BLACK EXCELLENCE MATTERS
THE MORE PERFECT UNION

THE EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
The Power of Inclusive Leadership

WRITTEN BY JUDITH L. TURNOCK
The Executive Leadership Council (The ELC) has seized the opportunity presented by what seemed at first to be unimaginable events beginning earlier this year. First the coronavirus pandemic, continuing to roll across the United States and the globe, laid bare the gaping inequities in health care services and health outcomes that have stressed Black Americans for centuries. Then videos of the death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer coalesced in the minds of many Americans the long history of unjustified violence by law enforcement, igniting protests in cities and towns across the country. The protests continue, escalated by more violence against protesters, local, state and federal military-like responses to them, and then the provocation of white armed “militia.”

This is not the America we want. We cannot continue to ignore the contradiction between the founders’ written ideals and the fact of slavery and its legacy. Reconciliation is the only path toward the more perfect union our Constitution anticipated. “We are unapologetically Black on the issues of systemic racism in corporate America and the lack of Black representation in C-suites, as CEOs, and in boardrooms,” declares Crystal E. Ashby, interim president and CEO of The ELC as of January 1, 2020, and the first woman to hold that title.

“We know the changes that must occur, and we embrace using our voice and power to effect that change,” she continues. “But let me be clear: I see this inflection point in our history not as Black vs. White. It’s Black vs. racism, which means it’s got to be everyone vs. racism... Everyone has to be an ally.”

In fact, major corporations were among the first to speak out against centuries of disparate treatment and present governmental overreach, recognizing that paying lip service to inequities is no longer acceptable. Speaking directly to corporate America, CEO Ashby asks: “Having allies is critical to effecting real change. What political capital are you willing to spend to ensure that tomorrow is better than today?”

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Included in this narrative are excerpts of conversations between CEO Ashby and five select corporate CEOs whose insights offer a change in the race narrative. They have been edited for length and clarity.
The ELC is partnering with corporations as they navigate an end to the deep inequities spotlighted by the twin pandemics of Covid-19 and racism.

After decades of research, philanthropy, and leadership development, The ELC plays a central role as a change agent, with its time-tested, unique services to members, corporate America, entrepreneurs, and the broader Black community in the US and the world. The ELC is partnering with corporations as they navigate an end to the deep inequities spotlighted by the twin pandemics of Covid-19 and racism to: (1) increase the representation of Black executives in the C-suite, in the CEO office, and in the boardrooms of the top 500 companies, and (2) build an ever-increasing pipeline of Black Americans at all levels of operation who are ready to step into those roles for generations to come. Black Excellence, ignored for decades – really centuries – must be a part of the new reality.

The ELC’s 2020 Juneteenth Call to Action
Immediately following the protests against the murder of George Floyd, CEO Ashby seized The ELC’s microphone, calling on the CEOs of ELC member corporations to join The ELC’s Juneteenth Convening. “If Black lives don’t matter, no lives matter,” CEO Ashby declared. “Silence and inaction are unacceptable.” Barely three weeks later, The ELC convened – virtually – nearly 240 ELC members and current and former CEOs of member companies, “Juneteenth was our stake in the ground,” she says. “You can’t deny the racism pandemic anymore. You have to act on it.”

ELC member memories of personal discriminatory experiences set the tone. ELC Board Chair Tonie Leatherberry opened the meeting with reflections on the defining moments of racism in her own life. “The trauma is real,” she stated. “We are at the tipping point in our businesses and within ourselves. The emergence of Covid-19 has amplified health disparities and educational inequities that now force us, as leaders, to look at things differently. We must employ economic, business, and community perspectives to face these challenges together, and these are all economic and business challenges.”

CEO Ashby moderated the hour-long session, where all five speakers – Marvin Ellison, CEO of Lowe’s; Clarence Otis, Jr., Lead Director, Verizon, and former CEO of Darden Restaurants; Carol Tomé, CEO, UPS; David G. Clunie, Executive Director of the Black Economic Alliance (BEA); and Dr. Robert W. Livingston, Public Policy Lecturer at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government – called on participants to face the root causes of racism in America, still reverberating today, and to begin the journey to enduring change, both inside and outside their corporations.

CEO Ashby first asserted the obvious: “There is no risk attached to investing in Black talent.” She then asked each CEO to “own the path forward...be intentional and transparent...and stay the course.” She added, “Invest in HBCUs [Historically Black Colleges and Universities] and invest in and cultivate Black businesses to begin closing the racial wealth gap.”

A copy of The ELC report ELC Juneteenth CEO Convening – CEOs Combat Systemic Racism: A Framework for Success was distributed. It provides a road map for achieving a transformed corporate culture through immediate CEO steps, longer-term strategies for systemic change, scorecards to measure progress, and radical steps to advance racial justice.

“To paraphrase famed architect Buckminster Fuller,” concluded CEO Ashby, “we are building a new model that makes the old model obsolete. We are here to help, and together we can create a different future that delivers value to society and to our shareholders.”

The Disappointing Status Quo: Facts about Black Inclusion at the Top
The ELC’s focus, to see corporate Black Excellence rewarded, is compelling, for Black Americans as well as for all American business. But progress has been slow, often agonizingly slow.

Since the death of George Floyd, several companies have already stepped up to increase their Black board representation, some by filling vacancies and others by increasing the size of their boards. And a number of companies and individuals have reached out to The ELC for its deep pool of qualified candidates.
The finding from Missing Pieces: The 2018 Board Diversity Census of Women and Minorities on Fortune 500 Boards, published January 2019 by the Alliance for Board Diversity (ABD) (a collaboration among The ELC, Catalyst, HACR (Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility), and LEAP (Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics)), and Diversified Search and Deloitte that women and minorities will represent 40% of those boards by 2024 is certainly welcome, but it glosses over the fact that Black representation, when disaggregated, is far below a critical mass and is not trending up. Black men and women together held only 486 (8.6%) of 5,670 board seats at Fortune 500 and equivalent companies, 332 by Black men (5.9%) and 154 (2.7%) by Black women. Other recent surveys do not improve these statistics. Black CEOs of Fortune 500 or equivalent companies, as of September 2020, still total less than 1%, none of them women. A July 2020 USA TODAY review of proxy statements from the top 50 Standard & Poor’s 100 found only five Black executives among the 279 named most senior executives, just under 2%, and that figure includes two Black executives who have since retired.

What holds back Black board CEO and C-suite representation? “Black corporate leaders are in your organizations now, despite what I often hear,” answers CEO Ashby. A 2019 study jointly conducted by The ELC and Korn Ferry, The Black P&L Leader Report, proved that current Black P&L leaders not only exist but that they share all the skills, experiences, and competencies, drivers and traits of their white counterparts. “They simply lack opportunities for advancement,” explains CEO Ashby. “They’re overwhelmingly not seen, not valued as highly as their peers, not positioned for success.”

We’re building on our commitment to do more for racial equality and economic opportunity

This year, we’ve come together — as a company and across the world — with intensified passion for racial equality. We all know we need to do more, and we need to do more now. It’s not enough to say something. We must also do something.

