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10 Diversity And Inclusion Trailblazers You Need To Get Familiar With

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Diversity & Inclusion

I help organizations create strategies for a more equitable workplace.



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Research indicates that **employees** and **consumers** alike are craving more socially responsible companies, and organizations have taken notice. More and more companies are taking a vested interest in fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for employees. With the rise of this interest, there has been an increase in the number of professionals whose work focuses on fostering more diverse and inclusive environments. It is important to highlight the changemakers of the industry who are moving the needle forward. Below you will find a list of 10 professionals (in no particular order) who are doing great work that is focused around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

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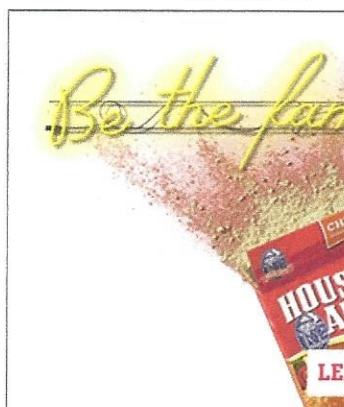
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focused on helping companies overcome barriers related to DEI. Nika has over 20 years of related experience in the field and has helped more than 80 companies and institutions with their DEI efforts. As the Head of Diversity and Inclusion at the Greenville Chamber, Nika has been able to implement DEI practices that have transformed the city and created lasting changes in her native South Carolina. Nika holds a Doctor of Management in Organizational Leadership. In addition to her extensive consulting experience, Nika has written two books on diversity and inclusion: *The Intentional Inclusionist* and *Next Level Inclusionist: Transforming Your Work and Yourself for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Success*. Nika is making waves and transforming businesses and institutions around the country through her consulting company.

2. **Deborah Levine.** Deborah Levine is the founder and editor-in-chief of the *American Diversity Report*. Deborah is also the author of 14 different books focused on religious diversity and developed the **Matrix Model Management System**, a tool designed to measure the Big Data of diversity. Deborah has 33 years of extensive experience in the field of DEI and has designed different resources on inclusion and unconscious bias. Deborah is a trainer and speaker who uses interactive and storytelling-based methodology to connect with her audience. Deborah's work on diversity has been published in the *HuffPost*, *Harvard Divinity School Bulletin*, and *The Journal of Public Management & Social Policy*.

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3. **Steven Matly.** Steven Matly is a diversity and inclusion advocate, and founder and CEO of a boutique Seattle-based full-service staffing and recruiting agency that focuses on talent acquisition and bridging the gap to help companies recruit more diverse employees. Steven was voted as one of the most influential leaders by *Seattle Magazine* in 2018 and was selected to give a **TEDx** talk on diversity and inclusion in 2017. Aside from delivering workshops and speaking engagements focused on DEI, Steven founded a Seattle diversity and inclusion **Meetup**, which has amassed over 600 members.



industry. In 2019, Wayne co-founded [The Icon Project](#), whose mission is to build emotionally intelligent Black and Brown men in the tech industry. Wayne has been recognized numerous times by different publications and is regarded as a thought-leader in the tech diversity and inclusion space. Wayne also visits numerous companies to deliver talks on tech DEI.

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5. **Mary-Frances Winters.** [Mary-Frances Winters](#) is the president and CEO of [The Winters Group, Inc.](#), a company designed to help organizations develop transformative solutions for more equity and inclusion. Through her consulting company, Mary-Frances has worked with hundreds of companies to strengthen their DEI efforts. Aside from running the company for over 35 years, Mary-Frances has received a number of distinctions including diversity pioneer by *Profiles in Diversity Journal* and the Winds of Change award from the Forum on Workplace Inclusion. Mary-Frances has published four different books, with the most recent being *We Can't Talk about That at Work! : How to Talk about Race, Religion, Politics, and Other Polarizing Topics*.

6. **Anj Handa.** [Anj Handa](#) is the founder of [Inspiring Women Changemakers \(IWC\)](#), a global, women-led movement of changemakers who are focused on the advancement of women. One of the things that IWC is dedicated to is lobbying on social issues that hold women back. As a professional lobbyist, Anj's work has focused on diplomatic assignments in the field of employment and skills policy. Anj is a multi-lingual lobbyist speaking five different languages. Anj has 20 years of experience in the area of employment law and has a number of different awards and distinctions. Anj also serves as a member on several different boards and committees.

7. **Dr. Kristen Liesch.** [Dr. Kristen Liesch](#) is the co-chief executive officer of [Tidal Equality](#), a consulting firm focused on "building a more equal world through engaging conversations, game-changing strategy, and transformational projects in communities, organizations, and sectors." Kristen also serves as the founding partner of [Blue Switch Consulting](#), where Kristen helps businesses in Canada and New Zealand become more profitable by increasing diversity in the workplace. Kristen also serves as an advisor/advisory consultant to several different organizations focused on equity and inclusion. Kristen has an extensive background as a strategist and educator, with over 15 years of experience in organizational equity and holds a Ph.D. in English Language and Literature.

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8. **Dr. Shelton Goode.** Dr Shelton Goode is a seasoned DEI leader with over 10 years of related experience. Shelton is also a decorated air force veteran. Currently, Shelton is the chief executive officer and president of [Icarus Consulting, LLC.](#), a veteran-owned consulting company that specializes in the development of more inclusive organizational cultures. Prior to leading Icarus, Shelton served as the diversity director/manager for several large organizations. Shelton holds a doctorate in Public Administration, is a certified diversity professional, and is currently serving on a number of different boards and committees. Shelton has been given several different DEI-related awards and last year received the Trailblazer Award from the National Association of African Americans in Human Resources.

9. **Lily Zheng.** Lily Zheng is a DEI writer, speaker and independent consultant, who helps companies create more inclusive cultures. Lily has consulted nonprofits, start-ups and Fortune 500 companies to help with the management of a growing diverse workforce. Lily has spoken at different companies on a wide range of topics including effective leadership, DEI, gender ambiguity, and LGBTQ+ issues. Lily is the co-author of a book, *Gender Ambiguity in the Workplace: Transgender and Gender-Diverse Discrimination*, which focuses on discrimination and the experiences of people who are gender-diverse. Last week, Lily and Inge Hansen released a new book, *The Ethical Sellout*, which features a collection of stories regarding different people's experiences and offers solutions to navigate marginalization and privilege.

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10. **Uché Blackstock, M.D.** Dr. Uché Blackstock is an associate professor and Harvard-trained, board-certified emergency medicine physician. Inspired by her mother's journey and experiences, Uché created [Advancing Health Equity \(AHE\)](#), an organization designed to address inequities and disparities in healthcare. AHE partners with healthcare companies to address barriers in healthcare. In addition, AHE holds workshops designed to mitigate



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Janice Gassam

I grew up in five different states and across two continents, which was the catalyst to my interest in diversity. My ultimate goal is to help leaders infuse more love... **Read More**

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