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extraordinary **WOMEN**

CHARLOTTE

Breaking Down Systems

By empowering women of all backgrounds and encouraging transformational change within organizations, **Diversity Woman Media** is creating a paradigm shift in the business world.

Dr. Sheila Robinson doesn't care for the phrase "what if." In fact, rather than wonder what would happen if she failed when launching a media company focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), she simply did it.

That was in 2005. Today, Dr. Robinson leads Diversity Woman Media, a multiplatform professional and executive leadership development enterprise that advocates for DEI through publications, workshops, and conferences. With Diversity Woman, Dr. Robinson is dismantling structures that prevent women of all backgrounds and races from achieving their full potential.

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disparities—are allowed to exist because of the systems currently in place,” she says. “My goal is to be part of the solution and break down those systems.”

Solutions to Problems

As a Black woman growing up in a loving Southern middle-class family, Dr. Robinson never viewed her race as a disadvantage. It wasn't until a hurtful incident in high school laid bare the racism in her community that she realized a painful truth: No matter how talented she was, some people wouldn't like her simply because of her race.

She soon realized her gender also posed a challenge with inequities in pay and opportunity at each rung of the ladder she climbed during a 14-year career in communications and marketing at a Fortune 100 company. When her division was sold, Dr. Robinson declined to follow, and instead sought a new position. Yet, despite her impeccable credentials, she encountered discrimination and bias in her job search. It was then that Dr. Robinson noticed there wasn't the equivalent of a high-profile business magazine advising ambitious women on how to promote their skills, negotiate pay, or deal with discrimination.

She started thinking: What if she combined her passion for mentoring with her love of magazines and marketing? After some serious legwork, she founded Diversity Woman.

Her vision for the company is twofold. First, it helps organizations make transformational DEI changes. “Corporations must get rid of systems that empower nondiverse and male leaders to discriminate based on gender and race—and it starts with boards and CEOs,” Dr. Robinson says. “We educate them on the problem that exists and create solutions to help them overcome it.”

Second, the company empowers women of all races and backgrounds advancing toward the C-suite by providing them with resources for exercising resilience, competence, and emotional intelligence. This takes shape in Diversity Woman's two publications, which educate women on trending business topics, and at nationwide conferences, where communities of women receive guidance from influential thought leaders and executives.

For the business world at large, Diversity Woman is not only a source of DEI expertise and media, but also a cultivator of talent that might otherwise go untapped. “If this country wants to be economically healthy and lead the way, we must have equity,” Dr. Robinson says. “Like many others, I overcame adversity to get to where I am. Just imagine where I'd be if I had been allowed to reach my full potential.”



Photo by Fabio Camara

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