



## **Reimagine Your Remarkable Life**

### ***Global Virtual Conference & Remarkable Ideas Pitch***

**Sept. 21 to Sept. 25, 2020**

### **Conference Speaker Bios**



#### **Lisa Blunt Rochester**

Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester represents Delaware in the U.S. House of Representatives and serves as an Assistant Whip for House Leadership. Lisa sits on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce. The committee has broad jurisdiction over health care, the environment, commerce and trade, energy policy, telecommunications, manufacturing, and consumer protection.

As the Energy and Commerce Committee's only former statewide health official, Lisa understands health care from a number of different perspectives – as an implementer at the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, negotiator while serving as State Personnel Director, and advocate as CEO of the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League. Lisa is focused on reducing the cost of health care and prescription drugs for middle-class families, addressing the disparity in outcomes for communities of color, and tackling our nation's opioid and addiction epidemic. She serves as a Member of the Bipartisan Heroin Task Force, comprised of more than 100 members united with the common goal of tackling opioid addiction.

Lisa is a leading voice in Congress on economic and future of work-related issues. As former Secretary of Labor and State Personnel Director, Lisa leverages her professional experience to advocate for legislation that boosts start-up business growth, removes barriers for citizens re-entering society, and addresses college affordability and ballooning student debt. She is a Co-Chair of the New Democrat Coalition's Future of Work Task Force and serves as the sole Member of Congress on the Aspen Institute's National Advisory Council for the Future of Work Initiative. She is also the founder of the Congressional Future of Work Caucus.

In the 115th Congress, Lisa was a member of the House Committee on Agriculture – the first Delawarean to serve on the committee in over 120 years. In this role, she helped craft the 2018 Farm Bill, which is a five-year re-authorization that extends U.S. Department of Agriculture programs related to the farm safety net; nutrition programs that feed children, seniors, people

with disabilities, and families who rely on the social support programs; land-grant and 1890 universities; and agriculture research.

As a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus and a strong proponent of reforming our criminal justice system, Lisa introduced first-in-the-nation legislation, the Clean Slate Act, sealing the federal records of former nonviolent offenders that remain crime-free and have earned a second chance. This bill would provide new opportunities for Americans to earn a good-paying job, pursue education and training, and rent or own a home. According to estimates by the Center for American Progress, the passage of the Clean Slate Act could boost the U.S. economy by as much as \$87 billion per year.

Traveling up and down the state, Lisa is an advocate for the needs of every community, which informs her work in Washington. Having met with homeowners in the South Shore Marina development in North Bethany Beach, she learned of an error in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's coastal mapping unit for the town – preventing homeowners from taking advantage of the National Flood Insurance Program and FEMA aid in the event of a disaster. Turning their concerns into action, Lisa reached across the aisle to work with Democrats and Republicans across the country with similarly affected mapping units and introduced the Strengthening Coastal Communities Act. She worked with allies in Delaware and Washington to help usher this critical piece of legislation into law – aiding homeowners and setting aside hundreds of acres for environmental protection.

With deep roots in the First State, Lisa grew up in Wilmington, graduated from Padua Academy, and worked her first job at the McDonald's on Market Street. She graduated from Fairleigh Dickinson University with a degree in International Relations and put herself through graduate school as a working mom – earning a master's degree in Urban Affairs and Public Policy from the University of Delaware.

Lisa began her distinguished career in public service as an intern and later Caseworker in a congressional office where she helped Delawareans with their Social Security benefits, disability insurance claims, IRS disputes, and housing needs. Lisa would go on to serve in the cabinets of two Delaware governors and as CEO of the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League – an action-oriented, public policy research think-tank.

Lisa also served as the Senior Executive Leadership and Systems Manager for the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston where she advocated for people with disabilities in their struggle for equal opportunity and civil rights. During this time, Lisa helped expand the Institute's global footprint and advised state agencies and employers. In part due to Lisa's work, she helped build the Institute into a fully-fledged college at the university, the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development — focused on the inclusion of all people.

Lisa currently resides in Wilmington, Delaware near her adult-aged children, Alex and Alyssa, as well as her daughter-in-law, Ebony.



## **Joan Pendergrass**

Joan has two focuses in her life: preserving Teddy Pendergrass' legacy and making a difference in the world. She currently spearheads efforts to raise money and awareness for individuals with spinal cord injuries through the Teddy and Joan Pendergrass Foundation. She also volunteers and donates to Rosie's Place in Boston, Pine Street Inn, Cradles to Crayons, Habitat for Humanity, and Boston Food Bank as well as mentoring young women in Belize and her native island of Dominica.