To help effect and sustain meaningful change, we know we must continue to remove barriers. This sense of urgency forms the foundation of Bank of America’s long-standing support for the people and communities we serve and is at the heart of our $1 billion, four-year commitment to accelerate work underway to help advance racial equality and economic opportunity. We’re also partnering with the Smithsonian through a $25 million commitment to its “Race, Community and Our Shared Future” program, and we’re one of the founding partners of iHeartMedia’s Black Information Network — the first and only 24/7 national audio service dedicated to providing news coverage with a Black voice and perspective. In addition, we spend over $2 billion annually with diverse suppliers.

Within our company, our Black Executive Leadership Council includes more than 200 senior Black leaders who influence change and continue to promote diversity through recruiting and advancing diverse talent, and engaging our communities. Council members work closely with the 16,000+ teammates in our Black Professional Group to create visibility and opportunity for our Black talent through coaching, mentoring and networking across 31 chapters globally.

To change the trajectories of underserved communities, strong collaboration by the public, private and nonprofit sectors is needed. We are proud to stand with the Executive Leadership Council and other members of the business community to continue defining our path ahead.

“Inclusion is everyone’s responsibility. We need a unified voice to drive accountability and progress. And when we do, those voices need to advocate for change, question the status quo, and hold us collectively responsible for breaking down systemic barriers necessary for true equality for all.”

Cynthia H. Bowman
Chief Diversity & Inclusion and Talent Acquisition Officer
Bank of America

www.bankofamerica.com/inclusion
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Thank you to the Executive Leadership Council for developing past, present and future Black leaders.

Now more than ever, Bank of America is committed to global diversity, racial equality and economic opportunity. Our Black Executive Leadership Council includes more than 200 senior Black leaders who influence change through recruiting and advancing diverse talent, as well as community outreach. We proudly recognize our executive leaders who are ELC members and who help drive the success of our company.

We also thank our senior Black executives who are leading major functions and businesses across our company.

Visit bankofamerica.com/inclusion to learn more.
Embracing the Power of Diversity

UPS proudly supports The Executive Leadership Council

UPS CELEBRATES and recognizes the achievements of Black executives, entrepreneurs and thought leaders in Corporate America. We know a diverse workforce is key to our success, and diverse leadership empowers our future.

UPS SUPPORTS organizations that share our strong commitment to identify, develop and support diverse talent. The UPS Foundation leads UPS’s global citizenship efforts and philanthropy, and we celebrate our 21-year partnership with The Executive Leadership Council. UPS was honored to receive The ELC’s 2019 Corporate Award.

UPS BELIEVES diversity, equity and inclusion are essential for our people, our customers, our suppliers, our communities—and a smart strategy for our business. We are committed to making diversity integral to everything we do.

At UPS, we have a unique opportunity—and genuine commitment—to inspire, motivate and elevate people’s lives, which we do by embracing and ensuring the inclusion of the diversity we represent: hundreds of thousands of employees, customers and suppliers that touch all parts of the world. We believe embracing diversity and cultivating inclusion allows all of us to go further, reach higher and—together—travel roads to places we cannot reach alone.

Alexis de Tocqueville, a French diplomat and historian fascinated by the American experiment from its beginning, observed after a visit in 1830, “The surface of American society is covered with a thin layer of democratic paint.” He was thinking of the aristocracy near the surface, but he could as easily have been thinking of slavery. Will America finally strip away the badges of slavery that to this day fence Blacks from the inclusion they have more than earned?

What follows are the steps The ELC has made to take advantage of today’s historic opportunity.

The Board Diversity Action Alliance and the Board Challenge

In early September 2020, The ELC announced the formation of two new partnerships to jump-start change. The ELC partnered with the Board Diversity Action Alliance, led by Ursula Burns, former Xerox CEO, Gabrielle Sulzberger, Chairman of True Food Kitchen Investco.
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ups.com/diversity

The Power of Diversity

UPS shares and supports the Executive Leadership Council’s purpose, promise and pathways to empower diverse leadership.

ups.com/diversity
Crystal Ashby: How does it feel, being in the CEO seat?

Carol Tomé: Between the pandemic and social unrest, it’s definitely an interesting time to step into this role. UPS has rallied, and we’re moving in the right direction. We must continue fighting against racism, and fighting for equity. We have a long way to go, but I’m super excited about all the efforts we have underway.

CA: How do you think you got this excitement about equity?

CT: I was born and raised in Jackson, Wyoming—a small, all-white, Protestant town. We studied the Civil War for perhaps one day, and never mentioned slavery. College was the same. But then I moved to Atlanta to work for Home Depot. A Black woman on our board taught me about equity, especially its importance to business. I’m a capitalist, I like to make money, and I like to create value. I know equity—in all of its forms—is good for business.

CA: How do you translate that into leading a team in a purposeful and authentic way on race-related issues?

CT: People don’t follow you unless you’re authentic. For my first day, I planned a video greeting to employees that would lay out a new strategy. Then George Floyd was killed. The planned video didn’t speak to how I felt—ashamed, embarrassed, and angry. So, I wrote those feelings down. I didn’t have it edited, scripted, or reviewed. That note opened the video.

But I wanted to turn anger into action. Externally, we expanded long-standing support of Black organizations, like the ELC, and extended support to new ones. We committed one million volunteer hours to Black communities. Internally, we launched a salary review, unconscious bias training and uncomfortable conversations. We established the Equity, Justice & Action Task Force, a cross-functional group of UPS leaders focused on dismantling systemic racism.

CA: How much of all of this do you think is really rooted in culture, beyond diversity and inclusion?

CT: It’s all rooted in culture. We’re a values-based company, but sometimes our behaviors don’t match our values. Aligning them is a strategic business imperative that requires cultural transformation. The commitment to equity must extend to suppliers, consultants, customers, the communities you serve. If our suppliers and consultants are not diverse and don’t want to change, we go somewhere else.

CA: How do you align your investors with that same strategic business imperative?

CT: On my first earnings call in August, I talked about racial equity and justice reform. And I called it a strategic imperative. There’s another thing I’m really excited about: several UPS board members are retiring over the next few years. I’m committed to replacing them with diverse candidates. We will have one of the most diverse boards in Corporate America when I’m done.

CA: How do you see making all your actions sustainable?

CT: I’ve surrounded myself with ambassadors who will carry these efforts forward by making all UPSers ambassadors. Optimism is a force multiplier. UPS can be the company others look to and say, “We can do that, too.” That’s motivational for all of us.

CA: I agree. Perfect ending. Thank you so much, Carol.
Adam Roosevelt | CEO, SEM North America

“When we are given the opportunity to lead...I truly believe that we’ll outperform other populations because of the difficulty we’ve experienced over time.”

Crystal Ashby: How about we start with you telling me about your journey to becoming a CEO when you are just 26 years old? Extraordinary!

Adam Roosevelt: Well, I grew up poor in Virginia, 17 years trying to survive on the streets, gangs, pretty typical disadvantaged African-American story. Then my mother said to me, “What’re you going to do with your life?” I made a commitment right then and there to do something more meaningful.

Since I thought I might want to be in politics, the best road for me seemed to be the military.

So, I joined the army, was assigned to a variety of different units, NATO on cyber security, some infantry work, twice to Afghanistan, and all of that really cemented my need to commit to a larger purpose. When I transitioned, I just decided to start a business, because I knew I wanted to own something, to build and develop it. I was very competitive, and I wanted to be content at work, but I also wanted to put together a financial foundation for my family for the foreseeable future.

