

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION
HALL OF FAME

THE CASE FOR DEI
INITIATIVES IN LAW FIRMS

NATIVE AMERICAN
EMPLOYEES WANT TO BE SEEN

INCLUSION


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Creating Globally Inclusive & Culturally Competent Workplaces



2023 HALL OF FAME 8 Exemplary Diversity Executives





HALL OF FAME

Inclusion celebrates eight exemplary executives who paved the way for DEI best practices within their respective industries

BY CAROLYN M. BROWN

With a global spotlight on racial inequity over the past two years, companies have devoted time and resources to elevating the conversation about the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. But the implementation of company-wide DEI strategies continues to get mixed reviews by observers. Many employees remain skeptical about attempts to address DEI and company culture. According to Buck's 2022 Wellbeing and Voluntary Benefits Survey, more than a third of the employees surveyed feel their companies are not really committed to DEI—the perception is that management's efforts are not genuine.

Progressive gains are still needed to address gender and racial inequality and to find solutions for building a genuinely inclusive workplace environment. Evidence-based research shows that those companies with DEI best practices that lead to change—and increase a company's bottom

line—apply a broad stroke of initiatives, including diversity recruitment, education and training, management involvement, employee resource group engagement, mentorship and sponsorship, high-visibility assignments, and workplace policies that foster a culture of inclusion and authenticity.

In this issue, *Inclusion* honors our 2023 Hall of Fame, a group of influential women leaders who have built a legacy of lasting, impactful change in DEI within the workplace. While they no longer walk the corridors of Corporate America, each of these changemakers leveraged about 30 years of executive expertise to lead a large-scale approach to hiring, engaging, and retaining diverse talent across global Fortune 500 corporations. These DEI practitioners continue to make a difference at the organizations where they currently serve—many are CEOs of their own enterprises—by aiding executive teams to identify and execute DEI strategies designed to achieve a vision of creating a genuinely diverse, inclusive, and equitable playing field of the future.

Nadine Redd Blackburn

Executive Vice President, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Culture & Change • **United Minds**



Nadine Redd Blackburn has left a huge DEI footprint at major consumer brands like Converse, Jordan, and Nike. She also garnered extensive experience in marketing, brand management, and finance at such major companies as General Motors, Verizon, and Procter & Gamble. Blackburn has more than 30 years of demonstrated success

that goes beyond the numbers, having pioneered strategies and innovative solutions that delivered long-term, tangible outcomes. She leveraged the power of representation, education, development, and community engagement with a mission to enable a belonging culture and employee experiences that resulted in thriving careers. She recently joined the executive leadership team at United Minds, where she spearheads DEI services and strategies at the global management consultancy, which is part of the Weber Shandwick Collective. Blackburn pays it forward through her board service at organizations such as Voices of Virtue Inc., a nonprofit that provides advanced music study to underserved communities.

PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

"My proudest achievements are when I've effectively influenced and prevented cultural missteps. In some instances, this was with work that was not executed—removing campaign elements with potentially offensive cultural cues and the like. In others, it involved improving processes and ways of working to ensure that global perspectives as well as regional and cultural considerations are factored into decision-making, including leveraging global employee resource groups to provide insights as part of the creative process."

CONTINUING LEGACY

"I get joy from helping executives learn, grow, and embed equitable practices that result in exponentially better employee and customer experiences. Also, my legacy is in giving back by educating and inspiring the next generation of leaders through my advisory and board involvement with organizations like Voices of Virtue and the President's Leadership Council at Baylor University."

Deborah Dagit

President and Founder • **Deb Dagit Diversity**



A sought-after diversity and inclusion consultant, Deb Dagit started her namesake firm in 2013 to deliver the practical, just-in-time resources and support for D&I practitioners that she wished were available when she was a chief diversity officer. As Merck's vice president and CDO for nearly 12 years, Dagit oversaw employee relations, recruiting and

staffing, and D&I best practices. Under her leadership, the company was recognized for its exemplary D&I work by a wide range of business publications, government agencies, and professional organizations. Prior to joining Merck, Dagit was the leader of Learning Communications and Diversity at Silicon Graphics and head of Strategic Cultural Initiatives for Sun Microsystems. She was instrumental in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act through her lobbying efforts and testimony before the US Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in 2011 regarding improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Dagit draws on her professional and personal experience as a person with a disability to help organizations develop and maintain business cultures where diversity is prized and inclusion is the norm.

PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

"I was one of about a dozen DEI trailblazers who established diversity as a function in the early '90s, along with Ted Childs, former CDO at IBM. I advocated for disability to be included in DEI and helped to create and facilitate CDO forums with Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole [the first Black female president at Spelman College], Eric Watson [former president and CEO of the Carolinas-Virginia Minority Supplier Development Council], and Candi Castleberry Singleton [VP of global DEI at Amazon]."

CONTINUING LEGACY

"Integrating disability inclusion, accessibility, and intersectional identities into key people and business practices across dozens of companies. Consistently and fearlessly being a servant leader, demonstrated by showing up and speaking up as an outspoken and undaunted ally for all marginalized communities."

