



LEVERAGE

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On DEI, staying strong, committed and bold

The recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling outlawing most race-conscious admissions practices in higher education poses no immediate threat to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) or

environmental, social and governance (ESG) programs in the private sector and other public institutions. The majority opinion was specific in limiting this new interpretation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution to the specifics at hand – race-conscious acceptance decisions at universities that the court said discriminated against White and Asian applicants in favor of Blacks and Latinx people.

The key word, though, is “immediate.” Even before the ruling, groups opposing DEI and ESG programs in the private sector had threatened legal action, claiming the initiatives discriminate against White people, especially in recruiting, hiring and promoting employees. It seems the high court will eventually have to weigh in on these additional applications of “affirmative action,” but it will likely take years for cases to wind their way through the judicial system.

What surprised me wasn’t the ruling itself but the public response to this latest rollback of Civil Rights era rules. According to surveys, two-thirds of Americans endorsed the end of race-based admission selection criteria. Every demographic group, including Blacks and Latinx, agreed with the court’s decision to some degree. Of note, polls found that Americans who strongly supported the decision vastly outnumbered those who were strongly opposed, demonstrating that legislative or further legal actions are not likely to succeed.

We must recommit to DEI and ESG while taking counsel on averting future legal challenges. There is worry that healthcare companies’ risk assessment/legal staff will apply pressure to adopt a defensive posture to avoid high-profile litigation in such politicized times, but let’s make sure our DEI and ESG programs are fair, equitable and comply with existing law.

Charlotte Burrows, chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, said the Supreme Court ruling “does not address employer efforts to foster diverse and inclusive workforces or to engage the talents of all qualified workers, regardless of their background. ... Diversity helps companies attract top talent, sparks innovation, improves employee satisfaction, and enables companies to better serve their customers.”

I can promise you that the work of TLN will continue unabated; in fact, it only adds to the urgency of our mission to bring diversity to senior healthcare leadership and governance. We see DEI and ESG as essential tools for ending discrimination at the highest levels of organizations, thereby fostering more equity and inclusiveness among frontline staff and better care for disadvantaged populations.

As Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson wrote in dissent, “Deeming race irrelevant in law does not make it so in life.” We still have much work to do to fully realize the freedom and equality promised in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Antoinette (Toni) Hardy-Waller

Antoinette Hardy-Waller
Founder and CEO

Healthcare Executive Leadership (HcEL) is Now... BEYOND BOUNDARIES: Accelerating your C-Suite Journey

The C-Suite is transforming. The definition of what it means to be an authentic leader has shifted. The ability to lead digital transformation, regardless of your domain, has become an essential attribute. Every leader needs to build strategic relationships, hone agile skills and be ready to successfully navigate the future. In order to drive success and growth through crisis moments and massive disruption, business leaders must move beyond prescriptive boundaries.

The Leverage Network has reimagined its Healthcare Executive Leadership Program as Beyond Boundaries. This program is designed for senior Black executives who are within one promotion of entering the C-Suite or those current C-Suite executives looking to advance their C-Suite role. This program will Prepare you for your C-Suite Journey, Position you for greater visibility and Promote you for viable opportunities.

Beyond Boundaries features a rigorous 6-month curriculum, enriched learning objectives and a Capstone Experience designed exclusively for each cohort. This one-of-a-kind, half-day experience crystallizes the learnings and skills acquired. Each executive will gain clarity on career priorities, optimizing stakeholder relationships and building their legacy.

Participation in Beyond Boundaries is limited to the first 25 registrants. Open enrollment begins July 27 while programming will kick off September 28 in Chicago.



THE NEW ROI? CALL IT 'RETURN ON INCLUSION'

By Philip Burton, Managing Partner of DHR Global

We know intuitively that the pursuit of inclusion is good for business, and countless studies confirm our observations. According to a [McKinsey report](#), companies with a more ethnic and culturally diverse workforce are 36% more likely to outperform their peers, while a [Boston Consulting Group study](#) found that companies with more diverse management teams are more innovative, and that's led to 19% higher revenue. And a [Deloitte report](#) concluded that diversity of thinking is a wellspring of creativity, enhancing innovation by about 20% and enabling businesses to spot risks – and reduce them as much as 30%.

