

MAFA Guild Roundtable
Diversity Part 2
August 18, 2020
Via Zoom

Welcome

MAFA President Helena Valentine welcomed the participants to the 2nd MAFA Roundtable to discuss diversity in our guilds and MAFA. She introduced Diversity and Inclusion Leader Cecilia Nelson-Hurt.

Cecilia describes herself as a proud Afro Latina. She was taught to crochet as a young child by her grandmother. Years later Cecilia learned to knit with the help of books and the assistance of the owner of her local yarn shop. In the fiber community, Cecilia is known as “Creative Ceci.” She has a YouTube channel: Ceci Knits the World.

Cecilia is a Diversity and Inclusion practitioner for L’Oréal—a global brand, and has over 15 years of experience developing and executing initiatives to create an equal opportunity workplace. As a marketing consultant, professional development coach and motivational speaker, she leverages her training and experience as a speaker at many fiber events and is also an inaugural member of the Vogue Knitting LIVE! Diversity Advisory Council (DAC). [from <https://bipocinfiber.com/listings/cecilia-nelson-hurt/>].

Cecilia began her discussion noting that Inclusion begins with “I” and that it is an action; an intention. She described the formation of the Vogue Diversity Council (DAC) in January 2019, following a post on social media around cultural appropriation. The intent of the poster was “appreciation” but the way it was perceived by many was “appropriation.” In the fallout, the Vogue Diversity Advisory Council was created. Cecilia emphasized that diversity refers to race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, physical abilities etc. That all should feel welcome. At the suggestion of DAC, several noticeable changes made to Vogue Knitting LIVE at the 2020 event include: wider corridors; quiet rooms; early access for attendees who needed more time; space for wheelchairs (plus companion) at the fashion show.

Cecilia’s presentation was eye-opening and packed with useful information and suggestions. It is likely that those guild members who were able to view the presentation will want to watch it again. Those who missed this Roundtable will certainly want to see it.

See Cecilia’s presentation here:

<https://youtu.be/jTX1oHKYFGs>

Here are some of the questions and comments that came up during the Roundtable and on the Chat :

One of Cecilia’s slides had a number of terms used in describing actions and behaviors. Cecilia explained or defined the following:

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- What is BIPOC? BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous and People of Color
- “Covering” is a concept where an individual feels the need to “downplay” some aspect of themselves to be accepted.
- What is “white fragility?” In his book *White Fragility*, Robin DiAngelo describes the difficulty some white people have when they feel pushed to discuss race as “white fragility.”
- “Intersectionality” is the concept that we are more than one thing; the way in which our differences intersect.
- “Privilege” In this country, privilege is seen as white, able-bodied and male. This does not mean they do not have hardships, but the systems that are in place benefit them.
- “Common Ground” We can find common ground in any of the dimensions of diversity.
- “Micro-affirmation” –Positive affirmation; things we do to affirm people.
- “Micro-aggression” Things that reveal a blind spot around bias. Common place words that reveal a prejudice or bias.
- “Centering”—making something about yourself.
- “Unconscious Bias” or “Implicit Bias”—Hidden beliefs that show up in perception and response to people, places and situations. Can lead to reinforced stereotypes

There was a question regarding the concept of “unpaid emotional labor.” Cecilia explained this concept speaks to systemic racism. For example, black people are often “asked” to educate about racism.

There was discussion about guild membership and how, if we want to be more inclusive, do we keep from veering into “tokenism.”

Suggestions were to look at “ways of being” in the guild. Cast a wide net and have a welcome desk where you provide a packet of information. Everyone needs to feel welcome and be greeted in the same manner. A number of attendees mentioned that their guilds had official “greeters”

Some final thoughts and ideas:

Who is missing at the table? Are there opportunities to say, “you can sit with us.”

Instructors—how do we make sure we have diversity in instructors.

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Festivals—how do we make sure they are accessible to everyone.

When did you last survey the membership to find out what they want.

The importance of Grace; allow people to make mistakes, recover and learn.

The following are additional resources mentioned during the Roundtable:

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous & People of Color working in the fiber community) . They have a BIPOC in fiber directory. <https://bipocinfiber.com>

Project Implicit Harvard University: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/taketest.html>

- The Danger of a Single Story:
https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en
- The Look. TalkAboutBias.com

Cecilia recommended the following books:

Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgements in Our Daily Lives by Howard Ross

How to be an Anti-Racist by Ibram Kendi

Our Search for Belonging: How Our Need to Connect is Tearing us Apart by Howard Ross

Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do by Claude M. Steele

So You Want to Talk about Race by Ijeoma Oluo

White Fragility: Why it's so Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo

Attendance

MAFA Board members attending:

Helena Valentine, President

Sara Robbins, 1st VP; Communications

Margaret Briggs, 2nd VP; Membership Chair/Conference Chair

Dave Banks, webmaster

Mary Strouse, Grants Chair

Patty Chrisman, Secretary

Guild Members attending:

Deborah Amaral, Triangle Weavers Guild

Dave Banks, MAFA webmaster, Williamsburg Spinners & Weavers Guild

Margaret Briggs, Central Virginia Fiberarts Guild

Aileen Campbell, Fredericksburg Spinners & Weavers Guild

Pat Canaday, Tryon Guild

Patty Chrisman, Frances Irwin Handweavers, North Country Spinners

Jill Coghlan, Harmony Weavers Guild

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Ellie Divito, MAFA Conference Committee
Nancy Everham, MAFA
Deborah Faehner, Handweavers of Bucks County (PA)
Margie Finn, Weavers' Guild of Rochester
Angela Fishman, Three Rivers Fiber Focus
Rebecca Fox, Central Virginia Fiberarts Guild
Beth Glauber, Frances Irwin Handweavers
Gail Gondek, New York Guild of Handweavers
Diana Guenther, PFLAG
Debbie Hadfield, Three Rivers Fiber Focus
Karel Henneberg, Weavers Roundtable
Deborah Herrin, Weavers Guild of Greater Baltimore
Joy Horner, Clothos Handspinners of Richmond, Virginia
Margaret Houseman, Weavers Guild of Buffalo
Maria Hughes, Paumanok Weavers
Carol Ireland, Fiber Guild, Harmony Weavers Guild
Denise Kash, Fredericksburg Spinners & Weavers
Judith King
Hedy Lyles, PGHW, JHW, HWBC
Susan Makuka, South Jersey Guild of Spinners & Handweavers
Charlene Marietti, New York Guild of Handweavers
Karen Mason, Harmony Weavers Guild
Katherine Mayer, Jockey Hollow Weavers
Carolyn Moore, Handweavers Guild of the New River Valley
Janice Mosley, Handweavers Guild of the New River Valley
Sally Orgren, Frances Irwin Handweavers, Jockey Hollow Weavers
Suanne Pasquarel, Weavers Guild of Buffalo; Rochester; Chautauqua
Debbie Patsel, North Country Spinners
Ellen Phelps, Frances Irwin Handweavers
Jane Phillips, Washington Spinners and Weavers
Doug Philhower, Frances Irwin Handweavers
Jennifer Philhower, Frances Irwin Handweavers
Kathy Reed, Fiber Guild of the Blue Ridge
Lesley Reynolds, Fredericksburg Spinners and Weavers Guild
Lillie Rizack, MAFA Conference Committee
Vilay Senthap, Baltimore Weavers Guild
Carol Steuer, New York Guild of Handweavers
Mary Strouse, MAFA Grants and Fellowships
Angela Tong, Westfield Weavers, Jockey Hollow Weavers
Nancy Turner, South Jersey Guild of Spinners and Weavers
Laura Womack, Handweavers of Bucks County