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Georgetown University Center for Public & Nonprofit Leadership
Girl Scouts of the USA
Girls Incorporated
Grand Valley State University, Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership
The Humane Society of the United States
Institute for Higher Education Policy/Alliance for Equity in Higher Education
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Nonprofit HR Solutions
Nonprofit Oyster
OpportunityKnocks.org
Points of Light Foundation & Volunteer Center National Network
Project on Student Debt
Public Allies
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Nonprofit Sector Workforce Coalition

A National Campaign to Recruit, Prepare, and Retain a Skilled and Diverse Next-Generation of Nonprofit Sector Leadership

THE CHRONICLE OF PHILANTHROPY

LIVE DISCUSSIONS

Achieving Diversity at Nonprofit Organizations

Friday, October 26, at noon, Eastern time

While many nonprofit leaders say diversity is important, members of minority groups remain scarce on the boards and staffs of the nation's charitable organizations. And this state of affairs can prevent some charities and grant makers from attaining full success in carrying out their missions.

To discuss what the nonprofit world is doing -- and should be doing -- to make itself more reflective of the people it serves, three experts will be available online. Share your thoughts about whether nonprofit organizations are paying enough attention to diversity in recruiting executives, staff members, and trustees, and offer your suggestions about how charities and foundations can improve their efforts to be inclusive.

Related Articles

- [Inching to the Top](#) (10/18/2007)

A transcript of the chat follows.

Heather Joslyn (Moderator):

Hello. Welcome to The Chronicle of Philanthropy's discussion on achieving diversity at nonprofit organizations, an addendum to our October 18 special report on that topic. We'll be joined today by three experts on this topic: Renee Branch, director of diversity and inclusive practices at the Council on Foundations; Paul Schmitz, president of Public Allies, a national group headquartered in Milwaukee that prepares young people for careers at social-change organizations (and heads a committee on diversity issues for the Nonprofit Sector Workforce Coalition; and the Rev. Clarence Williams, director of racial equality and diversity initiatives at Catholic Charities USA.

We welcome your questions throughout the hour. To ask a question, just use the link on the page that says "ask a question." You don't need to be a Chronicle subscriber to participate in this conversation. Let's begin the conversation. Welcome, Renee, Paul, and Father Williams.

Paul Schmitz:

This is my first time on a live discussion like this and my laptop was replaced yesterday, so please excuse me if I'm a little slow or have typos as I'm adjusting to a new keyboard.

I am glad the Chronicle has chosen to focus on the topic of diversity, and felt that overall the articles were quite good. The Nonprofit Sector Workforce Coalition, which I chair, is focusing on how to incent greater attention and results on this issue. And my organization, Public Allies, is about changing the face and practice of leadership in communities across the country - we believe that changing who is at the table requires us to change the table itself.

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Last year, one of our Allies, a white woman, was doing her "presentation of learning," a 15 minute presentation followed by 15 minutes of Q&A that our Allies do at the end of each year to demonstrate they've met our learning outcomes and will apply them in their future careers. Her supervisor, a white male in his 50s who had been an activist since the 60s asked her what his generation of activists needed to learn from groups like Public Allies. Her answer was simple and powerful: "Your generation sees diversity as an ideal - something to believe in. We see it as an action - something you do. Results follow from actions not ideals." I've quoted her wisdom hundreds of times during the last 4 months.

Thanks for participating. I look forward to your questions, comments and feedback.

Question from Teresa at Mental Health America:

I have been working with a small group of Hispanic leaders from across the country on this "lack of representation issue" -- not only about the challenges related to the issue at hand -- but how to effectively end this disparity. We know the problems, but need to take actions! What are some suggestions that you have for interventions?

Paul Schmitz:

I'll try my best. I've been thinking most about how we get organizations to change. I believe it has to be embraced at the top and a case needs to be made that it is both a social good and a business good (which it is). From what I've read, training, mentoring and other efforts can have incremental effects but what really works is when there is someone measuring data and held accountable for results. In large organizations, HR or a diversity officer may have targets. In a smaller organization, a board may hold a CEO accountable for demonstrating actions and results on increasing diversity. Does this answer your question?

