

MMR Black History Month – INFUSION by Castells

‘Who Will Tell the Story?’

Liz Castells-Heard

My creative director who leads the agency’s African-American efforts, Hadji Williams, shared a story about a newspaper ad from his childhood ‘that won many big industry awards and so vividly illustrated the story painted by Madison Ave. about people like me’. The ad showed a black teen in a tracksuit proudly holding trophies with the headline, ‘If you want to see how fast he can really run, wait until his girlfriend tells him she’s pregnant.’ I also unfortunately recall that ad, and remember how commonplace it all was.

Advertising tells stories: About a client. A product. An audience... And so many ads have told such small backwards stories about Black people largely to appease others rather than ask why this segment doesn’t gratefully buy into what they are being sold. Companies lately have stepped up in support of BLM, D&I and the 15% Black Pledge. But effective African-American marketing goes beyond representation, solidarity messaging, or the news cycle. And that’s why so many Black communities are still fighting to have their stories told and honored—even in our spaces where the end goal is to sell more telecom services, burgers or cars.

Yes, it starts with supporting Blacks’ contribution to society, pop culture trends, social opinion, entrepreneurship – and shaping the lens on brands. But it’s about being deeply rooted in the community with consistent engagement, offerings, and intentional acts of loyalty, predicated on actions and purpose. It’s about their contribution to your business growth, centering African Americans as customers worthy of equitable investment at every level, and infused into the common business culture and paradigm. It’s understanding and reflecting Blacks’ multi-dimensional characteristics and lifestyles in meaningful empowered context.

At INFUSION, we’ve honed our passion for AA communities into winning work for our clients while fostering lucrative bonds with African American audiences. We understand that Multiculturals, including African Americans, are a people of infusion, whose depth is a cauldron of resiliency, creativity, experiences, histories and narratives. There is no one single African American voice. No one style. No one correct tone. No one way to be Black. No one face... because their substance, meat, soul, and worth takes continual deep dives to comprehend.

The future of our industry rests not in tech or economic advancements, but in who will tell and honor the stories that bring us all to richest and truest definition of who African-Americans are, and who they hope to be. And who we all hope to be.