



Summary of Speeches and New Ideas

Committee of 100 Career Ceilings Summit: Creating a Level Playing Field

July 17, 2024 | 11 AM to 3:30 PM

The following is a summary of the event objectives, agenda, speeches, and the new ideas generated by the in-person attendees.

In-Person Attendees: 40 DEI and Employee Resource Group leaders, Asian American Non-Profit leaders, industry executives, and Committee of 100 members

Virtual Attendees: 220 general audience participants who watched the Fireside Chat, Keynote Speech, and Town Hall Discussions

Location: Dorsey & Whitney Conference Center in Midtown Manhattan, New York City

Summit Objectives

Chaired by Peter Young, Committee of 100 member and Chair of the Committee of 100 Asian American Career Ceilings Initiative, this in-person and virtual event had three objectives:

- To provide the attendees with informative updates on key developments via speakers and attendee discussion
- Through discussion and networking, facilitate relationships and collaboration between individuals and organizations whose activities relate to career ceilings, DEI, and Employee Resource Groups, especially for Asian Americans
- Orchestrate the creation of new ideas for all to use to facilitate moving these ideas forward

Special Thanks

The Summit was hosted by Committee of 100 with financial sponsorship by McKinsey & Co. Dorsey & Whitney donated the use of their conference center. Special thanks to Allister Chan and Kevin Feng who served for many months on the planning committee, the Committee of 100 staff led by Interim President - Cindy Tsai, and members of FF Fraternity who performed a variety of valuable volunteer tasks.



Agenda

- 11:00 AM
Welcoming Remarks (Ambassador Gary Locke, Chair, Committee of 100 and Peter Young, Event Chair)
- 11:10 AM
Fireside Chat (Ngan Nguyen, Senior Vice President, Global Diversity & Talent Management, Citi) and Open Discussion: "The Future of DEI: Can it Pivot?"
- 12:00 PM
Keynote Speech: "Lessons Learned" (Cecilia Stanton Adams, President, The Diversity Institute)
- 1:00 PM
Town Hall Discussion: "Breaking Through Career Ceilings: Choices and Solutions" (Adrian Kwok, Associate Partner, McKinsey & Co. and Frank Wu, President, Queens College)
- 2:00 PM
New Ideas through Dialogue: Discussion Leader led Attendee Discussion Teams to Generate New Ideas
- 3:00 PM
Presentation of New Ideas by Discussion Team leaders



Summary of Speeches/Panels

The video recording of the Fireside Chat, Keynote Speech, and Town Hall Discussions can be found on the Committee of 100 website at www.committee100.org/creating-a-level-playing-field-summit

- "The Future of DEI: Can it Pivot?" (Ngan Nguyen, Senior Vice President, Global Diversity & Talent Management, Citi)

Peter Young: Introduction

Definitional

An ERG program creates an open forum for employees who share a common identity to meet and support one another in building their community and sense of belonging. ERG programs empower these groups by offering them financial support, organizational support and access to decision-makers. ERGs are voluntary, employee-led groups that foster a diverse, inclusive workplace. Participation in an ERG can help develop future leaders, increase employee engagement, advise top leaders and Diversity Councils, and expand marketplace reach.

Organizations that have a DEI strategic plan or want to develop one sometimes form a Diversity Council or a Diversity Organization. It is often started or championed by the CEO, Chief Human Resources Officer, Chief Diversity Officer or whoever drives DEI initiatives.

Diversity Councils provide insights and information reflected in the organization and beyond, and they are a sounding board with which managers can accelerate the advancement of inclusion and diversity efforts.

Separately, there can be DEI groups formed by employees around any number of themes, not just ethnic or gender-oriented:

- Women's network (and even more focused, such as women leaders, women in technology, etc.)
- Network for people of color (and additional groups for specific minorities)
- LGBTQ+ network
- Working parents support group
- Veterans support group
- Network for people with disabilities
- Mental health advocacy group
- Mentorship group
- Young professionals network
- Community impact and volunteerism committee

History and Current Situation

DEI groups have been around for a long time, but they really took off after the George Floyd incident. Organizations felt an obligation to be more proactive in promoting a variety of goals around diversity, equity and inclusion. Similar to the ESG movement, although with less focus on measurement and rating requirements. ESG is in retreat now, after much fanfare, for a wide variety of reasons, including a widely diverse set of objectives (some of which could be defended and others that were harder to defend), the lack of standard measures to measure different aspects of ESG, manipulation of the criteria and measurements by companies, and a premature proliferation of ratings and ratings companies whose methods could not be defended and regulatory disclosure requirements for public companies that have been nearly impossible to implement effectively. The variety of structures and programs was broad, and a host of DEI departments and heads proliferated with different goals and with mixed results.

