

CLINTON GLOBAL INITIATIVE

— TAKING ACTION TOGETHER —

Session | The Business Case: How to Sustain Equity and Inclusion Commitments to an Inclusive Economy

Commitment | Increasing Employment for the Blind

My name is Kathryn Webster and I'm proud to serve as founder and president of the TAD Foundation. This morning, I'm trusting you to do me a favor. Close your eyes for a moment. I want to tell you about an everyday person, the only blind person at a top consulting firm. The only blind person having graduated Harvard Business School. And now the only blind person at KKR, the investment firm. This everyday person sounds impressive, right? No, instead, this woman is the only blind person because the unemployment rate for the blind has hovered at 75% for decades and society is not doing its part to shift that percentage.

Imagine a world where the overwhelming intrusion of biases didn't exist. A world where untapped potential is embraced for all capabilities. A world where one's ability to see doesn't blur perspectives of their competence. Now, please open your eyes. Just because you couldn't see me, doesn't mean I'm not here. And just because blind people can't see, doesn't mean they don't exist. Yet that 75% number continues to permeate our minds because society doesn't open the opportunity to show we are here and talented.

I'm here today because I worked incredibly hard and pushed my limits, but I owe much of my success to a differentiating formula: three facets that made success possible – my parents, mentors, and corporations that believed in me, which we are now scaling across the country through The TAD Foundation. Through mentoring, we're providing blind students with advanced technical and leadership skills to unleash their potential and excel. For families, we are supporting them each step of the way, so they are raising a child with independence, confidence, and skills. For businesses, we are providing a pipeline of qualified candidates who will shine in the workplace, but also partnering with those companies to broaden their DEI goals to prioritize disability.

My dream is for every blind student, family of a blind child, and company to know blind people deserve a seat at Harvard, in finance, as a consultant, lawyer, entrepreneur, whatever it may be. My dream is to have blind representation in every company. My dream is to shatter society's misconceptions and remove the implicit barriers. Now it's your turn to trust me, and let's together, achieve our dreams of getting qualified, capable, and talented people to work.