Question from 2778: Rosetta Thurman, Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington:

Can nonprofits ever be fully effective in solving social problems if they don't include the racially diverse perspectives of the communities they serve?

Rev. Clarence Williams:

There is no way for nonprofits to realize the fullness of their intentions without including the perspectives of the people they desire to relieve social distress. To solve any problem requires a diagnosis. The social treatment can not be devised without the assistance of the people seeking help. A symptom can be addressed but the deeper healing requires listening, dialogue and mutual assessment on the outcome. For social betterment a dialogue is the next step that lead from distress to security and well-being of groups in need.

Question from Heather Joslyn:

We talked about race and ethnicity pretty extensively in our October 18 look at nonprofit groups and diversity. But what role does economic class play in keeping charities and foundations from making their staffs more inclusive?

Paul Schmitz:

I think it matters as well. Where I most see it is in the prevalence of elite college graduates. For example, if one looks at the "social entrepreneurship" field as it is called and who gets labeled a "social entrepreneur" and celebrated by major national donors, most come from the Ivy League or equivalents. If the private sector only invested in companies founded by Ivy League and equivalent graduates, most of the Fortune 500 and the Inc 500 wouldn't exist. Yet, in the nonprofit sector, many funders wish to support people like them and that is where I believe class plays out the most.

Question from Wanda Pierce, African American Nonprofit Network:

There is broad-based recognition of the need for diversity in the nonprofit sector; is there an equally broad-based recognition that funding of programs and initiatives will be required to change the existing landscape?

Renee Branch:

What a great question. What your query suggests is that diversity in grant making strengthens our global

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ability to respond to the pressing problems of our time. Additionally, what it suggests is that diverse philosophical viewpoints and perspectives are valuable and enhance our ability to effectively problem solve. I would agree.

To offer some insight from the philanthropic sector, effectiveness in grant making already occurs at many levels. However, in our sector's quest to continue to improve the common good, greater effectiveness is aided by including diverse perspectives in grant making activities as well realizing that we exist in a complex society and sometimes changing landscape.

Diversity and inclusive practices encompasses gender, socio-economic status, sexual identification and orientation, race and ethnicity, philosophy, geography, physical ability, and a variety of other characteristics.

Thus we can engage our approach to diversity and inclusive practices in a variety of ways as well as at many levels of the organization both internally and externally.

As an example, diversity and inclusive practices in hiring, governance structures, business practices, and other aspects of a foundation's operations is a way to become more effective in our service to improve the common good. When we intentionally seek ways to lift up grant making opportunities that may be unknown were it not for making a concerted effort to engage diverse communities, we make progress in reducing societal ills.

Diversity and inclusive practices at all levels help organizations realize greater creativity and problem solving ability and help them to become more effective.

Question from **Shonda, Girl Scouts**:

Can diversity exist within an organization without inclusion? How can one ensure that both are present?

Paul Schmitz:

Shonda, that is an awesome question. I've seen one and not the other. For example, I had a site where all of the staff were people of color (diverse) but had a monolithic opinion of the world and were hesitant for other perspectives or ideas to challenge their group think (not inclusive). It led us to change our learning objective from "diversity" to "diversity and inclusion."

I think that you could have organizations that are very inclusive and make great efforts but are in rather homogenous communities so that they don't show much diversity but take efforts to explore these issues and create inclusive environments.

Both to me implies that one has diverse people and perspectives at the table and that the table is shaped by those people and perspectives and not set before they get there.

Question from **Edith Asibey, Asibey Consulting | Communication and Advocacy Strategies**:

There seems to be a dichotomy in the discussion about diversity in nonprofits: 1) some think that diversity should encompass gender, race, sexual orientation and disabilities; and 2) some think that putting all these issues in the same bag dilutes each individual problem, particularly the problem of race and the evident absence of people of color from leadership positions in nonprofits. What is your view?

