INCLUSION

Creating Globally Inclusive & Culturally Competent Workplaces
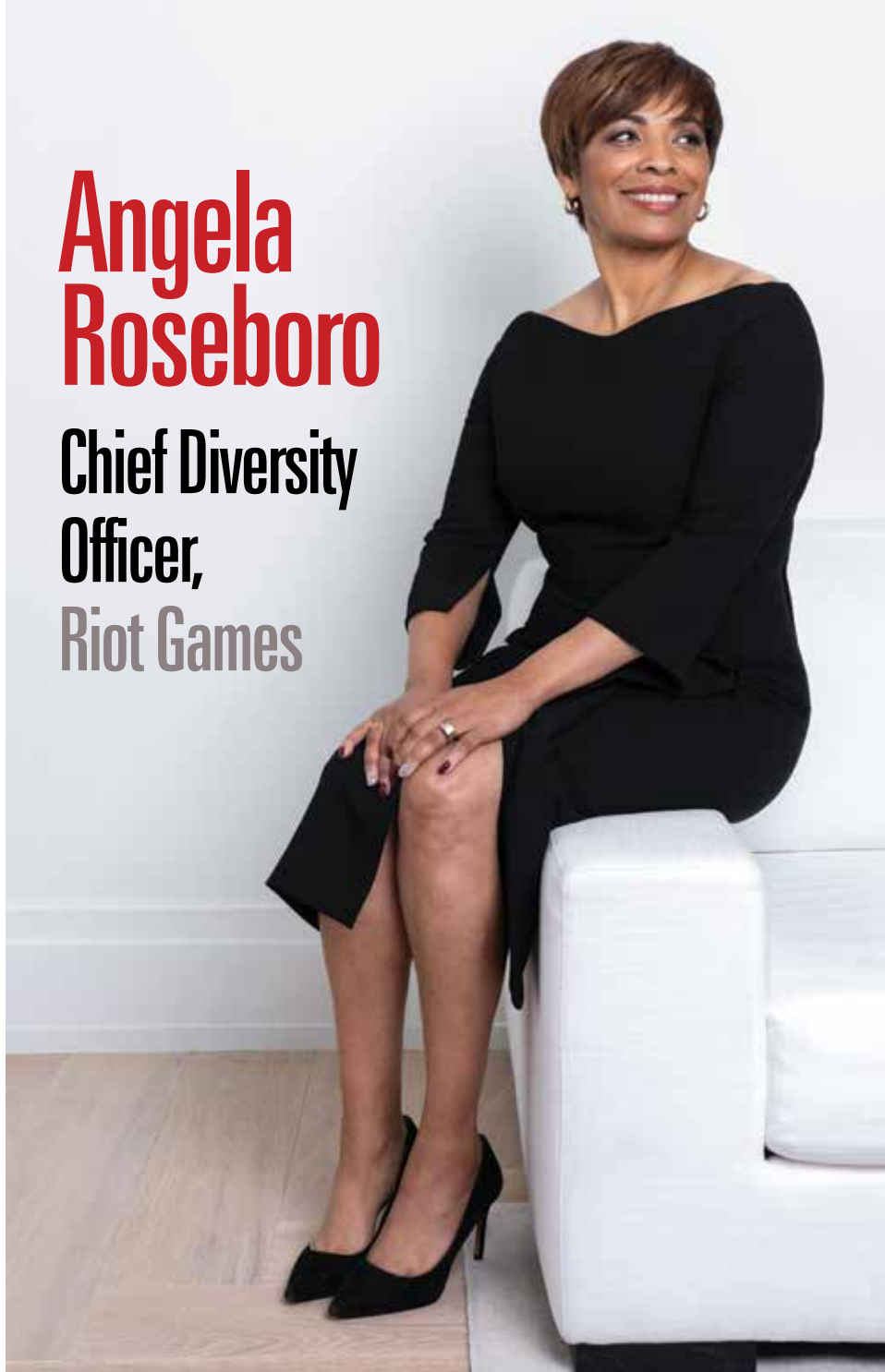
RIOT GAMES

GAME ON

ANGELA ROSEBORO

Leading the Charge on Implementing Inclusive and Equitable Practices in Gaming

Angela Roseboro

Chief Diversity Officer,

Riot Games

> "To make progress, we need a new playbook. New thinking is even more relevant now."

