



Indy lacks tolerance

Posted by [Derrick Braziel @DerrickBraziel](#) on Wed, Apr 10, 2013 at 4:00 AM

To be transparent, I'm a city boy. I was raised in Washington D.C, and I have not fully grown out of my love for a sprawling, diverse metropolis. Moving to Indianapolis four years ago, I initially expected to be here no longer than a summer, given the perceived slow pace and lack of diversity.

However, Indianapolis has now become my home, and it will be hard to find a person who champions this city more than I do. Whether it is our modernized downtown, walkable commercial districts, accessibility to some of the most successful sports franchises in North America or a state-of-the-art airport and zoo, Indianapolis is a destination for contemporary urban living.

Yet, to many young professionals, Indianapolis is rarely considered as an ideal location to live, work and ultimately raise a family. Statistically, there are tens, if not hundreds of thousands of college students that live within an hour's drive of Indianapolis, and despite an extraordinary effort by city officials and organizations to involve young people in city efforts, there has yet to be a significant bite.

The inevitable question is why?

Why is it that students and young professionals have yet to bite, despite the determination of elected officials to craft a message that resonates with them?

The answer may lie in a seminal book that was written 10 years ago that has since redefined the economic policies of major cities throughout the United States. This book, titled *The Rise of the Creative Class: [And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure and Everyday Life](#)*, has placed the recruitment and retention of the so-called "creative class," at the forefront of city planning.

The creative class, or a group of people that comprises nearly 40 percent of the American workforce, have the primary workplace function of providing creativity and innovation. They work in jobs across virtually every sector, including education, business, finance, health care and more. While appreciating individuality, they seem to operate by a common ethos that values "creativity, difference, and merit." Florida notes, that in order for cities to attract and retain this critical cross-section of the American workforce, they must possess three T's: talent, tolerance and technology.

Indianapolis, in many ways, has implemented many of the suggestions of Florida to reinvigorate our economy and attract talent. Whether it is through our burgeoning biomedicine or tech

industries, we seem to have the talent and technology components working tremendously well. However, the middle "T," which is in no coincidence glued in the middle, is the main area where Indianapolis struggles.

Tolerance, as Florida defines it, is an environment that is open to differences and diversity. Many creative people grow up their entire lives feeling like outsiders, and value places where their differences are no longer a stigma, but a welcomed asset. One only needs to look at issues facing public transit, education reform, growing income disparity, and an almost intentional desire to suppress public expression to see why so many young people are fleeing in droves. To compound this, I am certain that despite our surface-level "Hoosier hospitality," many would agree that Central Indiana is not welcoming to minority groups, new immigrants, or homosexuals.

As a result, what are we supposed to do? Nearby cities like Madison, WI, Chicago, Nashville, Louisville and Cincinnati seem to have it figured out. Yet, many are forced to hope that Indianapolis will eventually turn the corner. This unenviable position forces people that recognize the strength and potential of our city to make a difficult choice: do we continue to have faith that our city will change, or move to a place that already offers the amenities we so eagerly desire?

For my two cents, I believe that Indianapolis has a chance. However, I think it will take a lot of hard work. First, many will need to swallow a difficult pill and recognize that the way Hoosiers have "done it" for millennia may no longer be relevant in today's world. It is critical for there to be a major paradigm shift that not only recognizes the differences of others, but OPENLY accepts and embraces them.

My fear is that this will take an incredible amount of time, and if there's one thing I know about the creative class, it's that time is not a luxury.

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