



culturebeat
PULSE

PURPOSE

In our world today, with myriad sources for information, the pervasiveness of social networks, and the fragmentation of media, keeping track of what matters can be difficult. More importantly, making sense of how the news and events coming from these sources may impact your brand and your marketing strategy is now more important than ever before.

CultureBeat® PULSE is our humble initiative to bring you a consolidated, curated ensemble of relevant topics on multiculturalism and multicultural consumers. Our goal is to keep you well-informed about what's going on in our society and marketplace and, most importantly, why it matters.

In each edition, our multicultural research practitioners will bring you a mini collection of newsworthy events, conversations, and trends that are culturally relevant—with an informed point of view on why people from different walks of life, cultures, and ethnicities should matter to your organization, with the intent to serve as thought and conversation starters for the marketing community.

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IT'S OKAY TO NOT BE OKAY: THE STRESS OF BEING THE G.O.A.T.

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The Olympics are always an exciting time when sports and culture collide, and all wait to see who takes home the gold. However, it comes at a price. Besides the year-long delay and other pandemic-related issues, the 2021 Tokyo Olympics were under intense scrutiny. But if anything came out of these games, it was the importance of mental health for athletes.

At 4 feet, 8 inches tall, Simone Biles often feels she has “the weight of the world on my shoulders.” It all came to a head on the fourth day of competition when Simone Biles, the greatest gymnast of all time, withdrew from the group competition due to a cited medical issue. As reports started coming out, many

“
... I don't
have to be fine.
I can be pissed
off for now. I can
be mad. I can be
angry. I can be
joyful, you know?”

thought she had been physically injured at some point during the competition. But there were other factors at play. Biles stepped away due to the emotional toll she was feeling to be “the head star” of the Olympics.

After her unexpected departure, the USA women's gymnastics team ended up taking home the silver medal without 24-year-old Biles, a (at the time) four-time Olympic gold medalist. After a performance at Tokyo prelims on Monday, Biles already seemed to be hinting at a struggle. She opened up on Instagram, saying: “[I truly do feel like I have the weight of the world upon my shoulders at times.](#)”

Biles isn't the only athlete to speak up about mental health struggles and awareness.

Michael Phelps, the most decorated Olympian of all time, has been a vocal advocate for mental health awareness since 2018, when he announced that he had struggled with depression and contemplated suicide after his run at the 2012 Olympics. “We’re human beings,” Phelps said at the time. “Nobody is perfect. [It’s OK to not be OK.](#)”

Phelps has gone on the record to say that he estimated that 70% of Olympic athletes struggle with depression after the Games. “The USOC (United States Olympic Committee) and the IOC (International Olympic Committee) kind of just brushes us under the rug, pushes us aside, and we’ve got a line of kids coming up to fill our shoes,” said Phelps. “So as long as we performed well, that’s all, in my opinion, they really cared about.”

Since retiring from competition, Phelps has devoted what he calls “the second chapter of his life” to destigmatizing mental health and promoting water safety. He says this work is more rewarding than Olympic gold and that he will spend the rest of his life talking about mental health.

Athletes rely on their families for support in stressful situations. But this year, the Olympic stands were empty because of the COVID-19 pandemic, removing an important source of reassurance and support. Add additional stresses like frequent COVID testing, isolation from fellow athletes, and an intense media presence and you’ve got a pressure cooker just waiting to explode. This might sound like a lot to deal with, and that’s because it is.

A few days after she was done competing and winning a bronze medal on the balance beam, Biles revealed that a close family member had unexpectedly passed away during her time in Tokyo for the Olympics. “At the end of the day, people don’t understand what we are going through,” Biles said.

Biles also said she would treasure the bronze—her seventh Olympic medal—all the more after everything she’d been through.



REFRAMING THE CONVERSATION FROM BLACK STRUGGLE TO BLACK JOY

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Over the years, marketers have tried to connect with the Black/African American consumer as a way to grow their bottom line. They realized that if they captured the hearts and minds of this population of over 44 million, this could mean the difference between making its quarterly earnings or falling significantly short. That's because the Black/African American consumer represents \$1.4 trillion dollars in spending power, as large as the GDP of nations such as Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and Spain.

