

A DIFFERENT KIND OF GUIDEBOOK

There's a difference between a mentor and a role model. The latter could be anyone you've admired — from a grandparent you knew well (and whose curmudgeonly wisdom you came to appreciate) to a celebrity you didn't know at all. (Maybe you once fantasized about "expressing yourself" through cone bras and choreography on MTV.) But mentors actively work to help young people better themselves. What inspires this do-good breed to inspire others? In the new book *10 Who Mentor: Inspiring Insights from Creative Legends*, Denise Korn and Neal Kane collect conversations with 10 people, several with Boston ties, from a wide array of creative industries. Actor Brian White, Karmaloop founder Greg Selkoe, and eight other diverse subjects share stories about the figures who inspired them early on and the obstacles they overcame along the way. But most importantly, they talk about the ways in which they've chosen to support the next generation, from writing books to starting nonprofits. Korn herself is the founder of Youth Design, which hooks creative high school students up with internships and valuable career experiences in the world of design. *10 Who Mentor* inspired us to chat with its author about what it takes to help young people become capable and creative.

What inspired you to collect these stories and interviews? Over the years, I have been involved with a variety of initiatives related to the creative economy and the role of design as it impacts our world. I began to form my own opinions on the incredible power of mentoring as a change agent through creative leaders.

In speaking with these individuals, did you discover anything that inspired you in a new way? A common thread with all of these folks is they are each incredibly humble, authentic, and very down to earth in how they relate to those around them, regardless of station.

What would you like to see

Boston do to encourage growth in the creative economy, especially regarding opportunities for young people? Wow . . . where to begin?

I would start with education and valuing the arts and design as a core part of the curriculum from K through 12. If we can invest in great teachers who can inspire our kids and the next generation, so many other things would fall into place. Teachers are mentors and are asked to play more and more of a pivotal role in the lives of our kids. School is a safe haven where we can make serious progress and change with the next generation. If the New England economy would place value and focus on the creative leaders in our communities, they would rise up and contribute to solving some of our biggest problems. We need to engage government and corporations to leverage design thinkers to initiate change.

Why is the creative economy so overlooked? Why aren't more of our political leaders eager to invest in its opportunities? I think it's all about communication. Ironically, designers need to learn to focus their attention more outwardly in order to establish wider connections and create awareness around what they have to offer. There are a lot of preconceived ideas about what design is and the role of design. It's up to the design community to lead the way and open up possibilities for robust and positive engagement between the public and private sectors, between the design community and civic leadership.

Are there ways in which creative opportunities seem to particularly resonate with young people from underserved populations? It's all about making things relevant. Popular culture introduces kids to design through fashion, music, and products. Those categories are all great doorways for students to begin to understand that design plays a huge role in everything they see, touch, and buy. Youth Design brings this to life and exposes high school kids to the wide variety of professions and work environments that focus on how things are designed, communicated, packaged, etc. It's all about connecting the dots, and then the possibilities for kids who get



inspired with this new understanding are endless. . . . They devour the information and fly with it!

What's the most important thing you've learned as a mentor?

Mentoring is selfless. Mentoring

another means giving and not looking for anything in return. Try it and you'll be amazed what will happen.