

Panel

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of America is changing, companies and organizations have to embrace diversity if they hope to be successful. Including diversity as part of a business strategy can mean everything from hiring the best people or forming business-to-business partnerships to creating niche marketing strategies.

Forum panelists were: Linda Higuera, vice president and director of diversity in corporate human resources for Wells Fargo; Curtis Mathews Jr., vice president of corporate EEO and people diversity for CIGNA Corp.; John E. Kobara, senior vice president of strategic development in the online higher education division for Sylvan Learning Systems Inc.; and Rich Bevan, vice president of human resources for Quest Diagnostics.

Bill Taggart, chief administrative officer for Wachovia's insurance division within its capital management group, helped frame the discussion before the panelists gave their talks. "I would like to talk a little bit about the diversity topic but more from a business imperative standpoint....When we take a look at just purely household growth, between 2001 and 2015, in the African-American community, they are projected to grow at 32 percent. And the Latino community is projected to grow at 60 percent. The buying power of African Americans went from, in 1990, from about \$308 billion to

about \$572 billion. This question of diversity is not just one of what is right and what is just, it is also a business imperative to ensure that corporations align their business models to be able to market effectively to this growing presence in the marketplace.

"What are the ramifications of not understanding the issue and acting appropriately? In my humble opinion, they are twofold: It will be very, very difficult from which to recruit the very talented human capital that is necessary to run corporations....It will be very difficult to even retain that talent as well, and not having those precious resources within the confines of your organization, you will probably have some type of weakness in terms of your thought leadership.

"The ramifications can be also fairly severe from a financial standpoint. Not having the resources internally, not having that thought leadership, not having the insight to know how to change and calibrate your sales and service processes and other points of infrastructure in your business can have a financial consequence as well. You could lose market share; you could have a new competitor come on the scene and they have developed it as a core competency and take market share from you and (you) have customer attrition and some other not-so-pleasant outcomes.

"So it is a business dilemma that we face and a business dilemma that the Wachovia Corporation is taking very seriously. We're taking a very holistic approach toward the topic of diversity. One, we have been (on) a journey in terms of developing awareness and having formal diversity councils inside of our corporation. Each one of our organizations has a diversity council and we have a corporate diversity council. And that council talks about things that really matter when it is all said and done. How do we go forth and build the right environment so it is conducive so that everyone has a fair and equal chance to be able to display their talent inside the corporation. We also have discussion in terms of our best practices in terms of recruiting, retention. We have a diversity scorecard that each one of our senior executives is accountable for, making a link between the talk and the action associated with the internal readiness.

"We have also had teams put together to take a look at the true business case related to diversity, literally the business case, which says what is the economic benefit to the corporation in terms of making changes from a marketing, sales, or services standpoint to be able to ensure that we get our fair share of the market as it per-



Taggart

tain to all of the constituencies in our marketplace, may they be African American, may they be Caucasian, may they be Latino or any other group. We also have ... a strong emphasis around the women's market. That is another growth ... emerging domestic market that has probably been underserved and under-met in terms of taking our financial services products and presenting them in a light that will resonate of the minds and desires of women. It is a long journey, it is hard work....

"The color of success as it pertains to diversity is twofold: one, to build the right environment so we can bring the best and brightest, give them the tools and techniques they can fully demonstrate the full extent of their capabilities and then manifest the outcome of that in terms of products and services so that we can get all the customers we possibly can in a profitable fashion and give adequate return to our shareholders. Let's not forget about the shareholder."

Higuera, a Latina who has more than 20 years of experience in human resources management, said that, for some, diversity has become a dirty word, bringing up thoughts of affirmative action and racial quotas. She said that's not what diversity is. She said diversity involves appreciation for and use of people's different talents and attributes in a multicultural society. She said that corporate officials need to be re-educated of the meaning of "diversity."

She said that companies that are not multiculturally diverse in their operations, advertising, marketing and community involvements stand to lose market share. As an example, she said a Latino customer told her he buys Pepsi, not Coke, because he perceives that Pepsi is more involved in the Hispanic community, for instance, sponsoring community events.

Likewise, Higuera said she recently saw an advertisement for a competitor of Wachovia and there were no people of color among the smiling faces featured in the ad. Not good, she said.

She said some people of color have told her they are reluctant to do business with cruise companies that send out brochures featuring only white people having fun.

And her own employer, Wells Fargo, had room for improvement too. Some people in focus groups said they found Wells Fargo's advertisement featuring two white men with whips riding on a stagecoach to be intimidating. So the advertisement was changed to show the silhouette of a stagecoach, which was much more "neutral," Higuera said.