Patricia David

Coach, Mentor, and Consultant
Patricia David Consulting



Patricia David is recognized globally for her acumen in effective corporate DEI strategies in the finance industry. As the head of DEI efforts across four global regions at JPMorgan Chase & Co. for seven years, David was a driving force in firm-wide strategies and talent management efforts. Her power and influence included her work with diversity

councils, business resource groups, and pipeline development. Moreover, she was instrumental in launching the company's Advancing Black Leaders diversity strategy and Office of Disability Inclusion. David's pay-it-forward commitment is exemplified in having led large-group diversity education sessions for first-year students of Fordham University's Gabelli School of Business (GSB). Her most recent gift to her alma mater will help fund a high-school pipeline program aimed at BIPOC students. In honor of her academic and professional accomplishments, GSB initiated the annual Patricia David Trailblazer Award to recognize a female graduate for her dedication to inclusiveness in the business world. David offers unscripted advice and counsel in her book, *The 'Her'story of Davidisms: My Straight-Shooting Answers to 30 Years of Career Questions People Have Asked Me*.

PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

"With respect to the DEI field, it was undoubtedly launching the Disability Inclusion function at JPMorgan Chase, implementing processes and systems and impacting the careers of people in this community globally. Disability can and will affect everyone. Raising awareness, busting the myths, and being intentional about this community was personally refreshing to me."

CONTINUING LEGACY

"I lived my life as a servant leader, courtesy of my mom. I was raised as a giver, as someone who should look back and help others. I have and always will use my talents, treasures, and time to help others. Helping others gives me joy and a sense of purpose."

Deb Elam Grant

Senior Executive, President, and CEO
Corporate Playbook



A corporate pioneer, Deborah Elam Grant rose to the C-suite at General Electric (GE) as chief diversity officer and as president of the GE Foundation. In fact, she holds the distinction of serving as GE's first Black female corporate officer. Her role as global chief diversity officer placed her in the top 185 of 300,000 employees. She also led GE's

philanthropic efforts through the GE Foundation's \$130 million budget and GE Volunteers to tackle some of the world's toughest challenges. Her 30-year career enabled the visionary senior executive to launch Corporate Playbook, an executive-coaching consulting firm, where she serves as president and CEO. Corporate Playbook equips companies with strategies to elevate leadership, diversity, inclusion, and culture. Grant helps her clients kick-start new DEI initiatives or broaden the scope of existing programs. Grant's numerous accolades include being listed among the 50 Most Powerful Women in Philanthropy by Inside Philanthropy and honored with a Women of Power Award from the National Urban League. Grant's corporate DEI expertise extends into the boardroom with her service as an independent director at ShotSpotter and DJE Holdings (Edelman).

PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

"Being named the first Black female corporate officer ever at GE. My mom was an educator and my dad worked at the post office. The only thing either of them knew about 'corporate' was from watching TV. For me to make it to the C-suite was the level of achievement that they expected, but it was totally unlikely and completely improbable. I made it anyway!"

CONTINUING LEGACY

"I am living my best professional and personal life. I'm showing the world what is possible in my 'second season.' I run a thriving consulting business, coach emerging leaders, speak at tons of engagements, and I married the boy next door from elementary school last year."

Rosalyn Taylor O'Neale

Owner and Principal
R.T. O'Neale Group



Rosalyn Taylor O'Neale boasts over 40 years as a thought leader, advisor, and coach to global executives in more than 50 countries. With unwavering honesty and disarming humor, she challenges and helps leaders go beyond simply extolling the virtues of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility, and enables them to create a sustainably inclusive environment

of healthy debate and high engagement. Past leadership positions include principal consultant at Cook Ross; vice president, chief diversity and inclusion officer for Campbell Soup Company; executive vice president, diversity initiatives, for MTV Network; and CEO of Barnes O'Neale & Associates. An undisputable power player, O'Neale has been recognized as one of the Top 100 Most Influential Blacks in Corporate America by *Savoy* magazine, Top Executives in Diversity by *Black Enterprise*, 100 Top Executives in America by *Uptown Professional* magazine, and 100 Most Influential LGBT People of the Year by the Pride Power List. Additionally, she has penned the books *7 Keys 2 Success*; *Kat... Two Societies Where One Drop Was More than Enough*; and *40 Years in the Trenches*, a memoir.

PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

"I was honored to work with eight executives for 20 months to build the skills and heart that would enable each one of them to do extraordinary diversity, inclusion, and culturally transformative work. We created a cohort that learned, laughed, and cried together, and that went out into the world as IDEA [inclusion, diversity, equity, and access] champions and leaders. This group continues to make all of us proud."

CONTINUING LEGACY

"I want my legacy to live in the hearts of those I've met and the stories that they share with one another about me. I hope that my authenticity gives someone the courage to be themselves, the deep footprints I leave along the way provides a map for future IDEA leaders, and my relentless efforts to remove the 'ism' boulders allow the next generation of leaders to avoid the pitfalls and enjoy the journey."