Rev. Clarence Williams:

I agree there seems to be a dichotomy between identifying the aspect of diversity that is being addressed, and the generic idea of diversity. I am of the opinion and it is reflected in my job title (Racial Equality and Diversity Initiatives) that "race" is the issue of diversity, or more specific "racisms." By "racisms" I mean treating people as if they are not a part of the human race due to color, gender or class. To address how our culture "otherifies" people our most powerful tool of critiques. The most critiqued aspect of U.S. culture is race. It provides a template for history (Black, Native, Hispanic); vocabulary (minority, nonwhite, people of color); and legal and professional cases (civil rights, affirmative action, discrimination. Diversity is about race and

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"racisms." those of race. So, I address diversity as racial diversity, gender diversity and class diversity. In a programmatic since one needs to know where they are going in order to get there; likewise a diverse social networks needs to know what is the diverse element it is seeking.

Question from Heather Joslyn:

Paul, your story about the 50-year-old man and the younger woman brings up a point. In your experience, are younger nonprofit leaders and board members –younger than the baby boom generation, let's say – better about reaching out to the communities they serve and diversifying their workforces?

Paul Schmitz:

Not necessarily. But I do think many more have had experiences with diversity that lead them to be more intentional or at least have it on their radar screen. Many older leaders I've known tend to stop at thinking that it is great. Many younger leaders unfortunately stop at thinking they should do better. I don't know that either are achieving better results.

Question from Bennie Smith, non-profit consultant and former COO of a major non-profit:

Given the ineffectiveness of our current social networks (search firms and homogenous boards) in producing diversity candidates, what are the new effective approaches to sourcing diversity candidates?

Rev. Clarence Williams:

The alternatives to an ineffective agent searching in ones behalf is demonstrated in the "Achieving Diversity" special. It is searching in the community in which the services are directed and finding leadership in the local community organizations that can be brought into the environment and given the elements of leadership: information, formation and transformation. The community's leaders can be and are the "farm team" for the major league.

Question from Stephen Bauer, American Humanics and the Nonprofit Sector Workforce Coalition:

Going beyond diversity by numbers, how does an organization change to become not only a more diverse organization but also more inclusive...what are the steps?

Paul Schmitz:

I believe that the first thing is opening up the discussion and participating in community building that can reveal and challenge assumptions and allow real feedback to be heard. Again, this gets at actions not ideals - learning about why we should be inclusive is not the same as doing it. As a leader, I've "trusted the process" as the community builders on my staff have led us in everything from the Underground Railroad experience to power and privilege discussions to other activities that create a safe, yet challenging space to discuss issues of diversity, inclusion, power, privilege, oppression. I think the bottom line is if you are open to the discussion and striving to be more inclusive, you're probably doing pretty well.

Heather Joslyn (Moderator):

We've got about 30 minutes left in our discussion. Keep those questions coming!

Question from Kendra S. Cooper, Northwestern Memorial Foundation:

We are the fundraising arm of a major teaching hospital in Chicago, and we are looking to diversify our donor pool. Our first step will be to engage consultants on diversity in fundraising. Are there consultants that you would strongly recommend or do you have certain institutions that you've seen as leaders in diversity in philanthropy?

Paul Schmitz:

The WK Kellogg Foundation has a "Cultures of Giving" initiative that has funded groups to explore diversity and philanthropy. We've been one of the grantees. I think that looking at the grantees of that initiative may be one of the best sources as it was a very competitive grant process.

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Question from **Phyllis A. Wallace, American Humanics:**

As we all know, retention is also a major issue facing the nonprofit sector. How can we focus on recruitment and placement of diverse nonprofit leaders, if we have not successfully addressed the need for nonprofit agencies to be more competent with inclusion and providing an environment that welcomes and respects diversity?

Rev. Clarence Williams:

Recruitment and retention are the key to building cultures of racial, gender and class inclusion. The culture of the work environment needs a cultural competency that includes an awareness of how they present themselves to the "racially other." All types of organizations in every sector face the challenge of having one part of their organization go seeking for candidates only to have the people that they work with chase them out of the organization. Leadership has to address of culture of their organization as it brings in the people who might not fit the "profiled culture" of the workplace in terms of race, gender and class.