Companies have often used advertising as a way to attract

the Black/African American consumer to their brands. And why not? According to Nielsen's [Power of the Black Community Report](#), Black adults over index on weekly time spent on a media device: Total TV - 128, Streaming audio at 110, Gaming - 116, to name a few. Similarly, 96% of African Americans 35+ own smartphones and are 42% more likely to respond to ads on mobile devices. With numbers like these, marketing efforts to reach Blacks/African Americans should be a no-brainer.

Nevertheless, advertising spending to court Blacks/

African Americans does not reflect this opportunity. Despite having increased by 15.6% from 2011 to 2019, advertising that's focused on reaching Blacks/African Americans is less than [2% of total US ad spending](#). Clearly many companies have not yet gotten the message.

For those that have seen the numbers, in our judgment, marketing efforts have been based on perceptions and stereotypes about the population rather than rooted insight and understanding about what makes them tick. Too often advertising has shown the struggles that

Blacks/African Americans have gone through and are perceived to still be dealing with today. And yes, we all know there have been many, including 400+ years of slavery, Jim Crow laws, redlining, segregationist policies, and more.

In our research, Black/African American consumers often express that they are tired of being shown as poor and hopeless, only to be saved by the “great white corporation.” While these stories may feel good in the boardroom, they likely do not ring true nor resonate with the intended consumer. What Black/African American consumers want to see instead, and will respond more favorably to, are positive depictions of Black/African American consumers—ideas rooted in:

- An understanding of what family means;
- notions that show pride in Black/African American culture;
- concepts that demonstrate “you know me.”

These are examples of Black Joy. Such notions get beyond the generational trauma that is at the painful core of Blacks/African Americans and speak to the upbeat and uplifting stories.

At C+R Research, our CultureBeat® team has been helping clients understand Black Joy and how it can be leveraged for their specific market. If you see yourself struggling with the struggle or wondering how you can tap into this important consumer, contact us; and we can help you think through a learning approach.



WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE ISN'T ALWAYS WHAT IT IS: *PAIRING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY TO GET IT RIGHT*

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The other day, I was driving on a Chicago expressway; and a billboard caught my eye. It was a billboard encouraging folks to get vaccinated. What grabbed my attention was not so much the message but the actual components that made up the ad: it included a picture of what appeared to be a Black woman, a toddler-aged Black child, and Spanish text. I was not used to seeing an ad like this in Chicago, an ad with Black people and Spanish-only language. So, it definitely stood out, and it sparked my curiosity about what is happening in our nation at this exact moment in time, an unprecedented and history-making time, when companies and brands alike are ramping up their diversity and inclusivity initiatives; many are embarking on such an initiative for the very first time.

Seeing the ad begged some questions, “Are companies giving any real thought to the fact that there is a difference between being diverse

versus being inclusive? Do they understand how important it is to be both?” In this one ad, I sensed the pairing of diversity and inclusivity, as I deemed this ad to be reaching out to a specific segment of the population, perhaps an “Afro-Latino” audience, capturing a complex make-up in our society where research shows a concerning amount of vaccination hesitancy among this cohort.

First Draft, a nonprofit coalition whose mission is to protect communities from harmful information, conducted focus groups to delve a bit deeper into the reasons [why Black and Hispanic communities are hesitant to get vaccinations](#). Some of the reasons may be surprising if you don’t have a real grasp of what life has been like in the U.S. for these cultural groups and how those life experiences have impacted their day-to-day-lives. But, before I go any further with this digression, let me re-focus my attention to the purpose of this writing—Diversity and Inclusivity.



Why is it so important to pair diversity with inclusivity? Let's start by clarifying the difference between the two. Being diverse speaks more to the tangible—you may be able to TOUCH it; moreover, you can SEE it. For example, a company has a good mix of employees—White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, Millennials, Gen Xers, Boomers, etc.—so the company appears to be very diverse! Or is it?

