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Global Music Icon Alicia Keys Tells 17,000 Massachusetts Conference for Women Attendees: This is a “Time to Reach Out for What We Want”

Keys, Awkwafina and Doris Kearns Goodwin Call for Unity, Empathy, and Leadership

Media Contact: Alexa Bluth

(916) 607-7942

abluth@conferenceforwomen.org

(December 10, 2020) Fifteen-time Grammy-award winner Alicia Keys joined a power-packed lineup today in delivering a message of hope and unity at the Massachusetts Conference for Women. The virtual event, organized around the theme “Power by Purpose: Achieving Equity for All,” attracted an estimated 17,000 people at a time when the nation faces twin economic and health crises and a pivotal reckoning on racial injustice.

“What this year has taught me is how important it is to slow down and appreciate the moment and each other,” Keys said in a conversation with Ellen McGirt, a senior editor at *Fortune*. “This is a new time. It’s a time to reach out for what we want. It’s time to collect our blessings.”

Keys also called candid conversations that are occurring about race in America “imperative” and said she is hopeful they will lead to meaningful change.

"We have this collective awakening and this collective consciousness to really be present to know that we do have to fight for what we want to see, and we can't just wait for a bunch of other people to do it," she said. "We are showing up for each other in so many ways, and when we show up for each other, we make noise. We don't back down. We bend the arc, and we change the system, and we win."

The virtual [16th annual Conference](#), previously held at the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center, offered interactive networking, inspiration, and tools to help navigate today's challenges, including a day-long focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.

Golden Globe award-winning actress Awkwafina described having hate-filled comments directed at her at the beginning of the COVID pandemic that were driven by misplaced hatred of Asian-Americans—adding: "I really don't think there is any room for it."

"More than ever in this country, we need unity, we need hope, and most importantly we need empathy," she said.

The Conference's world-class array of speakers also included Doris Kearns Goodwin, presidential historian and Pulitzer Prize-winning author. Kearns Goodwin conferred advice she thinks that former presidents who assumed office during times of turmoil and change would give President-elect Joe Biden.

She said Abraham Lincoln would urge him to surround himself with strong, able people who "will speak truth to power," while Theodore Roosevelt would encourage him to protect democracy by bridging divides and listening to the people.

"Just as we learn from the triumphs and sorrows of our parents and grandparents, so I believe we can learn from the leadership of our presidents who led in times of crises," she said. "I believe they would all acknowledge that in the end, transforming change does not come from the top down, but rather from the ground up, from aroused citizens joining together to bring our country closer to its ideals."

The nonpartisan, nonprofit Massachusetts Conference for Women – part of the [nation's largest network of women's conferences](#) – included breakout sessions on an array of topics, resume reviews, job recruiting, and a virtual exhibit hall featuring women-owned businesses. In keeping with its important theme of achieving equity for all, the Conference included sessions specifically addressing justice, equity and inclusion with actionable tips on anti-racism, allyship and the workplace.

The Conference comes as women are being disproportionately affected by the economic impacts of COVID and as calls for racial justice are reaching a nationwide crescendo. This year, as women endure the economic impacts of the pandemic, the Massachusetts Conference for Women has donated \$300,000 to 60 women-owned restaurants across Massachusetts.

“The eloquent and powerful speakers we’ve heard from today personify the mission of the Massachusetts Conference for Women,” said Gloria Larson, Massachusetts Conference for Women Board President. “This Conference offers an important opportunity to have vital conversations about gender and race, and it also creates opportunities for women to support other women during these challenging times.”

The Massachusetts Conference for Women is presented by [State Street Corporation](#) and generously sponsored by [Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany](#); [Target](#); [Cisco](#); [Boston Scientific](#); [Bristol Myers Squibb](#); [Fidelity Investments](#); [Hologic, Inc.](#); [Johnson & Johnson](#); [Liberty Mutual Insurance](#); [MFS Investment Management](#); [Raytheon Technologies](#); [Sanofi Genzyme](#); [Takeda Pharmaceuticals](#); [TD Bank](#); [Teradyne](#); [The TJX Companies, Inc.](#); [Akamai Technologies](#); [Biogen](#); [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts](#); [Converse](#); [Cynosure](#); [Merck & Co., Inc.](#); [New Balance Athletics](#); [Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc.](#); [P&G Gillette](#); [Thermo Fisher Scientific](#); [UKG](#); [Vertex Pharmaceuticals](#); [Aternity](#); [Bentley University's Gloria Cordes Larson Center for Women and Business](#); [Bose Corporation](#); [Commonwealth Financial Network](#); [GSK](#); [Juniper Networks](#); [National Grid](#); [Pegasystems](#); [PTC Inc.](#); and [Weber Shandwick](#); and media sponsors [The Boston Globe](#); [WBUR](#); and [WCVB-TV Boston](#).

“State Street is honored to continue our sponsorship of the Massachusetts Conference for Women, which we have supported for many years,” said Kathy Horgan, executive vice president and chief human resources and citizenship officer at State Street Corporation. “Despite the challenges that are keeping us physically apart in these difficult times, we are grateful to see that this Conference has succeeded in bringing thousands of women together in a relevant and meaningful way.”

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