



ellen krug
writer, lawyer, human

Ten Point Plan for Changing Minnesota's Diversity and Inclusion Landscape

Introduction

Minnesota—in both its metropolitan and rural areas—faces significant challenges around accepting people who are considered “different” or “Other” because of their skin color, country of origin, religion, gender, sexual or gender identity, disability status, and a host of other labels or groupings that we collectively use to marginalize people.

A big part of the problem is that the state, and individual cities and towns, lack a comprehensive plan to help persons think differently (and more inclusively) toward people who are “Other.” If created, such plans would help focus efforts for change. The plans would need to have long-term and short-term goals/milestones; measurements to determine progress or lack thereof; accountability measures; and be codified in writing or via a website (optimally both) that anyone can easily access.

The following is just such a plan. While drafted with Minnesota in mind, the plan can (dare I dream) even be applied nationally.

The Plan

A reason why Minnesota generally lags in inclusivity is that too often, there is no accountability to ensure for community-focused inclusivity. Thus, I propose that each major Minnesota population center appoint, hire or retain an “Inclusivity Leader” to vision, facilitate, coordinate and carry out community-based plans that have the following elements:

1. Facilitated community-wide neighborhood meetings (what I call “Change Sessions”) that focus on our commonalities rather than our differences and which educate on how to live with compassionate inclusivity for all humans. For example, in Minneapolis, residents of South Minneapolis would travel to talk to residents of North Minneapolis and vice versa. In smaller towns, native-born or majority race residents would purposely visit with immigrant residents. Change Sessions should take place throughout neighborhoods over a two to three-year (or longer) period. In other words, the meetings won't be a one-shot deal.

2. Creation of a "Core Values" community education program that covers: (a) the economic and social values of having a diverse workforce and community, including how such diversity has historically enabled America to prosper; (b) which trains on unconscious or implicit bias, micro-inequities, the culture of poverty, and cultural humility; (c) which covers "trauma informed systems" (e.g. how growing up in dysfunctional family and cultural situations can create life-long acclimation problems); (d) which educates on the historical marginalization of humans of color (e.g. how white-color humans created a system that promoted their interests to the detriment of non-white humans); (e) which trains on such basic things as how to talk to people who are "different"; and (f) which educates on how to involve, promote and sponsor persons of color, persons with disabilities, foreign-born persons, women, and persons from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

The training should include *testing and certification* that the participant successfully understands these critical concepts, along with a *pledge* that the participant will actively work to make their community more welcoming to people who are "Other." Anyone should be able to participate in Core Values training and certification.

3. Enlistment of a community's chamber of commerce to train business leaders on Core Values. The list of certified businesses and their trained leaders should be published and updated regularly.
4. With the Core Values certification process, an employer should pledge that it will work toward a goal of its workforce fairly representing the percentage of non-white residents within its community. (In the Twin Cities, approximately 38 percent, and in greater Minnesota, approximately 20 percent.)
5. Like what is expected for a community's businesses, community school system team members should also receive Core Values training and have the same minority workforce fair representation expectations like that expected of businesses. The names of Core Values-certified teachers and administrators should be published.
6. A condition of granting any municipal or local government-based license should be Core Values training and certification for the license holder and its team members, with the idea that if a company is going to be sanctioned by a city, town or county to do business, it should be required to understand the customers and workforce with whom it will interact.
7. Creation of a "Change Force" (as contrasted with yet another ineffective "task force" to study the problem) comprised of representatives from organizations that have already demonstrated how to effect positive racial and socio-economic change. (Examples in Minneapolis include the Jeremiah Program, Joyce Preschool, Achieve Minneapolis, Juxtaposition Arts, and the collaborative that ensured for a diverse U.S. Bank Stadium construction work

- force.) Working together with Inclusivity Leaders, Change Force members will identify and implement additional strategies for positive, impactful, and permanent change.
8. Enlistment of various white-color power centers to engage in Core Values training. This list must include social and county clubs and social service groups like Rotary and Lions clubs. Without buy-in from these white-color power centers, there will be no lasting, inclusive change.
 9. Obviously with developments of late, all Minnesota law agencies should receive Core Values training.
 10. Finally, there should be an annual report on the "State of Our Diverse Community" which tracks progress or non-progress toward making the state and individual communities more welcoming and inclusive for all their residents. In the event of nonprogress, people and institutions should be held accountable.

A Goal for State-Wide Training

I propose that every Minnesotan receive basic implicit bias/inclusivity training by the year 2023. Without a goal like this, we will continue to delay the comprehensive hard work that's needed to make Minnesota more welcoming and inclusive for all its residents.

Conclusion

The above is no doubt radical, but the reality is that we need to address long-standing issues with new and innovative strategies. What we've done thus far hasn't worked very well. Until we radically change the system, marginalization, loss, and oppression will continue unabated.

I welcome constructive input on how to change the diversity and inclusion landscape in our communities.

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen (Ellie) Krug
Human Inclusivity Speaker, Trainer and Consultant

Encouraging open hearts and thriving human spirits

Founder, Human Inspiration Works, LLC ("We make 'inclusion' an action word"TM)

elliekrug@gmail.com

www.elliekrug.com

www.gettingtoellen.com

www.humaninspirationworks.com