



# The Exceptional Vine Youth Summit

Proposal for Partnership, Sponsorship and Collaborative Engagement

2019

## I. Introduction and Justification

The Exceptional Vine initiative is a professional and proactive reply to the lack of racial diversity within the wine and spirits industry. Industry professionals are overwhelmingly not people of color. African-Americans are rarely invited to, nor are they in attendance at professional, trade, industry symposiums, meetings, conferences, tastings, competitions and other events. While research is lacking, there is hard data that supports the above facts. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that just 1.7% of those employed by alcoholic beverage wholesale businesses are African-American (<https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat18.htm>). Perhaps because most wine professionals are Caucasian, career opportunities, advanced wine and spirits education, wine and spirits executive business education, high-end wine and spirits marketing, and luxury wine and spirits advertising rarely recruit or target African-Americans as consumers. This represents tremendous lost opportunities for the wine and spirits industry. By not systemically and strategically addressing this serious and ongoing lack of inclusiveness, the wine and spirits industry is neglecting a needed talent pool and a profitable consumer market. Additionally, the career and education challenges facing women in the industry are not being examined at ages that precede their college selection process and initial career decisions, thus mandating the creation of an onramp for young women and young men to responsibly learn about and explore our industry.

The Exceptional Vine is the first such industry initiative to globally address bringing young women and young men into the wine and spirits industry for college and career opportunities, professional guidance, mentoring and education.

The Exceptional Vine Youth Summit (EVYS) is not only an opportunity to significantly take actions to engage the industry in making tangible steps to impact the lack of race and gender diversity, but the EVYS would also bring diverse young people

together with professional wine industry leaders for a day of workshops, interactive panels and two-way commitments resulting in various measurable outcomes. Without this kind of exposure and engagement, these never considered young women and men may continue to not be aware of or seriously consider a professional wine or spirits industry career or related education options.

The purpose of the EVYS is to debut a well thought out Youth Summit that provides a long-term impact on our industry and the young women and young men we hope and welcome and support on their path into our industry. By providing our highest professional commitments, our most creative thinking and your involvement, we will stand side-by-side with The Exceptional Vine Initiative as the global onramp for our industries comprehensive career and educational opportunities. The EVYS is the only such first professional initiative to be launched in the history of our industry.

## **II. Scope of The Exceptional Vine Youth Summit**

The first EVYS will be modest in order to deftly validate the concept. In 2019-2020, we aim to bring 50 young women and men of diverse backgrounds (high school through college) and 20 wine industry professionals together for one day. The location for the ENYS will be one that best typifies the wine and spirits industry. The young women and men will spend the day in plenary sessions, panels, workshops and a networking lunch. Later, the youth will tour the selected region, without wine tastings (due to age restrictions). After their regional experience they will meet to de-brief, create their next steps and to have dinner with the top leaders in the wine and spirits industry. The Exceptional Vine is the umbrella for every professional and educational step that the young women and men take within the summit and beyond.

## **III. Operations of The Exceptional Vine Youth Summit**

The operations of the EVYS will include the following:

- Partners with The Exceptional Vine will work with Melody Fuller to actualize the above goals and outcomes of the EVYS.
- Partners provide the funding for the EVYS.
- Melody Fuller will interface with racially diverse schools and colleges to recruit diverse students and young women.
- Partners with The Exceptional Vine will work with Melody Fuller to invite key wine and spirits industry leaders, vintners, media, Sommeliers, winery owners, winemakers, marketing and sales executives, and others to the EVYS and to collaborate with The Exceptional Vine Initiative.

#### **IV. Conclusions and Actions**

The EVYS is an opportunity for the wine and spirits industry to address the issue of workforce diversity and to create a sensible vehicle to introduce young women and men to our industry for professional career and educational opportunities. While this is a modest initiative, it signals to the global wine and spirits industry that there are industry professionals who are thinking outside of the norm, and who are reaching behind themselves to create changes needed within our industry. The EVYS and The Exceptional Vine is the appropriate and authentic way to ensure long-term opportunities for young women, and for diverse youth to experience a truly extraordinary industry.

