



Thought Leadership Blog

Why are black women's experiences in the workplace often negative and the fruits of their labor much less than their peers?



In this month's thought leadership blog, Mia Ellis, Inclusion and Diversity Lead, American Eagle Outfitters, discusses the challenges black women face at work and how leaders can forge a path toward equality.

"Usually, when people talk about the strength of black women, they ignore the reality that to be strong in the face of oppression is not the same as overcoming oppression. That endurance is not

2020 Woman of Courage Honorees



From left to right are: Nikiya Davis, Shireen Deeb, LaTionna Russell and Carla Tonzo

Across our community, families have faced incredible challenges this year. For those who lost their livelihood, the pandemic has been economically catastrophic.

This year, we selected four outstanding clients as our 2020 Woman of Courage Awardees. These women have overcome incredible obstacles and have achieved success. You can watch their inspirational videos [here](#) and read their full written stories on [our website](#).

Nikiya Davis lost her job in 2019 and was struggling to find another. Just as her unemployment was about to end, COVID-19 shook her entire way of life. "I didn't know how I was going to feed my children," she said.

to be confused with transformation."
-bell hooks

[Click here to read the full article.](#)

We say farewell to several Board members



Our hearts are full of gratitude and appreciation for our outgoing board members completing their terms this December. Thank you for your years of service and the many contributions you've made in support of our clients achieving meaningful employment.

Thank you to our Ex-Officio, Jill Patterson; your leadership will be greatly missed. Also, thank you to Wendy O'Brien, Susan Nelson, Deborah Lee and Deborah Skillings-Phillips, for your commitment to our mission.

Thank you to our *Hope for a Brighter Tomorrow* Sponsors

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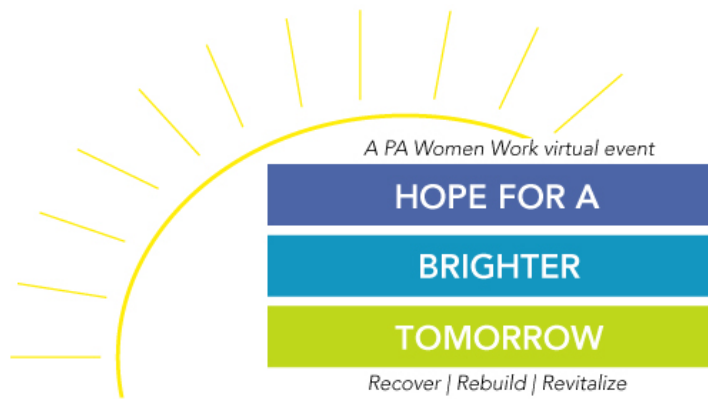
Carla Tonzo, who had always been employed and helped to support her family, found herself suddenly out of work due to COVID-19 downsizing. "I was shocked. I truly didn't know what I was going to do," Carla remembered.

Despite the obstacles, Carla and Nikiya prevailed. The resilience of those who lost their jobs and fought to continue meeting their family's basic needs is inspiring. We are honored to have played a part in their journeys.

Together we can help to continue to rebuild our economy and support local women to achieve financial security. This year, we saw a significant increase in demand for our workforce development services. Nikiya, Carla, LaTionna and Shireen were just four of the many clients who found employment after participating in our programs.

Join us and be part of more success stories. [Give today!](#)

Fall Virtual Event a Success



This year due to the pandemic, we decided to postpone our annual Circle of Hope awards dinner to the fall of 2021. In its place, we hosted a virtual event on Oct. 28 called Hope for a Brighter Tomorrow. The event drew over 225 guests, who first took part in virtual networking rooms and then joined our event portal for a video presentation, silent auction and raffle.

As part of the event, we highlighted several clients and the impact that the pandemic had on local job-seekers, including one of this year's Woman of Courage awardees, Carla Tonzo.

"When I lost my job because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I had no idea what I was going to do. PA Women Work helped me find a new career I can be proud of," Carla explained.

Welcome new Board members



Congratulations, Ebony Dendy

We are excited to have an Army veteran and accomplished business professional joining our organization. But she is not new to PA Women Work. Ebony is a graduate of our New Choices program and a former Woman of Courage. She's also actively involved as a volunteer.



Meredith Klein, Director, PR + Brand Engagement at Brunner

We look forward to working with a powerhouse in the communications industry and a vocal advocate for diversity, inclusion and female leadership. She's already made an impact on the organization as a mentor with our 3 Cups of Coffee program and as a volunteer.

Upcoming 2021 Classes



Thanks to our supporters, we surpassed our goal and raised over \$90,000. Your kindness will help continue providing vital programming and services to people working hard to support themselves and their families during this incredibly challenging time.



3 CUPS OF COFFEE GRAD LUNCH & LEARN

Over the past year, we have learned so much about the clients from 3 Cups of Coffee GRAD. The students and recent graduates from CCAC are motivated and resilient, but many of them face barriers to finding their dream job. We hosted a recent Lunch & Learn to help mentors better support and guide these clients toward employment.

Mia Ellis, Inclusion and Diversity Lead at American Eagle Outfitters Inc., helped educate participants on the challenges that community college students may face, like being a first-generation college student, having to work part-time to put themselves through school, single parents struggling with child care, criminal backgrounds and more. Understanding these challenges allows our mentors to better understand the individuals they're supporting and create deeper, more personal connections.

We also had Ella Kaplan, Social Worker at UPMC, describe how to best maximize the mentor relationship. She explained how important it is to drop preconceived notions at the door and really get to know your mentee, ask open-ended questions so they can best describe their situation, and help them set realistic career goals and be an accountability partner throughout the process. All of the event attendees walked away with a fresh perspective of their unique roles.

New Choices Class

Monday, Jan. 11 - Friday, Jan. 15
9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

A Closer Look: LinkedIn

Tuesday, Jan. 19
10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Employer Meet and Greet

Wednesday, Jan. 20
9 a.m. - 11 a.m.

New Choices Class

Monday, Jan. 25 - Friday, Feb. 29
6 p.m. - 8 p.m.

To register, [click here](#).



For more information on becoming a mentor, contact Taneshya Williams at twilliams@pawomenwork.org.

Thank you to the Next Generation Fund of the Roy A. Hunt Foundation for your continued support of the 3 Cups of Coffee GRAD program.

Customer Service



In October, we hosted our first virtual Customer Service First-Class training. This specialized course, which results in professional certification, provides individuals with a powerful set of interaction skills that enables them to communicate more effectively with colleagues and customers and, in the process, build trust, strengthen partnerships, and achieve desired results.

A special thank you to our employer partners for conducting interviews and supporting job-seekers on their path to meaningful employment. If your company is interested in an employer partnership with PA Women Work, contact Kristin Ioannou at kioannou@pawomenwork.org.

Thank you to the McElhatten Foundation for your support of Customer Service First-Class.

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