

BLACK LIVES MATTER:
MOVING BEYOND D&I

**THE COVID-19 SCAPEGOATING
OF ASIAN AMERICANS**

**MENTAL HEALTH: TAKING
CARE OF OUR TEAMS**

INCLUSION

WINTER 2021
+ ISSUE 6

*Creating Globally
Inclusive &
Culturally
Competent
Workplaces*

PwC'S

**Leading the Charge
on Implementing Inclusive
and Equitable Practices**

**SHANNON
SCHUYLER**



Shannon Schuyler

US Chief Purpose & Inclusion Officer, PwC

Shannon Schuyler, PwC's US chief purpose and inclusion officer, helps activate the firm's purpose to build trust in society and solve important problems and create a fulfilling work experience. Outside PwC's walls, Schuyler helps lead CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion™, which is committed to building more inclusive workplaces. She leads a team to harness the power of business to respond to systemic challenges that have created disparities across society.

At PwC, Schuyler helps connect purpose with belonging to create an environment in the firm that celebrates identity and intersectionality as a way to drive innovation and business value. She is responsible for furthering diversity, inclusion, and societal equity across the firm's workforce and communities through instituting formalized processes and programs.

Under her leadership, PwC helps to build a more equitable society by enabling its people to use their time, skills, and experiences to address social injustices. Two programs are central to this: AccessYour Potential is PwC's commitment to teach tech and digital skills to students in underserved communities; Skills for Society is PwC's pro bono program through which employees receive 40 hours to help nonprofit organizations and educational institutions address systemic causes that contribute to the opportunity gap.

In addition to D&I, Schuyler oversees the actions to achieve the firm's Net Zero Commitment.

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

Shannon Schuyler: For more than two decades, we have embraced and taken action to drive a culture where D&I is a foundational value of our workplace. Over the last year, following the murder of George Floyd, we accelerated our approach to using data to drive more progress faster within PwC and the society at large.

In June, we announced six new commitments to stand up against racism. Among other things, we launched our first Diversity and Inclusion Transparency Report in order to hold ourselves more accountable for progress, and we offer employees one-week paid volunteer time.

Action inside our four walls is only part of our commitment as a responsible business. In 2017, Tim Ryan, PwC US chair and senior partner, cofounded CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion™, the largest CEO-led commitment to advancing inclusion in the workplace. This year, in the midst of a global pandemic and social unrest, when CEOs could have pulled back on diversity and inclusion commitments, we have seen the opposite—business leaders have stepped forward. Since June, we've increased our signatory base by over 40 percent, and now have 1,400-plus CEOs and university presidents committed to advancing D&I in their organizations.

Last summer, we expanded the efforts to address systemic racism in society by creating CEO Action for Racial Equity, a fellowship that provides the opportunity for signatories to advance racial equity through public policy and mobilizes the business community collectively across industries and regions to enact change. PwC committed 30 fellows, and two PwC senior leaders, Roy Weathers and Roz Brooks, are serving as the fellowship CEO and policy leader, respectively.

IN: How has COVID-19 changed your perspective and your work?

SS: For me, COVID-19 has reinforced how widespread systemic racism, racial inequities, and deep biases are in our society. It seems as if humanity is at risk emotionally, physically, and financially, and there is an urgent need for clear, immediate, and bold action from business, government, and each of us as individuals.

The pandemic combined with the murder of George Floyd and killing of other Black citizens has forced a lot of personal reflection on the privilege that I have. The privilege that has been granted to me based on my skin color. It has compelled me to challenge the way that I speak about the societal progress of women overall, when what I truly mean, after thoughtful reflection, is the progress of white women. With this awareness, I acknowledge that I can continue to do more to elevate women of color. When you look at the deep societal biases that have historically created a lack of opportunities, higher underemployment, and increased health risks for Black women—with the potential of death—we cannot afford to refer to “women” and think we authentically mean all women.

“There is much we can do together through collective efforts like CEO Action. But at a certain point, this group always stresses that we have to look inward as organizations and ask what more we can do within our own walls.”