As chief diversity officer for Riot Games, Angela Roseboro develops and implements initiatives to drive inclusion and cultural growth. She manages all activity relating to diversity and inclusion while also leading the recruiting team in driving inclusivity in Riot's hiring and talent sourcing processes. As a member of Riot's executive leadership team, she ensures that D&I is tightly integrated into Riot's broader strategy to identify, recruit, develop, and retain the best talent to create rewarding experiences for players.

During her more than 20 years of HR experience, Roseboro has held positions leading diversity and inclusion, talent management, and leadership development for companies in technology, financial services, asset management, government, entertainment, and manufacturing. Prior to joining Riot, she was the global head of diversity, equity, and inclusion at Dropbox. Previously, she provided human resource guidance to Fortune 500 companies, including T. Rowe Price, Jones Lang LaSalle, Genworth Financial, Whirlpool Corporation, and Manpower International.

Roseboro has received numerous awards and recognitions for her work, including *Black Enterprise*'s Top Executives in Diversity, *The Network Journal*'s 25 Influential Black Women in Business, and 50 Out Front for Women's Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion. She has been featured in the *Chicago Tribune, Diversity Journal,* and the Commercial Real Estate Women's Network. Roseboro studied at the University of Louisville and Roosevelt University.

Inclusion: **This summer, as a result of Black Lives Matter protests focused on police reform, there has been increased attention on the need for racial justice and equity in the workplace and in society in general. What is Riot Games doing to advance change in your company or the community, or both?**

Angela Roseboro: After the death of George Floyd, I got a lot of emails from people within Riot who wanted to help, though many of them expressed that they didn't know what to say or questioned whether it was appropriate to say anything at all in this very emotional moment. To help start the conversation, I wrote a letter to the company to provide my insights and experience, not from a CDO perspective, but as

a Black woman, wife, mother, and aunt. Frankly, I am usually very protective of those aspects of myself, given that our work is to drive inclusion for all. But I felt that telling my story was super important when it came to bringing perspective on what the Black community was experiencing, especially when it came to describing our relationship with the police.

When we decided to take a stance, we wanted to create thoughtful and deliberate actions to drive change. We focused in three areas: supporting organizations focused on racial equality, building economic wealth in Black communities, and building talent pipelines into the gaming community for Black Americans. Thanks to insights from our Black employee resource group, we committed $1 million to the Innocence Project and the ACLU. We plan to invest $10 million in start-ups and other investments founded by underrepresented minorities in the game industry. Finally, we are investing in Florida A&M University's computer science program to build a pipeline of talent for our industry. I'm very proud of what we are doing at Riot. We not only doubled down on our current efforts but are also making our industry more accessible to a community that has been historically overlooked.

IN: **Has the onset of COVID-19 and its impact on the economy made it more challenging to implement diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts?**
AR: I do think the work is a bit more challenging, but not for the reasons I feared initially. With the 2008 recession, I saw a lot of companies scale back on D&I efforts. If D&I is not ingrained in a company's overall strategy, it is seen as a "right thing to do" strategy versus a "must have to be competitive" strategy. When a company then has the tough decision to cut budgets, our departments are quickly deemed nice to have but not essential.

The pandemic brought us to the table in a very different way. In our new virtual world, inclusion and engagement have to be a priority. Companies like Riot whose employees are not used to a work-from-home environment have had to find new ways to help employees stay connected and involved. We've also had to help managers set clear expectations and effectively manage a remote workforce. The D&I team has been integral in creating new programs to keep our Rioters—

what we call our employees—engaged and ensure that inclusive practices are not forgotten simply because we're not physically in the office. During this time, I have been blessed to have access to amazing D&I leaders in this space. I am a member of Twitter's Inclusion, Culture and Diversity Council, which allows us to share best practices, some of which I have implemented at Riot. It has been great to see that, in a time when I expected budgets to be cut, committed companies are committed to bringing us to the table, and the work has been not only valued but very much appreciated.