On the marketing side, a brand has an ad depicting its hair grooming product as appropriate for use by an array of different cultural groups. Is it really? Is that even possible? Perhaps! SEEING a mix of skin tones, genders, and ages may give a perception of diversity, but diversity alone does little and is just one step in a complex journey to achieving a truly diverse and inclusive environment! Inclusivity is oftentimes the part of the equation that gets missed. Diversity provides the face; Inclusivity...the VOICE!

Inclusivity happens when you open the door and extend a warm and sincere welcome into your space; it's in that space that a sense of belonging is

promoted and nurtured, despite cultural differences. The invitation opens a space up to what may have once been perceived as restricted or EXCLUSIVE. It becomes a classroom of sorts, where there is teaching and learning happening as a result of active and intentional sharing and listening. If your efforts at being inclusive are successful, that space opens up to evolve into a space where EVERYONE who occupies it feels not only welcome, but "heard." It becomes a space that celebrates and respects differences, a space that recognizes that each individual is not only a welcomed contributor, but a unique and valued contributor as well.

As those occupying that space become increasingly, and sometimes surprisingly, aware of the unique differences among the members of the group, they find themselves in a better position to be inclusive. Much work is needed to achieve true diversity and inclusivity; the work needs to be ongoing. It's a journey. A lot of planning, sharing, and learning needs to take place prior to, and during the execution of a good plan. So, plan to be in it for the long haul. Those companies that seem to be getting it right in their marketing efforts have been working toward this for some time now. You can read about some of them [here](#).

Whether or not you're an advocate of meritocracy, who doesn't want to live in a society where everyone has an opportunity to be their best possible self? Our biases, be them conscious or unconscious, whether birthed from ignorance, the lack of empathy, or assumptions that we have the answers to the unknown, are misplaced and hurtful in a society made up of different cultural groups and are prohibitive in enabling people to be their best possible selves. These biases greatly hinder inclusivity efforts, and they often give way to oppressive behavior.





Being open to learning about the nuances that make up different cultural groups helps to position all of us to make whatever modifications are necessary to give everyone a fair chance to be represented and understood—this is the epitome of being inclusive. This happens when you’re an attentive listener—actively listening to what those in-culture individuals have to tell you about what life is like for them and particularly how interactions with those who are not in-culture play a part in the experiences that different cultural groups have.

Brands and marketers play an important role in this as they have the long-reaching arm that positions them to authentically represent the diverse realities of different cultural groups.

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Authenticity works in tandem with a successful inclusivity effort.

Forbes reported, these brands and marketers play a role in how diversity and inclusivity play out in the [workplace](#). And our CultureBeat® team has done much research into how [brands and marketers also have a strong influence in representing these realities in the media](#). These are settings where diverse consumers should be represented as their authentic selves.

Our CultureBeat® team talks a lot about authenticity; we’ve practically been shouting it over the last several months in communication with our clients as well as in our webinars and blogs because it’s really important that they get the significance of

this message. Like diversity, “authenticity” works in tandem with a successful inclusivity effort. It’s at this juncture that your efforts are then perceived as genuine; you are truly an ally. Read one of our [case studies](#) to see how our client benefited from infusing inclusion in media and entertainment.

Remember when I talked earlier about that one-size-fits-all hair grooming tool. Well, as a marketer, it means, for example, that when you target my cultural group for your hair straightening tool, you show

me a Black woman successfully using your product with the same thick, coily, kinky, gorgeous hair that I have. It means that your messaging is realistic, and that you also acknowledge, celebrate, and recognize differences, even within the same cultural group.

So, before you put your ad out there, you accounted for the fact that my best girlfriend, who is also a Black woman, has thin, wavy hair, quite different from mine. And, that hair grooming tool that you said was appropriate for all cultural groups, is depicted in your advertising as being used by a woman whose hair looks just like my girlfriend’s, but she has to put the tool on a different setting than the one I would use for my hair type, and my friend and I see the results and both are able to say, “this product is for ME!” despite our differences. That’s being inclusive!

