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HALL OF FAME

THE CASE FOR DEI
INITIATIVES IN LAW FIRMS

NATIVE AMERICAN
EMPLOYEES WANT TO BE SEEN

INCLUSION

*Creating Globally
Inclusive & Culturally
Competent
Workplaces*

WINTER 2023
+ ISSUE 8

**Leading the Charge
on Implementing
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— Sunny Myers, Palo Alto Networks



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THE
DEEP
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The Future of DEI

*How to implement it
effectively with your team*

BY TAMARA E. HOLMES

Unconscious-bias training and other DEI education can make all the difference in your organization—but only if they're implemented right.

Jennifer Tardy, founder of Jennifer Tardy Consulting, which is based in Bowie, Maryland, provides DEI training to recruiters and hiring leaders. She offers seven tips for ensuring a program's maximum impact.

Get input from different stakeholders. When devising a plan for DEI training, Tardy recommends a trifecta-like partnership between DEI leaders, training leaders, and respective department leaders. "Each holds a different vantage point that is critical to a successful DEI training plan," she says. In her field of recruitment training, "the department leader would talk about the hurdles their recruiters were facing in context to increasing diversity. The DEI leader would use those pain points to build learning objectives that offered solutions to the pain points. The training leader would recommend the best way to deliver the learning."

Be clear about accountability. If your team knows how they are being held accountable for what they are learning, they are likely to engage more deeply. "It is the difference between



getting a certificate of completion just for showing up versus knowing that there is a comprehensive exam in order to receive a certification at the end," Tardy says. "Participants will engage more deeply if they are being held accountable for passing said exam."

Apply training to the functions of the team. Show team members how the training will make them more effective at doing their jobs. For example, when Tardy trains recruiters and hiring managers, she teaches them exactly how unconscious bias shows up when they are prescreening,

interviewing, and making a selection decision. "The more you teach in context to their role and to the pain points that they experience, the more the training will resonate and will be followed."

Be willing to adapt the format. Factors such as job level, seasonality, busyness, and attention span can impact how a team best learns. Some teams may do better with virtual content that can be digested when their schedule permits; others may learn better during in-person roundtable discussions. Be willing to customize the format to meet team members where they are.

Make the training ongoing.

"DEI can be a dense topic and delivering it all at once can feel overwhelming," Tardy says. Consider a combination of an initial training session to help participants gain foundational knowledge and then move into continuous micro-training to break down or unpack topics that came up during the first training. "Not only does this create a refresher for the participants, but it also allows more immersive learning and gives the participants time to implement aspects of learning and build on them over time."

Know the practical markers of success.

What positive results can you expect to see as a result of the training? "The question that I like most is, 'What actions would your participants take as a positive result of the training?'" Tardy says. If you're not seeing those actions come to pass, your training plan needs modification.

Reinforce the message.

Before training your team, tell them what you are about to teach them. Then teach them, and then remind them, again, what you taught them. "We often leverage this advice within our DEI recruitment training to make sure that we deliver the best training experience possible."



CEO as Chief Empathy Officer

Genuine compassion builds more successful companies

Vision, passion, and decisiveness are no longer enough to lead a company. Empathy—the ability to see an experience from another person’s vantage point—rules the day.

Events such as the pandemic, the 2020 racial reckoning, and the *Roe v. Wade* reversal have changed the workplace forever, says Tara Van Bommel, PhD, director and statistician for Catalyst Research and Data Innovation Lab.

“These events impact employees differentially, thus a genuine response to the crises requires leaders to be skilled in empathy,” Van Bommel says.

According to Catalyst research, employees in organizations with empathic leaders accomplish the following:

- ▶ Express more innovation
- ▶ Are more engaged in their work
- ▶ Experience greater inclusion
- ▶ Are more likely able to say they balance work and family obligations
- ▶ Have decreased levels of burnout
- ▶ Are less likely to leave the company

So how do you cultivate empathy? It’s an interpersonal skill, Van Bommel says. And like other interpersonal skills, such as collaboration and negotiation, it is not easy to master. However, these strategies can help.

- ▶ **Invest in empathy training.** Don’t expect yourself or your employees to figure it out on the fly. For example, Catalyst has a virtual-instructor-led training that teaches what empathy is and provides concrete opportunities for practice.
- ▶ **Seek and welcome feedback.** Ask a colleague you trust to offer constructive feedback about a time you could have handled a situation with more empathy. Give employees a safe way to evaluate leaders on their empathic approach.
- ▶ **Keep a growth mindset toward empathy skill-building.** Becoming comfortable with any new skill takes time. “There is no end to new situations and new encounters in which being empathic brings greater insight and better decision-making,” Van Bommel says.

A Help or Hindrance?



Workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion programs reached a watershed

moment in the wake of George Floyd's murder at the hands of police. The Racial Reckoning of 2020 sparked a flood of change as one company after another pledged to do more to advance their DEI goals.

But the push to more diversity has not come without new challenges. Among the biggest is the mass exodus of workers known as the Great Resignation, which threatens to derail many of those DEI goals before they can be realized.

How the Great Resignation is impacting DEI initiatives and gains

Nearly 48 million Americans quit their jobs in 2021, according to the US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. For some employees, the pandemic was a wake-up call urging them to be more discerning about their work environment. Others were lured away from their organizations by better job titles and higher salaries as companies struggled to fill key positions. But as companies found

themselves losing their top talent, some found their focus shifting away from DEI recruitment.

"Prior to the Great Resignation, many companies had diverse hiring goals and strategies in place," says Renu Sachdeva, head of diversity, equity, and inclusion for Talking Talent, a global coaching firm. "Now, with the high demand and competition for talent, often the diverse hiring goals are falling to the back burner

as companies simply try to hire qualified people rapidly, with little to no consideration of diversity." On top of that, "companies may also be losing the diverse talent who are part of their existing workforce, as more and more employees head for the exit door," Sachdeva adds.

Retaining women and diverse talent is a greater struggle

Indeed, a 2021 American Staffing Association survey found that while one-third of white employees were actively job hunting, two-thirds of Latinx employees and half of Black employees

were looking for a new job in the next year.

In Qualtrics's 2022 Employee Experience Trends report, a survey of nearly 14,000 employees in 27 countries, the technology provider found that the percentage of women employees who intended to stay with their current companies had dropped 8 points since 2021. Even more striking, the percentage of women in leadership positions who intended to stay with their companies had dropped by 21 points since 2021.

The Qualtrics research also showed that a lack of progress in the area of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) contributed significantly to employees' decisions to leave.

"Employees have said loud and clear that they expect their companies to double down on DEIB efforts," says Farren Roper, global head of diversity, equity, and inclusion for Qualtrics. "Eighty-five percent of those who said they feel like they belong also said they intend to stay, and the ones that answered negatively intend to leave in six months or less," Roper adds.

Bucking the trend

Despite the challenges, some companies have managed to move forward with their DEI goals notwithstanding the Great Resignation.

In 2020, Discover Financial Services promoted Jonita Wilson to its newly created position of chief diversity officer and shared what the company called its North Star Goals. By 2025, the



"Employees are speaking up about their demands for equity and inclusion in their organization and are willing to go elsewhere to find it."

company was seeking to have made these gains:

- ▶ Women make up 50 percent of management positions
- ▶ People of color make up 40 percent of management positions
- ▶ Black and Latinx employees make up 15 percent of management positions

In the company's first DEI report, released in March 2022, Discover reported its progress. In 2021, women made up 36 percent of the company's officers, up from 33 percent in 2020; 41 percent of directors, up from 38 percent in 2020; and 53 percent of managers, up from 51 percent in 2020.

The percentage of people of color in leadership positions has risen since 2018 as well. In fact, Discover noted that in 2021, its hiring of people of color outpaced the loss of employees through attrition. However, the financial giant acknowledges that it has more work to do in order to meet its goals for Black and

Latinx employees.

Qualtrics has also made gains when it comes to diversity during the Great Resignation, noting double-digit increases in women in leadership roles since 2020. Plus the company has seen double-digit growth in the number of underrepresented minorities in senior and executive roles during that time frame. Roper credits the organization's instituting of programs that foster inclusion and belonging, such as anti-racism and inclusion training.

"Our employees told us that having inclusive leadership is a key component of keeping them happy and engaged in their jobs," says Roper.

Letting DEI lead the way through the Great Resignation

Both Discover and Qualtrics learned that having a robust DEI strategy can benefit companies that are trying to capitalize on the Great Resignation by attracting diverse, top-rate talent. A 2020 study by Glassdoor found that 41 percent of

Black job seekers and 41 percent of LGBTQ job seekers would not even apply for a job at an organization if they didn't see diversity in the company's workforce.

But experts say the Great Resignation also brings new opportunities when it comes to DEI.

With many professionals leaving their jobs, some companies have stepped back to rethink the idea of bringing employees back to the office. The pandemic showed that workers can be productive at home, and by offering employees the flexibility of working remotely, employers hope to keep them happy. A side benefit of remote work is it expands the talent pool, letting recruiters go after diverse employees who live outside the company's immediate region.

The Great Resignation has also highlighted the fact that companies need to do more to keep the employees they already have. That opens the door to discussions about more effective ways to build an inclusive environment that focuses on employees' well-being and sense of belonging.

"Employees are speaking up about their demands for equity and inclusion in their organizations and are willing to go elsewhere to find it," says Dionn Schaffner, chief diversity officer for Aurea, a software company based in Austin. "This helps DEI practitioners move their organizations beyond mandatory yearly training to implementing policies, procedures, and systemic practices to address DEI goals."

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DATA ENTRY

The Most Inclusive States in America

The United States isn't just divided politically. It's also divided when it comes to inclusion. That's according to the 2021 Inclusiveness Index, a study of how inclusive each state is to disadvantaged groups.

The study, conducted by the Othering and Belonging Institute at University of California, Berkeley, measured inclusion when it comes to race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and disability. To come up with the rankings, researchers analyzed such data as political representation by different groups, income inequality, and state laws affecting different communities.

Top

Hawaii topped the overall list ranking as the most inclusive state
▶ score of 80.27, followed by these:

Nevada ▶ score of 67.28

Rhode Island, ▶ score of 67.23

Maryland, ▶ score of 66.61

Washington ▶ score of 61.08



Top states for inclusion by specific metrics:

Race	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Religion	Disability
Hawaii	Rhode Island	Nevada	Hawaii	Hawaii
New Jersey	Maryland	Colorado	Vermont	Florida
West Virginia	Vermont	California	Rhode Island	North Dakota
Washington	Minnesota	Vermont	Maryland	Nevada
Georgia	Massachusetts	Rhode Island	Minnesota	Oklahoma

Bottom

Louisiana was rated the least inclusive state ▶ score of 32.49, followed by these:

Wyoming ▶ score of 39.45

South Dakota ▶ score of 39.68

Mississippi ▶ score of 39.80

Alabama ▶ score of 40.75

The Inclusiveness Index also looked at inclusion from a global perspective. Out of 133 countries, the US came in at number 72. **Sweden** topped the list as the most inclusive country, followed by **New Zealand** and **Norway**. **Yemen**, **Iraq**, and **Angola** were at the bottom of the list.

INCLUSIVE CORNER

Illuminating Our Blind Spots

Implicit bias is human—but it can be outsmarted

Diversity, equity, and inclusion is a societal issue that requires foundational change. Enter CEO Action, which believes that collaboration and bold action from



DR. MAHZARIN R. BANAJI

“The science says we make better decisions when we don’t act on instinct, simply picking who strikes us as trustworthy, competent, and a good ‘fit.’”

thought-leadership opportunities to support business leaders in taking action and driving progress to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace.

the business community—especially CEOs—are vital to driving transformation at scale. To help build a groundswell, CEO Action has harnessed the power of more than 2,200 CEOs and thousands of CHROs and CDOs, representing over 21 million employees from companies of various sizes and industries. The organization provides a variety of tools, resources, events, and

CEO Action has joined forces with Harvard professor Dr. Mahzarin Banaji, coauthor of *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*, to provide insights into how the human mind operates and to offer a shared vocabulary for discussing potential blind spots in the workplace. *Inclusion* spoke with Dr. Banaji about her work with CEO Action and how it could lead to greater accountability and impact.

***Inclusion:* Have business leaders enrolled in the CEO Action learning modules been receptive to doing the work of making their workplaces more inclusive? And has the emphasis on the science- and data-based tools and research helped with that uptake?**

Dr. Mahzarin Banaji: Yes, many of the CEOs participating through CEO Action have implemented new forms of education for their companies alongside equally impressive transformations in their own behavior. I think generally some CEOs may not know how behavioral science research can help us understand and shape policy, and this work gives them the tools needed to continue improving. The most common response is relief that we are pointing to scientific evidence as the basis of change. One CEO told me he had been nervous about conducting a town hall on these issues, and my seminar gave him the insights and language to move forward successfully. Another used the idea of blind auditioning in a succession-planning experiment, which showed his leadership that they

Implicit bias resources

Dr. Mahzarin R. Banaji shares tools she has developed for detecting and overcoming implicit bias.

- ▶ Hands-on tests from **implicit.harvard.edu** provide insight into which implicit biases you may hold. Just as you’d want to know if you have hypertension so you could treat it, you may want to sample the tests to uncover your biases and, from there, explore ways to live a more-examined life.
- ▶ At **outsmartingimplicitbias.org**, users find a media series from which they can learn more about outsmarting implicit bias in life and at work.
- ▶ Signatories of CEO Action have access to deeper learning modules that include resources focused on outsmarting implicit bias.

generated quite different candidates in blind vs. non-blind contexts. When I see these actions, I know that a CEO has understood the hardest and most critical data. You can’t mount such experiments on yourself and your team if you skim the surface.



IN: The CEO Action website shows the actions taken by companies. Are there any commonalities either in types of actions taken or outcomes?

MB: Yes, there are variations by industry, country/culture, size of organization, etcetera, but I focus my teaching on what is common to all humans or large groups and have found this approach effective with the CEO Action signatories who have participated in my learning modules.

Here are three practices I recommend:

Collect smart, extensive data.

Organizations should collect deep data about themselves, their practices and policies, and the impact they have on basic decisions such as recruiting and referrals, selection and hiring, promotion, team dynamics, etcetera.

Without data, there's no way to know what is actually going on and what the outcomes of procedures and policies are.

Standardize procedures. Few companies have a standardized résumé form—most only accept a résumé submitted by the candidate. But résumés are Rorschach tests: you read into them and see the things you want.

Remove subjective opinion as much as possible from decision-making.

This is hard to swallow because most leaders feel they should “trust their gut.” But the science says we make better decisions when we don’t act on instinct, simply picking who strikes us as trustworthy, competent, and a good “fit.” Having clear grading rubrics to evaluate potential and current employees helps us rely less on our instincts and more on the actual data.

IN: Can you explain for laypeople the science laid out in the book *Blindspot*?