The picture is increasingly clear: investment in diversity brings greater creativity, stronger governance, sharper problem-solving skills and higher profits. Yet despite the benefits of an inclusive workforce, Black, indigenous and other people of color are still underrepresented in C-suites and boardrooms. Advancement opportunities for these leaders and entrepreneurs continue to lag, particularly in tech companies, start-ups and industries where innovation is key to growth.

Where should you start the quest to conquer disparities in leadership? And how can you help others on your team, and in healthcare, do the same?

The path forward begins with a three-step process:

Build the talent pipeline

A [Gartner report](#) finds the top reason human resource

managers give for the lack of diversity in the C-suite is “not having enough diverse leadership talent in the pipeline.” Organizations that seek a strong – and inclusive – pipeline of candidates for top executive roles need to be exquisitely intentional in their approach.

Create an expansive database of diverse, high-potential emerging leaders. Partner with organizations on best practices for hiring and onboarding diverse candidates. Meet potential new hires where they are: reaching out to Historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, professional associations and affinity groups is a strong start.

After hiring, support talent and distribute opportunity equally. Be deliberate in creating internship opportunities for Black, indigenous and people of color emerging leaders, particularly in the tech sector and other innovation-driven industries. Create curricula and training that develop leadership skills and increase the odds of promotion.

Identify root causes of hiring bias

[Extensive research](#) shows “unconscious bias” still is rife in virtually every industry and plays a hand in whom we hire. Defined as social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness, unconscious bias is manifested in hiring decisions based on the sense that the more that colleagues are “like us,” the better their fit, and the more comfortable our workplace culture will be.

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Develop a hiring team that includes diverse interviewers. Interrupt thinking and behaviors that lead to exclusion and perpetuate inequity. Educate your team through awareness training on techniques to reduce bias in the hiring process and create a fair experience for all candidates. Ensure job descriptions are bias free and appeal to all candidates, regardless of how they identify. Consider “blind hiring,” in which such information as candidate names, school names, and gender is concealed.

Pursue “science-based” hiring, a process that can ensure consistency by taking each candidate through the same steps, in the same way. Focus on the competencies that will drive job performance in a specific role. Instill diversity metrics and track them to illuminate areas for improvement.

Create a new rubric for evaluating candidates

The rubric, a type of scoring guide, assesses and articulates specific components and expectations for evaluation. Using a new rubric can ensure inclusion is imbedded into the hiring process. It can enhance the evaluation process for candidates to move beyond specifications from a job description to emphasize their unique attributes and experiences – a process often missed in evaluating underrepresented and diverse candidates. Modify hiring practices based on a candidate’s real potential to assume new, even more impactful, roles.

Look beyond older, rigid excluding factors, such as length of tenure in a role or a degree from a prestigious school, to consider personal attributes, such as critical thinking and relationship-building skills, that may increase access for talented leaders from underrepresented groups.

With a more inclusive hiring system – one uncommonly devoted to intentionally bringing diverse leaders into the talent pipeline, avoiding unconscious bias, and taking a more expansive approach to candidate evaluation – your organization can help break down barriers to access and open new doors to, and for, tomorrow’s C-suite superstars.

Philip Burton is Managing Partner of DHR Global, focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion in healthcare. He is also the founder of InHuevation, a social impact enterprise that advocates for eliminating barriers of access in health care, technology, innovation and venture capital. For more information, [contact Philip](#).



DATA REPORT

DATA SHOW ONLY MODEST GAINS FOR BLACK WOMEN TRYING TO MOVE UP

- The data on diversity of senior leadership in U.S. companies remains desultory. Less than 25% of senior executives are people of color.
- The future looks a little better: Three quarters of leaders in the “high-potential pipeline” are white, 9% are Black, 7.7% are Latinx 5 and 5% are Asian-Americans.
- It’s actually worse for Black women. Of current senior leadership, 36% are women, but only 9% of those women are Black.