Valerie Irick Rainford

Founder and CEO
Ellore Talent Strategies



After driving historic diversity results as a business leader at two iconic Wall Street organizations, corporate trailblazer Valerie Irick Rainford founded Ellore Talent Strategies to advise C-suite executives on best strategies for advancing diverse talent. When she was tapped in 2016 to head JPMorgan Chase & Co.'s Advancing Black Leaders initiative, she bore

responsibility for delivering increased focus on attracting, hiring, retaining, and advancing top Black talent at all levels across the company. Under her leadership, representation of Black professionals rose to historic levels, with an increase in Black senior executives by over 50 percent in three years. Today, her consulting firm builds on this work by advising C-suite executives on pipeline advancement through talent analytics, talent development, and talent strategy. While building her personal brand through self-advocacy and excellence, Rainford rose to positions of leadership in and outside the workplace. The celebrated financial services executive wrote an award-winning memoir, *Until the Brighter Tomorrow: One Woman's Courageous Climb from the Projects to the Podium*, and has dedicated her life to uplifting others by sharing her incredible story of perseverance and becoming the CEO of her destiny.

PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

"Professionally, I have been blessed with numerous achievements despite countless adversities along the way. I am proudest of where I am today—a financially free founder and CEO of a thriving business dedicated to using all that I have learned to open doors, create pathways, and advance diverse talent."

CONTINUING LEGACY

"I want my legacy—from struggle to success—to challenge long-standing assumptions and expectations for what talent from underserved communities can achieve when provided with access and opportunity. With Ellore Talent Strategies, I am building upon that legacy by advising executives who have both the power and the will to make a change and uncover hidden inequities that exist within their organizations."

Nzinga Shaw

President, Global DEI Practice
ZRG Partners



Nzinga “Zing” Shaw is a C-suite executive with extensive hands-on experience and knowledge that span DEI strategic planning, human capital management, employee relations, talent acquisition, organizational development, branding, and community engagement. Notably, she was the first chief inclusion and diversity officer at four stellar organizations:

Edelman, Starbucks, Marsh McLennan, and the National Basketball Association (NBA). She is known for her pioneering DEI work with the NBA, serving as the first D&I officer, representing the Atlanta Hawks and State Farm Arena franchise. While there, she launched the MOSAIC (Model of Shaping Atlanta through Inclusive Conversations) symposium, which made the Hawks the first professional sports team to demonstrate public allyship with and to celebrate the LGBTQ community. Shaw joined ZRG in 2021 and concurrently serves today as the first president and global head of the DEI & ESG Practice and chief DEI officer for internal ZRG talent. Among her civic accolades are serving on the Board of Trustees of Fisk University, the Board of Directors of ColorComm, and the Board of Advisors of Arctos Sports Partners, and being appointed by President Jimmy Carter to serve a six-year term on the Board of Councilors of the Carter Center.

PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

“Becoming the first chief diversity and inclusion officer at four blue-chip organizations [Edelman, the National Basketball Association, Starbucks, and Marsh McLennan] representing four distinct sectors—public relations, sports/entertainment, retail, and insurance/reinsurance. I have created purpose-driven, award-winning programs in each organization and built a sustainable infrastructure to support impactful DEI outcomes.”

CONTINUING LEGACY

“I would like my legacy to reflect unmatched courage in the face of adversity and strong advocacy for only’s and others. I want to be known and honored for my selflessness and for giving a voice to the voiceless so that they may be heard, seen, and valued.”

Kimberly Strong

Founder and CEO
Strong Connexion



Whether creating employee education programs, leading talent initiatives, partnering with senior executives, or creating metrics to track success, Kimberly Strong is all about bringing the right people together and improving the employee experience. Prior to launching her boutique DEI consulting firm, Strong Connexion, she served as vice presi-

dent of diversity and inclusion at Target. During her tenure, she facilitated communications, education, and training plans that increased awareness and understanding of D&I and maximized employee engagement, impacting over 366,000 employees across 1,795 stores and 38 distribution centers. She collaborated with the retailer’s chief human resources officer and the diversity analytics team to identify, track, and measure success. Strong has taken on leadership and committee roles with Twitter and Hello Fresh’s Inclusion & Diversity Council, the Executive Leadership Council, and the James Beard Foundation, and acted as a mentor with TechStars. Helping to change the narrative that few female founders of color receive start-up funding, Strong is an angel investor and a member of the Pipeline Angels network, where she invests in and advises women-led for-profit social ventures, including those led by cis and trans women, as well as nonbinary people.

PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT

“As a third-generation college-educated woman in my family from Detroit, I was the first family member to become an officer of a Fortune 500 company. I was also the first VP of DEI at Target from the field organization. This experience took Target’s DEI strategy to the next level, helping the entire enterprise to achieve its goal.”

CONTINUING LEGACY

“I’ve sponsored and mentored many women of color. In my 28 years with Target, and after I retired, my goal has been to reach out and advance women of color in corporate leadership and entrepreneurship. I also make sure that anyone I’ve mentored must pay it forward. I know I have generations of women-of-color talent that I have touched.”