CA: Your young life clearly formed a strong foundation for who you have become. How does equity – and by that I mean fairness – become a practice you personally support?

AR: The military made me a fair and impartial leader. That’s embedded in our leadership style. I was leading a very diverse team in high-friction environments, so the right esprit de corps could mean the difference between survival or death.

CA: Holding someone’s life in your hands, that’s a very different responsibility and accountability.

AR: Yes, the war mentality is very different. It’s not transferable to the civilian sector, but it did teach me that a team that’s not oiled correctly can lead to disaster. Putting a team together in the civilian environment is more complex. I didn’t see the same esprit de corps, the same trust. The team’s needs, the individuals, the organization’s mission, those were different.

CA: Is there anything else you want to share around engagement with your stakeholders, your investors, your customers, to advance the purpose behind equity?

AR: I would say that conversation was very uncomfortable for a lot of stakeholders, investors, and employees, but we’re now moving to discussions. I’d say I fall where the government is: diversity of thought across a variety of different populations fosters innovation.

And I know the African-American talent is there. There’s a genius in us because we’ve struggled for 400 years to adapt to impossible situations. When we are given the opportunity to lead, you’ll see high-quality impact to your organization. I truly believe we’ll outperform other populations because of the difficulty we’ve experienced over time.

CA: I think you crystallized a component of who Black people are. Thank you for everything you have shared today, and congratulations on everything you’ve achieved.

Adam Roosevelt

Ceo, SEM North America

Adam Roosevelt knows Black Excellence
“Our objective this year was to inspire and motivate CEOs to embrace disruptive strategies that yield bold, transformational and measurable actions...We want to eradicate systemic racism.”

The ELC is also a Charter Pledge Partner in The Board Challenge, a movement to “challenge” companies to appoint a Black director within the next year. The initiative was founded by Altimeter Capital, Valence, and the Boardlist, and has already been signed by 43 Founding and Charter Pledge Partners. The strategy for meeting the Challenge is to convince corporations to go beyond requiring director candidates to have prior board service and draw from a wider pool of candidates ready with the broad skills board members seek for their companies.

2020 GameChanger Conference®
The theme of the second GameChanger Conference®, a virtual gathering of ELC members and their CEOs the day of the virtual 2020 Annual ELC Gala, was not modest: “Driving a Systemic Breakthrough: The Eradication of Racism in Business.” This off-the-record peer-to-peer experience allowed CEOs, C-suite executives and thought leaders to share data-driven insights and best practices.

“Our objective this year was to inspire and motivate CEOs to embrace disruptive strategies that yield bold, transformational and measurable actions,” reports CEO Ashby. “We are looking for tangible results. We want to eradicate systemic racism.”

Featured speakers were Brian Cornell, board chair & CEO, Target; David Taylor, chair, president & CEO, P&G; Doug McMillon, president & CEO, Walmart Inc., chair, The Business Roundtable;
WE CONNECT
DREAMERS AND BELIEVERS.
WE CONNECT
ADVOCATES AND ORGANIZERS.
WE CONNECT
STORYTELLERS AND EDUCATORS.
WE CONNECT
MORE THAN PEOPLE,
WE CONNECT
THE SPIRIT OF CHANGE.

Learn more at att.com/equality

At American Family Insurance, we believe diversity and inclusion are imperative to our mission of inspiring, protecting and restoring dreams.

Our customers, employees and communities can pursue what matters most in life when opportunities are equitable, diverse voices are heard, and individuals are valued for their unique backgrounds and perspectives.

American Family’s vision is to be a leader in inclusive excellence and the employer of choice for diverse talent, with a goal of increasing our workforce diversity 50% by 2024.

We see a strong employee culture of diversity and inclusion as essential to our ability to create allies and champion for progress.

““At American Family, we want the best talent, the best benefits and the best company culture. We also want strong communities that equitably serve everyone. All these things are rooted in our strategy. They show we are absolutely committed to tackling the kinds of problems weighing our communities down today – because it’s good for our communities AND good for business.”

"We create social impact not only because it is the right thing to do as a human family, but also because it is the right thing to do from a business perspective."

Learn more at www.amfam.com.

Telisa Yancy
Chief Operating Officer and ELC Member

JACK SALZWEDEL
Chair & CEO

Tim Ryan, senior partner & chair, PwC US; Cindy Kent, ELC member, president & EVP, Senior Living, Brookdale Senior Living; Clarence Otis, Jr., ELC member, lead director, Verizon; Hubert Joly, professor, Harvard Business School, former executive chair, Best Buy; Eddie Glaude, Jr., Ph.D, professor & chair, African-American Studies, Princeton University; Michael Hyter, ELC member, CDO, Korn Ferry; Lanaya Irvin, president, Coqual; Julia Taylor Kennedy, EVP, Coqual; and Ed Dandridge, ELC board member, SVP, Boeing.

Four companies, self-appointed “early adopters” – AT&T, JPMorganChase, P&G and Target – reported on progress they had made over the last year reviewing their own Black leaders as well as their internal assessment, development, promotion, and succession practices and procedures to find and eliminate barriers. “Their purpose was to put in place our road map to sustainable change in recognizing and promoting Black executives within their own organizations.”

Lowe’s CEO Marvin Ellison was a featured speaker at the 2019 ELC GameChanger Conference in D.C.
At American Family Insurance, our customers count on us every day to inspire, protect and restore their dreams. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is THE reason we’re able to deliver on this promise — with world-class talent and collaborative teams that are disrupting the future of insurance with diverse perspectives, empathy and innovation.

We’ve been on this journey for some time — making active strides to ensure those inside our walls and in our communities have every opportunity to dream fearlessly. It’s a commitment that has led American Family to be consistently recognized as a top employer for diversity.

Today we’re proud to support the work of the Executive Leadership Council and celebrate the exceptional leaders that are creating change within the American Family Enterprise.

The American Family Enterprise is a family of organizations dedicated to delivering on one vision: to be the most trusted and valued customer-driven insurance company.
Lowe’s Commitment to Culture, Diversity and Inclusion

When Janice Dupré Little first laid eyes on her twin boys, the preemies were wrapped in tubes to help them breathe, eat – and survive. She understood those devices were startling but necessary, and as she reflects now, decades later, she realizes that experience equipped her to handle anything.

That same strength and courage drives her commitment to instilling a mindset of diversity and inclusion at Lowe’s, one of the largest home improvement retailers globally. Because committing to diversity and inclusion is hard work, and history has been cruel to those ideals.

But history hadn’t met the combined grit and determination of Janice Dupré Little and Marvin R. Ellison. Today, at the helm of Lowe’s, Marvin is one of only three Black CEOs in the Fortune 500. Promoted from Lowe’s first chief diversity officer to executive vice president, human resources in summer 2020, Janice became the first Black woman to hold a C-suite executive role at Lowe’s.

“Taking on these new responsibilities amid a global pandemic was certainly unexpected and – if I stopped to truly think about it – rather frightening,” Janice said. “But I’ve never backed away from a challenge. When the company calls on me, I want to lean in.”