BLACK WOMEN HAVE SHOWN OVER AND OVER AGAIN THAT THEY ARE ENTREPRENEURIAL AND SUCCESSFUL:

- They start businesses at a rate six times higher than the national average.
- 49% of Black-owned businesses are women-owned.
- Businesses owned by Black women employ more than 272,000 people ... and generate \$59 billion in annual revenue.

THE C-SUITE IS ENGAGED:

- 89% of companies have expanded diversity education and learning programs.
- 86% assess pay equity.
- 81% have business unit accountability for achieving diversity goals.
- 81% review gender equity and identify discrepancies.
- 67% have pay equity policy and take corrective actions.

Data provided by Diversity MBA Media; analysis by Pamela A. McElvane, MBA, MA, MCPC; the company’s CEO and Publisher.



Q&A WITH JOHN THOMPSON III

John Thompson III is the founder and CEO of Team ACES® and is a mentor and executive coach. Earlier this year his book, Stack Your Deck – How to be an ACE in Business and Life, was published.



TLN: In your book, you provide a framework on how to become an agent of change. Was it your intent to explore the topics in the text to serve as a guidebook that inspires action in one's pursuit of success?

JT: I have always been told to write the book I would love to read, and it is through this lens that I approached the writing process. We all have hopes and visions for our lives, but as Nelson Mandela once said, "Vision without action is just a dream." My intent with this book was to provide readers with a framework to not only craft a vision for their life, but to also provide the tools to help readers translate that vision into action.

TLN: In *Stack Your Deck* you introduce the acronym ACES: attitude, connection, empowerment and strength, which serve as the theme throughout the book. You describe how the ACES Pillars of Success™ can help control your destiny and create a life that is rich in meaning and purpose. How has it contributed to success in your life both personally and professionally?

JT: I created the [ACES Pillars of Success™](#) as an acronym and set of standards to guide me. They have become a filter for how I view the world. The origin dates back to my childhood where my grandma taught me and my sister how to play poker. On our way to her house, grandma would call out "bring your dimes" and after a night of poker, she would have no problem going to bed with all our dimes. I learned many lessons during that time with grandma and most of all, I learned the power of an ace. When I was dealt an ace, I felt like I had a special power and more often than not, I would win that hand. Years later, those ACES are still bringing meaning into my life, this time in the form of an acronym that provides the foundation of my book. It includes:

- **Attitude**, the ace of spades, is everything. It is the foundation for success or failure in anything you do. The good news is you have a choice each day regarding the attitude you will embrace.
- **Connection**, the ace of clubs, is what keeps you grounded and on track along your success journey. Connection gives meaning and purpose to our lives and anyone can cultivate it.
- **Empowerment**, the ace of hearts, is about being confident in who you are, being true to yourself and celebrating your freedom.

- **Strength**, the ace of diamonds, is all about overcoming the challenges we face in life. It's not about the adversity we face but how we deal with that adversity that defines us.

TLN: One of the most intriguing concepts in your book discusses the importance of connections and the steps you can take to ensure you are strongly connected to who you are and where you are going. Can you elaborate on the three areas of connection you identified and how you have cultivated them while on your journey?

JT: As humans, we were born to connect – with our mothers, with our families, with our tribe. It is this connection that brings meaning to our lives. In the Connections section of the book, I describe three areas: Connection to self, to others, and to the world, broken down as follows:

- **Connection to self.** According to Cigna U.S. Loneliness Index of 2020, 3 out of every 5 adults, or 61%, report sometimes or always feeling lonely. It's in these moments of loneliness where we need something, or someone, to reconnect with.
- **"Choose your friends wisely."** These were the words my grandpa would close out letters he would send me when I was in college. I created a tool to help me choose my friends, called the FACE Framework – making sure I am surrounding myself with individuals who keep me focused, hold me accountable, challenge me and elevate me. By taking inventory of my circle and making sure the individuals have a high "FACE score," I'm able to stay on track toward my goals.
- **Connect to the world.** One of the things I tell my girls every night before bed is "Life begins at the end of your comfort zone." To be connected to the world is to expand your creativity and options. By expanding your horizons, you allow yourself to explore new ideas and potentially find new ways of thinking about the world around you.