As I reflect on the last six months, I am also keenly aware of the delicate dance we all have to do in order to manage things like personal self-care, family support, child care, home schooling, community connections, and myriad other things. In good times, these plates are hard to keep spinning, but we manage to keep most in the air. Now, those plates tend to fall—a lot. And that can lead to feeling like a failure across all the areas in addition to feeling isolated. There are many competing priorities, but taking time to be more empathetic to others and kind to yourself, and to give space and grace to those all around, has helped me.

IN: As the reported instances of discrimination against Asian Americans have increased because of COVID-19, is this a concern that you and your organization are addressing?

SS: Absolutely, and this started very early in the pandemic and has continued to be a heightened area of focus, discussion, and support. It is so important that you bring this up, as many in the Asian community do not feel that their struggle and the xenophobia they have encountered have been acknowledged in a strong enough manner. We work hard to actively counter the perception that if you aren't seeing something, it isn't happening. If you aren't leaving your home, you may not see the venom being directed at the Asian community, but it is definitely happening.

To address these challenges, we've doubled down on allyship so we can better support our Asian and diverse employees. We are working hard to ask ourselves how we can better demonstrate where we as a firm stand on this

issue. For us, that's meant refocusing on our inclusion networks so we have a stronger understanding of our Asian community and what they are struggling with and then mapping out how we can enhance our efforts to support them.

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?

SS: I have always had a sense of justice, fairness and, in many cases, have chosen the path less predictable driven by stubbornness, a need to disrupt the system and to feel like my actions have an impact—have meaning. As a young woman, I felt that I needed to live up to my strong and inspiring matriarchal family. Then, as I got older, I wanted to embrace the liberal thinking of my father, a great orator and teacher. Together, these needs brought me to where I am today. Now, it is my eight-year-old biracial son, who struggles with his identity as a Black boy when he wants to choose to be white since it is easier, safer, and more privileged. My mind and heart were always drawn to this space, even unknowingly, but now it is my son and my soul that keep me resilient and unyieldingly hopeful.

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

SS: Admittedly, pre-COVID seems so long ago, and I focus more time looking forward, discerning how to evolve and be transformative in this new world—homing in on agility, dexterity, and grit. That said, when I slow down to take stock in our progress, I am humbled to have been a part of the creation and elevation of CEO Action. I vacillate back and forth between the timing of its creation being fortuitous or preordained. But either way, the conception galvanized CEOs around the diversity and inclusion in their workspaces three years ago, and now it continues to offer a safe place to be challenged, be courageous, be vulnerable, and to seek real change. Interacting with C-suite leaders galvanized around this corporate collaborative, growing and expanding the coalition, and really committing



Schuyler speaking at the 2019 CEO Action Closed-Door Session and CHRO & CDO Summit in New York City.

so with the declaration to release our first D&I Transparency Report—a journey that we were on to achieve but completed over a year early. Sunshine highlights the beauty and gives clarity, but it also exposes the blemishes and the work to be done. Being transparent with our data has afforded us with both scenarios, and I strongly believe that our progress will be accelerated and draw others in to drive the movement.

IN: For a number of years, practitioners of diversity and inclusion have been making the business case for D&I. Do you think this message is sinking in? Has COVID-19 made it more challenging?