The summer Marvin promoted Janice, George Floyd was killed. As father of a young Black man, Marvin focused on critical conversations with his family at home, and his Lowe’s family – all 300,000 associates.

“I have a personal understanding of the fear and frustration that many of you are feeling,” he wrote in a May 31 email to Lowe’s associates. “To overcome the challenges that we all face, we must use our voices and demand that ignorance and racism must come to an end. This is a time to come together, to support one another and, through partnership, begin to heal...

“At Lowe’s we will remain committed to fostering an environment where all individuals are safe, treated fairly, valued and respected.” he continued. “We are a company with zero tolerance for racism, discrimination, hate, insensitive behavior or violence of any kind.”

Later, when a reporter asked what other CEOs needed to do, he didn’t hesitate: “Talk less, do more.”

Successfully committing to diversity and inclusion begins with the executive leadership team understanding that the more diverse representation at the table, the more diverse the conversation and ability to reflect our customers. Make no mistake, diversity and inclusion isn’t just about gender or ethnicity. It’s about smart business.

Marvin and Janice both understood that engaging associates would be critical to success. They wasted no time. Lowe’s Business Resource Groups (BRGs) are aligned to the business and led by an executive who does not identify personally as a member of that group (e.g., Janice cannot lead the Black BRG).

Lowe’s has amplified the company’s internal and external promises, from simplifying Lowe’s Employee Relief Fund aid to associates in need, to pledging $55 million in grants to minority- and women-owned small businesses, as well as rural businesses, hit hardest by COVID-19. The commitment begins with leadership and is integrated into how Lowe’s does business – right down to the products on Lowe’s shelves, and who supplies them.

In September 2020, Lowe’s unveiled Making It… With Lowe’s, an open invitation to diverse small businesses to get their products in front of the mammoth retailer with just one click. A diverse small business is one with 51 percent ownership by a person who is a minority, member of the LGBTQ community, person with a disability, veteran or woman.

In 2020, Lowe’s announced a $4.5 million commitment to military nonprofits. An annual event, Lowe’s Women’s Leadership Summit inspires strong leaders through dialogue and career development. Impactful change must be intentional, methodic, constant. Inclusion isn’t a conference room marked “reserved.” It’s a mindset.

“Culture is a key driver of the success this executive team holds as our beacon,” Marvin said. “We have to be intentional about how we show up for ourselves so we can be intentional about how we show up for others – our communities, customers, leaders. Culture, diversity and inclusion are business imperatives for Lowe’s.”

Understanding Lowe’s dedication to culture, diversity and inclusion offers a glimpse at how our leadership team stays focused on bringing Lowe’s mission to life: Together, we will deliver the right home improvement products, with the best service and value, across every channel and community we serve.

https://corporate.lowes.com/newsroom
We’re a community of people from different backgrounds and experiences with one common goal: make home better, together.
At Lowe’s, we treat every customer like our own family because home is what unites us.
explains ELC Vice President Teresa Payne-Nunn, “and there have been important successes.”

Former ELC board member Michael Hyter, a managing partner and chief diversity officer at global consulting firm Korn Ferry and a consultant to CEOs on inclusion for decades, senses real change: “This time feels different. I see a genuine interest from senior leaders to address root causes and, most importantly, to address them in measurable ways.”

Dramatic Increase in the Reach of the ELC Corporate Board Initiative

For many years, The ELC’s Corporate Board Initiative (CBI), in conjunction with Heidrick and Struggles and EY, has been preparing select ELC members for board directorships. Through a program on board governance in partnership with the National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD), four cohorts of members studied the basics and complexities involved. They are introduced to

Independence Health Group

America’s diversity is one of its strengths. The project of creating this nation depends on acknowledging a wide range of ideas, experiences, and perspectives.

Now more than ever, we must draw on that strength — and reflect on how to ensure that the rights promised by America are equally enjoyed by the full breadth of its citizens. This goes for health care in the time of COVID-19, for justice in a time of societal reckoning on the issue of race, and for economic security in a time of recovery.

At Independence Health Group, we rely on the power of diversity to build a strong and vibrant workforce, create effective health care solutions for all our members, and attract and serve a broad base of customers. Diversity and inclusion is at the foundation of how we operate.

From our board, CEO, and senior leadership to the 10,000 associates we employ, we embrace, nurture, and celebrate our differences through volunteer projects, employee resource groups, activities, and clubs.

We also encourage new products, ideas, services, and solutions through our well-established supplier diversity program. In 2019, that program achieved record spending levels with diverse suppliers — businesses owned by African Americans and other people of color, veterans, women, and the LGBTQ community.

I’m proud to help ensure that our business relationships reflect the diversity of the community in which we live and work. And I’m also proud to have a leadership role at a company that I know is committed to the fight for equity and justice in America.

Gregory E. Deavens

Treasurer, Board of Directors,
The Executive Leadership Council

EVP, CFO, Treasurer,
Independence Health Group

Learn more at www.ibx.com
Our people make our company great

Here to serve, committed to making a difference

The past few months have been challenging, especially for people of color. As tough conversations about racial injustice surface strong emotions and a global pandemic physically isolates us, access to comprehensive health care is critical.

At Independence Health Group, we embrace the diversity and inclusion of our workforce. We believe that the diverse backgrounds and experiences of our employees allow us to better understand and serve the needs of our members and community.

For more than 80 years, our employees have been dedicated to enhancing the health and well-being of the people and communities we serve. Now more than ever, we remain committed to keeping our members, employees, and communities safe and healthy.

We’re all in this together.
Managing Through Misconceptions

Gina Adams knows firsthand that some people are surprised to see an African-American woman as the top lobbyist for one of the world’s leading multinational corporations.

For example, Adams once traveled internationally with a US delegation to negotiate a bilateral aviation agreement. Entering the meeting room, the group’s host pointed to her and said to one of the male delegates, “Your assistant can sit in that corner.”

“I felt the weight of what W.E.B. DuBois once described as a ‘dual consciousness’ for people of color, the pressure of having to be aware of how we’re perceived (by the mainstream culture) and how we see ourselves,” she says, “and it can equally apply to gender. So sometimes, we wonder about—but don’t dwell on—the motivations for how we’re treated.”

With a J.D. from Howard University, and an LL.M. from Georgetown, she began her career at the Department of Transportation. She joined FedEx in 1992, and became SVP of the Government and Regulatory Affairs team in 2001, leading one of the largest corporate PACs in the United States.

Her work has enabled her to cross paths with five US presidents, numerous world leaders and other power players. She’s committed to service, focusing on community, arts and education, with board memberships including the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Economic Club of Washington and her alma mater, American University and Howard University. The recipient of numerous national honors, she was included in Elle Magazine’s 10 Most Compelling Women in Washington (2016), as well as Savoy Magazine’s 2019 Most Influential Women in Corporate America.

She doesn’t let people’s misconceptions and micro-aggressions faze her. “I have great instincts, a willingness to trust them, patience and the ability to outwork anyone.”

“Since the death of George Floyd, The ELC has seen an increase in requests for board referrals, from...across the whole spectrum.”
Delivering a more diverse workplace.

We are proud to support the Executive Leadership Council.