MB: *Blindspot* demystifies implicit bias by showing that unintentional errors in judgment are pervasive; they’re a part of what it means to be human. Implicit bias in a corporation isn’t driven by a few “bad apples,” which if removed will solve the problem. Implicit bias is instead measured in a large proportion of the population.

Blindspot introduces a test that reveals your own biases. Think about the expectations we have of people based on their preferences—like beliefs about cat vs. dog people—and ask what beliefs you have based on categories like gender, race, sexuality, religion, and political affiliation.

Your conscious mind informs you that you may have slight preferences for some groups over others based on innocuous stereotypes. The data from Implicit Association Tests will likely reveal that these preferences are greater than you thought. *Blindspot* brings you face-to-face with the most fundamental disparity of all: a dissociation between your values of equality and your behavior, which, when measured, is often inconsistent with those values. **IN**

Dr. Mahzarin R. Banaji is the founder of Outsmarting Implicit Bias. She is the Richard Clarke Cabot Professor of Social Ethics in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University. Dr. Banaji studies how thoughts and feelings that reside outside conscious awareness or conscious control affect judgments of the most important entities in the world to us—other humans.



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How to Be a Diversity and Inclusion Ambassador

By CELESTE R. WARREN

"Thank you for your talk Ms. Warren. You've been able to work with leaders to drive change within your organization. I find myself in a situation where I want to do more, but I don't have the abilities to drive change. What can I do?"

It's a statement that I have heard frequently throughout my career as a diversity and inclusion leader. It's not uncommon for individuals to feel powerless in the wake of trying to make a difference. However, everyone must play a role in creating a diverse and inclusive work environment in any organization. I think it is important for people to know that diversity, equity, and inclusion is not going away. It is a part of who we are as individuals and is growing in importance.

There is a simple framework that can be applied to any individual who wishes to be a diversity ambassador within his or her respective organization.

The first step in the model involves looking at yourself. You will need to do a self-reflection and assessment to determine what your strengths and areas of development are. Understanding yourself is very important, especially if you want to engage with others.

The second step in the model involves taking an inventory of your surroundings so you can know what to do to help others. Ask yourself



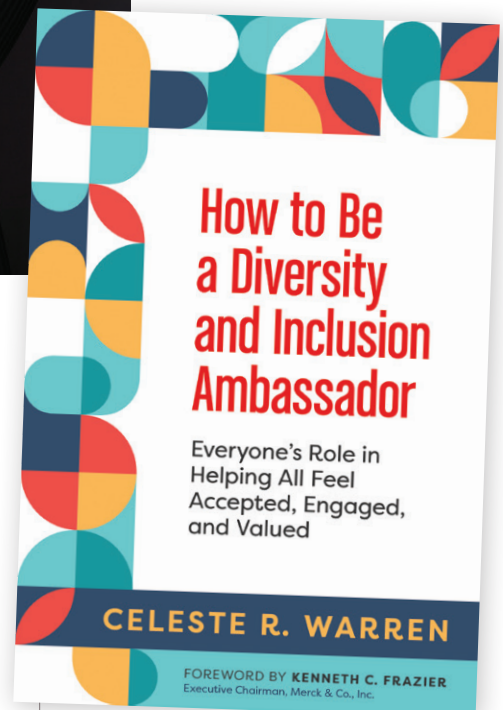
what is getting in the way of there being an inclusive environment in your work area?

The third step involves taking action. It's not enough that you do self-reflection and take an inventory of the environment around you. You have to put into action the revelations you have after your initial assessments.

No matter where you sit, what your level is, or where you are on your career journey, you have to take responsibility for your role in driving change across the organization.

This article is adapted from the book *How to Be a Diversity and Inclusion Ambassador: Everyone's Role in Helping All Feel Accepted, Engaged, and Valued*, by Celeste R. Warren (Berrett-Koehler, 2022). **IN**

Celeste Warren is vice president, Global Diversity and Inclusion Center of Excellence at Merck. She has over 30 years of experience in the fields of human resources diversity, equity and inclusion, and change management.





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INVISIBLE NO MORE

In the workplace, Native Americans have been belittled, ignored, and outright discriminated against. It's time for that to change, and these activists are leading the way.

BY JACKIE KRENTZMAN



Whenever Sunny Myers would encounter a fellow Native American colleague in a meeting or hallway, the two would find a nonverbal way of acknowledging each other. “I would get warm fuzzies because it was always exciting to have a Native American colleague in your workplace,” says Myers, leader of inclusion and diversity, Business Partner-Product, at Palo Alto Networks. “We would give each other a silent fist bump of recognition.”

That fist bump was necessary because the percentage of Native American and Indigenous people in workplaces in the United States, in particular at white-collar jobs, is minuscule. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Native

American unemployment rate in December 2021 was estimated at 7.9 percent, compared with 3.9 percent for the overall population. In professional jobs, the figures may be even worse—but there isn’t any reliable data to know. Many studies of people of color in leadership positions don’t include Native Americans—let alone a specific count of Native American women. “Native communities are described by the National Congress of American Indians as the Asterisk Nation because they are so often omitted from data collection and reporting,” says Olivia Hoeft, a marketing manager at Google who leads the Google Aboriginal and Indigenous Network.

What’s clear is that Native American women lag far behind in the wage disparity gap. The estimates vary between 50 and 60 percent for how much Native American women earn relative to white men, compared with 83 percent for all women. Prairie Bighorn-Blount, executive director at the nonprofit American Indigenous Business Leaders, says, “We are the minority of the minorities.”

The reasons for these stark gaps are numerous, going back to the moment white settlers stepped on North American soil. The systematic extermination and later outright institutionalized discrimination against Native populations have resulted in lack of access to education and job opportunities. No wonder there are few Native Americans in leadership positions in business, academia, or pretty much anywhere outside of reservations. The spotlight on recent government appointments and elections of a handful of Native Americans is a bright spot that only reveals how infrequent those positions have been until the past few years. (Note: This article primarily uses the term “Native Americans,” but the terms “American Indians,” “Indigenous people,” and “First Nations,” common in Canada and elsewhere, are also frequently used.)

“The sad irony is that we are often forgotten at home—and this is our home,” Bighorn-Blount says. “We have always been here, and we are still here. But we often look up and don’t see other Native Americans in leadership. If you can’t see it, you can’t be it.”

As usual, the problem begins early. American Indigenous Business Leaders (AIBL) empowers, educates, and trains young Native American students, providing internship opportunities, mentoring, conferences, and peer groups. According to AIBL, only 11 percent of Native Americans obtain bachelor’s degrees, and just 6 percent go on to earn graduate-level degrees.

The challenge for these students goes back generations. “We think of ourselves as a developed country, but so many Native Americans grew up in rural areas without access to running water, let alone broadband,” says AIBL’s Bighorn-Blount.

According to the FCC, 99 percent of housing units in US urban areas can connect to broadband service, whereas only 65 percent of housing units on rural American Indian and Alaska Native lands have the same level of

“The sad irony is that we are often forgotten at home—and this is our home.

We have always been here, and we are still here. But we often look up and don’t see other Native Americans in leadership. If you can’t see it, you can’t be it.”

— Prairie Bighorn-Blount, executive director, American Indigenous Business Leaders

access. “How can you learn and compete for jobs if you live in a digital desert?” says Dwana Franklin-Davis, CEO of Reboot Representation, a nonprofit dedicated to closing the gap for Native Americans in the tech sector.

Some companies are taking it upon themselves to try to close this divide. For example, in 2022, Google.org announced a multiyear \$10 million grant to the National Digital Inclusion Alliance to support the creation of National Digital Navigator Corps, which will span rural and tribal communities across the United States and

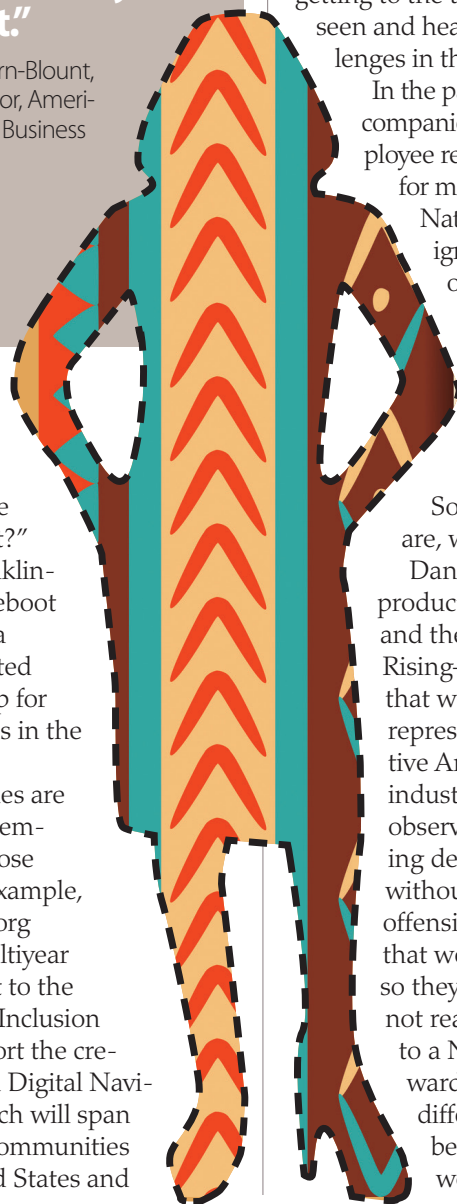
impact thousands of people through one-on-one technology training and community outreach to connect residents, many of them Native American, to the Internet and appropriate devices.

ONCE NATIVE AMERICANS MANAGE to leap past these hurdles and are hired, they are faced with a new challenge—being seen.

“In all my circles of trust, I hear the constant pride in our community and background, but we still feel so invisible every day,” says Sunny Myers. “Just getting to the table and then being seen and heard are our biggest challenges in the workplace today.”

In the past few decades, large companies have formed employee resource groups (ERGs) for many identities, but often Native Americans are ignored, while employees of other backgrounds—Black, Latino, Asian-American, Pacific Islander—are represented. Sometimes this lack of recognition engenders slights. Sometimes those slights are, well, not so slight.

Danielle Forward, a former product designer at Facebook and the founder of Natives Rising—an organization that works to increase the representation of Native Americans in the tech industry—says that she’s observed colleagues making derogatory comments without knowing they are offensive. “Many people think that we don’t exist anymore, so they will say something, not realizing they are talking to a Native American,” Forward says. “We all look very different. Some decide to be white-passing in the workplace.”



The frequent microaggressions include comments such as “let’s have a pow-wow,” or “low man on the totem pole.” Other concerns include the belittling of Native Americans with uninformed questions and assumptions. Myers says that when she’s shared with coworkers that she is Native American, she has been asked, “What percentage Native American are you?”

They may say something like, “Oh, my great-grandmother was Cherokee,” says Myers. Instead, she recommends that coworkers who are truly interested in gaining knowledge phrase the question along the lines of, “Would you mind sharing your tribal community so I can learn more?”

Other times, the insults and microaggressions are so baked into our culture that Native American employees realize they need to pick their battles and protect their psyches. Forward says she finds the most difficult months October and November when Columbus Day and Thanksgiving are observed. “Some of us consider Thanksgiving a day of mourning,” she says. “So when people say ‘Happy Thanksgiving’ to me, I don’t know what to say.”

In part, the problem stems from the fact that most Americans don’t know much about Native American history. A 2015 study by researchers at Penn State Altoona found that 87 percent of the history, culture, and issues taught about Native Americans refer to pre-1900 context—as if their history ended then and Native Americans no longer exist. That knowledge deficit can have direct implications. As a correction,



Studies of people of color in leadership positions don’t include Native Americans—let alone a specific count of Native American women. “Native communities are described by the National Congress of American Indians as the Asterisk Nation because they are so often omitted from data collection and reporting.”

— Olivia Hoeft, marketing manager, Google Marketing

says Hoeft, Google includes a reminder in its allyship guidelines to describe Indigenous people using the word “are,” not “were.”

As do other marginalized groups in the workplace, Native American women tire of correcting colleagues and explaining why a certain phrase is offensive. Sometimes they fear that raising the issue can hurt their ability to advance in the company. Forward says it can be hard to correct a colleague, especially a supervisor.

“I feel the most unsettled when people use the word ‘powwow’ for a meeting,” she says. “Most of us from marginalized groups have experienced this awkwardness, as you are likely the only one feeling discomfort in the moment. You think, ‘Am I going to correct that person in front of everyone? Or do I take them aside? Do I even need this stress today?’” As a result, the fear of being ignored, dishonored, marginalized, and discriminated against has even led some Native Americans to avoid self-identifying in the workplace.

Prairie Bighorn-Blount’s organization, AIBL, partners with Fortune 500 firms, and at one of those companies, she says, “someone told a story about

a man they could tell was Native American. But for his first 15 years there, he never told anyone. This made me sad, that he had to hide his true identity to advance his career.” Luckily, in this case there was a happy ending. Once the company agreed to form a Native American ERG, the man “came out,” says Bighorn-Blount. “Due to the work of the ERG, he was finally ready to step into his power and claim the essence of who he is—that is the power of ERGs.”

THE TECH SECTOR PRESENTS ITS OWN set of challenges. Oftentimes, when data is analyzed, Native Americans are grouped with Black and Latino applicants and employees, making it difficult to parse the information. And Black, Latina, and Native American women face even greater headwinds than white and Asian women when it comes to studying computing and entering the tech sector. According to Reboot Representation, those three groups together represent approximately 16 percent of the total US population, yet make up only 4 percent of students obtaining computer and information sciences degrees. Most of that 4 percent are Black and Latina. According to one study, by SACNAS (Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science), only 0.2 percent of the STEM workforce

is Native American (compared with overall Native American, Native Alaskan, and Native Hawaiian population of around 2 percent).

In recent years, organizations have been founded to address that stark reality. Reboot Representation, for example, has set the goal of doubling by 2025 the number of Black, Latina, and Native American women who graduate from college with computer science degrees.

The organization has partnered with the American Indian College Fund to provide scholarships and wraparound services to Native American women, as well as with the Kapor Center (a nationally respected organization dedicated to leveling the playing field in tech) and the American Indian Science and Engineering Society to rewrite computer science curriculum to be more culturally relevant for Native American students.

empower Indigenous communities through careers in Silicon Valley. It promotes and provides mentorship, community, and networking opportunities for Indigenous people in tech and also works with companies to identify and recruit Indigenous people into the tech industry. One of the organization's focus areas is helping Native Americans heal from intergenerational trauma going back centuries.

"For starters, you have to overcome shame, doubts, and the imposter syndrome that have been inherited," says Forward. "That is part

dial—how can anyone alone overcome centuries of systemic, often horrific, and blatant racism? One person can't fix a broken system in which Native American

students are saddled with a huge disadvantage that may follow them throughout their lives.

