

UniWorld Group puts Africa in its expansion plans

 By [Karabo Ledwaba](#)

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American agency UniWorld Group (UWG) has put Africa in its global expansion plans for 2023 and beyond.



Monique Nelson. Source: Supplied.

The agency which is the longest-running multicultural agency in North America plans to create a network of Black-owned agencies in South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. They aim to partner with some of these agencies in creative work going forward.

Coming together

On Saturday UWG hosted a small dinner in Johannesburg with key Black marketing and advertising professionals who have cemented themselves in the South African ad agency space. Marketing professionals and creatives from businesses such as Brand Reserve, African Bank and Two Tone Global were in attendance.

In an interview with *Bizcommunity*, chair of UWG Monique Nelson and managing director Peter Ukhurebor said they want to see the African diaspora come together to support each other in the advertising world.



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“UWG is finally coming to Africa and we are coming in the sense that we want to partner with Black owned agencies on giving them the global support that these agencies lack. When we look at opportunities for Black run agencies in South Africa we look at only 2% of the entire market share that they hold.

“We looked at these opportunities that are not given to Black-owned businesses and we decided that across the continent we need to create the first pan-African network or movement of Black-run agencies and thereby giving them the opportunity to be agencies of record,” said Ukhurebor.

Accelerating growth

He said Black-owned businesses need to also benefit from multinational brands that enter the African market. Nelson added that the coming to Africa of UWG will hopefully accelerate the growth of these agencies.

“One of the reasons I am so passionate about this is we were the first to do this in the US. We are 53 years old and we know a lot of the bumps and the bruises that we took and we want to make sure that they don’t have to go through all of that. We would love to figure out a way to accelerate the progress of more Black-owned agencies like ourselves and we want to bring our history, our relationships as well as our know-how to these agencies and let them know that they can win,” said Nelson.

She said she is cognisant of the fact that America is a different environment to Africa.

“In America, we [Black people] are the minority and that is not the same on the continent [Africa] but there really is no reason why Africans can’t lead without the right resources and support and of course clients,” said Nelson.

Black creatives are cool

She said when UWG started in 1969 the Black population was about 8% of the American population and now they are sitting at 14%.

“Our revenue has not always matched this growth and part of what we want is to grow proportionally with our contribution. So the contributions aren’t quite there yet but we have the capabilities to do so and now that we are looking at the diaspora we have one point one billion people which is a significant market for any brand that is trying to grow,” she said.

Nelson said in the US it was not always ‘cool’ to work for Black people and on a continent that is majority Black, it should be the norm.

“I know it sounds cliché, but we should be prideful in ourselves and know we are excellent, and we can do this work and we do the work and can do it ourselves,” she said.

This is not the first time Black professionals have had conversations about needing to create a network. At the dinner, concerns were raised about these networks not moving forward and becoming fruitful.

“It cannot stop at a conversation it must become reality,” said Ukhurebor.

ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

Karabo Ledwaba is a Marketing and Media Editor at Bizcommunity and award-winning journalist. Before joining the publication she worked at Sowetan as a content producer and reporter. She was also responsible for the leadership page at SIMag, Sowetan's lifestyle magazine. Contact her at karabo@bizcommunity.com

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