At FedEx, we understand the importance of a diverse and inclusive culture. It is reflected in our recruiting, hiring, training, and promotion practices, but also extends to the makeup of our corporate decision-makers. We’re proud to honor these FedEx leaders who are members of the Executive Leadership Council.

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spent years living in London but is now back at headquarters in New York. “We recognized that African and Caribbean Blacks in the UK face many of the same challenges we face here,” agrees Board Chair Leatherberry. “And broadening our community beyond our borders increases the benefit for all of us.”

“The IPC also offers an instant network for ELC members who are expats on assignment in the UK,” says Libi Sprow Rice, ELC VP and Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, who helped launch IPC. “Connecting with other Black and African Diaspora senior executives can help them navigate the UK corporate environment.”

Now there are close to 20 Black British ELC members.

The IPC co-chair based in London, Andrew Pearce, an Accenture Managing Director, reports, “We are now visible role models here, inspiring future Black leaders.”

Rather than starting programs in the UK, “we partner with UK organizations aligned with ELC key strategic objectives,” explains Isaacs-Lowe. The ELC sponsors the Black British Business Award (BBBA) to recognize successful corporate executives and entrepreneurs, and members serve on the selection panel. “We partner with the Power List,” adds Pearce, “which publishes a list of the top 100 high-potential Black talent, which always includes UK ELC members.”

“We partner with UK organizations aligned with ELC key strategic objectives…”

The BBBA’s Talent Accelerator Program, also sponsored by The ELC, has created the same sort of learning experiences The ELC has in the US. A corporate board initiative similar to The ELC’s “provides experiences for senior Black professionals to network with UK corporate executives and board members,” Isaacs-Lowe relates. Pearce continues, “Inside Track, another program we launched, hosts small meetings with prominent media and political figures to discuss the challenges of race and how The ELC can help.”

US and UK ELC members had immediate resources to offer when Covid-19 and racial protests swept the US and the events of the last six months have undeniably changed the world in a way that no one could have predicted.

At Otsuka, their purpose – defy limitation, so that others can too – acts as a North Star as they navigate these new times. The company celebrates diversity and cultural acceptance and works to give equal voice and opportunity to all employees.

“We understand that the powerful words of our purpose don’t simply relate to medicine or even healthcare,” states Kabir Nath, president & CEO, Otsuka North America Pharmaceutical Business. Rather, the statement is a testament to the company’s desire to help people overcome anything that stands in their way, including systemic racism.

“We are better as a business because of the diversity of our people,” said Nath. “Our journey to support inclusion is not new; however, we can do more. We are focused on taking intentional, purposeful actions to improve inclusivity across our organization and the patient communities we serve.”

Charlotte Jones-Burton, MD, MS, vice president, clinical development in nephrology, is passionate about ensuring equity through Otsuka’s business practices. “Otsuka acknowledges the health disparities that exist amongst different racial and ethnic groups,” said Dr. Jones-Burton. “We are beginning the important conversations around tailored efforts to address the needs of under-represented communities. Unmet medical needs, clinical trial participation, and access to treatment are just a few of Otsuka’s areas of focus.”

Otsuka’s entire leadership team is committed to implementing true and meaningful change.

“Our Otsuka-people have never been more energized to come together to speak freely and exchange ideas to make a bigger, much broader impact,” said Nath. “We cannot fix inequities in the patient world without starting with ourselves first. We must first work inside our own walls, to create sustainable opportunities for all.”

https://www.otsuka-us.com
At Otsuka, we firmly stand against racial bias and injustice. Our purpose—**defy limitation, so that others can too**—compels us to create a more equitable future where everyone feels valued, heard, and has a true sense of belonging.
At Nationwide®, we take action.

We’re providing extraordinary care when our communities need it most

At Nationwide, we are committed to supporting social justice and the communities where we all live and work. The Covid-19 pandemic has created hardships for everyone, and we want to do our part to support those who are impacted in this time of great need. That is why the Nationwide Foundation has provided $5 million in national response grants to support the American Red Cross, Feeding America and United Way, which included $2 million for select non-profit partners who are serving those impacted by Covid-19.

Internally, we hosted a Unity Rally committing to collectively and individually take action for racial equality as well as Catalyst for Change sessions, featuring local and national community leaders, where our CEO and executive leadership team address current societal issues that are on the hearts and minds of our associates. These sessions equip our associates with the knowledge they need to be catalysts for change within our organization and communities.

Additionally, we reasserted our commitment to justice and equality with an additional $2 million, multi-year investment to support local and national organizations to address criminal justice, economic empowerment, education and housing – all core issues at the heart of systemic racism.

Nationwide is no stranger in advocating to end racism and inequality. We’ve made significant and long-standing commitments aimed at social justice and equality and remain diligent in these efforts.

www.nationwide.com/diversity
MAKING INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP A REALITY

At Nationwide®, we take pride in the way our Executive Leadership Council members help strengthen our business and the community around us.

Thanks to their leadership, we’re able to empower future Black business leaders — and create a more diverse and inclusive workforce from the top down.

Visit nationwide.com/diversity to learn more about our commitment to diversity and inclusion at all levels.
John Miller | CEO, Denny’s

“To grow, you have to be open and vulnerable. You have to have thick skin, and share even when you’re going backward.”

John Miller reflects on serving everybody

CRYSTAL ASHY: Hello, John. It’s almost 10 years for you at Denny’s, right?

JOHN MILLER: Yes, February the 1st.

CA: Congratulations. Has it been the ride you thought it would be?

JM: It’s never as you plan. My first ride in from the airport, my cab driver asked, “Isn’t Denny’s the company that had some race problems not too long ago?” That had happened 17—now 26!—years before! Despite our progress, we still needed to change that narrative.

CA: So, how did you change it?

JM: First of all, we had to own it. Second, we had to set metrics and goals, hold leaders accountable, so that it’s part of your business literally every day, from the shift level and all the way to the strategic multiyear plan that the board endorses.

CA: Have conversations in your organization changed now?

JM: Well, it’s really just more of the same. We’re purpose-driven, and our purpose is we love feeding people: open to all, serving all, supporting all the communities, buying from all communities, and representing the communities in which we serve to make our living.

We have a wildly diverse guest base, so our management teams, from entry-level all the way through the board, should be wildly diverse. We’re not there yet.

In the past five or six years, we’ve made progress on our board — our chair is Black, and she may be the only one in full service — and in our hires. But by the time you get to the little pyramid at the top, it’s white male. Why is that? What are the lenses we use to make those selections? What are the biases that prevail?

One of the problems is that turnover is low in the middle to upper ranks, where senior officers have spent decades with our company to reach those positions. So now when we have an opening, we look through the entire roster. We set targets and goals, require a talented, diverse slate of candidates, and we hit our goals. We’re seeing progress.

We embrace openness, and that means we set targets and goals and talk about what equity means. Our conversations could insult some people in a different environment, but we’re all getting more comfortable. I’d say the majority of our workforce has gotten comfortable, but there are still cultural sensitivities.

CA: What kind of transparency do you have with your investors?

JM: If you don’t publish your statistics, you can’t really track progress. To grow, you have to be open and vulnerable. You have to have thick skin, and share even when you’re going backward.

CA: One last question. How do you go about making that culture sustainable?

