

The Wounds of Honour are Often Self-Inflicted

——— Torin Ellis ———



“ The words of honor are self inflicted. Honor is something that each of us is born with. Honor can not be granted nor can it be taken. It must only not be lost.”

- Morgan Freeman, The Last Knight

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At the inaugural Inclusive.Hiring, Torin Ellis delivered a truly eye-opening talk signifying how we all have a part to play in the D&I movement and expressed the importance of starting to take action.

The powerful words of industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie were delivered with equal impact and heft by Torin Ellis.

We alone are responsible for the way we conduct our lives, for the way we attain and maintain honour.

And that is the central message from Torin Ellis' moving and challenging key note.

There is an element of “preaching to the converted” at diversity and inclusion conferences. And Inclusive Hiring is no exception. Few people attend such events who do not have existing empathy and belief in its principles.

However, to create change, it is what happens after such events that matters more than what happens during them.

Indeed, few people in the room are likely to work for organisations who do not have a beautifully crafted diversity and inclusion mission. However, what real progress has been made?

If Henry Ford, in 1919, was the first to focus on inclusivity within the workplace, what would his reaction be today to the progress of the last century?

The diversity reports from so many leading organisations and enterprises speak to commitment, desire, and intent rather than real change and momentum.

And Torin was nakedly honest about this not being easy. Progress and clear movement will only happen through people being disruptive within the workplace. This may well involve people making themselves unpopular. Pointing out some inconvenient truths within their organisations. Having some uncomfortable conversations.

This is about speaking up and speaking out.

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The first thing we all need to do is find our voice – speak up! We are not doing a great job in D&I because not enough of you are speaking-up.... every single person has a responsibility in the ongoing conversation around diversity and inclusion.

- Torin Ellis

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What are the barriers preventing people from doing so within your employer?

It is easier to stand up at diversity and inclusion conferences and make a point, than to do so back home in the workplace. Back home where it matters.

We have gone past the need for data and metrics to make such points. Any number of pieces of research from the likes of McKinsey and Boston Consulting make the benefits of hiring from the broadest possible spectrum very, very clear.

It is not data but people who will create such momentum.

And there has never been a more important time for such change to happen. The workplace is evolving – more and more people are working from home, working flexibly and job sharing, having a more distant series of touchpoints with work. More and more are becoming gig or contingent workers.

We might have an increasingly diverse series of relationships with work and the workplace, but this is detracting rather than adding to inclusivity and belonging.

So many factors see individuals retreat from actively and comprehensively engaging with the workplace – be they related to ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexuality, family responsibilities. Such people might be in the workplace but they are not present. They are often hiding, not giving of themselves. Not being themselves. They are hiding in plain sight.

Even if organisations are hiring from diverse talent pools, it does not mean they are encouraging their full contribution and engagement.

How do you and your organisation respond to hiring managers that appear to be limiting the scope of their hiring?

There are many places to start within your organisation, many elements of the candidate and employee experience which impact on the capacity to be inclusive and diverse. Perhaps it's your employer branding messaging? Your use of technology? Your on-boarding? Your hiring managers? Your succession planning? The list is anything but exhaustive.

Have you audited your candidate journey to understand how inclusive it feels?

And whilst a lot of important work will happen within your organisation in terms of creating and maintaining such momentum, then employers need to engage with their external communities. Do they truly understand the talent audiences from which they are hiring? Do they grasp how such audiences currently perceive them? What could they do to improve such perceptions, to break down barriers and to open their doors?

Do you have experience of surveying external audiences to understand how your organisation is processed by candidate communities?

This is not about blaming the male, pale and stale. They are part of the solution as much as they are part of the problem – as everyone is. If the objective is an ever more increasing breadth of inclusion within the workplace, this is everyone's responsibility. But traction is difficult if it is attempted alone. People need to work together and to bring on-board leadership. With the best will and the best intentions, change only happens with leadership behind it.

What wins have you seen in terms of getting leadership behind such initiatives?

True diversity and inclusion is a journey not a destination. There is no finishing line, things can always be improved and enhanced. That does mean that even small, incremental changes are important. The dial will not be shifted overnight, particularly for larger organisations – however, this is about making a start, making a difference.

This is about taking good intentions out of the conference room into the workplace, the trading floor, the laboratory, the canteen. We can achieve so much. We can make a difference. We can be superheroes. But, like the Avengers, we're stronger together.

Whether we're armed with capes, passion or commitment, we know we have to break down all the "isms" that surround us, that can split and divide us. But isms, schisms. Whoever we are, whatever we're doing, wherever we're doing it. We're looking for the same things from work.

Key Contributor



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