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SELMA BLAIR, CHLOÉ ZHAO, OTHERS CITE THE GROWING IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AMID LINGERING PANDEMIC

More Than 15,000 Attend Virtual 2021 Mass. Conference for Women Opened by Mayor Michelle Wu

BOSTON, Dec. 2—During a week in which the world learned of a new variant of the COVID pandemic that has already set women's progress back a generation, speakers at the 2021 Massachusetts Conference for Women struck a common theme about the growing importance of women's connection and leadership for communities seeking to move forward in 2022.

Disability activist and actress **Selma Blair** said “the mind fields of loss and turmoil” unleashed in recent years have “only highlighted how essential compassion is” today for both self and others. She added that while many women have cause to feel frustrated and exhausted, she finds tremendous hope in connecting with other women at events and online.

The 2021 Academy Award-winning director **Chloé Zhao** suggested that “the most crucial thing” leaders can do now is create more of a balance between a focus on action and winning and cultivation of openness and connection.

Stacey Abrams, who announced her second run for Governor of Georgia yesterday, encouraged women leaders to fully embrace their ambition to create change.

“Ambition is not a bad thing. Ambition is a growth opportunity,” said Abrams, a voting rights activist, entrepreneur, and three-time *New York Times* best-selling author. “Ambition is saying that more is possible, and you want to be part of it. We've got to not only lean into ambition, we have to chase it, and we have to believe it is our right.”

The Massachusetts Conference for Women is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization dedicated to advancing women in the workplace. This year's theme was “Forward, Stronger, Together.” The annual Conference is the largest Conference for women in the nation and part of the [Conferences for Women](#), a network that attracts more than 50,000 attendees a year.

This week, the Massachusetts Conference also lent its financial support to women-owned businesses by announcing \$300,000 in grants to women-owned restaurants. [Learn more.](#)

More than 1,000 people also participated in the Conference's first-ever virtual career fair on Wed., Dec. 1. It was designed to help women who lost their jobs due to COVID find virtual, flex, and hybrid positions with top employers. [Learn more.](#)

The Massachusetts Conference for Women is presented by [State Street Corporation](#) and generously sponsored by [Hologic, Inc.](#); [Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany](#); [Takeda Pharmaceuticals](#); [Target](#); [Cisco](#); [Biogen](#); [Boston Scientific](#); [Fidelity Investments](#); [Johnson & Johnson](#); [Liberty Mutual Insurance](#); [MFS Investment Management](#); [National Grid](#); [P&G Gillette](#); [Sanofi](#); [Thermo Fisher Scientific](#); [The TJX Companies, Inc.](#); [UKG](#); [Akamai Technologies](#); [Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts](#); [Commonwealth Financial Network](#); [Converse](#); [Merck & Co., Inc.](#); [New Balance](#); [Ocean Spray Cranberries, Inc.](#); [Philips](#); [PTC](#); [Teradyne](#); [Bentley University](#); [Bristol Myers Squibb](#); [GSK](#); [Juniper Networks](#); [Oracle](#); [Rapid7](#); [Vertex Pharmaceuticals](#); [Fairygodboss](#); [Ladies Get Paid](#); and [PowerToFly](#); media sponsors, [The Boston Globe](#); [WBUR](#); and [WCVB-TV Boston](#).

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