JM: The culture of a company, family, home or business is more powerful than any individual. Embedding principles and values becomes an anchor to the organization, with tremendous roots and stability beyond any given leader.

So, we make sure we talk about this all the time, at every level. I’ve booted it down to three sound bites: Everyone is welcome at Denny’s. Everyone is treated like your favorite guest. Everyone is treated with kindness and respect. With Covid-19 complaints going up, we have new challenges. But when you model care and love, it unites people.

My hope is those principles and values do stick. If they’re eroded, it will destroy a company. It will destroy a family. It will destroy a nation. We’ve got to care for each other.

CA: I am going to close with that last statement, John, because you really landed the plane!
Mary Barra | Chair and CEO, GM

“"We have many pockets of good things, but we want to bring it all together and then take it to the next level.””

CA: When you thought about your team and how you were going to galvanize them into action, how did you share your authenticity?

MB: I believe you have to start with yourself, and because I’m responsible for General Motors, I have to start there, too. I wrote a note to the whole company, and I think what really brought my leadership team of 15 people together were the responses we got when I posted the note. I still get goose bumps when I think about some of the personal stories people told of their experiences at GM that weren’t what I want them to be.

The stories led to listening sessions. We had town halls on inclusion. We’ve also had two listening sessions with the leadership of GMAAN, our African-American ERG [employee resource group]. The leaders asked everybody to share how they’re feeling. The words were hard to hear, but we kept peeling back to a deeper level, to understand why they felt that way.

Then the senior team and I started examining all our policies and procedures, from hiring, promotions, development, marketing, and communication to dealer and supplier diversity. We have many pockets of good things, but we want to bring it all together and then take it to the next level.

Every fall we get our top 230 company leaders from around the globe together for a session on business and culture. We were virtual this year, so we broke it up into different topics. The first one was on diversity, equity and inclusion [DEI]. I started off by saying I’m still learning, so if I say something wrong because I don’t understand, I hope you’ll help me understand. Please don’t cancel me!

CA: How do you engage your many stakeholders – the investors, your employees, your customers, community organizations – on this journey?

MB: Our IAB [Inclusion Advisory Board] includes one dealer and one supplier, and they’ll take messaging back to their colleagues. And we have strong support from our investors, especially from those who have been with us a long time. We share what we stand for, because we believe that leads to better business performance.

I also ask investors, how can you not support creating an environment where all people bring their true – and best – selves to work? And frankly, the pushback answers I get are not very good. I’m not saying I’ve won everyone over. But that’s what we’re trying to achieve.

CA: How do you plan to make change sustainable, to become a part of the organization’s foundation, not to mention a part of your legacy?

MB: That’s something we’re really focused on. We’re looking holistically at all the company systems, since people respond better to what gets measured. We’re setting goals and holding ourselves accountable.

Our number one goal has long been to have health, workplace safety and product safety, and we just added psychological safety last month at our Global Safety Week. That opens up a link to our DEI work.

CA: That’s a great strategy, and I look forward to reports. Thanks so much for your time, Mary.

MB: Thank you, Crystal.
University, and substantial funds have also been raised from corporate partners and alumni. Each university has hired a full-time program director, and the program services, put together in collaboration with the Universities, are rich: mentoring, tutoring, ELC members as guest lecturers, summer internships, one-on-one coaching, mental health assessments, and an all-important process for assessing and measuring results. “We’re confident that these approaches will work,” said Deese, “but we’re prepared to iterate as we learn, to include those learnings.

“We believe this program can be transformative for the young men and their families,” explains Deese, “If through our Black Male Graduation Rates initiative we can unlock – and we believe we can – the barriers that make young Black men underperform, and we can demonstrate that these interventions are successful, then there’s no doubt in our minds that it can be replicated and have a tremendous exponential effect over time.”

“My long-term relationship with Colleen Amos [OBE] was instrumental in forming my concept,” states Leatherberry. “Colleen, with her sister, Baroness Valerie Amos, founded Amos Bursary in 1999, a support system for young British men of African and Caribbean descent, and we have learned from their experience. Through our ELC members in the UK, we are able to support Black male achievement in both countries. To create this ELC initiative with her experience and under the leadership of my first and most important mentor and friend, Willie Deese, just multiplies the blessings.”

**Charitable Investments and Scholarships**

The ELC annually explores purpose-focused and mission-aligned charitable endeavors that include new initiatives, partnerships and directed charitable giving. Last year’s charitable investments totaled almost $1 million, reaching 27 organizations ranging from leadership development and internship opportunities

“If through our Black Male Graduation Rates initiative we can unlock – and we believe we can – the barriers that make young Black men underperform...then there’s no doubt in our minds that it can have a tremendous exponential effect...”

**Thinking Differently About Inclusion, Race and Social Justice**

At General Motors, we aspire to be the most inclusive company in the world. In every moment, we must decide what we can do – individually and collectively – to drive meaningful, deliberate change.

This year, the global automotive company made that bold commitment.

“The culture of inclusion that we aim to create is one where we all see and value each other,” said Telva McGruder, GM’s first Chief of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. “It’s a culture where we seek to lift up each other all the time, each and every one of us. And it’s a company where everyone feels welcome.”

To crystallize GM’s commitment, Chairman and CEO Mary Barra formed an Inclusion Advisory Board (IAB) to provide consult to the company’s senior leadership team. Additionally, GM has resolved to advocate for equality in social justice, education, health care and economic opportunities for the Black community and other marginalized groups.

Accordingly, General Motors designated $10 million to support organizations that promote inclusion and racial justice. An initial $1 million will go to the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund. The company is determining additional recipients based on input from internal and external sources, including employee resource groups (ERGs) and the IAB.

These commitments are promoting more active dialogue about inclusion, race and social justice. Eleven ERGs are collectively sharing their stories and helping engage employees in understanding cultures, traditions and circumstances, and GM’s leadership teams are committed to turning awareness into action.

“A year from now, what I really expect to see is that we are different than we are today,” McGruder said. “We will be thinking differently about diversity, equity and inclusion. We will also understand where we are on our journey, what we have to do and be in the mode of constantly working our continuous improvement practices.”

**GENERAL MOTORS**

THERE ARE NO REST STOPS ON THE ROAD TO BECOMING THE MOST INCLUSIVE COMPANY IN THE WORLD.

We’re on a mission to support diversity, equity and inclusion within our workforce. Today, tomorrow and for every generation to come. And we won’t stop until we get there.

GENERAL MOTORS
Mission-Driven Focus Inspires Inclusion at Discover

Wanji Walcott has been part of the Discover family for just over a year – Executive Vice President, Chief Legal Officer, General Counsel and member of the Executive Committee – but she is no newcomer to building a diverse and inclusive work environment.

“What drew me to Discover,” says Walcott, “is our mission-driven focus. We help our customers spend smarter, manage debt better, and save more, so they achieve a brighter financial future.”

Diversity and inclusion are key drivers of that customer-focused mission. This year’s Covid-19 and racial protests have sparked even more focus and creative practices. Through its Eat it Forward campaign on social media, Discover is giving $5 million to Black-owned restaurants across the United States.