Question from **Brigitte Rouson, Alliance for Nonprofit Management:**

What are your thoughts about the connection between diversity or inclusiveness--or a term we use, "cultural competency"--and broader goals of equity? Also, what do you see as distinct about the pursuit of diversity or inclusiveness in the nonprofit sector as compared to other sectors?

Renee Branch:

Many thanks for the thoughtful question.

Diversity and inclusive practices are not an either or proposition. We view them as intrinsically linked. Effective outcomes are more likely when we view them as such. For example if we bring diverse candidates into organizations and do not meaningfully include them, what have we achieved other than representational diversity?

Cultural competency is an aspect of what individuals and organizations can do to raise awareness of differences and similarities among diverse groups. Depending on the approach to cultural competency, it may or may not be easy to gauge how behavior changes as a result. Does cultural competency immediately change behavior?

Broader goals of equity are more challenging to define and sometimes the issues of diversity and inclusive practices and equity become conflated. When issues of equity impact our ability to be effective in our grant making then we must understand the barriers to equity and seek ways to remove those barriers.

Finally, I will posit a response to the last part of your question about the distinctions between the nonprofit sector as compared to other sectors.

Keep in mind that my responses are focused on the philanthropic sector and I would suggest that we can continue to learn from existing successes achieved in the business and governmental sectors and conversely we have promising practices and good information to share as well.

Question from **Phyllis A. Wallace, American Humanics:**

To achieve a more diverse nonprofit sector at all levels, how can we successfully impact the local decision-makers who hire staff and leadership for nonprofit agencies, neighborhood and community-based agencies nationwide? Perhaps, we need to start with identifying and recruiting more diverse local HR executives for our sector?

Paul Schmitz:

I think that bringing in more diverse HR execs would be a start but we have to remember that the Executive Director is the HR person for 50% of nonprofit organizations and that the vast majority do not have an HR

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professional. We need boards and Executive Directors who are committed to this and find ways to push them to be so.

The Nonprofit Sector Workforce Coalition, as you know, is looking at creating a "Guidestar"-like Web site that would ask organizations to take a pledge to do best practices in regard to diversity. By signing the pledge, organizations would gain the privilege of being able to promote their commitment to funders, employees, candidates for hire, etc. They would also have the responsibility of sharing publicly their demographic data on their organization. If the site caught on among diverse young employees and job searchers and funders, there would be an incentive for groups to be on the site and an incentive to measure and work for better data. I believe that we need efforts with a little bit of teeth to them so we can push toward better results and fewer conversations.

Question from **Susan Morales-Barrias, Johnson Center:**

While accountability and performance measures are important, I think that the concept of "quotas" have been generally unacceptable for a lot of people. In fact, even with appropriate data on composition, people always find excuses for the data. We have been thinking about how we can really change culture within organizations. Are there cultural competency or organizational models out there that have been effective?

Rev. Clarence Williams:

I think we have had many years discussing how to be inclusive. we have developed "boutique language" to talk about it, i.e. "people of color." At the present time there are many professional at the leadership level who are willing to talk in closed conversations about the culture of their workplace and a history of attempts to address the problem. Those who have been in the work realize that is the institutional culture in which our staffs live, the people they worship with, recreate with and have friendships with that prepares them to work with others, regardless of color. There is a need for cultural competency that sees "white supremacy culture" as a culture to examine or what is now being called, "Anglo culture." Examinations of how groups get to become "white," which is the subject of "Critical White Studies" will shed light on the internal work of our organizations as we reach out to be inclusive. It is very difficult to talk to a fish about water, because they are in it. As we lose people that we have spent valuable time and money to find, it is time for a cultural competency that looks within as it looks outside.

Question from **Brenda, small nonprofit:**

Is the lack of minority staff and governance due to the source of funding for charitable organizations and the unspoken stereotype that sound money management and minorities don't mix?

Renee Branch:

I do not subscribe to the belief of that stereotype and would suggest that the sector is evolving and is more diverse today than it was 30 years ago or even 10 years ago. It is an evolutionary process and having conversations about the value of diversity and inclusive practices and moving that conversation to the forefront of our common agendas is an important and worthwhile endeavor.

