



CHAPTER LEADERSHIP FORUM: THE ART OF TACT, TAI CHI AND TRANSFORMATION

Membership Engagement: the heart of manifesting our mission. Each chapter's success relies on its ability to connect with its members and discover how to best use their talents. That success can be jeopardized by conflicts that do arise. One chapter's issues will echo another's, and form the same questions: How can we inspire our members to become better involved? How can we resolve problems and grow with grace?

Dames Natalie Keng of Atlanta, Robin Lee Griffith of Charleston and Tanya Holland of San Francisco formed a dynamic panel providing insights, key concepts, and exercises for our Dame leaders to bring back to their membership.

LEAD WITH EMPATHY

As an Asian-American female growing up in the rural South, Cookbook author Natalie Keng learned first-hand how societal "mash-ups" can spur creativity and new perspectives. It was foundational in her journey, leading her to teaching the soft power of food: when you open yourself to the foods of another culture, you open yourself to the people.

To further build your empathy muscle, she introduced the Social Identity Wheel. Here, you select how you view yourself, the parts of yourself you'd like to know more about, and the values that are important to you. This provides a lens for how you see others—the overlaps and the dissonances that create conflict or opportunity. In reimagining leadership, it is important to discover/uncover commonalities while remembering that differences are beautiful. Sometimes that means taking a step back. Natalie calls that "Tai-Chi-ing It." In doing the work, there is a natural ebb-and-flow. If you hit a snag, pivot. Step back. Let something else creative flow in.

YOUR AWARENESS WINDOWS

Dame Robin Lee Griffith has enjoyed a rich and varied career in food and hospitality, and is now a consultant specializing



Speakers at the LDEI Conference Leadership Forum, L-R: Dame Robin Lee Griffith (Charleston), Tanya Holland (San Francisco), and Natalie Keng (Atlanta).

in nonprofits and culinary history. She serves on the DEI Committee of LDEI. Her presentation focused on an impactful exercise to enhance your awareness through a process that includes a physical component. The Five Windows of Awareness are Reflection, Attention, Feeling, Thinking, and Wanting. Physically going through each step—as stepping from box (or window) marked on the floor to the next—cements the realizations inside you.

Consider: When you *reflect* on a troubling situation, what are you paying *attention* to? What are the *feelings* that are coming up? Now move to the cognitive: *think* though the description of the situation, its causes, the associated assumptions and expectations, and ideas and solutions. Finally, identify what you *want* and need: as a general outcome with statements about how to achieve, what you hope for yourself, for others, and what they hope for you. This exercise for conflict resolution works on all levels: in business, in organizations, in personal life.

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Dame Tanya Holland has formidable experience blazing difficult culinary trails. Being a Black woman chef in the early '90s with no mentors and no one in her field who looked like her, she was often dis-

missed, underestimated, and in a position to constantly prove herself. A perfectionist who also considers herself an "omni-vert" Tanya forged a path to become a renowned chef, restaurateur, cookbook author, and media celebrity. Coming from a time long before DEI gave her a unique voice and perspective: "I have to do the work. I must self-advocate." Her presentation was a conversation with attendees that stressed, a) learning to listen and lean in, b) respect for our elders, honoring institutional knowledge and experience, c) whether it is ageism, racism, or any form of discrimination: call it out. And finally, d) look at the values we all hold.

Everyone wants to feel valued. Everyone has value. How can the Board formalize roles to showcase those values? Broaden the spotlight. Assign mentors to new members. Find the frequency: how a member can contribute (Time-Talent-Treasure) Reach out. Phone calls matter. If no one volunteers, make the assignments. Some are waiting to be asked. Don't be afraid to set expectations. Give grace. And remember the golden words, please and thank you.

The panel was moderated by LDEI Chapter Board Liaisons: Anastasia Nickerson, Robin Plotkin, and Belinda Smith-Sullivan.