"We are less likely to be positioned to compete for jobs because we can't get into the pipeline," says Forward. "And when we do get that job we really want, we might not be able to keep some of the manifestations of that trauma from showing up at work because of a family crisis, for example. It also may take us longer to get a college degree. Perhaps we had to drop out a semester to help our families, or perhaps we couldn't afford the gas to get to class. These challenges add up."

FORTUNATELY, AT some companies, awareness is growing. Take, for example, Google, among the companies at the forefront of listen-

ing to Native American employees and creating pathways through the challenges in education and career access. It has invested \$1 million in Partnership with Native Americans to train 10,000 students at more than 50 Native-serving organizations by 2025 through its Grow with Google Indigenous Career Readiness Program. Google will provide digital-skills curriculum and trainers, in addition to helping with career jumpstarts, at tribal colleges and universities and



Native American women lag far behind in the wage disparity gap. The estimates vary between 50 and 60 percent for how much Native American women earn relative to white men—compared with 83 percent for all women.

"There are many pathways into tech, and we chose to focus on helping students earn a BA in computer science or a related field," says Franklin-Davis of Reboot Representation. "We want to see opportunities for women to rise through organizations and to be at the decision-making table. A BA degree is the baseline check mark for that to happen."

Another organization working to increase STEM representation is Danielle Forward's Natives Rising, whose mission is to economically

of the work at Natives Rising—showing inspiring examples of Native Americans doing great work and cool things and succeeding. It's important for us, as well as others, to realize that not everyone is poor or doing drugs, as our greater culture often assumes. Because in order to succeed in the workplace—while still being our true, authentic selves—we need to be able to self-actualize and heal that trauma."

Of course, the responsibility should not be on the individual to move the

other Native-serving institutions. The program will also reach high school upperclassmen preparing for college and careers as well as vocational and non-traditional students.

For its current employees, Google has an ERG composed of people from, or passionate about being an ally to, Indigenous or Aboriginal communities. The ERG's mission is to bring the influence of Indigenous and Aboriginal peoples to both Google employees and users through hiring and retention, product inclusion, and social responsibility initiatives. The company itself focuses on diversity in hiring, retention, and belonging. While the numbers are still small, 0.8 percent of Google employees identify as Native American, compared with fewer than .005 percent in the tech workforce overall in the United States.

Another ally company, says Danielle Forward, is Meta, the parent of Facebook. Its Native American community is visible and strong, and the company sponsors Native@ ERG (American Indians, First Nations, Alaskan Natives, and Native Hawaiians) with a healthy budget to host speakers and events to raise awareness of issues. She also notes that the company encourages finding mentors, whose role was instrumental in her own success.



The key to progress starts with becoming visible. Make sure your company celebrates Native American Heritage Month. Lobby for an ERG. Arrange for Native Americans to be invited to speak on panels on DEI topics.

At Palo Alto Networks, Sunny Myers consults with and advises the leadership team on inclusion, equity, and belonging strategy.

She helps the organization devise and measure goals, and serves as an advocate for raising awareness of the marginalized communities that are customers in its business lines and making sure products are created using a DEI lens.

Forward says that in her years at Facebook, the company became increasingly aware of the challenges of and need for support for its Native American employees.

"One of the best examples of allyship in my career," she says, "came when a VP of design at Facebook during Native American Heritage Month told me she wanted to educate herself on Indigenous People, so she signed up for an

online class on Aboriginal worldviews. I took it with her and some other Native American colleagues, and it prompted great discussions."

THE KEY TO PROGRESS, EVERYONE agrees, starts with becoming visible. Make sure your company celebrates Native American Heritage Month. Lobby for an ERG. Arrange for Native Americans to be invited to speak on panels on DEI topics.

Forward says she's come to realize that, for better or worse, the onus is on her to some degree to fight for visibility. "My supervisor once said, 'There aren't that many Native American people left.' I know he cares about me, but this is a microaggression—myth No. 1 is we don't exist. I'm thinking, 'You're telling me to my face I don't exist.' People would say other insensitive things, and I didn't want to deal with it.

"But later, after educating myself about our history," Forward says, "I became more prepared, and able to claim my identity and talk about it. I realized by not saying something, I was contributing to the myth that we don't exist. Suddenly, I became the first Native American who people I worked with even knew. They were forced to think about us and how their actions might impact us. Coming forward like that has created an opening where people start to understand the reality of what it is like to be a Native American in the workforce today."

Myers concurs, also noting that it is important for Native Americans to band together with women from other marginalized communities. "Native American women are often subject to the same challenges as other women of color," she says. "What Black women experience in the workplace we often experience as well. We have a lot of catching up to do—we are decades behind Black and Latina women doing the same work. But in working with others, together, we can catch up." **IN**

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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.”

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LEGAL EAGLES

Diversity has lagged in the legal profession, but smart strategies can create better workplaces

BY KIMBERLY OLSON

As a fresh-faced attorney at the beginning of her career, Toya Gavin was assigned to a criminal case in New Jersey. Donning a suit, she arrived at the jail to meet with her client, then joined the other attorneys in the designated line. One by one, they were ushered through, except for Gavin.

The jail staff didn't believe that she was a lawyer. "They let every other attorney who was not Black in with no problem," Gavin says. "They thought I was trying to see my boyfriend."

Gavin's colleagues sent over a statement confirming her profession, but jail personnel remained skeptical, so she had to get a court order to gain admittance. "That was my first experience in recognizing, oh, this profession isn't going to protect me from classism, sexism, racism, ageism—all the isms and phobias," she says.

The rigors of the legal profession are compounded for women of color. After

working as a city government attorney and as a prosecutor, and then launching her own practice, Gavin experienced burnout.

At the time, she penned a piece for Solo Practice University, a networking and education site for lawyers. "I wrote, 'I'm a Black woman, I'm an attorney, and I have a mental health challenge. I don't know if I'm ever going to work again, and I don't know what this means for my life,'" she remembers. "It was a very scary moment. But I got so many messages from women, primarily, who were lawyers and said, 'Can we get on the phone? Thank you for writing this.'"

Bias from all directions

Most women lawyers of color—around 70 percent—consider leaving the legal profession. Research shows that they find themselves in unwelcoming workplaces where they feel undervalued. In a report on female lawyers of color from the American Bar Association

(ABA) Initiative on Achieving Long-Term Careers for Women in Law, titled *Left Out and Left Behind*, nearly all participants said they experienced bias and stereotyping at work.

"Women of color experience micro- and macroaggressions from peers, supervisors, clients, court staff, and even security," says Genesis Fisher, founder of Fisher Law Practice PC, which helps businesses address office tension and conflict to create healthier workplaces.

The difficulties range from basic obstructions to entry—comments like "only attorneys are allowed in this area"—to double standards in promotion. "Every indignity can leave a residue," Fisher says. "Those residues can build over time."

Double standards, double bind

Lawyers who are women of color begin facing hurdles during the job search. "Many recruiters, if they are honest, will tell you that it's not as easy to place a woman of color because



there's that skepticism about how well [she] is going to do," says Paulette Brown, a partner at Locke Lord LLP, the ABA's first Black female president, and coauthor of the *Left Out* study. "There are usually—and I've seen this firsthand—additional questions that will be thrown up as barriers. And people don't necessarily see those as barriers. 'Just doing extra diligence,' they might say."

Once the candidate is hired, the hurdles often keep coming. While working at one firm early in her career, Genesis Fisher noticed that new associates of color minded their p's and q's, while the new white associates felt more comfortable letting their hair down. "One [white] guy was a lot more familiar in his approach, and that was lauded," she remembers. "The leadership invited him out to drinks."

The response to transgressions of professionalism can differ depending on who's crossing the line. "If there's already trust, those transgressions are tolerated and even make you a person of interest," Fisher says. "If there's not already trust that you can do your job well—and if you're a woman of color coming in, that might be the case—transgressions of decorum are not tolerated."

As a result, women of color tend to be on guard, continually assessing which behavior might seem palatable. But that approach has its own consequences. "People want to recommend people they can trust," Gavin says. "And that requires a level of connection and vulnerability that women of color don't feel safe enough to do."

Tough road to the top

The ability to connect is important because meaningful relationships spur a legal career. Women of color at law firms are actually more likely than their peers to have mentors or sponsors. But they often have less access to *influential*, well-connected mentors or sponsors

who can effectively advocate for them. Analysis by the ABA, for example, found that women lawyers and attorneys of color have historically not been mentored by partners, who dish out the choice assignments.

Meanwhile, they frequently work harder than their peers for the same opportunities. One participant in the *Left Out* study, for example, noted that all the Black associates at her firm had at least two Ivy League degrees, while white associates did not.

Research shows that women attorneys of color face persistent obstacles to career advancement. The demographic comprises more than 14 percent of associates yet makes up fewer than 3.5 percent of partners. "Less than 2 percent of equity partners are women of color," Paulette Brown says. "That statistic has been the same for about 20 years."

While Brown managed to scale the ladder to partner, the rungs were slippery. Despite her success in big cases, colleagues would question her ability to handle the next case. They might ask about specific strategies she used, hoping to replicate her success, yet wouldn't invite her to join their team. She was often the last attorney to get internal referrals. "Not to boast, but I know I'm a better lawyer than [some others] who have had opportunities that I didn't have," Brown says. "So pretty much everything I ate, I had to kill it."

The costs of homogeneity

Historically, the legal profession has been among the least diverse. "The reputation of law firms as an industry isn't great," Genesis Fisher says. "Some of the most brilliant people, including

Women of color tend to be on guard, continually assessing which behavior might seem palatable. But that approach has its own consequences.

women of color, don't see them as a place to belong. Some of my [NYU] classmates are on TV every day. Many didn't want to go to firms."

Law firms that hire only attorneys who "fit the mold" miss out on strong candidates. A report by legal analytics company Premonition found that in court, for example, female partners were successful 70.19 percent of the time, compared with male partners, who won 57.47 percent of their cases.

Firms with more homogeneous teams may also put themselves at a competitive disadvantage. "Studies show that mixed groups create the best options and reach the best results, especially if you have women on the team," Fisher says. "There are tangible results—money results."

Legal organizations that aren't welcoming to women of color will find it increasingly difficult to attract the best legal minds. "A lot of younger people coming out of law school now—even if they are white, even if they are male—are concerned about diversity in law firms because they believe that if you are not progressive in that way, then you're not going to be progressive and innovative in other ways," Brown says.

Meanwhile, corporate clients—whose customers are diverse—expect their legal team to be diverse too. "Corporations recently have been much more engaged in making the point to their law firms that 'I want to see diversity on my [legal] team,'" says Eileen M. Letts, a partner at Zuber Lawler LLP and coauthor of the *Left Out* report. "I received an email from a client today that said, 'We want your first-quarter [diversity] statistics on the work done.'"

The Mansfield Rule

In 2016, the Women in Law Hackathon—“a *Shark Tank*–style pitch competition” according to Diversity Lab, which sponsored the event to help advance women in law firms—birthed an idea called the Mansfield Rule.

Named for Arabella Mansfield, the first woman to practice law in the United States, the rule measures the work undertaken by law firms to actively consider women, attorneys of color, and other underrepresented groups for leadership and governance roles, equity partner promotions, and lateral positions.

More than 115 law firms, as well as corporate legal departments, have now earned Mansfield certification. Mansfield early-adopter firms have boosted the racial and ethnic diversity of their management teams by 4.4 percent in two years—more than 30 times the rate of non-Mansfield firms.

Assess, plan, report

For myriad reasons, law firms need to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). “We’re moving to a place in our work culture where you actually have to care about the people who are making your business work,” says Gavin, who, informed by her own experiences, founded Legally Bold, an online coaching and consulting agency that helps women in law redefine their careers and find better-fitting jobs. “You can’t just put the multicultural attorneys on your brochure and think that’s enough. The work is going to be listening and making changes so that everyone feels like they’re a part of the team.”

When firm partner Regina A. Petty became chief diversity officer at labor and employment law firm Fisher Phillips, she embarked on a listening tour to better understand employees’ needs. She also reached out to other CDOs. “I started to introduce myself and say, ‘Can I have an hour of your time to find out what you’ve learned?’”

The research is clear that attorneys who are women of color care about seeing others who look like them at work, including role models. Experts say law firms must review their people data. “All the data that I could think to ask for, I asked for,” Petty says.

A DEI expert can help firms conduct an assessment, craft clear goals, and create a strategic plan. Posting that plan and making leaders accountable will help ensure success. “It should be part of the compensation,” Brown says. “Tell me everything that you’ve done to promote women of color in the firm and give them opportunities. How many clients have you introduced them to? How much credit have you shared with them when they’re doing the bulk of the work?”

Fisher Phillips examined various areas of its business, from data collection to recruiting, and rolled out firm-wide DEI programming. Petty went on to lead her firm to earn Mansfield Rule certification (see sidebar) by considering historically underrepresented lawyers for top roles and outside counsel leadership. More than 30 percent of leadership roles at the firm are now held by lawyers of color and other diversity categories.

Honest conversations

Elevating understanding is also crucial to culture change. “Everybody has implicit bias—we all do,” Letts says. “Conversations need to be had between young lawyers of color and white lawyers and partners.” A 2021 ABA Practice Forward survey found

that 53 percent of older lawyers were having conversations with colleagues about racial justice issues more often than they had a year earlier, and one-third said those conversations had gotten easier.

Honest talks help reveal blind spots. While white women lawyers face gender bias, for example, the *Left Out* study found that they’re less aware than their Black counterparts of racial equity gaps in the workplace. As a result, they’re more likely to support policies focused on gender specifically than those addressing diversity more broadly.

Problems are often complex, so Fisher Law Practice offers its clients a multi-module approach to workplace education. “We start out with leadership or organizational change and move up to D&I or even religion,” Genesis Fisher says. “People become comfortable with the discomfort of not being able to solve problems, and just listen to each other. It’s really powerful.”

With research now spotlighting the challenges faced by attorneys from diverse populations, Letts hopes firms take bold action, and says, “We don’t want to be having this same conversation in five to ten years.”

“Law firms spend a lot of money to attract top law students,” Fisher says. “They wine and dine them, give them VIP tickets to ball games, and take them on yachts. If they could spend just a portion of that money creating more welcoming workplaces, it could go a long way.”

Toya Gavin says that the women attorneys who seek her coaching services have realized that, like justice itself, the legal industry isn’t blind—and yet she’s optimistic. “I’m not going to give up on myself and on this population of people who primarily get into this profession because they want to help people,” she says. “This is a time of change and movement forward, and we need those voices.” **IN**



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-Dr. Johné Battle, SVP & Chief Diversity Officer

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DOLLAR GENERAL

FRESH TAKE

Black Women Flourishing

It's time to thrive, not merely survive

BY ERICKA HINES

Black women are surviving at work, but they deserve to thrive. How do I know?

- Because I am a Black woman who thinks back to when she worked at organizations and remembers how much I needed to twist and change myself to fit in, look the part, and play along to get along.
- Because I remember many “coffee walks” and errands with my Black women colleagues that were, in truth, problem-solving, peer-coaching sessions.
- Because I have heard women say it in closed-door conversations, focus groups, and surveys. Because I wrote the report on it.