Question from **Therese, NPO development consultant:**

I have worked in the public health sector for two large non-profit organizations and am now trying to make a name for myself as a development consultant. As a female I still feel like I'm a "minority" and I still feel like the glass ceiling is there. I've worked for both men and women and I feel like young women (I'm in my 30s) are still being shunned from being offered higher paid executive level positions and being discouraged from "moving up the ladder." Maybe this is only happening in the public health sector, but what is being done to HELP encourage women to further their careers in non-profit? I see so many women at high executive levels yet I also see a LOT of successful and dynamic women being passed over for jobs by less-qualified men. Are other states, besides California, doing anything to practice what they preach in regards to diversity, starting internally with the staff they hire? Thank you.

Paul Schmitz:

I see this issue cutting two ways. First, the vast majority of nonprofit employees and executives, are women

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from what I understand. Second, the larger the organization, the bigger the gaps between men and women in management and pay -- larger organizations are more likely to be led by men and if women have equivalent roles, they are often paid less (I've seen this data in the *Chronicle*).

I would imagine that the public health sector tends to be larger so the gender disparity is more prevalent.

Because most of the organizations I deal with are women-led, I have focused more on racial and ethnic diversity. I think the first step in addressing these issues are to discuss them. Gathering data and looking at the field overall and reports like the Chronicle has done on gender and pay, etc. and talking with executives about it and asking them to engage on these issues. I hope this helps -- is there something more specific I might add?

Question from **Adaora Ikenze, Commonweal**:

I have not so much a question as a comment which perhaps broadens the scope of this discussion. I am an African born female who has worked in philanthropy (not development) in Africa and in the US for the past 10 years and it still amazes me how few non-Americans there are not only in the management of international programs but also the programmatic design and evaluation of these projects. I am aware that the current trend especially amongst the newer social change organizations is to recruit "local" staff to add authenticity to the project, but how many of these staff have the opportunity to move into management and actual institutional design and oversight?

Renee Branch:

Kudos to you in your decision to work at the international level and thank you for your comments!

I do not have specific knowledge or data around the number of local individuals who then move into the management of international organizations, but certainly there seems to be a growing interest in empowerment movements and capacity building.

Comment from **Jeffrey Emil Diaz, Benefitted from Philanthropy**:

Hello. I wanted to suggest that foundations, and in turn nonprofits, look to those whose lives they have changed. As someone who was given a scholarship by The Boys' Club of New York and The Peddie School, it has been my experience that philanthropists often focus on children (rightly so). However when those children become adults who are highly competent and successful, it makes sense to first look to bring them into the halls of corporate America for a multitude of reasons, and second, to tap them as a ready resource to lead philanthropic efforts. The Boys' Club continues to develop leaders in this regard.

Question from **Brigette Rouson, Alliance for Nonprofit Management**:

With our Cultural Competency Initiative, the Alliance is paying attention to research and tools developed with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. These various works speak to the need for intergenerational work to begin reinventing nonprofit organizations. Where and how do you see that type of work already, and what needs to happen next, so that nonprofits be most effective in changing society?

Paul Schmitz:

Brigette, I think you may be better able to answer this than me. I do think that intergenerational work is important -- especially if it can be done in a way that has people equal participants in the discussion. I've often found the power dynamic in intergenerational efforts can shut down and push away young people and they lose faith in the efforts. If the playing field is equal, it can be very rich. I know that Rusty Stahl of Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy (EPIP) has been big on these discussions and hosted a Pocantico Conference on this. I think France Kunreuther and Ludovic Blain's work on the Building Movement Project at Demos unveiled a lot of the intergenerational challenges that need to be addressed and they hosted some meetings afterward that might be interesting to look at.

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Question from **Phyllis A. Wallace, American Humanics**:

American Humanics prepares college students for careers in the nonprofit sector. 40% of our students are diverse. Internships at nonprofit agencies are a major component of our program. We have over 70 universities offering nonprofit leadership programs where hundreds of diverse students can be recruited, and we annually host an educational Institute (AHMI) where diverse and prepared students can be interviewed. How can we get more nonprofits engaged in this process to help diversify our sector?