The current pressure on DEI that is being felt by companies, non-profits, government organizations and others is coming from a variety of sources, causing a retreat by many organizations. The pressure from activists, investors and government officials who claim a variety of things, including racial discrimination, the supreme court decision on affirmative action, claims that DEI activities do not create shareholder value or increases in performance or profits, and, of course the woke movement. This is causing a significant retreat by many organizations. Every day there are announcements about the downsizing of DEI efforts.

What do workers and the public think?

A report from the Pew Research Center that was published in May 2023 indicates deep divides in Americans' attitudes towards DEI at work based on demographic and political lines. While the Pew data finds that a majority of employed American adults (56%) say focusing on increasing DEI at work is a good thing, it also notes that a relatively small share of workers place a lot of importance on diversity at their workplace. Only about three in 10 respondents say it is extremely or very important to them to work somewhere with a mix of employees of different races and ethnicities or ages, according to Pew.

Moreover, the survey found 78% of Democratic and Democratic-leaning workers say focusing on DEI at work is a good thing, compared with just 30% of Republican and Republican-leaning workers.

The data also shows American workers have disparate views on how much attention their employers are paying to DEI. About half of the workers (54%) surveyed by Pew said their company or organization pays the right amount of attention to increasing DEI, while 14% say their employer pays too much attention and 15% say their employees pay too little attention.

It is hard to say what is right or wrong since the issue is so complex, but much of the debate will focus on what the right objectives should be for each type of organization, what methods should be used to achieve those objectives, and what should legitimately change. Of course, the answer will be different depending on the nature of each organization.

Asian American Specific Issues

Many of the DEI issues for Asian Americans are the same as for other ethnic groups and gender groups. However, the key difference is the perception that Asian Americans don't have a problem or that they are too small as a group to focus on.

The other is that Asians generally are less likely to work together and, as a result, their efforts are more fragmented across the board. The Summit we organized in 2021 and this one has one of its objectives to encourage collaboration between the various groups.

The Future

Rightly or wrongly, I feel that the DEI groups and activities will continue to retreat. Some organizations will stay fully committed to the broader goals and resist the outside pressures. Others will either partially retreat, redirect, or completely retreat. The easiest defense, however, is to pivot to seek the best people for each job and to create, where practical, a level playing field. Very few people will dispute that promoting and hiring the best people is likely to enhance the success of any organization. The harder case to make will be what methods are appropriate to create a level playing field.

Discussion with Ngan Nguye

Question: Tell us a bit about yourself and how you became involved with DEI

Ngan Nguyen started by telling her story as an immigrant from Vietnam and her experiences and the experiences of her family. In the course of her career, she became increasingly aware of the problem facing Asian Americans in corporate America. She spent part of her career at Ascend which works on ways to help Asian Americans succeed before she joined Citi.

Question: What is Citi doing in DEI in the current environment?

Nagan Nguyen: Citi calls their effort "inclusion" rather than DEI. A huge part of the effort is focused on education. There is a substantial investment companywide to create awareness and to educate employees about the problem and what can be done. DEI is all about removing biases.

Any comment about the Supreme Court ruling about affirmative action?

Ngan Nguyen: There is an intensive focus on the Title 6 ruling and what it may tell you about Title 7. Everyone is wondering whether the broader DEI issue will end up at the Supreme Court and how the court will rule.

Question: Is part of the problem the issue of how companies can defend their DEI efforts against activists who say that DEI efforts are a form of racial discrimination and do not create greater profits and shareholder value?

Ngan Nguyen: There are studies that show that the metrics show that companies that focus on greater diversity do better.

Audience Discussion

Cecelia Stanton Adams: There are 16 groundbreaking studies that have been done that do tie revenues to greater gender and racial diversity. Unfortunately, you have a lot of people who are trying to discredit those studies.

Allen Tse: For all ethnic groups getting to the top is a pipeline issue. That is not necessarily the case for Asian Americans. There are plenty in the pipeline, we just don't

make a stink, and the general perception is that Asian Americans are doing well as a whole, i.e. there isn't a problem.

Ngan Nguyen: I agree with Allen. Further, there is just an issue of the recognition of bias in the organization. A lot of work has gone into getting everyone to recognize biases at Citi.

Adrian Kwok: The way that we manage leadership programs at McKinsey has changed so that anyone can apply to a program, but you can find ways to allow certain groups to understand the benefit to them so that you get around the issue of whether you are favoring one ethnic group over others.

Anla Cheng: There is a particular problem for women, including Asian American women, around the issue of speaking up in order to be noticed and be promoted. Perhaps a training program for Asian Americans to get them to learn to speak up more will help.

