have worked at various Philadelphia ad agencies at one time or other in their careers. But diversity is more than having a few executives of color

on an account or collaborating on a contract here and there.

Becoming diverse takes real investment. David Lane of LevLane Advertising commented in his interview that they moved their entire firm after years in the

suburbs into Center City explicitly for the purpose of attracting a more diverse array of professionals. "After years of working outside the city, we needed to put ourselves in a position to have access to the most diverse talent available," David Lane said. "This (continued on Page 54)



Proudly displaying their trophy from The Big Pitch 2006 competition, Associate Creative Director Sam Bonds of Tierney Communications (second from right) served as agency coach on behalf of Roxborough High School. Pictured with Bonds includes (from left) David W. Brown, President of BrownPartners Multicultural Marketing and Creator of The Big Pitch; Mary Stengel Austen, President and CEO of Tierney Communications; and Marsha Perry of the Philadelphia High School Communications Academy and faculty coach for the Roxborough High School team. Now in its 3rd year, The Big Pitch matches inner city high schools with area ad agencies in a competition in which the students "pitch" campaigns around a common campaign theme as a way to become exposed to careers in advertising.

A FAMILY TALK ABOUT RACE

(continued from Page 11)
can't be a one-time deal. Our move has already started to pay off. In our internship program alone, we have attracted candidates who are African American, Latino, Asian...we even have a student from Ghana. Diversity is something we all have to be working on."

Beyond programs within individual agencies, there are various initiatives on a national level that are working to make the industry more diverse. The AAAA's has operated the MAIP (Minorities in Advertising Internship Program) for some 33 years and has placed more than 1,600 of the top qualified African American, Asian American, Hispanic, Native American and multiracial and multiethnic undergraduate and graduate students from colleges and universities around the country in 10-week paid internships at AAAA member agencies in various U.S. cities.

The AAF, the organization to which our Ad Club is affiliated, maintains the Mosaic Center on Multiculturalism which implements all AAF multicultural and diversity initiatives and is the only national ad indus-

try resource of its kind. It hosts an annual career fair as part of the Most Promising Minority Students Program that honors the top graduating students of color in the country every spring and a competition in the fall celebrating the best in multicultural advertising and programs that achieve diversity in attracting talent, supplier partners and exposing students of color to the field.

The next Mosaic program will feature a forum on diversity in the advertising industry as part of the awards program set for



David W. Brown is President of BrownPartners Multicultural Marketing firm and is the Creator of The Big Pitch, a competition that matches inner city high school students with area ad agencies as a way to expose them to careers in the field.

September 27th at the New York Athletic Club.

Locally, BrownPartners created and has operated *The Big Pitch* (which matches inner city public high school students with area ad agencies to pitch their ideas around a common advertising campaign) for the past 3 years. The program was honored last year with a Student Diversity Mosaic Award from the AAF for being the best program in the country for exposing kids of color to the advertising business.

Each year, *The Big Pitch* has attracted more students and schools, but needs more agencies to sponsor teams to be matched up with their professionals.

While a bottom up strategy like *The Big Pitch* and the AAF's Most Promising Students program is important, the return on that investment will take a long time to realize. To make a more immediate impact, a top down implementation is absolutely critical. The decision to pursue diversity as a business strategy has to come from the top of the organization—whether that organization is an ad agency or a client that advertises.

George Beach, President and Founder of Beach Advertising—long considered to be one of the Deans of Philadelphia's advertising community as his firm has operated as a minority-owned agency for more than 40 years—provided these final insights:

"The key to diversity is applying those practices consistently," Beach said. "We're not talking about just diversity on an intern or clerical level...but on all levels and in all departments. The clients have the biggest role to play because they hire the agencies. They pay them. They can direct them."

But even with client directives (and possible legislative requirements that loom on the horizon mandating mainstream agencies with public contracts to have more diverse staff), diversity has to be embraced as a way to do business over the long term...not just a short term initiative to respond to outside pressure.

As ad agencies, we are all defined by our ability to communicate to the audiences that matter the most. The world is changing and we better change with it...or be passed by it.

