

Diversity at City Hall: “Who’s sitting in the decision table?”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Arts, the, Fun Stuff, Touchstone Theater October 31, 2019

 68th in a series of posts on Touchstone Theatre 

Hidden Seed: Bethlehem’s Forgotten Utopia

“In the first two decades, the Moravians built a racially integrated city.”

(Seth Moglen)

When you hear “a Priest, a Rabbi, and a Minister walk into a bar,” prepare for a joke.

When you hear a Latino man, an African American woman, and a White woman are discussing diversity, prepare for an indictment.

Such happened in the middle of the panel discussion following the “Hidden Seed” performance during Touchstone Theatre’s Festival UnBound.

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“Who’s sitting in the decision table?” asked LM, “if you don’t have the diversity in the decision table, it’s no diversity at all.” “Take, for example, the City Hall here in Bethlehem, ok,” followed AAW, “tell us about the diversity in City Hall [pause], there’s hardly any diversity in City Hall. . . . It’s all white most of the time. . . . So when you’re talking about how can we change our city, well, I think our City Hall needs to be reflective of the people, the composition should include the people of the community. . . . It is very, very, very Anglo.” “And very male,” adds WW, “many times I’m

in the room, I'm the only female in the room in City Hall. . . . I get very tired having to explain that I think differently . . . I entertain ideas differently, and it's almost that I got to justify. . . . It is absolutely an unconscious bias. . . . In the business community, in government, it's a challenge."

Short exchange, long in ramification.

Elections are on Gadfly's mind today as you can see from the previous two posts.

Some random thoughts to chew on as we think about the role future elections play in furthering the goal of a more diverse city:

- Should diversity start at the top?
- What would a photo of the Mayor's staff meeting show?
- Are we getting close to a woman mayor?
- We have three female councilpersons — a record number?
- Can we imagine more, even a totally female Council?
- We have Latino representation on Council — sufficient?
- Has there ever been an African American on Council?
- Has there ever been an African American running for Council?
- Does a range, a balance of race and gender and heritage in our elected officials matter?