So, establish realistic goals on your journey to achieve a successful diversity and inclusivity program. That plan should include:

Starting with accepting that you don't know what you don't know;

Leaving biases parked outside and being open to learning more about the different cultural groups that occupy this world of ours;

Recognizing when you are an "outsider" during certain conversations and, as such, being open to attentively listening and carefully observing in-culture experiences to educate yourself about different cultural groups;

Applying those learnings to your marketing initiatives so that you can authentically amplify the voice of diverse populations toward a goal of being inclusive.

After you've established good footing toward being diverse and inclusive, it is only then that we can add

equity to this equation—which should be an ongoing and long-term goal of diversity and inclusivity initiatives. That's when meritocracy hints at being fair. But we will save that conversation for another time.

In the meantime, if you have a need to learn more about multicultural groups, our CultureBeat® team can help you in this area. Not only have we been studying the multicultural consumer for over 20 years in order to help provide great research, deep perspective, and committed client service to our research partners, but our expertise is also augmented by our internal efforts here at C+R. We have a strong focus on culture here, it's one of the most popular mentions by our employees of why they love working at C+R.

To learn more about how we can help your team with your research diversity and inclusivity initiatives, reach out to our CultureBeat® team. Multicultural is what we do, and we're always happy to share our learnings.



SOWING RICH CULTURE IN A NEW LAND: THE CONTINUED HISPANIC MIGRATION

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It has been little more than a year and a half since life's "normalcies" were redefined to adjust to the world-striking virus that continues to lurk around with its many [variants](#). This summer seemed to be looking more travel-friendly as safety measures became more relaxed in most places. So, my family and I decided it was time for a break. My husband and I packed up our two boys—a 13-year-old teenager and a highly active toddler—and took some days off from our little Chicagoan bubble to embark on a much-needed family road trip.

We love driving, and since the Delta variant continues to spread at an increasing rate and masks are making a comeback throughout the country, we thought that travelling in our own vehicle was the safest way to move around and enjoy the change of scenery. So, to the east we went! And by "east," I mean just a couple of cities because teenagers and toddlers are not exactly "long-hours-in-a-car" kind of people (wink).

First stop, Maryland; this is where my Venezuelan family has lived for over 30 years. In Maryland, there are very few Venezuelan people or Venezuelan-owned

establishments, as the Hispanic community there is represented mostly by Central Americans. Central Americans account for 54% of the Latino population in the area according to [Census Bureau](#) data. Wherever we went, it was easy to spot a Salvadorian accent from workers in restaurants, construction projects, even the Spanish-speaking radio stations. By the way, if you happen to visit this city, you cannot leave without having a delicious [pupusa](#) simply because you have to try something other than crab in Maryland!

A few days later, we headed to New York and spent a couple of days in touristy Manhattan. The Hispanic community in the Big Apple, specifically encounters with Dominicans and Colombians, brings music to my ears as it reverberates with the sounds of the Caribbean neighbors from my childhood. These two groups are very lively and happy. During our visit, we had the opportunity to chat with a Mexican street vendor who told us about his story of sharing a small studio in the city with his wife and children and listening to his Dominican neighbors jamming every day to some Merengue.

On our way back to Chicago, we were reflecting on our week of travel to these vastly different cities. And even though we were out for only a few days, we were craving food from our local Mexican joint. As you may have guessed, there is a large Mexican population represented in the Windy City, and even though we did see representation in Maryland and New York, Chicago is where I would take anyone to eat a good [birria](#). My husband is from the north side of Mexico, and Mexican food here has been an adventure for his palate. He gets more Mexican commodities locally, as Mexicans here come from many regions—and with that an array of products that can only be found in those specific regions of Mexico, availing us a more authentic experience in the city.



