Website Diversity Audit: Miami Police Department Institutional Affiliations

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**Introduction**

It is periodically necessary to assess the levels to which diversity and its benefits are being presented on a company’s website. This is vital in sending a strong message of inclusion and representation to potential clients, consumers, and job applicants. When a corporation, small business, or government institution does not have a clearly stated message or initiative devoted to celebrating diversity it does all parties involved a disservice. It can be especially detrimental by alienating qualified individuals from feeling welcomed to apply, the company loses out on countless beneficial employees and the divide in the minority wage gap remains vast. Therefore it is essential to do an audit of the websites of public institutions for cultural diversity and inclusiveness.

**What Website was Chosen and Why? How is This Relevant to Cultural Diversity Studies?**

For this assignment I chose to focus my attention on the public institution of the local police department. Specifically, the Miami Police Department and its public website. I believe it is particularly important for public institutions such as the police department, school board, and local medical facilities to portray a message of cultural diversity prominently on their websites so that the public may feel these institutions represent them equitably. These institutions are funded by the public tax dollars, therefore, they should reflect that public and make sure they feel welcome and included.

At this particular juncture in American history when police involved shootings of predominantly, unarmed, African-American males is receiving unprecedented focus in national media outlets, I thought it would be particularly relevant to this institution to portray an inclusionary message on all of its forums. This would go a long way towards projected to the public that true efforts were being made to address some of the untreated divides that continue to plague the nation. It would also go a long way towards encouraging people from all backgrounds to join the police forces that have had issues with diversity on their force in the past. By making the neighborhood police force be more reflective of the community they are intended to serve would likely reduce the number shooting incidents we’ve seen in recent memory. A website audit could be instrumental in assuring that a message of openness to diversity on the police force is embraced by its current members would be helpful in that regard.

**Outline: Questions & Answers**

**Evaluate how accessible diversity-related material is on this Web site. Is there a direct link from the home page?**

* There is no direct link to any diversity information, nor are there any tabs near the top of the page indicating anything of the sort. Diversity information is generally scarce throughout the site, with the exception of a single sentence using the word to describe the diverse Miami community, not the police department.

**What type of results does entering the term “diversity” in a search box yield? Or, do you have to explore on your own?**

* Diversity search resulted in a “None Found” error message. There is a visible search bar available at the top of the webpage, however, it does not lead to anything regarding diversity. After a lengthy search I discovered that in the “Careers” subheading, there was a single sentence in which the word diverse is used in three paragraphs of text. This use of the word was in reference to the community rather than any aspirations for the police force itself.

**What does this say about the organization’s commitment to diversity?**

* It would be hard for a visitor of this site to conclude that this organization is very concerned about portraying an image of inclusiveness or that diversity is high on their list of priorities. This is especially surprising due to the fact that this particular police department has been instructed via consent decree by the United States Department of Justice, to implement tangible, documentable, strategies to encourage and increase minority hiring within its ranks in 1977; and has been forced to submit reports outlining their practices to that effect to the government on a quarterly basis since that time. (*www.clearinghouse.net/chDocs/public/EE-FL-0130-0001.pdf).*
* This is also surprising due to the well documented statewide issue regarding a lack of diversity among the states many police forces, as outlined in this Miami Herald article (www.miamiherald.com/news/state/florida/article21228594.html). This article documents the statewide issues with diversity among Florida police from 2015 and as we are nearing 2017 nothing has been addressed with regard to cultural diversity in the public webpage of the Miami police Department.
* Neighboring Department of North Miami Police clearly states the importance of diversity in their mission statement offering a stark contrast between the ways surrounding precincts want to be perceived by the public. (www.northmiamipolice.com/about\_nmpd/). The Miami Beach Police Department has also taken well documented steps to prove their commitment to diversity, though change can move slowly it is a clear attempt on their behalf outlined in this article, (http://wlrn.org/post/miami-beach-police-department-goes-through-diversity-training). Every department but Miami PD seems committed to expressing the importance that cultural diversity plays in policing.

**Evaluate the usefulness of the diversity information to potential employees, customers, and suppliers. Is the diversity material related to the organization’s business case for diversity, core values, mission, etc. the way that the organization does business?**

**How current is the diversity-related material?**

* The pictures of black women and Hispanic men who are award recipients within the department have not been updated since 2013. This is one of the few places on the site where minorities have been showcased and it seems to be being neglected.

**Evaluate the appropriateness of the photographs and graphic material that relates to diversity. Some Web sites will feature photographs of diverse employees and customers, yet not link this material to the verbal content. Some reuse the same pictures on different pages, etc.**

* There is a revolving image scroll at the top of the webpage pointing out different information to visitors of the site, the fifth of eight images shows three motorcycle officers side by side with a caption that reads “ Traffic enforcement detail: Miami Police Department”. The three officers are racially diverse (white, black, and Hispanic); I believe this is intended to convey the sense that their police force is ethnically diverse and properly represents the communities they vow to protect and serve. There are no instances of images being reused anywhere on the site. The aforementioned image cannot be clicked and does not lead to any diversity information so any assumptions made from it with regard to race would be completely speculative.

**Assume that you are a) a potential employee, b) a potential customer and c) a potential supplier or sub-contractor. What perceptions might you have about this organization’s commitment to diversity based solely on the Web site?**

**Looking at this Web site, do you think that it encourages or discourages diverse employees to apply for jobs in this organization? Why or why not?**

* I don’t believe this website encourages members of minority communities to apply for open positions within this organization. The imagery used throughout the site reinforces the idea that the Miami Police Department is a public institution dominated by white males. Most of the administrative positions are held by men. I will say that there seems to be no discrimination against hiring and promoting Hispanic men within this police force either, however, if I were a Hispanic male I would have to search the site for quite some time to identify just how welcome I was (on the award recipient page).

**What internal management issues can affect the prominence that diversity gets or doesn’t get on an organization’s Web site?**

* Most of the administrative positions are held by men.

**Are there any diversity awards listed on the Web site? If so, review the criteria and selection process as presented in the Allard article on awards (from the textbook) or if the award is not mentioned in that article. Evaluate the value of the award through the sponsoring organization’s Web site.**

* There are no rewards dedicated to diversity.

**If you were a (female, over 55, racial minority, person with a physical challenge, gay or lesbian, etc.) job applicant and you have read an ad for job opening for which you are fully qualified. Based on your audit of the company web site what perceptions might you have of this company before you even walk in the door?**

* I don’t believe this website encourages members of minority communities to apply for open positions within this organization. The imagery used throughout the site reinforces the idea that the Miami Police Department is a public institution dominated by white males. Most of the administrative positions are held by men. Therefore if I fit the aforementioned criteria I would probably discount myself from a positon with this institution before even applying because it doesn’t appear to be a conducive work environment for someone like myself.

**Would you still apply for the job? Why or why not?**

* Most likely not, for all of the above-mentioned reasons.

**Sources (to date)**

1. Case 1:75-cv-03096-SH Document 774 Entered on FLSD Docket ... (n.d.). Retrieved November 20, 2016, from <http://www.clearinghouse.net/chDocs/public/EE-FL-0130-0001.pdf>
2. Sayre, W. (2015, May 14). Miami Beach Police Department Goes Through Diversity Training. Retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://wlrn.org/post/miami-beach-police-department-goes-through-diversity-training
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4. [www.miami-police.org](http://www.miami-police.org)
5. By John LantiguaFlorida Center for Investigative Reporting. (2015, May 17). Black police officers underrepresented on Florida streets. Retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://www.miamiherald.com/news/state/florida/article21228594.html