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From the San Francisco Business Times:

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## **This team of artists is helping companies to write equity into their missions**

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If there's one critical issue that the pandemic, along with the rise in anti-Asian violence and murder of George Floyd, exposed was that there is much work to be done to address systemic inequities embedded within our society. Two local artists have been making this important work their life mission for the past decade — and it has only become more urgent.

Oakland-based artists Candice Wicks-Davis and Hodari Davis, a husband and wife team, started their consulting business, Edutainment for Equity (E4E), in 2011 to combat racism at the organizational level. The company partners with local businesses to unpack ways to create a more equitable environment for their employees and clients. Through in-person (and now, virtual) training, consulting, arts-led workshops and conversations, the team has compiled a toolkit of best practices that businesses can apply in their ongoing work to challenge their own internal biases.



BETHANIE HINES

Candice Wicks-Davis and Hodari Davis

I caught up with Founder and CEO Candice Wicks-Davis via email to better understand the work E4E is currently focused on and how they've evolved over the past decade.

The pandemic accelerated the urgency of their work, not only in terms of the national dialogue about systemic racism and inequalities, but in a wider embrace of technology to collaborate more quickly and efficiently. E4E's pivot to conducting virtual workshops and trainings meant that the team was able to partner with a greater number of businesses to lead change and impact on a greater scale.

"During the pandemic, we shifted to virtual offerings and realized that our new model made it possible for us to reach more people, reduce our carbon footprint and be more present for our family. We transitioned into a virtual company and decided to update our digital capacity to meet the needs of a broader geographic constituency," Wicks-Davis said.

After focusing their efforts locally in the Bay Area, the company is now looking to expand to other cities throughout California. Their focus is on six fundamental overarching topics: organizational development; youth development; equity and inclusion; anti-racism; teaching and instruction; and strategic thinking, forecasting and planning.

"For me the issue of equity was an imperative, not a side note. I had seen the weight of inequalities on communities of color: unequal access to quality education and housing, unequal application of the law, unequal access to medical care and technology, etc. and felt that it was imperative for me to do whatever I could to contribute to a more equitable world. That is my calling. So, I decided to take a risk and build an institution that allowed me to answer that calling," Wicks-Davis said.

The founders each have a long history of nonprofit and educational work under their belt, and are rooted in Oakland's arts community. They have a core belief that true change happens "on the other side of comfort" and that creativity can spark social change.

"I've spent my entire career really curating the future, focused on the power of young people and the power of voice to create

transformative experiences that lead people to become agents of change. I've always tried to aim my work at combating injustice and inequity, challenging the forces of racism, as well as the hegemony in our schools systems and communities. Growing E4E with Candice has provided opportunities to expand our reach and impact, we're excited to keep doing this transformative work and move the needle forward," said Hodari Davis in a statement.

Some of E4E's partners have included Red Bay Coffee, Bay Area Organization of Black Owned Businesses, Youth Speaks, Kingston 11 Cuisine and The San Francisco Department of Children Youth and their Families. The company has also worked with the cities of San Francisco and Oakland to provide training for artists, youth development professionals, foundations and city employees. Their current project is in collaboration with the city of Oakland to produce an art piece in response to the city's equity reporting data.

**Diana K. Murphy**

Special Projects Editor

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