Finally, I know because, as a DEI strategist, I have done many trainings where I have raised difficult issues about racism and sexism and had Black women pull me aside and give me their own stories of encountering those in their positions. As a researcher, I kept asking myself, how can we help Black women thrive in the workplace?

For many of us, our lives—outside the workplace—are full of meaning, community, and joy. That is where we experience thriving. We spend our time in community with family and close friends. We use that time to “fill our cup.” And we often draw on that cup throughout the week at work. But imagine if we worked in atmospheres that helped us thrive.



“We can’t hope to create thriving workplaces if we haven’t heard what Black women need to thrive.”

environment conducive to thriving for anyone, especially for Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Research shows that there are characteristics inherent to thriving in the workplace. For example, a group of researchers at the University of Michigan developed a “socially embedded model” that defined thriving in the workplace as “the psychological state in which individuals experience both a sense of vitality and a sense of learning at work.” The combined sense of vitality (positive feeling ascribed to having available energy) and learning (feeling that one can gain and apply information and

Many workplaces trying to figure out how to become more diverse, inclusive, and equitable have not given much thought to how to help people thrive. At the same time, I’ve watched organizations start using the term “thriving” without understanding what it truly means, how it differs from DEI, or how to create an environ-

skills) conveys a feeling of movement toward personal development.

While this concept of thriving is helpful, it doesn’t consider the implicit biases and systemic inequities that BIPOC women face that directly impact their ability to thrive.

That is because Black women, at all levels of organizations, have to navigate workplace structures and cultures that were not initially built for us. That reality has been made clear in many implicit and explicit ways—through pay gaps, performance and promotion bias, mentor and sponsorship gaps, daily microaggressions, and discrimination.

From researching the issue for almost two years, I now know that thriving in the workplace goes far beyond power, pay, and upward mobility. Even when Black women achieve the pinnacle of traditionally defined “success,” we are still not thriving. We can’t hope to create thriving workplaces if we haven’t heard what Black women need to thrive.

It’s time to listen. **IN**

Ericka Hines, principal of Every Level Leadership, has committed to helping organizations build an equity culture. She is the lead researcher and author for Black Women Thriving.



Dr. Johné Battle

**Senior Vice President,
Chief Diversity Officer,
Dollar General**

Dr. Johné Battle is a renowned global business executive and thought leader who brings to his work the powerful combination of skillful talent development and human-capital expertise. His deep understanding of human relations, personal branding, diversity, equity, inclusion, and organizational performance has led to a successful track record of business transformation and human-capital counseling.

Dr. Battle is the founding partner and CEO of The Greatness Factory, and the senior vice president and chief diversity officer for Dollar General Corporation, a \$38 billion-plus retailer with more than 19,000 convenient, easy-to-shop stores in 47 states. Dr. Battle owns the strategy for diversity, equity, and inclusion for over 165,000 employees, and works across the organization using belonging indexes, talent-flow analysis, inclusive leader assessments, and other information to make data-based decisions. Prior to joining Dollar General, he was a senior client partner at Korn Ferry, where he led clients through large-scale cultural transformation and assisted with holistic DEI leadership development, employee

engagement, and employee branding efforts that enabled clients to attract, develop, and retain their talent while meeting business goals.

Dr. Battle received his doctorate in work-based learning leadership from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. He also earned a master of education in learning leadership from the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, a master of business administration in organizational behavior from Emory University Goizueta Business School, and a bachelor of applied science in organizational leadership from Mercer University.

Inclusion: As offices return to the traditional in-person model, how can organizations best balance the differing needs of employees while maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness?

Johné Battle: The talent landscape is so different today, due to the Great Resignation phenomenon, that organizations must shift to a more purpose-driven focus on how we attract, develop, and advance talent throughout the enterprise. We must create a workplace by design that allows for flexibility in how we bring units together to share in those important in-person summits, and when and how we allow for hybrid day-to-day interactions. Even business-critical all-hands-on-deck initiatives still require a balanced hybrid approach in today's workplace.

IN: What do you think companies should be prioritizing in 2023 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

JB: Companies that are not prioritizing social mobility in their IDEA [inclusion, diversity, equity, and access] strategies are missing a critical variable in their inclusion journey. There has been a significant focus on this in the UK, but not enough focus in the US when looking through the lens of diversity and inclusion.

When we think about inclusion through the lens of social mobility in organizations, the research is clear on the impact this variable has on organizational success. Research has shown that people in the workplace who come from lower social-class origins in the United States are 32 percent less likely to become managers than people who come from higher social-class



origins. What organizations fail to realize is that this disadvantage is even greater than the one experienced by women compared with men [27 percent] or Black people compared with white [25 percent].

Most organizations' measurements of their DE&I success stop with measurements around gender and ethnically diverse talent metrics. These are important variables, but social-class disadvantage is prevalent in the workplace in every major economy throughout the world. Yet many D&I leaders don't have it on their scorecards, and if we are in fact discriminating against people who come from a lower social class, we are grossly failing by default to design an inclusive workplace for most of the workforce.

IN: In 2021, many companies began to put more energy and priority on belonging, equity, and, in some cases, the support of social change and social justice in the community. What are some of the changes you have witnessed, and do you see that energy continuing?

JB: Social justice was and continues to be a critical driver to the work we do in the DE&I Center of Excellence at Dollar General. What we didn't want was to be prisoners of the moment, following the path of just writing a check and getting some goodwill out of it. Instead, our focus was on how we could strategically partner with the right organizations. We took a three-pronged approach, starting with how to break the cycle of social injustice, which led to our partnership with the Equal Justice Initiative and the great work that attorney Bryan Stevenson does to help those who have been wrongly incarcerated. Our second step was the intentional partnership with John Hope Bryant and Operation Hope. We felt that one of the critical areas of opportunity was around fiscal literacy, and the Hope Foundation has full-time financial advisors who help our frontline employees and people in our communities with everything from how to improve their credit scores to purchasing a home free of charge.

Our third partnership is with INROADS, an organization dedicated to underrepresented talent that is working with Dollar General to create intentional career pathways for diverse college students by offering



mentoring and internships that lead to potential early career opportunities.

I honestly don't see this effort by organizations slowing down anytime soon. The grassroots movements that we see stoking the flames of change remind me of the importance of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote during the March on Washington on the fierce urgency of now. Organizations today are pressed to continue playing a role in the fight and support of social change that can only come through social justice.

IN: Equity is now taking center stage over diversity and even inclusion. How can an organization best ensure equity?

JB: It's simple. Create a fair and equitable framework for development that outlines how "everybody matters." I am not simply talking about the "hi po's" [high-potential employees]. I am also talking about the "hi pros" [high professionals] and the "pros" already in position as well. You can't have true equity unless you have an approach to developing talent that shows that all talent matters—and development, a learnable skill set, is the key and must be differentiated in its approach, because one size does not fit all.

IN: What brought you to this work? Is there a personal motivation, a story from your childhood or past that inspired you in this direction?

JB: I grew up in the SWATS ... Southwest Atlanta Too Strong! I was blessed to be the son of parents who were civil-rights foot soldiers. My father was Rev. Dr. Noel Battle, a march organizer for Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who sits in the prestigious Morehouse College Preachers' Preacher Ring of Honor. My mother

"Social justice was and continues to be a critical driver to the work we do in the DE&I Center of Excellence at Dollar General. What we didn't want was to be prisoners of the moment, following the path of just writing a check and getting some goodwill out of it."

IN: How do you use data and metrics to measure DEI success?

JB: Everything I do starts with a data-based decision. I want to have both quantitative and qualitative data that allow me to articulate the business case for where we want to go. Without data, I can't speak the language of business-to-business folk, because what gets measured is what gets done, but what gets measured with feedback is what gets done well. So for me, that all begins with a talent-flow analysis where I can see data that shows who was hired for positions across the enterprise in the last five years and at what rate, who exited the enterprise and at what rate, and who was promoted throughout the enterprise and at what rate. My qualitative work must be driven by focus groups that represent every dimension of diversity throughout the enterprise, from our women to our members of the LGBTQIA+ community. From there I can see where the gaps are in the experiences different people are having, and then solution design can take place. **IN**

is Mrs. Martha Hall Battle, and her servant leadership started during the civil rights era, when she was a secretary for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Both my parents were a part of the first F.W. Woolworth lunch-counter sit-ins.

I share this bit of my background not to impress you, but instead to impress upon you that I am standing on the shoulders of giants today. It is the work of all those who have gone before me that drives me to live a life of servant leadership.

IN: Tell us about your greatest success story—and the greatest challenge you are currently facing.

JB: One of my greatest professional success stories is in the work that we are currently doing at Dollar General to build an intentional, inclusive workplace where everyone can feel valued, respected, and supported. The innovation driving how we connect underrepresented people across all three verticals at the director level with senior executives responsible for the development of director-level associates is breaking structural barriers that existed prior to doing that work. The greatest challenge I face is knowing as a seasoned practitioner that everyone will publicly say they are for creating an inclusive workplace. But the reality is that I must privately negotiate paths along the way, and my negotiations look different every day depending upon the leader sitting across from me.



Vanice Hayes

Chief Culture,
Diversity, and
Inclusion Officer,
Dell Technologies

“Leading with empathy is [a] big topic I hope falls out of the ‘trend’ zone and becomes more business as usual.”

Vanice Hayes serves as Dell Technologies’ chief culture, diversity, and inclusion officer, responsible for the company’s global culture, diversity, and inclusion initiatives. In this role, she partners with leaders and employees across the organization to deepen and advance Dell’s culture of inclusion and to build a workforce that better represents the customers the company serves. During her more than 23-year career at Dell, Hayes has held a range of global and regional learning and development and HR leadership roles.

She received her undergraduate degree in mathematics from the University of Texas at Austin, and her master of education administration from Texas State University.

Hayes has always had a desire to help others grow and develop in an inclusive environment and feels fortunate to be able to do so in a corporate setting. Prior to joining Dell, she taught secondary school, equipping her students for success

through math. She also established an after-school program supporting at-risk students. When she's not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband and two daughters, planning family adventures, traveling, and exploring new restaurants.

Inclusion: As offices return to the traditional in-person model, how can organizations best balance the differing needs of their employees while at the same time maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness?

Vanice Hayes: Flexibility is here to stay. Over the past two years, a lot of companies learned how to work remotely, but few learned what it means to be truly flexible. To us, flexibility means having ownership over how and when you work and the space to fulfill the demands of work and life. We've been on this flexible work journey for more than 10 years, so when the pandemic hit, we knew how to work in a way that kept team members feeling supported as we delivered for our customers.

We truly believe the future of work is hybrid. Our sites reopened on March 7, 2022. That said, we've been clear from the very beginning that for roles that can be done remotely, the way you work is a choice—those who want to come into the office can do so, and those who want to work from home can continue to do so as well. To us, work is an outcome, not a place or time.

For that to work, and for this hybrid model to succeed, you really need a workplace culture built on trust and inclusivity. As companies balance their in-person and remote team member base, inclusivity needs to be top of mind, and there needs to be a push to maintain equity in a virtual world. Technology can help bridge that gap in a lot of ways, especially when you think about all of the collaboration tools that have become second nature to how we work—from pervasive use of video conferencing in Zoom to the ease of instant messaging, collaborations, and calls from software like Microsoft Teams. At the end of the day, we want all team members to feel they have an equal seat at the table, no matter where that table is.



IN: What do you think companies should be prioritizing in 2023 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

VH: There needs to be a focus placed on inclusive and empathetic leadership. These past two years have completely changed the way we relate to each other and to ourselves. Leaders need to take the time to understand how their teams are feeling and how their emotional well-being impacts the work they do each day. Our teams are juggling multiple responsibilities—kids, parents, pets, and more. We want to make sure our leaders are tuning in to the person behind the work—not just their work product. We're making it a priority for leaders to check in with their teams to ask how they're really doing and how they're feeling. We are also continuing to encourage true flexibility across our organization so teams feel they have the bandwidth to show up for their job and their home life. This concept of emotional well-being at work is incredibly

important to us at Dell. It's a shift in mindset from what many of us have been programmed with over our careers—but it's an important shift I'm proud to be part of.

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?

VH: I have an insatiable curiosity, and I love trying new things. I would say my willingness to tap into that curiosity and explore new ways to drive change is what brought me here.

I started out as an engineering major, then switched to focusing on mathematics. I received my master's in education administration and became a teacher with the goal of creating positive change among our next generation. Shortly after, I learned about a position at Dell, where I intended to spend a few years in corporate education before returning to the classroom; however, more than 23 years later, I'm still here. People ask me why I've stayed. The truth is, I'm constantly challenged with opportunities that deal with transformation and driving change. In my current role, I feel honored to help cultivate our inclusive culture day in and day out and create a space where all team members feel valued and like they belong.

IN: Tell us about your greatest success story—and the greatest challenge you are currently facing.

VH: My greatest success story professionally is a good example of the success that can come from bringing people together. I was tasked with solving a problem no one could figure out. As I'm a former mathematician, you can imagine how this piqued my interest. I was determined to solve this problem. I spent time talking to people about what was happening, learning from others and ultimately creating a team that collaborated to get the job done. I'm happy to say we solved the problem in record time, and we did so with a process still used today. It was a great lesson in coming together to solve problems for the greater good. In a lot of ways, that's translated into the work I do today.

“Flexibility is here to stay. Over the past two years, a lot of companies learned how to work remotely, but few learned what it means to be truly flexible.”

When it comes to my biggest challenge, in my current role, I'm running a race that does not have a finish line. I know this, and in a lot of ways, I agree with that sentiment because you should always be working to nurture and improve your workplace culture. We have a very high standard for how we work and how we lead here at Dell. We make commitments to our people, our customers, and our partners, and it's important to me that we deliver on those. It's my job to positively influence how we all relate to each other and that we lead with inclusivity in all we do. It's a tall order when we think about how all of us are wired as humans and the biases we hold on to throughout our lives. But it's a job I'm honored to have.

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

VH: The workplace conversation has dramatically shifted over the past few years. The conversation around talent attraction is incredibly important and top of mind for many. We want to attract and retain fantastic, diverse talent, and as an industry, we need to expand our talent pools to do that. One example is focusing on skills and experience when looking at our job requirements. Inside our organization, it's important to focus on supporting the development and growth of our team members and getting them ready for their next role.

Leading with empathy is another big topic I hope falls out of the “trend” zone and becomes more business as usual. We need to make sure we're coaching leaders to drive connection within their teams and truly check in with how they're feeling. We know when teams feel supported, their work also excels.