Rev. Clarence Williams:

I think that you have a potentially groundbreaking program! At this time the "baby boomers" are beginning to notice that there are not a line of people to fill their shoes. I feel that a "mentorship" program that invites nonprofits to "adopt a future leader" would be received well. I have noticed the "grandparent gene" popping up in a surprising number of people who want to give their experience, insights and vision to the young. Your organization could fulfill the need to pass on a valued part of people's soul to these young people who are seeking to make a difference.

Question from **Laura, Civic Ventures**:

As member of the nonprofit community for over 20 years, I'm continually appalled by the lack of diversity "around the table" and in many ways it seems like it if we have not made any progress, especially when it comes to leadership positions within nonprofits. Can you offer any hope for the future in moving to more action and less talk of the ideal?

Paul Schmitz:

Well, if more people like you push on these questions, we can indeed get there. I really think that we need new strategies to move this issue. I described in my answer to Phyllis Wallace how we've chosen to address this at the Nonprofit Sector Workforce Coalition. At Public Allies, both through our program which identifies and develops diverse young nonprofit and community leaders and through our consulting work with groups like the Alliance and Children and Families who are trying to figure out how to do it, I've come to the conclusion that it requires commitment at the top, accountability for results, and a willingness, even vulnerability, among leaders to take the risks that come with challenging ourselves and allowing others to challenge us on these issues. I have hope that some of these new efforts and increasing impatience with empty commitments will move us in new ways. It won't happen by wishing for it or complaining about it.

Comment from **Susan Houchin, Girls Incorporated**:

I've seen some requests for resources in helping to build cultural competency within an organization. One that we have found particularly useful is published by the Denver Foundation. It is called Inclusiveness at Work: How to Build Inclusive Nonprofit Organizations. Their web address is www.denverfoundation.org.

Heather Joslyn (Moderator):

Thank you, Susan.

Question from **Tracy Brown, author Breaking the Barrier of Bias**:

Many of the challenges continues, but what signs of progress are you seeing or experiencing?

Rev. Clarence Williams:

There are signs of progress and regress at the same time. In terms of progress the phenomenal work of the Ford Foundation. The article on Susan V. Berresford of the Ford Foundation and the four decades of culture building within the leadership of the foundation world is progress. The walking the walk of constructing a world of racial diversity within their circle of influence through strategic funding of those whose hands join with their in the construction of a new cultural arrangements. Faithfulness to the vision is encouraging and answers the nay-sayers, "And where do you see that being done anywhere?"

I am also encouraged with the article on Claudia Thorne's circle of giving. That along with top down power of a Ford Foundation there is the bottom up of people coming to realize the power of their presence in the world. Thorne's comment about seeing herself as a philanthropist is the epitome of cultural change in which the

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person realizes the maxim of Gandhi, "Become the change you want to see." The person becomes the cultural transformer wherever they go. As she said, "I have been so touched and moved. I talk about it all the time." This type of leadership is contagious and it is culturally altering toward to the good. This is the type of outstanding leadership that brings about the cultural transformation. Change in the culture is the answer for me. And cultural change agents at the elite level and the community level give me hope and inspiration.

Paul Schmitz:

In closing (unless another question comes), I think that the biggest falsehood out there is that there are not enough talented people of color available to our sector and that we can't compete. I feel about this the way I do about schools that say we can't be blamed for failing the kids because we have poor kids. Just as there are schools that achieve incredible results with poor kids there are organizations that have no problem with diversity. It is about commitment and action. The diverse talent we need is out there but organizations have the culture, commitment and connectedness to access them. The three go together and are essential to creating change.

Heather Joslyn (Moderator):

Thank you so much to Paul, Renee, Father Williams, and everyone who participated in this chat — part of a long and continuing conversation we'll be having online and in the pages of *The Chronicle*. Send your ideas and comments about anything we can do to improve our coverage of the nonprofit world by writing to editor@philanthropy.com. Thank you to our guests for joining in with their thoughts and for being so generous with their time.

Comment from **Phyllis A. Wallace, American Humanics:**

Thank you Heather and the Chronicle for a wonderful hour of dialogue on diversity in the nonprofit sector.

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