Akemi Mechtel: On the other hand, we want to make sure we do not make people feel bad about not speaking up and telling them something is wrong with them. We do training and try to do so through a cultural lens and to give people a number of options to succeed.

- "Lessons Learned" (Cecilia Stanton Adams, President, The Diversity Institute)

Question: Tell us a little about your upbringing and how you ended up interested in diversity issues.

Cecilia Stanton Adams: I grew up in New York City in an immigrant Jamaican family, left home at the age of 16, and ultimately became the first in my family to go to college. I had an interest in diversity issues early on and went on to get my graduate degree on issues of diversity. After working in industry for many years in companies focused on diversity, equity and inclusion, I formed a company ten years ago that advises companies and individuals on how to create the right programs and training around diversity and equity.

Question: Give us a bit of history regarding the diversity and equity movement and progress.

Cecilia Stanton Adams: It has been going on for a long time. It started out with legislation that required certain behaviors, including affirmative action. Interestingly, the greatest beneficiaries of affirmative action early on were white women. Then a

great deal of research was initiated to study unconscious bias. These studies were very useful to make progress. Although the George Floyd incident accelerated the movement to adopt DEI programs, progress, and awareness had been going on for a long time. Although we have made a great deal of progress at lower and middle levels of management, we are now facing the challenge of impacting the upper ranks of management. We have to be seen as equals in the upper echelons.

Question: What do you see as the path going forward to make progress and, in particular, to deal with the increasing obstacles that have arisen?

Cecilia Stanton Adams: Intercultural development continuum will be one key area. There are five phases of progress around intercultural progress, that we are working our way through. The first phase is the denial of differences. The second is being aware of differences and polarization. Then you move on to minimizing differences, followed by an acceptance of differences. The last is adaptation where we see similarities and meet the others where they are. There is a lot of fear and polarization today that is based on a lack of understanding.

Question: Many of the people who are here in-person in the audience are from DEI groups and non-profits dealing with these issues. Many are experts in the field. What advice would you give to the people here in the room?

Cecilia Stanton Adams: Don't burn out, check in with yourself and deal with your own biases. Second, there are three pieces have to work with each other: DEI, communications, and legal. You have to have a balance between the three parts. Don't let the legal department dominate and try to avoid risk.

Audience Discussion

Andrea Louie: How do you accomplish an allyship?

Cecilia Stanton Adams: This Summit event is a great example of creating allyship and dialog between different ethnic and types of groups and different. I am learning things for all of you.

Peter Young: You have to collaborate with other groups and, at a minimum, learn from others.

- "Breaking Through Career Ceilings: Choices and Solutions" (Adrian Kwok, Associate Partner, McKinsey & Co. and Frank Wu, President, Queens College)

Peter Young - Introduction

How bad is it today? A number of the Committee of 100 Asian American Career Ceilings events over the last three and a half years have presented data from leading

researchers and scholars on this issue. We won't go through the data today, but suffice it to say, the data is very depressing. It shows that, with very few exceptions, Asian Americans do not do well in terms of advancement above the middle ranks, even in industries such as technology where the stereotypes would lead you to feel that the opposite is true. When you get to the CEO and board levels and to leadership roles in government and non-profits, the data is equally bad. It is even worse when you look at Asian American women. The only exception appears to be Indian Americans who are doing much better than the other Asian American groups for a variety of reasons.

What are some of the choices that can be made or actions that can be taken to solve the problem? Examples, working together and collaborating as a group, electing government officials at the local and federal levels, acting to block laws that are discriminatory related to career ceilings, and individual actions to succeed personally (developing mentors, training, adapting management styles, creating organizational awareness of the issue, forming DEI or similar groups), changing family child raising to be in sync with societal rules, create awareness of the issue on multiple fronts and that there really is a problem, combat the current Asia Hate and other discriminatory actions and activities, mentoring others, etc.

Fireside Chat

Question: How would you characterize the state of Asian American Career Ceilings and DEI?

Frank Wu: Part of the problem is that Asian Americans are considered a model minority, and many feel we do not have a problem. Another part is that many don't really feel we are part of this country. One of the issues that holds back Asian Americans is a self-imposed beliefs. There is an overemphasis on the importance of technical skills and the lack of focus on the soft skills. That approach does not take into account the non-technical skills, interests and needs of those who are going to hire or promote you.

Peter Young: Warren Buffet got it right when he said that success is driven by three things: IQ, EQ and the amount of energy you apply to succeed. I think you are saying that there is a lack of EQ. Unfortunately, EQ is not emphasized by Asian parents as an important skill for their children.