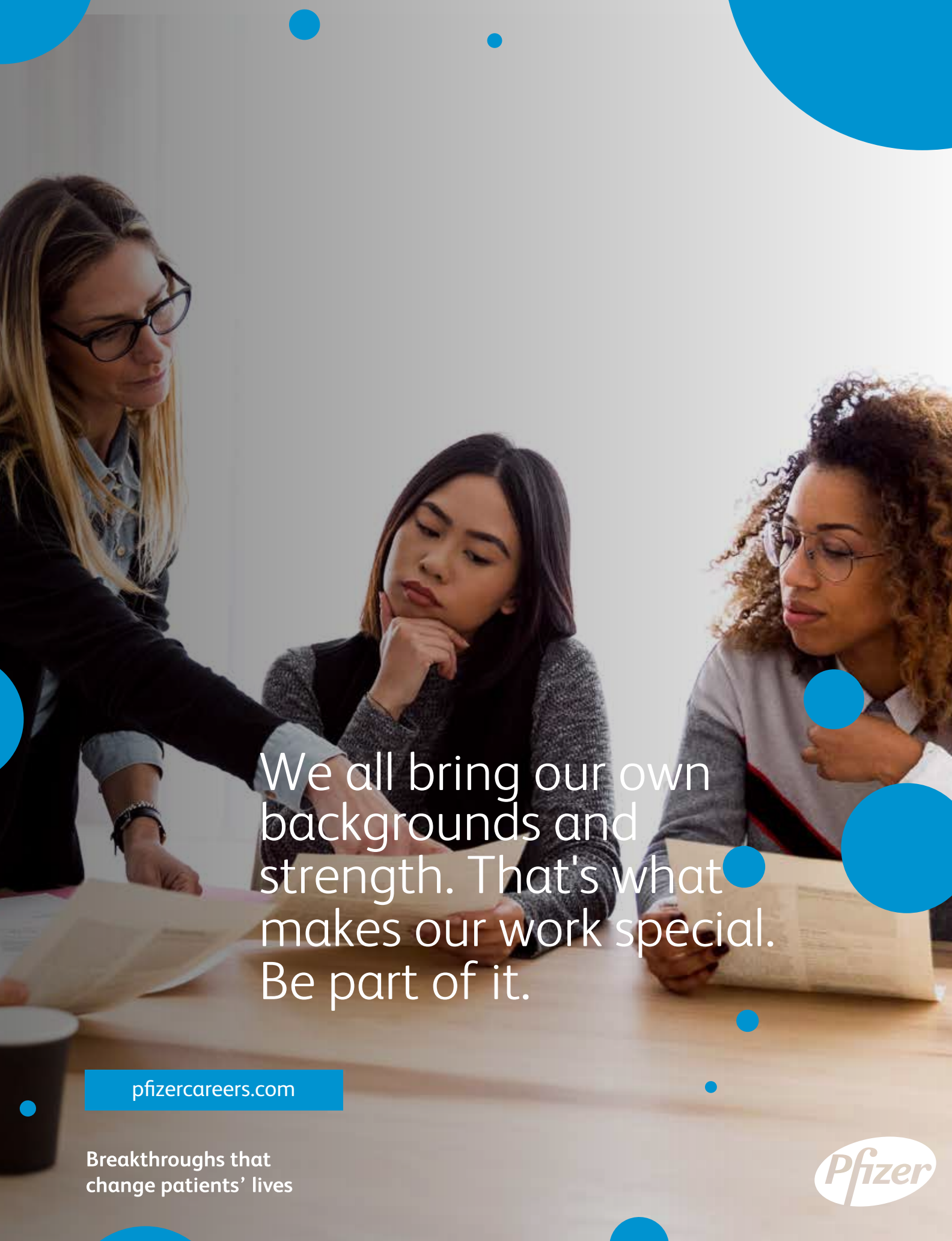
SS: Honestly, it depends on what case is actually sinking in. The most comprehensive business cases for D&I are around the impact on revenue and innovation, and yet last March, when COVID-19 was beginning to have business impacts, a number of companies furloughed or laid off their D&I teams in the first wave. Those actions do not align to the solid business case being communicated for decades.

With that said, the murder of George Floyd visibly and poignantly demonstrated the critical need to address systemic racism, and since then, D&I teams were brought back to companies and CEO Action has seen a 40 percent increase in signatories in the last six months. The business case now is not just on paper alone, but in protest, social media postings, and brand elevation. For now, this side of the case seems to be sinking in.

In September, PwC's Annual Corporate Directors Survey found the vast majority of those polled—84 percent—agree that companies should be doing more to promote gender and racial diversity in the workplace.

That being said, the same survey found that only 39 percent of directors think D&I goals should be included in executive compensation plans, and only 34 percent say it's important to have racial diversity on their corporate boards.

People understand conceptually the benefits in theory—now they have to put them in practice. I don't know if COVID-19 has made it more challenging, but I hope this pandemic accelerates the pace of change. **IN**

A photograph of three diverse women in a professional setting, likely a meeting. One woman on the left is pointing at a document on a table. The woman in the middle is resting her chin on her hand, looking at the document. The woman on the right is also looking at the document. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. There are several blue circular graphic elements of various sizes scattered around the image.

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backgrounds and
strength. That's what
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