Prior to her relationship with Teddy, she worked in multiple professions securing a future and education for her children including managerial roles at New Balance, where she recently retired. Today, she is a frequent motivational speaker as she talks about her own journey through trauma. She was the recent subject of a television documentary, *Victim No More: The Joan Pendergrass Story*. Joan's memoir is expected to be published in 2021.



## **Dr. Wendy K. Smith**

Wendy wants to advance both/and thinking toward a more sustainable, generative and thriving world.

Wendy received her B.A. in political science and psychology from Yale University and her Ph.D. in organizational behavior from Harvard Business School. She is currently Professor of Management at the Alfred Lerner School of Business at the University of Delaware and the Deutsch Family Fellow. She is also a Fellow at the Center for Social Innovation at Cambridge University's Judge Business School and at the Center for Sustainable Leadership at the Nova School of Business in Lisbon.

Wendy studies how we can adopt both/and approaches to more effectively navigate competing demands. We face ongoing tensions between work and life, advancing ourselves and helping others, advancing what we know or learning new skills. Leaders confront ongoing tensions between today and tomorrow, global integration and local distinctions, social missions and financial pressures. Wendy's research shows how a both/and approach leads to more generative and sustainable outcomes. Her research has been published in top academic journals such as *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Organization Science* and *Management Science*. From 2016-2019, she served as an associate editor at the *Academy of Management Journal*. In 2018, Wendy received University of Delaware's Mid-Career Excellence-In-Scholarship Award. In 2019, Web of Science recognized Wendy as a Highly Cited Researcher for being among the top 1% of scholars with the most cited research.

Wendy teaches leadership, organizational behavior and business ethics. She has taught MBAs and undergraduates at University of Delaware, Harvard, and University of Pennsylvania - Wharton. She won the MBA Teaching Award at the Lerner Business School in 2016 and 2019, and was runner-up for this award in 2018. Wendy founded and leads the Lerner Women's Leadership Forum, a 3-day executive forum for mid-career women. Wendy also engages with executive and senior leadership teams around the world, providing teaching, consulting and keynote talks to address the challenges of leadership, managing strategic paradoxes, and advancing in organizational change and innovation.

In 2016, Wendy co-founded the Women's Leadership Initiative at University of Delaware, an initiative to advance gender equity through education, advocacy and research. In 2019, she received the Delaware Today's Women in Business Award.

Wendy lives in Philadelphia with her husband and three children.



## **Kay White**

Kay is known as The Smart Career Moves Mentor for Corporate Women and is the Author of two Number 1 best-selling books (The A to Z of Being Understood AND It's *Always* Your Move). Kay shows her clients who are experienced corporate career women how to own and leverage their skills, value and influence so they more confidently navigate their career paths towards promotion, more recognition and more rewards (all without losing themselves along the way). She hosts live Events, regularly speaks at conferences and inside organizations and works with her clients both privately and in small mentoring groups.

Drawing upon the highs and lows of her own +20-year corporate experience in insurance broking at Willis, London (starting as a Secretary and leaving as a Divisional Director broking Global Industrial Property risks) Kay brings her passion and experience for the energy of language, the art of influence and persuasion and making strategic, considered career moves to her myriad of corporate clients. As Kay says *"I show career women how and why to take the steering wheel and drive their own career bus and why it's so key they do."*

Kay and her husband of 18 years live close to London with 3 rescue Lurchers and much of Kay's inspiration comes from walking the hounds, early in the mornings, in the local countryside. Playing the drums (occasionally guest-spotting in a heavy rock band) and Water-skiing, Kay keeps herself flexible with Yoga and Pilates.



## Leticia Gomez

Close the deal. Leticia Gomez has lost count of how many times she's heard those three simple words in her long career. What fuels this self-made and overachieving literary agent is being a tireless champion of underdog writers so they, too, can achieve their dreams. That means closing the deal. About fifteen years ago, during the Great Recession, Leticia Gomez started Savvy Literary Services. She had multiple strikes against her.

- No money
- No college education
- No “good old boy” connections
- A Latino woman
- Based in Texas instead of New York City

Despite these undesirable circumstances, she has distinguished herself as a prominent literary/film/television agent who has helped her clients secure deals with the largest publishers in the world and seen several of her projects successfully optioned for film and television rights. To date, she has placed close to 200 non-fiction and fiction books with independent and mainstream traditional publishers. According to Publisher's Marketplace she is currently the #4 ranked agent in Non-fiction/Advice Relationship, #5 in Non-fiction Narrative, and #9 in Non-fiction books.