Ultimately, we want to make sure we're doing our part to keep our team members happy, challenged, and fulfilled at work. We spend so much of our day doing our jobs, and we want to make sure our team members are finding purpose in what they're doing each day. That means creating a supportive culture that embraces differences and inspires you to bring your whole, authentic self to work each day. **IN**

A full-page portrait of Quita Highsmith, a Black woman with short, curly reddish-brown hair. She is sitting on a light-colored sofa, leaning forward with her right leg crossed over her left. She is wearing a white double-breasted blazer with black trim and gold buttons, a black top, and black pinstriped trousers. She is also wearing black pointed-toe pumps with red soles. Her accessories include large gold hoop earrings, a necklace with a small pendant, a ring on her right hand, and a bracelet on her left wrist. The background is a blurred office interior with a staircase and framed pictures.

Quita Highsmith

Vice President and
Chief Diversity Officer,
Genentech

Photography by
Tony Valadez

Quita Highsmith is Genentech's first chief diversity officer in the 46-year history of the company, reporting directly to the CEO. She is responsible for enterprise-wide strategic initiatives that drive business impact by investing in commercial efforts, stakeholder engagement, research innovation, and community relations.

Highsmith brings to Genentech deep experience in brand marketing and business development as well as a global leadership perspective. Prior to becoming the CDO, she held leadership roles in commercial and government affairs at several companies (Genentech, Sanofi, Aventis), where she increased revenues. Recognizing the need to diversify clinical research, she cofounded Advancing Inclusive Research®, an initiative to address barriers to clinical research participation for underrepresented groups.

Highsmith has coauthored several articles on health disparities in peer-reviewed journals. In 2022, she was chosen by *Savoy* magazine as one of the Most Influential Black Executives in Corporate America and by LEAD 360 as Executive of the Year. In 2021, she was named the Inspire Award Winner by the *San Francisco Business Times* and selected as a Top 15 Champion by *Diversity Global* magazine. She is routinely asked to speak at national and international forums and to give media interviews with both large and small outlets, such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Stat*, the *Atlantic*, Katie Couric Media, and *HuffPost*.

Highsmith has committed to community service by working with nonprofit boards such as the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Delta San Francisco-Peninsula Foundation, Leadership Council San Mateo County, and the Genentech Patient Foundation.

Highsmith earned an MBA and an advanced diversity and inclusion certificate from Cornell University and an undergraduate degree from the University of Kentucky.

Inclusion: As offices return to the traditional in-person model, how can organizations best balance the differing needs of employees while at the same time maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness?

“One area critical for organizations to prioritize in 2023 is to make certain that artificial intelligence [AI] is more inclusive and equitable. For the biotech sector, robust and powerful AI enables our ability to provide better health care, but potential for bias can worsen health disparities.”

Quita Highsmith: Throughout the pandemic and as employees have adjusted to being back on campus, Genentech has leaned into creating an inclusive, supportive environment. To ensure that employees' well-being is front and center, we've provided a comprehensive suite of mental health benefits and resources during this transition.

We also implemented our Future of Working initiative—an approach driven by each function and department of the company according to the unique needs of their teams. We adopted this hybrid work model because we want our employees to have flexibility in when, where, and how they choose to work, but we also believe that our campuses are vital to the work we do for patients and our ability to maintain our collaborative, innovative culture. We believe that offering flexible work options will help us attract a more diverse pool of candidates and, ultimately, build a more diverse workforce.

IN: What do you think companies should be prioritizing in 2023 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

QH: One area critical for organizations to prioritize in 2023 is to make certain that artificial intelligence [AI] is more inclusive and equitable. For the biotech sector, robust and powerful AI enables our ability to provide better health care, but potential for bias can worsen health disparities. For AI to be more inclusive and equitable, the people making the programs need to be representative, and the data must be representative of the communities that are impacted. As we continue to use AI to rely on data for personalized health care, and as the use of technology continues to grow, the need for more representative data increases. We need to build trust and engage underrepresented patient populations in our health care system to inform and improve the AI algorithms that will be making many of our future health care treatment decisions.

IN: In 2021, many companies began to put more energy and priority on belonging, equity, and, in some cases, the support of social change and social justice in the community. What are some of the changes you have witnessed, and do you see that energy continuing?

QH: The pandemic created a new normal for the future of working, where the lines between our personal and professional lives are blurred. We can't expect employees to leave their individual experiences and

societal challenges at the virtual office door, whether working from home or returning to the office. At Genentech, we've seen that our employees want us to take action and speak up on these societal wrongs, and as leaders, this is the moment for us to have tough, important conversations internally and ensure that all employees feel included and supported.

In 2020, we created an event series called Dialogue Circles, which gives employees a safe space to share their feelings about the social injustices and other issues happening across our country. Some of our most attended events were centered on addressing employees' feelings on the murder of George Floyd, coping during the global pandemic, and the increase of Asian American Pacific Islander hate across the nation.

We also encourage our employees to join our Diversity Network Association [DNA] Groups, which are an integral part of our culture, providing support to our employees and serving as a vital connection between our employees and leadership. Our 14 DNA Groups include Genentech Women Professionals, African Americans in Biotechnology, VIDA [supporting Hispanic/Latinx culture], Genentech Native Americans [gNA], and gPRIDE.

IN: Paid compensation has been very unbalanced. What is your organization doing to rectify this, and what are some hopeful signs and trends you are seeing?

QH: Over the last decade, we've applied a multipronged, long-term diversity and inclusion strategy, and we are proud of our ongoing commitment to pay parity. We've successfully maintained pay parity across Genentech, with no effective pay difference between women and men, or between people of color and white employees.

IN: Has Genentech made a commitment to sharing DEI data, and what has been the impact of that?

QH: We believe that embracing the increasingly diverse world around us is integral to our business strategy. Last year, we announced our 2025 D&I Commitments, centered around three core pillars: fostering belonging, advancing inclusive research and health equity, and transforming

"We are proud of our ongoing commitment to pay parity. We've successfully maintained pay parity across Genentech, with no effective pay difference between women and men, or between people of color and white employees."

society. We also launched our inaugural D&I Annual Report, as a road map for us to bring this mission to life, and we have shared our employee demographic data both internally and externally in the spirit of transparency and accountability. Our 2025 D&I Commitments are intended to create impact for our employees, all patients, and society at large. At Genentech, we believe that we have to be transparent, intentional, and bold in our efforts to make change.

In support of our 2025 D&I Commitments, we launched the Genentech Officer D&I Action Plans to allow our leaders the opportunity to transparently detail the measurable steps they are taking to embed diversity and inclusion strategies and behaviors into their day-to-day work and responsibilities. Nearly 100 percent of Genentech's officers completed D&I Action Plans, which are accessible by any employee on our intranet to ensure transparency and accountability, and we encourage employees to follow up with officers and ask questions.

To view our latest D&I Annual Report, visit gene.com/stories/our-commitment-to-diversity-inclusion.

IN: How is Genentech supporting gender identity and expression in the workplace?

QH: We are committed to creating an inclusive working environment and to celebrating all employee identities and everything that makes them unique. Last year, in support of gender identity and expression, we developed a Gender Identity & Pronoun Usage Guide. The guide was developed for people at Genentech to better understand key concepts about gender pronoun usage; to make pronouns part of our day-to-day language; to give employees learning tools to build more inclusive work environments; and to provide a resource to support gender nonconforming individuals.

We've also expanded our voluntary self-identification options for employees to include gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, military service, sexual orientation, allyship, disability, and veteran status.

IN: What do you foresee in the future and how can we get there?

QH: We still have to double down, we still have to stay focused, we still have to be intentional, and we still have to be bold in order to ensure that we are going to get to the finish line. All of us are responsible for creating an inclusive culture and have to be aware of the barriers to advancement faced by employees of color and faced by patients of color, so our work is not done. I am pleased to say that we have taken some steps forward, but we still have a long way to go. **IN**



Charlene Jackson

Global Chief Diversity,
Equity, and Inclusion
Officer, **Iron Mountain**

Charlene Jackson has a career track record of leading cultural transformation, developing and implementing impactful diversity and inclusion strategies, managing change in complex organizations, translating strategic vision into tactical implementation, and driving operational excellence. Prior to her work at Iron Mountain, she was a member of the executive management team of Girls Inc., a nonprofit organization that inspires all girls to be “Strong, Smart, and Bold” through direct service and advocacy.

Jackson’s position at Girls Inc. followed a stellar corporate and entrepreneurial career. She has held executive positions in the financial services, energy, and real estate services industries. She joined Enron as a managing director after spending nine years with Salomon Brothers, where she reported to the chairman/CEO. At Salomon, she became the firm’s first African American female managing director.

Jackson received a joint BA from Claremont McKenna College and an MBA from the Drucker School of Management at Claremont Graduate University. She received her JD from Harvard Law School.



The Iron Mountain Singapore team during International Women's Day embracing the 2022 theme #BreakTheBias.

Inclusion: What do you think companies should be prioritizing in 2023 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

Charlene Jackson: Culture transformation! Every company has a culture. The question is whether the culture is one where all employees have a lived experience of inclusivity and belonging. Many companies have attempted to increase the representation of underrepresented groups by holding great events, encouraging and funding employee and/or business resource groups of all types, engaging in diversity training, and supporting special occasions such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Black History Month, Pride Month, and Women's History Month, among others. All of these endeavors are good because they bring awareness; however, it does not appear that they lead to sustained change. Almost all organizations are still trying to figure out how to increase the representation of underrepresented groups, especially in the leadership ranks.

The issue in part is that transforming a culture is not easy and it does not happen quickly. Leaders must be willing to engage in the bold, courageous, difficult work necessary to create belonging, where the words said are matched by a universal sense of belonging—where people feel their contributions are valued and their voices are heard—and all employees have the opportunity to achieve their goals and meet the needs of customers.

It is a holistic approach to DEI. Real culture transformation requires the company be willing to fundamentally shift the way things are done by utilizing the appropriate metrics; auditing the systems, policies, processes, and practices to ensure they don't negatively impact inclusivity;

"If the goal is the attraction, advancement, and retention of underrepresented groups, there must be a focus on creating a culture that genuinely embraces belonging."

and creating a culture of accountability with consequences—from the board to the executive team to each and every employee.

IN: What brought you to this work and what is your greatest success story?

CJ: I began my career as an investment banker in the early 1990s, covering the domestic electric and gas utility industry. At that time there were some women but even fewer people of color—as you can imagine, very few women of color. I have never been hesitant about speaking up or trying to right a wrong. It just didn't make sense to me that there were so few people of color in the profession given the numbers graduating from top business and law schools that were the pipelines for these positions. After about five years, I approached our CEO with my mentor, Milton Irvin, to discuss the issue and offer some

recommendations. At the time it was not my intent to engage in the work but to raise awareness. The CEO responded a few weeks later and essentially indicated that he was in agreement and wanted me to lead the effort. After some negotiation, I agreed and began reporting directly to him.

His rationale was that I had grown up in the firm, was well known, had been a revenue generator, and would have the respect of the business leaders. Although I reported to the CEO, I met weekly with the firm's operating committee, which I had enlisted to oversee the initiative. It was during this period that I realized increasing the numbers was important, but more important was creating a culture where people were valued and actually wanted to remain. It became clear that if we were really serious about solving these issues, we needed to commit to the difficult work of changing the environment. With that idea as a backdrop, we engaged a cultural anthropologist from NYU who reviewed everything ever written about the firm from the day it began in 1910. The anthropologist was able to help us understand how the culture of the organization evolved—how it had adopted its values, its norms, its formal and informal road maps for survival, and how that showed up in current times.

We also hired a diversity consultant, but more importantly we hired a change management consultant—not a typical consulting firm but a Fortune 500 business that had a consulting arm, which at that time and still today has a good reputation in the diversity world. That firm was Xerox. So, with the help of Xerox, we were willing and able to make the heavy lift. Focusing on culture transformation and holding leaders accountable are critical to increasing representation. Suffice it to say, it is extremely satisfying that over 20 years later, McKinsey in its 2021 study of women in the workplace concluded that “the path forward is clear...companies need to do the deep cultural work required to create a workplace where all women feel valued.” For “women,” we can substitute any other identities that are underrepresented.

IN: In 2021, many companies began to put more energy and priority on belonging, equity, and, in some cases, the support of social change and social justice in the community. What are some of the changes you have witnessed, and do you see that energy continuing?

CJ: Since the murder of George Floyd, companies have definitely put more energy and priority on belonging, equity, and supporting social change and social justice. Firms are making very public commitments, writing large checks, and hiring chief diversity officers. However, if the goal is the attraction, advancement, and retention of underrepresented groups, there must be a focus on creating a culture that genuinely embraces belonging. In light of the pandemic and the Great Resignation, companies must be intentional



Above: Charlene Jackson (left) with Carla Harris, keynote speaker, and Edward Greene, Iron Mountain chief human resources officer, at Iron Mountain's live-streamed Global Diversity Summit in Boston, Massachusetts, in November 2021. Below: Charlene Jackson and Ted MacLean, executive vice president and general manager, Crozier Fine Arts.

ability—will garner surprising results. As a DEI leader, data is your friend and will tell the story much better than words.

IN: Has Iron Mountain made a commitment to sharing DEI data, and what has been the impact of that?

CJ: Every year, our company publishes the Corporate Responsibility Report, in which we voluntarily share our DEI data, goals, and progress as they relate to our environmental, social, and governance practices. I have been with the company a little over a year and plan to produce a separate DEI Annual Report in the near future. I believe transparency is key to progress—building trust with employees, customers, and other stakeholders—and it only helps us improve what we do when we're willing to look in the mirror and positively and proactively address what we see.

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

CJ: There's no doubt that COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way we work, and it's changed the way we think about work and engagement. I think for DEI, the pandemic has pushed us to explore new educational channels for training, ways that include a global audience and are still engaging. You have to find the right recipe for creating accessibility and engagement through active dialogue. It's hard to totally replace the in-person setting and interactions, but COVID has certainly given us the opportunity to make DEI training and conversations available to everyone through virtual means. **IN**

in their efforts to establish an environment where employees want to stay because their contributions are valued. Although we are beginning to see a focus on equity, it is a more complex concept, and is often confused with, equality. Equity attempts to achieve fairness in outcomes by focusing on specific needs of an individual and/or group, whereas equality attempts to ensure everyone is treated the same.

IN: How do you use data and metrics to measure DEI success?

CJ: I am absolutely passionate about data. I know that doesn't sound very exciting, but to me, it's the key to building a truly equitable workplace. I manage by facts, and accurate data is the facts. I believe an organization must disaggregate their data and granularly look at representation in departments, teams, sites, regions, and business units. It's simply not enough to summarize the percentage of BIPOC individuals in your US-based business. That doesn't tell you the representation of all races, gender identities, and abilities. As I mentioned previously, utilizing the appropriate metrics—combined with the results from auditing your systems, policies, processes, and practices and creating a culture of account-

Wendy E. John

Head of Global
Diversity and Inclusion

Fidelity
Investments



“To be effective, organizations must create leadership capacity for the social, emotional, and professional experiences employees need to thrive.”