Wells Fargo offers a wide range of diversity services for its customers, including translators, instructors, services and forms in more than one language; targeted products and services to different ethnic or racial groups; and the company is increasing its small business loans for women- and minority-owned businesses, Higuera said.

"It's all these little things that make a big difference," she said.

Mathews, who has overall responsibility for developing and implementing CIGNA's people diversity strategy, said diversity is similarities plus differences, minus biases. He defines contribution as skills, talents and experiences plus inclusion. He said diversity plus contribution equals value.

He stressed the importance of companies having a vigorous performance management system to ensure diversity. He said that at CIGNA managers cannot receive their bonuses unless they meet their diversity goals.

Mathews also said that companies that do not embrace diversity stand to lose market share. He said companies should not overlook the importance of women, as well as people of different ethnic and racial groups.

Before the forum, a Wachovia representative presented a \$2 million check to Babcock School Dean R. Charles Moyer to fund the Wachovia Scholars Program, which will furnish scholarships and career assistance to MBA (master's in business administration) students to create a more diverse student body. The program provides three scholarships annually for under-represented full-time MBA students to cover up to 100 percent of tuition, fees and costs associated with an international summer study trip. The program was announced in November, and the first recipients will begin MBA studies this fall.



Higuera

Art imitated life for Price

Local singer/actress poured a lot of herself into playing the legendary Josephine Baker

BY SHERIDAN HILL THE CHRONICLE

Once upon a time there was a girl. This skinny, little girl, the daughter of a St. Louis washerwoman, became the highest paid entertainer in Europe in 1927. Josephine Baker was one of the most photographed women in the world who became a French spy at one point in her life. She was a sensual performer who struggled heroically against racism (a New York Times article once called her "the Negro wench").

For two weekends in February, Baker's courageous and heart-torn life came alive through Janice Price's soulful performances at the Artistic Studio on Third Street. The production was the result of Price's 22-year interest in Baker's life that began while Price was a student at Howard University.

Price first played Josephine Baker in 1985 at The Kennedy Center in the play "Mammy the Gypsy," written by a French playwright and friend of Baker's. Price felt an instant familial bond with Baker.

"I know what it is like to not be loved by either side," Price said. "Since I was a small child, I have had problems with racism. It runs everywhere, including within races. There is a line in the play: 'Josephine's too light to be black and too dark to be white.' Josephine Baker and I both suffered from that prejudice. She felt, as I do, that the same color blood runs through everyone's skin."

Price's play, "Josephine," is a dramatic, historical musical that includes scenes from Baker's life that mirror Price's life. One such scene involves the Ku Klux Klan.

"I was the first black to integrate Walkertown Elementary School when I was 6 years old," Price said. "I woke up one night to find a cross burning in the neighbor's yard. The Klan had



Janice Price, seated, is surrounded by supporting players in her recent play, "Josephine."

made a mistake and put it in the wrong place. When Josephine cries, "Mama, hold me close," that is a scene from my own life." "Josephine" is a complete rewrite of a play Price wrote in 1984. It was first produced in 1992 at the Broach Theater in Greensboro. In the more recent production, Price worked with Nathan Ross Freeman, the Winston-Salem playwright who founded the Montage Showcase Ensemble. Freeman urged Price to tear into the script to get to the heart of Baker's life.

"An audience comes to see a play not to hear about past events, but to be inspired by a life," Freeman said. "I encouraged Janice to find the moments of Josephine's life instead of the events. That's how we were able to focus on the internal Josephine, and her bout with self-love."

"Josephine" was a co-production of Price's Artistic Studio and the Montage Showcase Ensemble. Original music was written by John Stamey Jr. and performed (via recording) by Ernie Bonner (piano), Matt Kendrick (bass), Eddie Rouse (percussion), and Shelton Beane

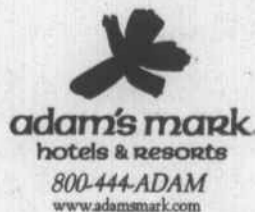
(drums). Baker adopted 12 orphans: children from Korea, Canada, Colombia, Finland and other countries. She wanted to prove that children of different ethnicities and religions could love each other. In a line from Price's play, Josephine says, "Noel was our 11th child. He was found in a mountain of trash outside a restaurant in Paris. Jo (her husband) was furious, but it was Christmas and, to me, Noel was a gift from God. All my children were beautiful growing together as brothers and sisters."

As for Price, her children are her students at the Artistic Studio, where she nurtures self-development, creativity, and artistic talent through lessons in singing, acting and dancing.

"I did not write this play as a showcase for my talent," Price said. "I wrote it to open some eyes and hearts. To actually think you are better than anyone else is so silly. It happens within all races and religions, among people of the same color and same country, because one believes something different from the other."

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