Seeing other Hispanic people from the aforementioned countries is not uncommon—diversity in cities like New York and Chicago have been there for many decades. What’s happening more recently is a mass exodus of my Hispanic people from their beloved homelands. Venezuelans, for example, are packing up and leaving their countries to start over in a multitude of places, but what’s more impressive is the number coming to the United States. Also, a new wave of Puerto Ricans arrived to the States after the devastation of Hurricane Maria hit the island in 2017. This Category 5 storm caused catastrophic damage which resulted in [\\$91.61 billion in losses](#), leaving the island without energy for months—impacting the economic future of everyone. According to Centro, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, this uncertainty of their future on the island caused an exodus of nearly [160,000 residents](#) who relocated to the United States. In terms of both volume and duration, this departure represents one of the most significant migrations of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland in the island’s history.



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My husband left right after the hurricane hit in 2017. I had lost my job and his hours were significantly less and was doing other roles too. We were without water for three months and without electricity for four months. I remember doing long lines in the grocery store and going to the gas station at night since it was going to be 3-4 hours of wait. Our banks in my area did not work, my husband would get paid by direct deposit, every Saturday we would travel an hour to a bank in the city and get all the cash we could to use in our town since ATMs and ATH were out of service for a long time. My family and I would be in line to get access to the river and bathe and wash our clothes. Moving to North Carolina was the best thing to do, my kids are getting the health and school services they need plus our finances have improved 110%. Harnett county doesn’t have many Latinos; therefore, I have to travel an hour and 10 minutes to get to the closer Latino grocery store to get some of the Puerto Rican stuff my kids are used to eat and relay in a Facebook group page to inform each other of activities with other Boricuas.

Desi, North Carolina (married, mom of two, 40, Puerto Rican)

Much like their Mexican, Dominican, and Puerto Rican counterparts, Venezuelans have been in the U.S. [for over 20 years](#); however, in recent years, we’re seeing one of the largest migrations from [Latin America](#). This movement has been propelled by a number of [issues](#) like hyperinflation, violence, lack of food, medicine and essential services resulting from many accumulated years of political disruption from this once oil-rich country. More than 5 million people have left their home in Venezuela. The United States government has taken a few positive steps in order to aid Venezuelans since rupturing diplomatic relations with the

country in 2019. For example, an expired passport can still be valid for five years after its expiration date. As a way to stay, a lot of them have been granted [asylum](#) as they were able to prove government retaliation due to their political views. There are also designations and President’s orders that have been signed recently like the DED (Deferred Enforced Departure) and TPS (Temporary Protected Status), both to protect Venezuelans against removal and allow the opportunity for a work permit. [According to the Pew Research Center, the Venezuelan-born living in the US population has increased more than 300% since 2000.](#)

It is amazing to experience all these Latino cultures in two or three cities. You would think this road trip gave us just a light glimpse of the East and South Coasts, but in just a couple of cities we experienced a few Latin American countries with unique cultures adapted to life in the U.S.

Each of our Latino backgrounds represents a world full of differences derived from culture within culture, variation in our accents, particular interests and current ordeals that move us as a group within a group.

A very crucial fact to keep in mind, a constant when marketing to Hispanics as mentioned constantly by my colleague and head of our CultureBeat® division at C+R, Jorge Martinez: Not all Latinos are the same!

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Venezuelans were not known for being immigrants, that wasn't part of their culture. Venezuelans in the US are not as many as in Spain and Colombia but it's changing. For the most part they come here educated from some kind of successful life and with a professional background but they have to scratch all that and start from zero. Venezuelans are trying to emulate the life they used to have there and buy things here like a home as soon as they can in order to get some sense of belonging.

Ingrid Cova—Immigration Lawyer in Chicago (married, mom of one, Venezuelan)

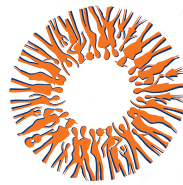




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The multicultural research division of C+R Research.

CultureBeat®, C+R Research's multicultural research division, helps brands understand how different cultures, ethnicities, and lifestyles—and the dynamics that intertwine them—influence their consumers.



latinoeyes®

LatinoEyes® is the research consultancy division of C+R Research that specializes in U.S. Hispanic and Latin American consumers and shoppers.

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