In terms of internal and recruitment programs, the Diversity Accelerator Program encourages college sophomores to make Discover internships their “top choice.” The Deliberate Advocacy Training program prepares a broad range of employees to be effective advocates for D&I as they engage with leaders across the business. In addition, Discover is a premier sponsor at key national diversity conferences including NSBE (National Society of Black Engineers), SHPE (Society of Hispanic Engineers) and AnitaB.org’s Grace Hopper Celebration.

More permanent practices are also in the works. A company-wide listening session in June, co-hosted by CEO Roger Hochschild and Walcott, led to a D&I Task Force with representation from all levels in the organization. The Task Force’s mandate is to de-bias systems, increase representation, educate colleagues, and give back to communities. “With a deeper understanding of the inequities,” reports Walcott, “we can make sure we don’t have more of the same.

“I’m especially excited about the Data Transparency Project we are setting up,” states Walcott. “Our HR Department has created a really great dashboard so we can drive accountability and progress. “Our recent candid conversations about race in the workplace, they’re like nothing I’ve seen before,” Walcott concludes. “We are focused on keeping the momentum going.”

As a scholarship benefit, all recipients participate in an Honors Symposium that is designed to encourage them to continue their interest in business careers.

The ELC Institute for Leadership Development and Research

The Institute has always been responsible for developing and presenting a series of unique training opportunities for Black corporate executives and an ever-expanding pipeline of younger Black corporate professionals ready to fill their shoes. But over the last year, the Institute’s achievements have mushroomed.

• Bristol Myers Squibb Scholars;
• Linde’s Engineers of Tomorrow;
• Raytheon Technologies Scholars
• winners of the Award for Excellence in Business Competition, sponsored by The Coca-Cola Foundation; and
• winners of the National Business Case Competition, sponsored by ExxonMobil.

The same way we treat our employees is how we treat all applicants – with respect. Discover Financial Services is an equal opportunity employer (EEO is the law). We thrive on diversity & inclusion. You will be treated fairly throughout our recruiting process and without regard to race, color,

https://jobs.discover.com/culture-and-benefits/
Diversity in culture starts with honoring people.

“At Discover, what we stand for is a brighter financial future for all. And to help our customers achieve this, our employees need to feel at home here, they need to feel like they belong. We are focusing on maintaining a culture where everyone feels like their unique perspective matters, they feel valued, can be themselves and are provided equitable access to opportunities to grow and advance. Our focus is on diversity, equity, and inclusion in all that we do.”

See how we shine bright at jobs.discover.com/culture
Together We Must Amplify Black Leadership

Our path forward to a better, more just and equitable future is illuminated by Black leadership. It anchors The Coca-Cola Company’s approach to meaningful advocacy — where our words and our actions align — so our business and world can emerge stronger. Our growth is guided by the resiliency and vision of Black leaders like Lori George Billingsley, Global Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, and Valerie R. Love, Senior Vice President of Human Resources and Social Justice Executive Chair for Coca-Cola North America. We will sustain our growth by strengthening our Black leadership talent pipeline — amplifying the voices of Black leadership from every level of our organization and accelerating their professional advancement.

Coca-Cola’s social justice work underway today is charting a bold path for the future of our business — with a level of empowerment, agility, energy and commitment unprecedented in our company history. Fragmented tactics will not create the systemic change that is desperately needed. Our strategy to listen, lead, invest and advocate mobilizes our legacy of advancing civil rights and rallies the strength of our employees to make our vision a reality. Together, we must amplify Black leadership on this journey.

Lori George Billingsley, Global Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, The Coca-Cola Company; and Valerie R. Love, Senior Vice President of Human Resources and Social Justice Executive Chair, Coca-Cola North America

We are reckoning with a reality that is not new...far from it. For too long, Black lives, Black joy and Black futures have stifled under the weight of systemic racism. This summer, The Coca-Cola Company met the magnitude of a cultural turning point. We listened to our Black employees, whose sense of personal safety and belonging was eroding. We listened to our community leaders and social justice advocates, whose hope in the private sector as an ally was waning.

“Together We Must Amplify Black Leadership”

THE Coca-Cola CO.
USA

https://www.coca-colacompany.com/shared-future/
diversity-and-inclusion

“The Journal is a new vehicle for sharing information that spotlights the experience of Black professionals.”

was published this fall. Both issues are available on The ELC website.

The Institute is also responsible for keeping a full pipeline of Black professionals ready to step into the shoes of today’s executives and board members. Leadership Development Week (LDW), a series of sessions offered for the last 20 years, has now had its content updated, all able to be effectively presented in person or virtually.

All the programs have been redesigned around a competency- and research-based learning model, and content
together we must

start change
demand justice
admit we can do more
stand as one
right wrongs
listen and create a better future
end racism.

and together we will.

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AIG’s Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion

At AIG, the diversity of our people is one of our greatest strengths and sources of pride. By bringing their full, authentic selves to work each day, our colleagues show us how to better understand our clients, increase innovation and reduce risk. That’s why, as part of our strategic vision, we are focused on fostering a culture of inclusion that is designed to attract, develop and retain diverse talent.

Our commitment starts at the very top: AIG CEO Brian Duperreault is a signatory to CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion, and he has personally championed one of our most successful Diversity & Inclusion programs, the Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Our ERGs represent areas of focus that are important to our employees and clients, such as gender equality and identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, faith, diverse abilities, generational differences and military experience. More than 11,000 AIG employees actively participate in one or more of the 145+ ERGs around the world.

Sometimes more immediate action is needed. Amid protests over social injustice in the United States and around the world earlier this year, AIG granted additional volunteer time off to employees who wanted to support their communities and promote diversity, understanding and equality in our society.

In recognition of these initiatives—as well as our commitment to talent recruitment and development, leadership accountability, and supplier diversity—AIG has been named to the 2020 DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity for the third straight year as well as the Human Rights Campaign’s “Best Places to Work for LGBTQ Equality” for the ninth consecutive year.

AIG’s Executive Leadership Team and Board continue to support and promote the strategic importance of our diversity, equality and inclusion efforts, and are deeply committed to a diverse workforce and a welcoming environment for everyone.
AIG is proud to support the Executive Leadership Council.

AIG’s greatest strength lies within our employees, who help us make a difference in the world every day. We’re committed to creating an inclusive workplace focused on attracting, retaining, and developing diverse talent that fosters a culture of belonging for all employees. Visit aig.com to learn more.

“Diversity and inclusion is more than a commitment. It’s how we define ourselves and who we aspire to be at AIG.”

Brian Duperreault, Chief Executive Officer, AIG
Finally, a nighttime panel discussion included CEO Ashby, NAACP CEO Derrick Johnson, Urban League CEO Marc Morial, Black Enterprise CEO Earl “Butch” Graves, Jr., and Color of Change President Rashad Robinson, and was moderated by April Ryan, author and CNN correspondent. Videos of all concurrent sessions and guests are available for attendees to watch on The ELC website for the rest of October.

The first-ever Power of Women at Work (POWW) took place virtually in September. POWW gathered more than 300 women business and thought leaders for panels, workshops, and Q&A sessions on workplace authenticity, identifying and navigating bias, and mitigating the effects of gender and race inequity. The foundation for this one-day program was Being Black in Corporate America, a study by Coqual formerly CTI.