Wendy E. John is the head of Global Diversity and Inclusion at Fidelity Investments. In this role, she leads and executes an enterprise-wide strategy to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace—one that will deliver the best outcomes for the firm’s 65,000-plus associates, its customers, and the communities Fidelity serves. During her 25-year tenure, John has held multiple client-facing senior leadership roles of increasing responsibility. Prior to her current capacity, she served as the chief administrative officer of Fidelity Charitable, where she advanced programming to make philanthropic giving more accessible, simple, and effective. She has a bachelor’s degree in mathematics with a double major in actuarial science and economics from the University of Waterloo, and a master’s degree in investment management from the Questrom School of Business at Boston University.

Inclusion: As some offices are returning to the traditional in-person model, how can organizations best balance the differing needs of employees while at the same time maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness?

Wendy John: Thousands have switched roles or companies in recent years, while some have never been to their employer’s work site. These employees have a limited frame of reference for their company’s culture; Zoom might be what helps them recall someone’s name; and they might have found ways to “mask” visible and invisible differences through virtual work. So, as many transition back to in-person or hybrid work settings, we remain focused on the associate experience at Fidelity Investments. This includes an emphasis on emotional intelligence and allyship for all our associates. Being able to read the room—in person or virtually—and understand how your colleagues experience the space you share are important. And allyship is about actively and intentionally building trusting relationships

to grow confidence in, and protect the interests of, underrepresented or otherwise marginalized peers. To be effective, organizations must create leadership capacity for the social, emotional, and professional experiences employees need to thrive. Our employee resource and special interest groups have been integral to deepening a sense of inclusion across the firm, while our Allies Connection group—created by a team of senior leaders across the enterprise—help equip people managers with information about microaggressions, unconscious bias, and more. The goal is to facilitate constructive dialogue and drive positive behavioral change to improve the associate experience over time. That starts with tangible, authentic support for those within and outside an individual's sphere of influence.

IN: What do you think companies should be prioritizing in 2023 that has not been given enough attention in recent years?

WJ: Neurodivergence. In recent years, companies have focused on hiring practices to improve workforce representation among historically measured diversity categories: gender, race, and ethnicity. These programs remain critical; however, inclusion is not just about onboarding new team members with diverse skills and lived experiences. We have to go beyond what we can see and readily understand to engage those who may think and work differently than we do. And that means ensuring our leaders, recruiters, and customer-facing employees know how neurodivergence can impact interactions and how unconscious bias comes into play.

Organizations must consider how they react to and show support in the workplace, whatever the nature of the neurocognitive condition. Many neurotypical behaviors that were once considered “normal”—like making eye contact, shaking a person's hand, or using colloquialisms—don't consider that some conditions make it difficult to endure eye contact and physical touch or pick up on social cues. And the presence of those conditions or behaviors should never diminish the perceived value of what a person can



“The pandemic helped employers understand how mental health issues and associated stigmas can significantly affect the employee experience. And there's opportunity for companies to give neurodiversity the same support and attention.”

bring to your organization. The pandemic helped employers understand how mental health issues and associated stigmas can significantly affect the employee experience. And there's opportunity for companies to give neurodiversity the same support and attention. It starts with education and awareness. We then need to formalize the tools, resources, and programs that help job candidates, employees, and customers enjoy equitable experiences and opportunities.

IN: What brought you to this work? Is there a personal motivation, a story from your childhood or past that inspired you in this direction?

WJ: I would say diversity and inclusion work found me through different experiences over the years. I've always considered myself a social scientist, and growing up in Trinidad and Tobago, I had a natural appreciation for all kinds of music [and] cultural and religious experiences. My parents also cultivated my curiosity by encouraging me to never stop learning, exploring, and doing everything possible to improve the situations I encountered by giving my very best. So, when I was given the opportunity to lead the Fidelity Investments Global Diversity and Inclusion office in mid-2020, I accepted the role out of a desire to help the firm create meaningful, authentic experiences for our associates, customers, and communities. I personally understand how important it is to feel safe and comfortable in the workplace and have worked hard over the years to create inclusive and relatable spaces for myself and those around me.

IN: Tell us about your greatest success story—and the greatest challenge you are currently facing.

WJ: I'm most proud of releasing Fidelity Investments' first *Diversity & Inclusion Report* in 2021. It was something we chose to do—for our associates, customers, and clients. Sharing our commitments, workforce representation metrics, and the programs, training, and processes we've established to strengthen our culture of inclusion was a way to thoughtfully demonstrate transparency and accountability. In doing so, we humbly initiated conversation about our areas of opportunity and established a baseline to track our progress. It was also an opportunity to relaunch our multiyear strategy and action plan. Our efforts are part of a journey, not a destination. Being transparent and accountable to those we serve helps ensure our good intentions



are paired with actions to drive successful outcomes. As I enter the third year of issuing our now annual report, I'm encouraged by our year-over-year improvement and the evolution of our thinking. And I hope, more than anything, that our desire to anticipate, react, and respond to the needs of our associates and customers continues to power progress in a meaningful and authentic way.

IN: What is the greatest challenge for DEI leaders?


WJ: Holding the line on inclusion. Building a diverse and inclusive culture is a marathon, not a sprint. Having the endurance to maintain focus, despite the emotionally and socially charged work, can take its toll. But to prevent that from happening, you must pause often and remember your why. We are working to create a better future than the one we inherited, and nothing worth having comes without effort, intentionality, peaks, and valleys. What has remained true for me is that elevating diverse perspectives helps create the best outcomes. While

I'm lucky to have "diversity" and "inclusion" in my current job title, progress will be driven by all of us, collectively. Progress isn't just about aligning success with who or what you agree with. Progress is about learning to listen to and respect perspectives you don't agree with to find a common motivation for beneficial change. An inclusive culture isn't about finding "the right way." It's learning to sit in a paradox that allows multiple, opposing perspectives to coexist, with mutual respect and a common desire to achieve a shared outcome that—at times—extends beyond your own self-interests.

IN: What will be some of the most pressing issues and challenges in the coming years for corporate diversity and inclusion leaders like yourself?

WJ: For as much perceived progress as the diversity and inclusion community has made in recent years, there's still an incredible amount of work left to do. We've become very reactive. And we're grappling with both the shifting nature of our work and the ever-expanding role we are asked to play. A peer recently referred to us as becoming the "conscience" of our organizations. Whew! That's a heavy weight to carry.

Diversity and inclusion require understanding, transparency, clear commitments, and alignment across several parties. When working to achieve the best for all, we sometimes stumble and miss the mark. Everyone won't be happy with our decisions, though we might start with that end in mind. So, as owed to my younger, curious self, I encourage my colleagues to listen, reflect, pause, and then act. The more we listen and learn before endeavoring to ally through action, the more our intentions align with the desired outcome. Learning and thinking about who we ally for requires a kind of awareness that never truly ends. Though it may seem exhausting, child-like curiosity puts you in a perpetually humble but always eager space. Let's be okay with that thoughtful pause. Slow down and ask, "What don't I know? Who have I not heard from? Who has a different lived experience than me? Who can help me better understand this situation?" Then, follow that path. It opens the aperture to expand what inclusion really means. **IN**

A professional portrait of Dawn Jones, a woman with long dark hair, smiling and wearing a black blazer over a white ruffled top. She has her arms crossed and is wearing large gold earrings and a ring. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

Dawn Jones

Chief Diversity and
Inclusion Officer and
Vice President of
Social Impact,
Intel Corporation

Dawn Jones is Intel Corporation's chief diversity and inclusion officer (CDIO) and vice president of social impact. In this role, she leads the company's global diversity and inclusion (D&I) strategy, the Intel Foundation, and the company's social policy work. In addition, she oversees Intel's investments and programs for positive global impact, including convening industry partners to create a more inclusive, equitable, and responsible workplace and society.

Jones's philosophy that leadership is driven from any seat has propelled her 24-year career at Intel from administrative assistant to public affairs manager of community and education investments to CDIO. Most recently, Jones was global director of policy, strategy, and partnerships, responsible for Intel's D&I policy, strategy, communications, external alliances, and stakeholder engagement.

She earned a bachelor of arts in broadcast journalism from Arizona State University and a master of science in communications management from Syracuse University.

Inclusion: As offices return to the traditional in-person model, how can organizations best balance the differing needs of their employees while at the same time maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness?

Dawn Jones: The pandemic offered an opportunity to reimagine how we work and collaborate. In an April 2021 survey, 90 percent of our employees shared that they preferred a hybrid workplace when offices reopen, which is what we announced as our "hybrid-first" approach in November 2021. We also recognize the need to ensure that hybrid and remote working models are inclusive and support everyone long term, no matter what role they are in or where they are located around the world.

We are encouraging employees and their managers to partner together to determine the work location and model that drives the best results for their type of role. This might mean working from home to focus on a priority project or working on-site in our enhanced

"Combating issues such as the deep digital divide and gaps in women's and underrepresented minority leadership, and ensuring equity for all, requires collective action."

collaboration spaces. Remote collaboration has been critical during the pandemic, but I think we also have renewed appreciation for the power of face-to-face collaboration.

One way that our employees will continue to connect and feel included is through our more than 45 employee resource groups [ERGs] and leadership councils globally. At Intel, more than 33,000 employees are members of an ERG, which range from our American Veterans at Intel to the Women at Intel Network. ERGs are a key element of our inclusive culture, as they help build camaraderie, foster a sense of belonging, and provide personal and career development support for employees. It is more important than ever to listen to our employees to understand their needs and create a culture where everyone is motivated to bring their full self to work in a respectful and inclusive environment.

IN: In 2021 many companies began to put more energy and prioritization on belonging, equity, and, in some cases, supporting social change and social justice in the community. What are some of the changes you have witnessed internally, and do you see that energy continuing?

DJ: Intel has a rich history of combining the power of our technology and global scale with the expertise and passion of our people to create a more inclusive and responsible workplace, industry, and world.

But 2021 was transformative. The pandemic put a spotlight on the structural inequities that were further magnified by social unrest around the world. It caused us to think differently about the challenges we face as an industry, society, and global community.

As part of that effort, Intel has both expanded existing inclusion programs and launched new ones. Since its launch in 2016, our confidential employee service, the Warmline, has provided employees with support from advisors to work through personal and professional roadblocks and explore different options before they consider departing the company. Eighty-seven percent of employees who used the service in 2020 have stayed at Intel, and 91 percent would recommend it to others.

Intel is also a founding member of a new industry coalition, the Alliance for Global Inclusion, which is focused on creating industry solutions that drive meaningful change in four critical areas: leadership representation, inclusive language, inclusive product development, and STEM readiness in underserved communities. We believe that shared responsibility and collective impact can drive better outcomes in DEI.

New this year, we delivered an inclusion survey to accompany our annual employee experience survey, which goes deeper into understanding employees' pain points and how we can create solutions that bring about tighter inclusion and belonging across the enterprise.

IN: And what about any external changes that positively impact communities around the world?

DJ: Creating more diversity, equity, and inclusion goes beyond our four walls, and we are working to use the power of our technology, our scale, and the talents of our people to accelerate progress in creating a positive social impact globally. Combating issues such as the deep digital divide and gaps in women's and underrepresented minority leadership, and ensuring equity for all, requires collective action. That's why we convene industry partners and work with governments, academia, and nonprofit organizations to accelerate inclusion and access to STEM education and resources in our communities. It's not just because it's the right thing to do; diversity and inclusion accelerate business success.

As a world-leading semiconductor manufacturer, we also recognize our shared responsibility to combat the systemic and structural inequities impacting our employees and communities. Social equity is part of our 2030 RISE strategy and an extension of our Global Human Rights Principles. As part of our social equity commitment, Intel is supporting a range of organizations that are advancing anti-racism and social equity work in communities around the world, one of which is XPRIZE. Together, we recently launched the Racial Equity Alliance to inspire innovation for equity and justice to dismantle structural inequity, especially as it relates to the Black community.

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?

DJ: I was the product of a single-parent home, so my brother and I had to become self-reliant early in life, just like so many kids of my generation. I watched my mother work really hard to provide for us. It taught me self-sufficiency, which is critical

"My mom instilled in me what it means to lead from any seat. So any room I'm in, I have a voice and I use it."

for my role at Intel. You need to be able to assess the situation and make a call. My mother's hard work stuck with me, as she was always focused on doing the best job she could do.

I started at Intel in 1997 as an administrative assistant. I was a single mom. I was working full time and had gone back to school full-time. So, from a society standpoint, I had a lot of statistics, if you will, against me: single parent, Black woman, and woman. But after deciding to go back to school, I earned my bachelor's degree and then my master's degree, all while continuing at Intel.

My mom instilled in me what it means to lead from any seat. So any room I'm in, I have a voice and I use it. That philosophy is what propelled me from administrative assistant to public affairs manager of community and education investments to chief diversity and inclusion officer and vice president of social impact. I have used my voice from every seat I've held during my amazing 24-year career at Intel. This is why diversity and inclusion are so important. When we talk about diversity, we're really talking about representation, access, and opportunity. At Intel we want a workforce that is reflective of our employees and the communities in which we operate, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender. We are

looking for top talent. We are driving a culture that is focused on inclusion, creating a psychologically safe environment grounded in respect where all voices can come to the table.

IN: What will be some of the most pressing issues and challenges in the coming years for a corporate diversity and inclusion leader like yourself?

DJ: Talent is a competitive advantage, yet increasingly we are competing for talent in a dynamic market where people choose to work in environments that not only provide opportunity for growth but allow for the opportunity to make an impact on the business and the world. And that's exciting. We realize attracting and retaining the right talent doesn't happen organically; we have to create the culture where people want to work.

As we continue to grow and expand our business, refining our employee value propositions will be critical as one size doesn't fit all. We also have to ensure we have a robust workforce that is representative of the available talent and reflective of our employees and communities. This means we need to drive meaningful change in areas where we have persistent gaps, such as women and underrepresented minority leaders. Continuing to push the boundaries of traditional HR practices will be key. **IN**



Dr. Sharoni Little

Head, Global Inclusion Strategy, Creative Artists Agency

Dr. Sharoni Little has helped to establish Creative Artists Agency's (CAA) efforts to ensure inclusive business practices in a welcoming culture, where all employees are valued and respected, have an authentic sense of belonging, and are empowered to thrive personally and professionally. Dr. Little, who previously served as vice dean and senior diversity, equity, and inclusion officer and professor at the University of Southern California's Marshall School of Business, is an author, scholar, and media commentator with expertise on strategic leadership, race and identity, and global inclusion. She is completing her forthcoming book, *The Perpetual Surveillance of Black Men* (2023); has written various articles and book chapters, including work on Michelle Obama and racialized educational disparities; and has given two TEDx talks. Dr. Little earned her PhD from Indiana University, an EdD from the University of Southern California, and bachelor and master of arts degrees from California State University, Los Angeles. While she values her community and organizational efforts, her most cherished blessing is being the proud mother of her twin sons.

Inclusion: 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?