IN: **What brought you to do this work? Is there a personal motivation, a story from your childhood or past that inspired you in this direction?**
AR: I think, honestly, the work found me. I started my career as a human resources generalist with the goal of leading the HR function. I was asked to take on a diversity role, first as an assignment, then full-time. In the beginning, I was very reluctant to take on the role, as I did not want to be seen simply as the Black woman discussing representation and inclusion of Black people. I felt I could be most impactful in HR by ensuring that processes were fair and inclusive. In contrast, the

diversity role typically doesn't own the processes, but instead relies on influence to hold others accountable for actual change.

I also questioned how I could drive change in a company for marginalized groups when I was experiencing some of the same issues and barriers.

At the time, my oldest daughter was becoming a promising soccer player. During one of her games, she was called a word that was not her name by an opposing player—she was 10 years old. I not only saw her fight through her hurt, but also saw her white teammates come to her defense and risk their first championship if the player was not removed. There was a happy ending. The player was removed and her team won the regional championship.

I knew two things that day: millennials and gen Zers, who were more exposed to difference than were the generations before them, might make this job obsolete one day, and I had to do my part to make sure she does not have the same barriers and obstacles that I faced. I still fight to achieve those goals today.

IN: Tell us about your greatest success story pre-COVID-19.

AR: I came to Riot when it was in the middle of transforming the culture; trust was low and the media still described the organization as "toxic." With leadership committed to change, we spent the first 90 days listening to Rioters, analyzing data, and reviewing people processes. As a result of this foundational work, we were able to create an action plan, which resulted in some good forward movement in our culture, representation in leadership, and positive trends in satisfaction scores from women and underrepresented groups.

Having said that, we still have a lot of work to do. Numbers are only one part of the story; true success is measured by the impact on our people. I often ask women at Riot whether they would recommend Riot as a place to work to their friends and family. While we're still early in the journey, I'm hearing yes more and more.

IN: What are some of the recent thought leader topics in the world of inclusion that organizations are learning about and implementing?

In February, Angela attended Riot's first ever game night in celebration of Black History Month.

> **"We focused on three areas: supporting organizations focused on racial equality, building economic wealth in Black communities, and building talent pipelines."**

AR: I think 2020 has been, in many ways, one of the most challenging years yet. We are still in the middle of a pandemic, the 2020 election is looming, and the demand for racial justice and equality is changing conversations. I have said this for a while: to make progress in diversity and inclusion we need a new playbook. But I believe new thinking is even more relevant now given many of these challenges are ones we have not had the opportunity to see before.

The three most impacted areas are artificial intelligence, health disparities, and racial inequities. AI is a broad topic and a major impending challenge. As AI becomes an increasingly larger part of our society, I feel we are running out of time to get ahead of the racial and gender biases being built into systems. These systems will ultimately determine outcomes based on flawed logic that will negatively impact marginalized groups.

The numbers tell us that the coronavirus pandemic is killing underrepresented groups at disproportionately high rates. I don't think the health-care disparities in minority communities are new, but I do think that the pandemic provides an urgent reminder that we need to be thinking about what we can do in our companies to support our employees and help impacted communities too. Education, partnerships, and wellness offerings are all even more critical now.

So many companies have made statements about racial inequities and have pledged support to the Black community. For example, as Riot was determining our stance in support of the Black community, I honestly hesitated at first. I wanted to make sure that we could hold true to our commitment and that our commitment would make a difference. Now that the statements have been made, as practitioners, we need to be at the forefront of holding our companies accountable for following through and holding the organizations accountable for achieving their goals toward racial equality. *IN*