The speakers were all stellar business professionals, each representing different industries: Minda Harts, author of The Memo – What Women of Color Need to Know to Secure a Seat at the Table; Julia Taylor Kennedy, executive vice president and co-author of the Coqual study; Charlotte Jones-Burton, M.D., co-founder of Women of Color in Pharma and a vice president at Otsuka Pharmaceuticals; Aisha Bowe, an aerospace engineer and co-founder and CEO of STEMBoard; Trudy Bourgeois, founder and CEO of The Center for Workforce Excellence; and Melissa Butler, founder and CEO of The Lip Bar, a vegan beauty brand.

2020 ELC/Beta Iota Boulé Black Economic Forum

Once again, The ELC, McKinsey & Co., Beta Iota Boulé, and the Beta Iota Boulé Foundation hosted Black business, economic, non-profit and political leaders – virtually this time – for the 2020 Black Economic Forum (BEF), to discuss the opportunities revealed in today’s twin pandemics: Covid-19 and racism. The focus of the more than 700 participants was evolving a Community of Action to accelerate Black socio-economic development.

McKinsey & Co. updated attendees to the alarming racial wealth gap (RWG) within the framework of current events, beginning with the estimated $1-1.5 trillion GDP loss to the US caused by the RWG. They also laid out a road map of considerations in establishing an effective Community of Action to tackle the complex socio-economic and policy-related issues.

Keynote speaker Bruce Gordon, ELC member and director, Northrop Grumman, stated, “In companies with Blacks in their boardrooms – and speaking truth to power there – we’ve seen success.” The strategy now is to amplify the impact with a Community of Action. Honored guest Ohio Congressmember Joyce Beatty promised, “Racism is a national crisis, and I will do everything in my power to identify strategies to close the wealth gap.”

Embracing Diversity and Defining Possible

“Achieving our best culture means understanding the ‘why’ behind what we do – where our organization is headed, why it is changing, and why the changes are so important to our employees, customers and the global community. We deliver on our commitments with bold innovation and operational excellence, because our mission is your experience.”

Northrop Grumman aspires to create a workplace where every employee is empowered to think differently and encourages fierce curiosity and a pioneering spirit. The company’s commitment to inclusion is reflected in its diverse workforce that embraces people of color, women, veterans, people with disabilities and the LGBTQ community. Diversity enables Northrop Grumman to define new possibilities every day by designing, developing, building and supporting some of the world’s most advanced systems – from undersea to outer space and cyberspace.

Shawn Purvis knows what it takes to enable this global enterprise. As a leader in the technology and engineering field, she is an active voice and advocate for others. Her team ensures that 90,000 employees are equipped to drive Northrop Grumman’s performance and provide next-generation capabilities around the world. The strong foundation that her team has built enables Northrop Grumman to rapidly address customers’ needs and ensure a secure and stable environment in a world that is constantly evolving.

Along with driving company performance through innovative technological solutions and enabling the massive technology infrastructure to protect the network, her team is also charged with leading a digital transformation and advancing collaboration systems that promote agility and efficiency. Embracing disruptive thinking in the effort to shape the future requires changing how one works, thinks and learns. Purvis’ team is paving the way in driving a transformation that will redefine the approach to engineering and manufacturing.

www.ngc.com/inclusion
Many voices. One mission.

We support our 90,000 team members who are as diverse as the communities we support, all dedicated to solving the world’s most challenging problems.
Scott Uzzell | CEO, Converse

“If you’re coming out of college and you don’t see anybody who looks like you above you in a firm, you’re not likely to take a job there.”

Scott Uzzell: Hi, Crystal, this is Scott.

Crystal Ashby: Good morning, Scott. From what I know about you, equity is not just business; it’s personal. How did this happen for you?

SU: I have to admit that I’ve learned a lot about equity in the last six months. I used to think it was just about giving people of color like me more opportunities, and once we were hired, we had to be perfect. I still say that’s important, but now I also see that the environment you’re in has to be willing to support your overall success.

I realize now that my colleagues of color and I don’t have to walk on water. We’re human and we’re allowed to make mistakes, to grow, develop, and continue on our journeys. It’s made me as a leader on inclusion much more forceful.

CA: You also have to add in a lot of stakeholders: investors, employees, customers. How are you weaving them into your new objectives?

SU: It’s being declarative on how important representation is to our culture, to our country, to what we believe is the value of our brand. It’s about being transparent and creating a culture of belonging where all bring their best selves to work. It’s being clear that we need to get more people of color into our ecosystem of creative agencies, consultants, law firms and supply chains. If we’re not constantly pushing back, we’re co-conspirators, which is close to enabling the problem.

I’ve come to see there’s no middle ground when it comes to where you stand on equity, diversity and inclusion. If we put D&I on our website as critical to our organization, we have to show it. Now when I’m on calls with boards I’m on, and all the Zoom boxes look the same except for me, white board members are calling it out. Not everyone, but at least half. We’re not yet living the story we’re telling. I see progress, but there’s still work to be done.

CA: What do you think it takes to make the progress sustainable?

SU: Being CEO is different. I used to think you just make public statements, give money to social justice organizations, scholarships to HBCUs, but that’s not enough. It’s having those constant dialogues with your leadership team that drive sustainability.

One, making sure you have the right leaders on your team, from a representation standpoint and from the standpoint of living the company values every day. Second, this has to be a business topic that’s talked about every day. And third, it’s got to be in the fabric of everything we do. It can’t be just about training people in the pipeline. It’s also making sure you have representation across the board. If you’re coming out of college and you don’t see anybody who looks like you above you in a firm, you’re not likely to take a job there.

It’s also about having clear deliverables and associated timetables and measures. If the CEO is not pushing that agenda every day, it won’t be important to the next group of people. And I know I’ll be held accountable. If you don’t see progress in 90 days, six months, a year, then I’m not credible.

CA: Scott, I want to thank you for how transparent and honest you’ve been, and for how much of yourself you shared in this discussion. You do Converse and ELC proud.

SU: I’m honored, Crystal.
Panels of ELC members and non-profit leaders then presented different aspects of the action plan: safeguarding future family income through education, technology and innovation; the role of the public sector in building family wealth and family savings; and how criminal injustice and inequitable access to health and health care shape Black communities.

Former ELC CEO Ronald Parker, one of the founders of BEF, a retired PepsiCo executive vice president, and now president and CEO of the National Association of Securities Professionals, closed the Forum with the call to action, first steps in forming the Community of Action: a pledge to hold a series of courageous conversations with other organizations on better collaboration and metrics; to identify concrete steps; and to consider how a Community of Action might convene and continue the dialogue. “This is our Black Davos. We’ll pressure test our agenda every year,” says Parker. “We’re exercising our power for sustainable change.”

The ELC has for almost 35 years introduced Black Excellence to corporate America, policymakers, the business media, and elected officials.

Today, America’s history of racial discrimination can no longer be deflected, diminished, unseen, denied, or ignored.

On behalf of the more than 800 ELC members, CEO Ashby asks corporate America the urgent question: “What will you do to ensure the change that has to happen? It’s time for us to share the accountability with our allies and partners. The collective power of our unique capabilities can create the more perfect union where Black Excellence is free to flourish in all its forms.”

“...create the more perfect union where Black Excellence is free to flourish in all its forms.”