

## LEADERS IN DIVERSITY

The people and companies bringing inclusion to the workplace.

# The face of diversity

THE COMPANIES AND INDIVIDUALS LEADING GREATER BOSTON'S DIVERSITY INITIATIVES IN THE WORKPLACE.

**TRAILBLAZERS: ALBERTO VASALLO JR. AND DENISE KORN**

## A pair of entrepreneurs open doors of opportunity

BY PATRICIA RESENDE  
Special to the Journal

Two entrepreneurs with two very different backgrounds have made such a tremendous impact on the streets of Boston by opening doors of opportunity and providing a voice to those who may have otherwise been ignored. The actions of Alberto Vasallo Jr., founder of El Mundo Newspaper and Denise Korn, founder of Youth Design, has not only paved the way for the Latino community to be heard and urban youth to feel empowered, but has made them trailblazers in diversity.

For Vasallo, who loved communications since immigrating from Cuba at the age of 24, it wasn't the prospect of money that fueled the launch of El Mundo, a weekly newspaper serving the Latino community, it was pure need.

"They were desperate to have media to be aware of what was going on around the world," Vasallo said of the Latino community. He created the first issue and sold 75 copies at 10 cents each. It wasn't easy, but after six months the paper was a success.

It's been 43 years since he first launched it



Alberto Vasallo Jr.



Denise Korn

and since then he's not only brought news to the community, he has helped launch several Latino nonprofits including La Alianza Hispana and Concilio Hispano.

For his efforts, Vasallo was awarded with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services's Outstanding American by Choice Award. And in September, the city of Cambridge named the intersection at Columbia Street and Bishop Allen Drive in his honor as "Alberto Vasallo Jr. Square."

"I didn't realize how many things I did for this community on behalf of people in need, but when

I started to put it together and saw the many things I had done, it was very rewarding," he said. "There are many Alberto

Vasallos out there and this is why I work so hard to open doors for other people and will keep doing that for the rest of my life."

For Denise Korn, founder of Youth Design, the experience that led to her first conviction on diversity in Boston was as co-chair of the Creative Economic Council of New England. The organization showed promise with meetings and conferences, but was a political nightmare to get everyone aligned around moving the dial, according to Korn.

"I finally got frustrated because I like to get things done and didn't want to talk about it anymore," she said. Out of frustration, Korn launched Youth Design in 2003 on the premise of what she knows best – design. Her solution was to create a vibrant mentoring program where senior-level designers are mentoring high school kids in urban communities.

"You can't have that passion without identifying the economic gap which is all tied to diversity," Korn said. "Young people applying to my company were coming from the same places and backgrounds, no kids were coming from our own communities, and there were very few people of color.

### BY THE NUMBERS

## RACE AND GENDER IN THE LABOR FORCE

Within these communities, more Hispanic men and African American women (aged 20 and over) are in the labor force than Hispanic women and African American men.

Source: Bureau of labor statistics