Sharoni Little: My interest in, and then immersion into, diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and antiracism has always been centered in both my personal and

“We must model a sustainable strategy, honoring humanity, that allows for empathy and grace, which I contend gives you even more opportunities and relational currency to have tough and honest conversations based on truth versus fear.”

professional lives. Having grown up in Compton, California—where I still reside—I was acutely aware of a negotiated and constructed narrative of place, and the underlying influence of identity—whether “race,” ethnicity, gender identity, religion, or disability, to name a few—in shaping one’s perception and reality.

I saw how stories about people, place, and class were discussed, basing one’s value and subsequent opportunities upon perceived similarities, or more notably, their differences.

After proudly being accepted to the University of Southern California at age 16—straight outta’ Compton—I learned one of the formative lessons that has remained a core pillar of my work. Being smart, kind, and curious would not alone allow me to pursue my goals and dream unabated. There were systems in place that would often serve as literal and figurative obstacle courses designed to halt all progress. While I persevered, due to my faith and my “village,” the “resiliency” I fostered came at a great cost

for myself and many others who often have to navigate spaces and places designed to question your brilliance, contribution, and resolve.

After three years at USC, with a grade point average well below 2.0, I transferred to California State University, Los Angeles, the perceived less reputable “state school” across town, where my love of learning, coupled with a welcoming and affirming environment surrounded by “mirrors” of so many aspects of myself, my community, propelled me toward the plan that was preordained for me. The university nurtured my peer relationships and the roots of research and inquiry, as I became a peer-tutor and interrogated reifying “empirical” conclusions that justified deficit narratives of Black, Latin, Asian, and Indigenous professionals in the workplace. I also earned my master’s degree in organizational communication and strategy at the university. I then joined the faculty in Arizona State University’s Human Services Department. I next went to Indiana University to pursue my PhD. In 1999, I began teaching at USC.

IN: What did you learn teaching?

SL: This experience, personally, professionally, and intellectually, solidified my life’s work of being committed to examining and confronting the mechanism and perpetuation of hatred and marginalization in stories and narratives. While teaching myriad business and organizational communication/leadership courses, one of my classes partnered with local firms to provide pro bono assessment and recommendations. Often, the companies would

self-diagnose a series of possible organizational challenges, but after evaluation, concerns around organizational change, leadership development, and succession would emerge. The common thread was, at core, the lack of knowledge, tools, and skills to effectively acknowledge, leverage, and value the various identities coexisting in the workplace.

Two additional stages of my personal, academic, and professional journey solidified my expertise and engagement in this work—pursuing my PhD and becoming a professor at the same institution I left as a student nearly twenty years prior. After teaching at ASU for two years, I decided to pursue my PhD to study rhetoric and law, as much of my organizational research used a rhetorical lens, examining how language, argument, and narratives seek to construct and/or deconstruct competing notions of reality or value.

My PhD cohort at Indiana, which, by the way, was the top-rated school in the field of rhetoric, consisted of 14 white males, 2 white females, and myself. At the time, I didn’t know that I was the first Black woman admitted to the program in the prior ten years, but what I did know was I wasn’t the only smart Black woman who had applied, so there was certainly some explaining to do. Over these four years, my research and analytical foundation shaping my understanding and strategy related to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and antiracism was heightened, as I began to connect the proverbial dots of intentional racism, inequities, disparities, and power/privilege preservation.

IN: What are some of the truths you learned in your professional career that you would like to highlight?

SL: When engaging in this work for the long-term, with the hopes of systemic versus cursory change, we must avoid the tendency of what I call the “throwing gas syndrome,” where one might feel that the only way to garner a company’s attention and bring about change is by burning down the house, shaming and alienating existing leaders, and intimating that the only path forward is total demolition. Now let me be clear. There are some serious situations that require massive

change, interventions, and overhauls, but even in those situations, we must model a sustainable strategy, honoring humanity, that allows for empathy and grace, which I contend give you even more opportunities and relational currency to have tough and honest conversations based on truth versus fear.

IN: Given CAA's centrality and clout in the entertainment industry, how can it help diversify the talent in front of and behind the camera? Is CAA making a shift from a focus on diversity and inclusion to diversity, equity, and inclusion? If so, how are you shifting thinking, resources, desired outcomes?

SL: As a global entertainment leader and business representatives of those who influence popular culture, CAA recognizes the vital importance and responsibility of fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and antiracism [DEIA] in our culture and all aspects of our business in service of one another, our clients, and the broader community.

CAA recognizes that DEIA is foundational to our culture and business to serve and reflect our diverse and global clients and marketplace. Some of our specific efforts to address the dearth of opportunities for Black, Latin and Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, and Indigenous creatives and talent throughout the sports and entertainment industry include CAA Amplify, launched in 2017, which connects prominent thought leaders and changemakers of color and leverages their collective influence to unleash transformational cultural and business change.

In 2020, CAA created a Cultural Business Strategy team to focus on strengthening creative and business growth opportunities for the agency's diverse clients. The group oversees and implements a range of efforts across the agency, including a slate of custom talent development programs, corporate partnerships and collaborations, data and research capabilities, and cultural consulting across narrative, marketing, and corporate projects.

CAA is the founding partner of the Full Story Initiative, established in 2020, an entertainment industry-facing effort incubated by the CAA Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Creative

"We don't have to wring our proverbial hands to wonder why entrenched patterns of overrepresentation and underrepresentation are pervasive in many aspects of our societal structure. Will and intentionality will assist us in transforming this collective work."

Artists Agency, designed to generate more authentic, inclusive, and equitable storytelling in television and film.

In November 2021, CAA signed on as contributing member to Diversify The Stage's Inclusion Initiative, pledging to help strengthen the industry's inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility practices by creating a strong pipeline of professionals from historically excluded and/or underrepresented groups and increasing the experience, diversity, and strength of the talent pool within this sector of the industry.

More than a decade ago, CAA began actively recruiting at top-tier colleges and universities, historically black colleges (HBCUs), colleges with high Latino populations, and women's colleges, with a focus on providing access to opportunity, ensuring diversity of thought/perspective across our business. These efforts have resulted in a significant change in the pipeline of young staff hired by CAA, as well as those whose internships translate into jobs across the industry.

IN: In 2021, many companies began to put more energy and prioritization on belonging, equity, and, in some cases, supporting social change and social justice in the community. What are some of the changes you have witnessed, and do you see that energy continuing?

SL: In the immediate aftermath of the murder of George Floyd, many companies reactively established roles and initiatives aimed at addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and antiracism, in many cases in "good faith." While 2020 saw a more intentional focus on the historical marginalization and dehumanization fueled by generations of racism and many other "isms," in the United States and globally, these issues are not new. Studies have shown that prior to 2020, major corporations spent billions of dollars each year on initiatives such as unconscious bias training and targeted hiring initiatives to achieve inclusion and equity with little or no change.

I contend that the ebb and flow of episodic attention to these issues is emblematic of a much simpler yet troubling explanation of the persistence of racism and the dearth of diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace environments across industries. There is an intentional use of power to reify and maintain systemic control. Companies and cultures do not create and/or perpetuate themselves—human beings are responsible. We don't have to wring our proverbial hands to wonder why entrenched patterns of overrepresentation and underrepresentation are pervasive in many aspects of our societal structure. Will and intentionality will assist us in transforming this collective work. **IN**



Nichole Barnes Marshall

Global Head of
Inclusion and Diversity,
Pinterest

Nichole Barnes Marshall is the global head of Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) at Pinterest. In this role, she leads Pinterest's I&D team and strategy, integrates I&D principles into the company's people and business processes, and serves as a key partner to Bill Ready, CEO at Pinterest. Barnes Marshall joined Pinterest in January 2022 after serving as the chief diversity, equity, and inclusion officer at Bath & Body Works, where she was responsible for leading the cultural transformation

of the brand through the integration of DEI programs and efforts across the company.

Barnes Marshall has more than 20 years of experience in DEI and recruitment at such iconic brands as L Brands, Aon, and IBM, and remains active in the community on issues including social justice, educational access, and economic opportunity. She also serves on the boards of the Columbus Urban League, African American Leadership Academy, OIC of America, and United Way of Central Ohio.

“One of the biggest opportunities I’m focused on right now is broadening the awareness of DEI as a shared responsibility to build trust, credibility, and connectivity.”

Inclusion: Equity is now taking center stage over diversity and even inclusion. How can an organization best ensure equity?

Nichole Barnes Marshall: I see diversity, equity, and inclusion as interrelated and interdependent. Equity and inclusion without diversity [are] an echo chamber of homogeneity; diversity and equity without inclusion will not yield the mix of people or fairness to make it a reality; and you can’t have equity without diversity and inclusion because you won’t have the culture for fairness to thrive. So organizations must focus on how each of these areas supports one another and work to foster an overall sense of belonging by encouraging behaviors that create a welcoming environment for everyone.

Additionally, equity often gets confused with equality. Many only focus on equality because it emphasizes sameness. I’ve heard many managers say, “I treat everyone the same; I don’t give preferential treatment.” While this is a noble effort, it only gives an illusion of meritocracy. The reality is that people have unique experiences and needs that may put them at different starting points. Equity is what allows organizations to recognize these gaps and differences, to ensure the processes they have in place are fair, and gives everyone access to the same opportunities. No one should miss out on getting the apple on the tree because they are not tall enough or don’t have the support to reach it. Equality and equity should work hand in hand.

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?

NBM: As a child and native of Chicago, I looked up to Harold Washington, the first Black mayor of the city. He inspired me to go into politics to help others and make a difference in my community, especially for those who looked like me and had to struggle through adversity. So I studied and earned my degree in political science at Western Illinois University with the ultimate goal of becoming the mayor of Chicago or even the governor of Illinois.

Once I graduated, however, I had an opportunity to be a recruiter for my alma mater and share my experiences to help attract prospective students to the university. I fell in love with connecting and engaging with people. I went on to recruit for IBM and later landed at the *Chicago Tribune*. It was there that I worked with my first DEI leader, who noticed I had a knack for bringing diverse talent into the company, and for the first time, a diversity recruiter role was created for me. My experience as the only woman or Black person on my teams often translated into forming

fruitful relationships with diverse talent who brought immense value to the company.

From there, I held several other DEI, program management, and community affairs positions, eventually ascending to global chief diversity officer roles. Through my work in recruiting and DEI, I’ve been able to do exactly what I had hoped to do in politics, and that’s make a difference in people’s lives by creating inclusive workplaces and being a conduit to opportunity.

IN: Tell us about your greatest success story—and the greatest challenge you are currently facing.

NBM: When I think about my professional success, I am most proud of the talent I’ve helped to develop over the years and the positive difference I’ve been able to make in people’s lives and career trajectories. I’ve introduced numerous professionals to the DEI field and have cultivated several professionals who are now leading, consulting, and working full-time in DEI roles. In my personal life, my greatest success is my family—my husband and three children—as well as the work I do on boards and community organizations to give back and help advance women, youth, and people of color.

As for challenges, one of the biggest opportunities I’m focused on right now is broadening the awareness of DEI as a shared responsibility to build trust, credibility, and connectivity. Everyone from individual contributors to leadership has a critical role to play in fostering a more diverse and inclusive culture. There’s often an unintentional box-checking mentality that says, “We have a

diversity and inclusion leader, so we're good," but we're all stakeholders in this work, including those who are not part of traditionally marginalized communities. It will be uncomfortable at times, but we have to lean into the discomfort to make things better.

IN: What will be some of the most pressing issues and challenges in the coming years for corporate diversity and inclusion leaders like yourself?

NBM: One issue that I care about a lot and have been focused on personally is the need to define and build the skills and competencies of an effective DEI leader. Over the last two years, there's been a proliferation of DEI roles and expansions of DEI teams where many professionals have come into this work because they have a passion for it, they've been "voluntold" to do it, or there's an assumption that since they are a woman or person of color, they can easily take on the work because of their identity.

Organizations and leaders are quickly learning that DEI is, and must be recognized as, a discipline with required skills, competencies, and experience. You wouldn't just put anyone into a chief marketing officer or general counsel role, and you shouldn't do that for senior DEI roles either. There's an assumption that identity and passion are enough to qualify you as a DEI leader, but there's so much more to the job.

It's important to cultivate the next generation of DEI leadership as strong practitioners who value the body of DEI work as a discipline. I never call it the "DEI space"—that's amorphous; you wouldn't say the "medical space," you'd say the medical field because it's a field of study. So I'm seeking to bring that same credibility to DEI.

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

NBM: I see COVID-19 as the convergence of three pandemics: (1) the public health pandemic that has exposed the inequities in health care and health outcomes, particularly for communities of color; (2) the economic pandemic that has negatively and disproportionately impacted people of color and women;

"There's an assumption that identity and passion are enough to qualify you as a DEI leader, but there's so much more to the job."

and (3) the social justice pandemic that has underscored the real sense of crisis that marginalized groups face in their ability just to live and feel safe—from what's happening in Texas and Florida with the trans community to the strained relationship between Black people and law enforcement to the #StopAsianHate movement.

This convergence has fundamentally changed the way I go about my work in DEI. I lead with so much more intention and am unapologetic about moving past the need to justify why we have to do it. Leading with an intentional mindset is essential to the health, vibrancy, and sustainability of an inclusive company culture.

DW: How do you use data and metrics to measure DEI success?

NBM: I think about it this way: if DEI is a body, then data and metrics are the lungs. Data breathes life into an organization's DEI efforts and reflects the impact and health of the initiatives and programs put into place.

I firmly believe that a data-driven, fact-based approach to sharing DEI success is critical for helping stakeholders know that you aren't just providing lip service.

At Pinterest, data shows that our work in DEI is not performative. We tell our DEI data story through our annual I&D report and are able to share how our efforts are having a tangible impact on representation, promotion, retention, engagement, and our overall business outcomes and platform innovation. We're by no means perfect, but I'll take consistent progress over perfection any day.

IN: In the last year, with so much happening in the world and country that impacted all of us, how did you help your organization and team deal with the fatigue and sense of being overwhelmed by the scope and speed of the work required to increase equity at Pinterest?

NBM: First, let me say, the fatigue is real. There is so much violence and mayhem showing up on our TVs, in our news feeds, and in our physical environments—and it's a lot to process. At Pinterest, we kicked off Pinclusion Discussions, a quarterly forum to bring everyone together with the goal of building proximity and collectively acknowledging the weight and trauma we're all carrying around as we navigate what's going on in the world today. The forum is meant not only to provide support, care, and visibility for our employees, but also to create a culture of sharing and community. These discussions help us refocus and remember our "why," which is to create a culture where our Pinemployees [Pinterest employees] thrive through representation and belonging. **IN**



Willard McCloud III

Vice President, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Environmental, Social, and Governance, **Zimmer Biomet**

Willard McCloud, a member of the global HR leadership team at Zimmer Biomet (ZB), is responsible for developing and executing the company's enterprisewide strategies for DEI, embedding its principles in leadership development, talent acquisition and management, and culture. In addition to that portfolio at ZB, he is in charge of its ESG (environmental, social, and governance) initiatives. Prior to joining ZB, McCloud was a vice president in human resources and global head of diversity and inclusion for Pfizer. Before Pfizer, he spent 14 years in a number of functional and business leadership roles with Cargill. McCloud's approach to leadership in human-capital management focuses on wholesale systemic change and transformation to drive value creation and enable business strategies by leveraging best practices in diversity, equity, inclusion, and talent management.

