



Women Leaders at African Bicycle Contribution Foundation's Panel Discuss the Need to Have a "Seat at the Table."

Key themes: Women Should do better at mentoring younger women and using their social capital, but they also control \$14 Trillion of U.S. Wealth

Philadelphia, PA, Dec 11, 2017 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) - As part of its recent Three-City U.S.Tour, which featured Bernice Dapaah, CEO and founder of Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiatives (GBBI), the African Bicycle Contribution Foundation (ABCF) (www.africanbike.org) convened, at the Aramark headquarters offices in Center City Philadelphia, "Why Women Should Have a Seat at The Table," a panel presentation, featuring four female CEOs and leaders from across the globe.

As moderator, Renee Chenault Fattah, an ABCF board member, broadcast journalist, and former Wall Street attorney, said in her opening remarks that the panel had been designed to bring geographically and ethnically diverse women together to share their views and strategies on how to increase female private and public sector leadership, across international borders.

The panelists included Bernice Dapaah; Ms. Gerianne DiPiano, CEO and founder of FemmePharma Global Healthcare, a corporation that develops over-the-counter and prescription treatment options to address health issues that affect women; and Dr. Nina Ahmad, a native of Bangladesh, a board member of the Philadelphia Foundation, and a former Deputy Mayor of the city of Philadelphia.

The key themes expressed by the participants were: Women are significantly underrepresented in large corporate settings; they have to become substantially better at mentoring and building their own mentorship systems; they have to become assertive, and not frustrated, when met with gender-based career impediments; they have to "set their own narrative" for achieving success; their career aspirations have to be set higher; and the time to take action, on each of those fronts, is now.

As Gerianne DiPiano said, "Women do well in conceiving interesting ideas, even disruptive ideas, but it's time, now, for them to become more effective at creating outcomes, at serving as mentors for one another and at, supportively, "lifting a sister up."

She also stressed that women need to be more "intentional," explaining that females control \$14 trillion of wealth in the U.S. Accordingly, Ms. DiPiano encouraged the

women in the audience to support woman-owned entrepreneurs, to “open your purses and support your fellow-woman.”

In her remarks, Ms. Dapaah emphasized the need to "get involved with 'younger ladies' who want to do constructive things, in a different way." She added that she was especially proud that her company, GBBI, built its iconic bamboo bicycle frames with Ghanaian raw materials, and that the company creates employment for a growing number of local African women.

A key theme for Dr.Ahmad was that women have a clear need to become more comfortable in speaking up at critical meetings. One of the first steps, she said, would be learning how "not to be silent," when decisions are being made.

When the discussion turned to womens' growing impact on corporate decision-making, Ms. DiPiano reminded the attendees that in 1995, there were "zero" women CEOs in Fortune 500 Companies. She went on to say that, today, women are still only 5 percent of those CEOs and that such a level is not sufficient, "not where we want to be."

In the closing recommendations, the panelists stressed the need to move beyond discussion, and on to meaningful action.

Ideas for achieving that goal included Ms.DiPiano's suggestion that women create “safe spaces” so that aspiring female leaders feel comfortable in approaching one another for career guidance and support. She encouraged women to “think larger, think bigger” but, added that, in setting their career advancement strategies, women should never confuse confidence with abrasiveness.

Dr. Ahmad agreed, and added emphatically that "Everyone should leave the panel presentation knowing one person they didn't know before."

In her own closing comments moderator Chenault-Fattah noted that “Women need to know that there are other women out there doing great things, who can serve as role models and mentors, domestically and globally."

In her closing remarks, following the panel presentation, ABCF Executive Director Patricia Marshall Harris said, "The climate is not going to change unless women do something to make it happen. Let's decide whether we want to stand outside the door and let everyone else pass by, or knock on the door and, when it opens, say, “There's a seat over there; it has my name on it.”

The African Bicycle Contribution Foundation(ABCF) is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation whose mission is to generate funding to underwrite the distribution of free bicycles, made by the Ghana Bamboo Bikes Initiative(GBBI), to under-resourced students, small farmers and healthcare workers, on the African continent. The corporation has made a commitment to finance the distribution of 2500 bicycles, in Ghana, over its first five years of operation.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGiBJSivWxl&t=18s>