

**Illinois Diversity Council**  
**13<sup>th</sup> Annual IL Women's Conference**  
**Concurrent Session 3 from 3:00 - 3:45 pm**

**BE-YOU-TIFUL: Authentic & Professional Brand**

This is “Our Year of Know”, knowing ourselves, knowing our value, our boundaries and knowing our possibilities. Even in a season where we aren't winning, we're learning and leaning into all the facets of BE-YOU-TIFUL, a mindset of reimagining, resilience, resetting and reinventing our next and best brand. This session brings together the entire spectrum of intersectional womanhood that is authentic and uncompromising. We are no longer fitting into norms or accepting bias and aggressions but fostering change that embraces belonging.

**Out of Bounds**

Women especially resist saying no and setting appropriate work boundaries, impacted by socialization encouraging politeness and selflessness. Saying no in the workplace is particularly daunting, with the thought that declining any task could impact our roles and hinder our potential for advancement. Feeling as if one cannot say no can lead to burnout, as was witnessed during the height of the pandemic with family life and work life becoming more integrated.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 80 percent of the 1.1 million people who exited the workforce were women, at the onset of the pandemic. Female workforce participation had already dropped to 57 percent—the lowest level since 1988, according to the National Women's Law Center. With a lack of access to affordable childcare resources, educational support, work-life flexibility and skills training; many women are finding challenges with reintegrating into the workplace.

This burden is ten-fold in communities, where obligations of caretaking for elderly parents and emotional labor are placed on women outside of their nuclear family. For example, among the U.S. adult population, approximately one-fifth of both the non-Hispanic White and African-American populations are providing care to a loved one, while a slightly lower percentage of Asian-Americans — 18 percent — and Hispanic Americans — 16 percent — are engaged in caregiving (National Alliance for Caregiving (2009). In a national survey that looked only at people 70 years of age or older, however, 44 percent of Latinos were found to receive home-based family caregiving compared to 34 percent of blacks and 25 percent of non-Hispanic Whites (Weiss et al, 2005).

The ability to analyze one's workload and set realistic boundaries not only promotes efficiency, effectiveness, and quality control but also enhances mental health and engagement in the workplace. How can women learn to assert themselves and prioritize their own work, needs, and well-being while maintaining a harmonious workplace and collaborative work culture? How can women also prioritize setting boundaries with family and taking care of their own emotional needs?

## What Did You Say? Reading Between the Lines

In today's global economy, organizations must recognize and increase their awareness of Unconscious Bias, and the impact it has on sustainability. Many organizations have developed and rolled out diversity, equity, and inclusion strategies to assist in educating employees about the existence of bias in the workplace. However, the challenge is in how to respond to it. Unconscious bias manifests through microaggressive behaviors that lead to microsassaults, microinvalidations and environmental microaggression - all of which are indirect or direct expressions of prejudice in the workplace. How can we communicate what microaggressive behaviors are and how to respond to them? What are ways to develop and implement strategies that overcome unconscious/implicit bias? What are best practices for CASH-IN; Creative, Accountable, Supportive, Healthy, Inclusive, Narrative?