A banker and strategist by training, McCloud uses his experience in leading businesses to implement human-capital strategies for maximum impact, return on investment, and sustainability. He is a member of the Executive Leadership Council and sits on the Business Advisory Council for the Human Rights Campaign, the United States' largest civil rights organization working to achieve LGBTQ equality. He holds a bachelor's degree in economics, magna cum laude, from Morehouse

College, where he was an Oprah Winfrey and Merrill Scholar. He received his master of business administration degree from the University of Virginia's Darden School, where he was a Consortium fellow.

Inclusion: As offices return to the traditional in-person model, how can organizations best balance the differing needs of employees while at the same time maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness?

Willard McCloud: It starts with embracing a mindset that balancing the needs of employees and maximizing camaraderie and effectiveness are not mutually exclusive. The most flexible and agile organizations, able to do all that simultaneously, are going to be the winners in a continually evolving workplace. The pandemic has proven the capacity for companies to deliver results and maintain productivity without adhering to traditional in-person models. Face-to-face meetings and larger in-person team gatherings will continue to be an important part of how we work in the future, but relying solely on an "in-office" model to build the necessary engagement, effectiveness, and connection of team members will most certainly fail. The key to successfully navigating the future of work is recognizing that everyone's home, family, and lifestyle are different. What we value, what we do with our time, and how we get our work done are all different. So the organizations positioned to win in the future will understand that the social contract between workers and companies has significantly changed. Companies that embrace a more fluid and flexible approach to work that acknowledges differences in lifestyle and personal needs, while focusing on clearly defined, objective measures of performance and productivity, will be the most successful and sought-after destinations of work. No doubt this will require a refreshed leadership mindset that welcomes different ways of working and delivering results. This mindset, key for managers charged with leading their companies through these uncharted waters, is guided by strong principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

"At Zimmer Biomet, we have begun to strategically connect our DEI work with our ESG work to stake out a position of leadership on the critical issues of sustainability and inclusion that underpin being a Best and Preferred Place to Work."

IN: In 2021, many companies began to put more energy and priority on belonging, equity, and, in some cases, the support of social change and social justice in the community. What are some of the changes you have witnessed, and do you see that energy continuing?

WM: The immediate aftermath of George Floyd's death forced a reckoning with the lack of progress toward building fair and equitable environments for Black and Brown communities, inside and outside of companies. Many corporate leaders realized that sitting on the sidelines was no longer an option, and commitments to DEI and significant resources were channeled to organizations focused on finding real solutions to the social and cultural ills plaguing society. My own company, Zimmer Biomet, committed to giving over \$5 million to nonprofit organizations dedicated to anti-racism efforts and diversity, equity, and inclusion; \$2 million of that went to the NAACP to support its public health work and provide the inaugural funding for establishment of NAACP's Black Assets Index. These types of investments in organizations that focus on social change and social justice help us get at the roots of society's failure to uplift all its people. Leading companies realize the need to be part of the solution by investing in the communities from which they hope to draw talent and where they intend to sell their products, and I do not see that changing in the foreseeable future.

IN: What brought you to this work? Is there a personal motivation, a story from your childhood or past that inspired you in this direction?

WM: I was born into a prominent family in the South, the third generation to attend college and graduate school. My passion for diversity and inclusion was born out of a unique journey in life that has taken me to many parts of the world and has culminated in an intersection of privilege and distinct visible—and invisible—identities.

My life clearly offered advantages: a loving family who were able to provide me with a first-class education; access to professional experiences that have afforded me the opportunity to live, work, and become close friends with people of all races, religions, and backgrounds, from many nations around the world; and the positive and indelible sense of self-worth that comes from living with, growing up around, and being educated by successful Black people—all of these have shaped my work.

My identities offered me a unique set of perspectives: a Black person with fairer skin; a cisgender, gay man who can easily “pass” in many environments; and a business leader whose hearing loss informs where I can sit and who I can hear in meetings—these have also shaped my work.

The confluence of my upbringing, professional experiences, and connection to multiple identities shapes and inspires the work that I do. I was raised in my family to believe that to whom much is given, much will be required. With that in mind, I’ve tried to use my life, identities, insights, and perspectives to bridge different communities in ways that help others see the strength and commonality we all share, through embracing diversity and being more inclusive.

IN: What ideas and trends in the world of DEI are organizations learning about and implementing?

WM: The connections between DEI and environmental, social, and governance concerns are taking center stage in boardrooms around the world. At Zimmer Biomet, we have begun to strategically connect our DEI work with our ESG work to stake out a position of leadership on the critical issues of sustainability and inclusion that underpin being a Best and Preferred Place to Work [per IDG/Computerworld and Great Place to Work]. The current political and economic uncertainty, not only in the United States but throughout much of the world, is going to continue to create a need for companies to step forward and fill a void of leadership. Companies are being called upon to bring voice to issues of equality and fairness while creating the inclusive and sustainable platforms upon which much of society’s future rests. We cannot be good business

“The key to successfully navigating the future of work is recognizing that everyone’s home, family, and lifestyle are different.”

leaders if we do so while destroying the environment. We cannot be good business leaders if we do not create corporate cultures that are diverse, inclusive, and equitable. And we cannot be good business leaders if our stakeholders—internal and external—don’t believe we have sound, reasonable, and transparent policies and procedures that provide a clear and accurate view of a company’s health. Leaders of companies are being called upon to do more now than ever to ensure that we not only meet the goals of increasing value for the shareholders [but that] we do so in a sustainable way that includes other populations that are affected.

IN: How do you use data and metrics to measure DEI success?

WM: All good and sustainable progress in DEI is anchored in data and metrics. At Zimmer Biomet, we have developed a very thorough, in-depth DEI Scorecard, which provides

meaningful and actionable data and insights for HR and business leaders to make thoughtful goals about leadership representation and diversity, equity, and inclusion in our businesses. Our goals are based on rigorous external benchmarking and market analysis to identify areas of opportunity and put in place action plans to position Zimmer Biomet as a Best and Preferred Place to Work for diverse team members.

IN: In the last year, with so much happening in the world and country that impacted all of us, how have you helped your company and team deal with the sense of being overwhelmed by the scope of the work required to increase equity in your organization?

WM: This is a challenge not just for Zimmer Biomet but for all companies as they manage through increasingly uncertain economic and geopolitical times. At Zimmer Biomet, we have prioritized and focused our attention on team member wellness, engaging them in focus groups and identifying opportunities to make sure we are all taking care of each other. We have involved our employee resource groups in wellness efforts to understand the nuances of wellness faced by specific ethnic and racial groups. We have focused on building flexibility into our work culture—something we actually began before COVID-19 but doubled down on because we believe it gives us a cultural advantage in a very tight employment market. We were excited to have recently been certified as A Great Place to Work, with its acknowledgment of the effort our teams make to champion DEI and wellness as we build a leading med-tech company with a winning culture. We know that the work landscape will continue to be challenging, but also strongly believe that if we get our culture right—if we construct a culture that creates a sense of belonging for all—we are better positioned to support and retain the talent we need for success in the future. **IN**



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Share your company's purpose, values, and mission and how you are creating a workforce that reflects the world we live in.

For information on DEI cover story features in INCLUSION magazine please contact:
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INCLUSION

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Martha's Vineyard Luminary Award Winners



Martha's Vineyard CDO conference founder and CenterFocus International President Dani Monroe (right) with Tiffany Warren, CDO, Sony Music and founder of ADCOLOR (left) and Dr. Sheila Robinson, CEO and publisher of Diversity Woman Media (center).

At this summer's inaugural Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) Summit on Martha's Vineyard, three women, including Diversity Woman Media Publisher and CEO Dr. Sheila Robinson, were honored for their lifetime achievements and commitment to breaking down barriers for women and people of color.



Dr. Sheila Robinson, founder and publisher of Diversity Woman Media, received the DEI Champion Award for her talent, tenacity, and determination in not only forging an impressive corporate career as a Black woman in the South but also for her visionary work as a publisher, bestselling author, inspiring speaker, and talent innovation specialist.



Dr. Kizzmekia S. Corbett, assistant professor of immunology and infectious diseases, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, was recognized with the Game Changer Award. Dr. Corbett was honored for her groundbreaking work in developing COVID-19 and influenza vaccines, and pandemic preparedness.



Leslie Mays, chief diversion, equity, and inclusion officer at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, received the Trailblazer Award for her career spanning more than 30 years advocating for and creating significant cultural transformation at a host of Fortune 500 companies.

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Transformative: The Inaugural Martha's Vineyard Chief Diversity Officer Summit



It started as a spark of an idea and turned into a rousing success.

The inaugural Martha's Vineyard Chief Diversity Officer Summit, envisioned and founded by **Dani Monroe**, brought together 125 chief diversity officers from New York to California to search for ways to reflect, reset, and reenvision leading DEI into the future.

The speakers captured the mood and preoccupations of the attendees. Many CDOs arrived on the island exhausted and weary from the constant barrage of tumultuous events they'd had to battle over the last three years.

Educator and thought leader **Dr. Damon Williams** exquisitely painted that picture of worn and torn soldiers as the role of CDOs has quickly expanded to include sustainability, environmental, social responsibility, governance, and social justice.

Dr. Alisha Moreland-Capua, the founder and director of McLean



Hospital's Institute for Trauma-Informed Systems, engaged the audience and helped them understand the impact of cumulative experiences of trauma.

Howard University journalism professor **Nikole Hannah-Jones** told the attendees that bringing to fruition her Pulitzer Prize-winning *1619 Project* was a living case study on how effectively owning and strategically executing one's power renders positive results.

"Freedom at Work," a new framework from **Dr. Laura Morgan Roberts**, professor of practice at University of Virginia's Darden School of Business, presented the thought-provoking notion that people from diverse backgrounds have the right to be normal and average—and even to fail.

In keeping with the Martha's Vineyard tradition of public discourse, the summit included Community Conversations Under the Tent, open to the

Photos by SoFocused Photography



general public. This forum featured Harvard's **Dr. Kizzmekia S. Corbett**, one of the lead scientists in developing the COVID vaccine. The exhilarating day wrapped with a panel of distinguished journalists who shared their perspectives on our times. Moderator **Reverend Liz Walker**, former anchor of WBZ-TV Boston, was joined by **Sunny Hostin**, cohost of ABC's *The View* and ABC News legal analyst; **Michele Norris**,



Clockwise from top left: The Summit's 125 attendees celebrate. Nikole Hannah-Jones. Dr. Laura Morgan Roberts. Dani Monroe delivers opening remarks. Dr. Alisha Moreland-Capua. Journalist panel: Reverend Liz Walker, MDiv, former anchor, WBZ-TV, Boston; Sunny Hostin, JD, cohost, ABC's *The View*, Michele Norris, BA, opinion columnist, *The Washington Post*; Byron Pitts, BA anchor and chief national correspondent, ABC News.

opinion columnist at the *Washington Post*; and **Byron Pitts**, anchor and chief national correspondent at ABC News.

"The summit was transformative for me," one attendee said. "Never have I felt more seen, affirmed, and edified professionally—and personally. The conversation, brilliance, knowledge exchanges, and pure heart under that tent brought me both comfort and discomfort, in all the ways I needed, to continue to be stretched and fulfilled in this work. I'm already excited about next year's summit!"

THE LAST WORD

Celebrating Our Groundbreaking Pioneers

BY DR. SHEILA A. ROBINSON

A The DEI movement in Corporate America is now reaching middle age. Many chief diversity officers have been on the job for 20 years or more—and some are retiring or making the shift to consulting and authoring books on leadership and DEI.

These influential leaders, many of whom began this work before there even were titles like chief diversity officer, are the ones who raised their voices and developed and executed the strategic initiatives that serve as a road map for us today. While we still have a long way to go and much work to do, now is the time to salute those women and men on the front lines who have made a difference. Some of their impact happened quietly behind the scenes, but rest assured, culture-changing advances in diversity, equity, and inclusion are their legacy.

In our 2023 DEI Hall of Fame class, beginning on page 21, you will meet eight women at the pinnacle of their profession. They paved the way for the rest of us, and their tireless work in the trenches of the battle for equity, inclusion, and belonging is why I feel optimistic for the next generation.

These stellar changemakers reflect here on their proudest achievements and legacy. Take Nzinga Shaw, the first CDO at a staggering four blue chip companies—Edelman, the NBA, Starbucks, and Marsh McLennan—representing four distinct sectors: public

relations, sports/entertainment, retail, and insurance/reinsurance. Her proudest achievement? “I have created purpose-driven, award-winning programs in each organization and built a sustainable infrastructure to support impactful DEI outcomes,” she says.

Legacy takes many different shapes. Sometimes a person has enacted groundbreaking programs; in other cases, the legacy is the whole of their life and work, as they serve as a role model to the younger generation. Consider Rosalyn Taylor O’Neale, formerly the vice president, chief diversity and inclusion officer for Campbell Soup Company and executive vice president, diversity initiatives for MTV Network.

“I want my legacy to live in the hearts of those I’ve met and in the stories that they share with one another about me,” she says. “I hope that my authenticity gives someone the courage to be themselves, the deep footprints I leave along the way provide a map for future IDEA [inclusion, diversity, equity, and access] leaders, and my relentless efforts to remove the ‘ism’ boulders allow the next generation of leaders to avoid the pitfalls and enjoy the journey.”

Notably, none of the leaders we are celebrating stayed in their lane. They recognized that they could not fulfill their DEI mandate without taking a stand and figuring out how real-world



events—including civil rights, social justice, marriage equality, income disparity, and the generational wealth gap—impacted the workforce at their companies as well as in the surrounding community.

Elsewhere in this issue, you will meet others who did not stay in their lane—and, as a result, drove change. We feature Q&As with nine DEI leaders currently

navigating their companies and clients through a landscape that includes not only the usual workplace challenges, but also a rapidly changing society.

And last, in the feature “Invisible No More” (page 15), on the challenges for Native Americans in the workplace, we learn how this group has often been ignored as their companies prioritized advocating for other groups. We explain why Native Americans, women in particular, have been sidelined, and how they are fighting for recognition long overdue. **IN**

Dr. Sheila A. Robinson is the founder of Diversity Woman Media.

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A photograph of two women in an office setting. The woman on the left, with dark skin and braided hair, is looking down at a tablet held by the woman on the right. The woman on the right, with light skin and glasses, is smiling and looking towards the camera. They are both wearing professional attire. The background is softly blurred, showing office furniture and a plant.

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