How does a Latino woman who came from very humble beginnings with only a high school education defy the odds and build a successful literary services company in Texas? What has enabled her company, which was founded in the height of the recession, becoming a mainstream industry leader? How does a woman consistently described as sunny and sweet compete and win in the cutthroat world of publishing against major league agents? Book her as a speaker at your next corporate event, non-profit meeting or university program and find out the secrets to her success.

Leticia Gomez is an engaging speaker who brings a truly fresh viewpoint to what it takes to become a successful entrepreneur in a highly specialized and oftentimes brutal industry. One of the few bi-lingual literary agents, she has thrived and built a highly successful literary agency—book by book. Now she has developed a series of workshops for universities, corporations, and non-profits to help people write their stories and sharing her knowledge on how to get them published. Because of her expertise in both fiction and non-fiction publishing as well as her understanding of the trends in the marketplace, she brings highly pragmatic and relevant information into all her workshops. All workshops are customized to those in the room and are highly interactive. An inspiring speaker with a host of practical advice for writers, book lovers, entrepreneurs, women business owners, and people of color, Leticia Gomez is a strong addition to corporate events, non-profit meetings, or university programs.



## **DeLores Pressley**

DeLores is an International Keynote Speaker, published Author and Life Coach with more than three decades of experience. She is President of DeLores Pressley Worldwide and the Founder and Executive Director of She Elevates™, a non-profit organization created to empower girls to become confident leaders, entrepreneurs and CEOs.

As a former elementary school teacher and a pioneer of the plus size fashion and modeling industry, DeLores has inspired and helped thousands to leverage their leadership voice, be confident, have a powerful presence and live their most marvelous life. Her writing skills are notable, as she has published many articles on inspiration, confidence and empowerment. She is the author of “Clean Out the Closets of Your Life”, “Believe in the Power of You” and “Empower”. She is the Spokesperson for Humanitarian Hands Charities.

DeLores has worked at various levels with numerous top-notch companies which include: Ford Motor Company, Coca-Cola, Roche Pharmaceuticals, Procter and Gamble (P&G), Kellogg, American Heart Association, Vident Health, Kirby Vacuum, Bakersfield Women’s Conference and Union Pacific Railroad. She has received many awards and recognition for her work including Women’s Impact Award, Elite Business Woman Award, Smart Business Magazine Award and the Top Ten Business Owners by the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO), named Top 50 Visionary 2019 by Radical Business Magazine and was a recipient of the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award from President Barack Obama.

DeLores is a Former Chairperson of The ABCD, Inc. Board of Directors, O’Jays Entertainers Scholarship Committee Board Member, and Past President of the National Speakers Association’s Ohio Chapter. Furthermore, her story has been touted in Speaker, Glamour, Washington Post, Black Enterprise, Essence, Ebony and Marie Claire. She is a frequent media guest and former host of a TV Show; A Purposeful Life. She has appeared on the Bravo TV Network; Married to Medicine, TCT Network, and has been interviewed on every major network including Entertainment Tonight and OPRAH.



## Miracle Olatunji

Miracle Olatunji is a college student, entrepreneur, public speaker, and author of *Purpose: How To Live and Lead With Impact*. She is the founder OpportuniMe, which empowers the next generation of leaders to realize their full potential and make an impact in their work/careers and in the world. Miracle founded OpportuniMe when she was 17 years old. Miracle is now a rising junior at Northeastern University where she is studying Business Administration with a concentration in Finance and a minor in Communications. Miracle has been honored as one of *The Tempest Magazine's* '40 Women To Watch Who Are Changing The World', a 'Young Futurist and Game-changer' by *The Root Magazine*, and she was selected as a Young Global Leadership Scholar and studied abroad in Copenhagen, Denmark. Her work has been featured in *Forbes*, *Technical.ly*, *AmericanInno*, *The CEO Library*, *ReadWrite*, *The Female Lead*, and other publications. Miracle is also building Her Wallet Media, a new financial literacy and wellness platform for women and girls. Through Her Wallet Media, Miracle will create and share content and resources on the topics of building your "net worth, network, and self-worth." She was honored as an EXTRAOrdinary Woman by Boston.gov during the International Women's Day Celebration at City Hall. Miracle was recently part of *Barbie's* #YouCanBeAnything #MoreRoleModels campaign aimed at closing the dream gap and inspiring women and girls globally. She was also part of Melinda Gates and the *Harvard Business Review's* 'Equality Can't Wait' campaign on gender equality. She is also a Women Who Empower Ambassador at Northeastern University.