Adrian Kwok: I am not a DEI expert, but I am heavily involved with the Asian American Employee Resource group at McKinsey. McKinsey does a lot of research on the issues we are discussing. One of our beliefs is that a key is what Asian Americans as a group or as individuals should do to succeed. Also, Asians are trying to succeed in a country that is not Asian, with a very different and diverse set of cultures.

Frank Wu: Darwin said that the key trait of the survival of the fittest is the ability to adapt, not being the smartest or the strongest. One needs to recognize that there are many different rules by country, but industry, etc. The key is to adapt to the environment you have put yourself in. Generalizing is dangerous.

Peter Young: An obvious additional point is that you have to understand yourself and your skills and don't choose a profession where there are more obstacles to your success than you might find elsewhere. If you hate politics, don't join a large company or organization where politics are more prevalent.

Audience Discussion

Adrian Kwok: Question for the audience. Any comments about what companies should do not just for the individual but for the group or company as a whole?

Angela Wang: We need to have more help around the environment around the employees and the structure, not just putting the onus on the individual to solve the problem. I am at Bain and that is one of the things we have put some energy into.

Liwen Li: A key issue is whether your company evaluates senior managers on how they develop those below them and the extent to which they do it with fairness around the diversity issue. At Citi, we have 360-degree evaluations, so the senior people have to pay attention.

Diana Pan: A big part of the problem is the lack of knowledge about Asian Americans relative to other ethnic groups and genders on the part of managers. I am asked to talk to companies all of the time, and they want and need to learn more.



Allan Tse: Ethnic minorities should consider pursuing careers in companies and industries that are outside of their comfort zone, but you have to make sure you feel you can learn the skills that are required.

Michael Lee: I am President of MOCA, but earlier in my career I did some research a while back when I was on the Committee of 100 staff and found that there were very few Asian Americans on the boards of Fortune 500 companies. Citi had two Asian Americans on their board. Question for those of you who are at Citi: Is there more of a pipeline of Asian Americans in the path to the C-Suite at Citi that explains the prevalence of Asian Americans at senior levels?

Ngan Nguyen: There is extensive data on ethnic categorization at Citi and employees are very self-aware. This and many other practices have created a more level playing field for Asian Americans.

Henry Tang: I was appointed to the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission by George W. Bush. A key finding was that "trust and comfort" was a dynamic that 31 of the top 35 CEOs would regularly mention as important traits that are key to being promoted, not necessarily having the highest scores or working the longest hours. This is important for Asian Americans to understand if they want to succeed in this country.

Summary of New Ideas Generated by the Discussion Team

Discussion Table 1 (Discussion Leader - Kevin Feng)

- Networking receptions - Create relationships focused on careers, career paths and experiences
- Training and resources platform - help raise Asian Americans with career workshops, public speaking skills, mentoring methods, career development resources, etc. Could be a resources website, training videos, and podcasts, virtual and in-person classes
- Career opportunities sharing - mechanism where available career opportunities are shared
- Create a TikTok / Social Media account that provides short videos on career and personal development advice

Discussion Table 2 (Discussion Leader - Andrea Louie)

- Create greater sources of funding to support the AAPI community
 - Building giving circles
 - Actively encourage companies, individuals, and organizations to donate 1% to the AAPI community as a regular program
 - Embed training around this issue into mentorship programs
 - Seek company donations to organizations where their employees are on the board of directors
 - Encourage and teach you professionals to invest in themselves by investing in relationships by showing them how to create dinners/coffees/outings with bosses and others with authority
 - Encourage individuals to do pro bono working in their communities to have an impact, but also to develop personal skills associated with philanthropy and community action
 - Work on creating social capital by using charitable giving as a personal business strategy

Discussion Table 3 (Discussion Leader - Adrian Kwok)

- Create an Asian Oprah, i.e. an Asian media outlet for storytelling and news to unite the community



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- Broaden reach to get people who do not sign up for diversity training at all levels to become involved
- Increase lobbying and awareness of Asian American history and contributions
- Develop grassroots resources to help the communities, including basic translation services for immigrants, etc.

Discussion Table 4 (Discussion leader - Allister Chan)

- DEI group best practices sharing by doing a survey of what the DEI groups are doing that is working, developing a list of best practices, and issuing a white paper
- Mentoring resources creation through the development of tutorials, tools, website, and a mentoring system
- Skills development organization that can support the development of important skills to succeed such as speaking skills, constructive aggressiveness training, etc.
- Create more visibility for individuals in underrepresented minority groups within and across other organizations
- Create more donations of time and money to deserving organizations related to career ceiling and diversity/equity/inclusion by raising the awareness of certain causes/issues that need financial support. Publicity program directed at the AAPI community, companies and funding organizations about deserving organizations.