

DEI Insider

a diversity, equity, and inclusion periodical from Nukk-Freeman & Cerra, P.C.



Beyond the Game

THE ECONOMIC INEQUALITY IN WOMEN'S ATHLETICS

BY BROOKE BUCKNUM

Lack of revenue. Lack of marketability. Lack of funding. Just be grateful for what you have. No one watches women's sports anyway . . . I have heard (and experienced) all the excuses.

Please allow me a little brevity when I say they are all nonsense (Editor's Note: "nonsense" was not the author's first choice word here). The most common refrain seems to be that no one watches women's sports. The below speak to the contrary.

On a hot July day in 1999, over 90,000 fans crowded into the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, CA, to witness the USWNT beating Japan in an epic penalty shoot-out, and it remains as one of the most iconic moments in American sports.

The Women's World Cup Final on July 5, 2015, between the USWNT and Japan brought in 26.7 million viewers and became the most watched soccer game up to that point (it was usurped by the 2022 Men's World Cup Final between France and Argentina - thanks, Messi!).

On August 30, 2023, a crowd of 92,300 packed into Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Nebraska to watch the University of Nebraska's Women's Volleyball Team defeat Omaha.

The 2024 NCAA Women's Basketball National Championship outdrew the Men's Championship in average viewership - 18.9 million to 14.8 million.

But, please, tell me again how no one watches women's sports.

The reality is none of the narratives hold much water. One need only look as far as Nadia Comaneci, Anna Kournikova, Alex Morgan, or more recently, Caitlin Clark, to disprove the lack of marketability narrative. I could spend hours making arguments to disprove all the narratives, but it often feels like screaming into the void. Instead, I will focus on the main point - women athletes and Women's Athletic Programs are not asking for more than the equitable share of opportunities, funding,

investment and coverage afforded to our counterparts. Well, that and to not have to constantly justify or fight for their existence.

Women are not inferior. Their sports are no less exciting. Different tactically, sure, but not less exciting. Anyone who saw Abby Wambach's goal in the 122nd minute against Brazil in the Quarterfinal of the 2011 Women's World Cup can attest to that. It still gives me chills whenever I see the highlight reel (for anyone interested - [CLICK HERE](#)). Those narratives are just excuses to justify the inaction of pushing progress forward. And we all know how the saying about excuses goes . . .

Progress is not linear, but it also should not be stagnant or moving the needle backward. Looking back, I am keenly aware of how lucky and privileged I am to have grown up in the shadow of Title IX and the opportunities that became available because of that groundbreaking legislation. Still, most may be shocked to hear some of the things I have experienced throughout the years as both an athlete and coach at the high school and college levels. So, this is me on my proverbial soapbox urging you to support Women's sports and athletes in any way you can - Go to a Gotham FC, San Diego Wave FC, or NY Liberty game & buy all the merch. These Women athletes represent the best of us and deserve an equal opportunity to earn your support & prove that to you.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

APPROACHING BIODIVERSITY THRU DEI LENS
A NOD TO VETERANS/FIRST RESPONDERS
SAVING BEAUTIFUL BANGLADESH
DEI SOCIAL PILLAR: POTLUCK LUNCH
POTLUCK LUNCH SECRET RECIPES - REVEALED



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APPROACHING BIODIVERSITY ...with a DEI lens



BY SOUNDOUS BOUCHOUAR

When we discuss the principles driving DEI, biodiversity rarely enters the conversation. Applying DEI principles to our understanding of biodiversity, however, can deepen our grasp of ecological and health dynamics. This approach not only advocates for better treatment of all species and ecosystems but is also crucial to tackling the existential threat posed by the climate crisis.

Valuing diverse perspectives and fostering an inclusive environment where all can thrive is a fundamental principle in DEI. Applying this lens to our understanding of biodiversity can positively influence our actions and our impact on the world's environment. Experts believe we're currently in the midst of Earth's sixth mass extinction driven by human activity, with wildlife populations having declined by 69% since 1970. In the words of David Attenborough, "to restore stability to our planet we must restore its biodiversity, the very thing that we've removed. It's the only way out of this crisis we have created."

Preventing any further damage to and restoring Earth's biodiversity is essential to supporting all life on Earth – including human life. For example, coral reefs are among the most diverse and productive ecosystems on the planet. More diverse coral reefs increase their ability to combat diseases and coral bleaching, making them more likely to survive the ongoing impacts of climate change. Coral reefs protect coastlines from storms and erosion and around one billion people globally depend on coral reefs for their food and livelihoods. Similarly, rain forests – the most biologically diverse terrestrial ecosystem on Earth and home to half of Earth's plants and animal species – thrive because the interactions between the many species help maintain ecological balance and stability. The wilder and more diverse forests are, the more effective they are at absorbing harmful gases, such as carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, making the air we breathe healthier. Both are in danger, with a 14% loss of the world's coral reefs since just 2009 due to climate change and human activities (e.g., pollution, overfishing, collecting corals for aquariums) and only 36% of the world's rainforests are still intact due to deforestation. The damage to both continues to increase at alarming rates.

Biodiversity is the process that sustains all life on Earth, including humans. By recognizing the importance of valuing, not just people with different backgrounds, but also species in different environments and their habitats, we can better understand the actions that need to be taken so that our environment can thrive. By acting, we can limit, and even reverse, the damage we are responsible for creating on Earth. While policy and wide scale change must occur to protect our planet's biodiversity, there are a few things we as individuals can do:

- Spend more time in nature. Developing a closer relationship with the world around us helps us attach greater value to other species and other habitats.
- Learn about other cultures. What you do and what you buy can affect people around the world and their homeland. For example, [learn about the devastating process of cocoa production and its significant impact on Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana](#) - and then find [alternative sustainable options](#).
- Buy local, seasonal produce – and/or grow your own.
- Reduce the amount of food you waste and [start composting](#).
- Eat more plant-based foods.
- Limit purchasing brand new clothing, particularly from "fast-fashion" brands, which are responsible for nearly 10% of global carbon emissions.
- Save the bees! Plant nectar producing wildflowers in your garden.
- Make sure the sunscreen you use, if going in the ocean, is [ocean friendly](#) (check the ingredients, not the labels).
- Recycling the wrong materials or improperly causes additional harm to the environment – make sure you [recycle properly](#).

A species can only thrive when its surrounding environment flourishes as well. By adopting a DEI lens to better understand biodiversity, we can become better informed and equipped to make the necessary changes to save our planet.



A NOD TO OUR VETERANS AND FIRST RESPONDERS

BY RACHEL MANNE

On the heels of Veteran's Day, I thought I would take the time to share with you a charity with which my family has been involved for the past few years. It's called the Tunnels to Towers Foundation (t2t.org) and was started in memory of the first responders who lost their lives on 9/11. Tunnels to Towers raises money to build "smart homes" for veterans and first responders who have been catastrophically injured in the line of duty. It also assists homeless veterans and aims to pay off the mortgages for homes of first responders who lost their lives on 9/11 or have suffered from 9/11 related illnesses. I recently read a statistic that more than 10,000 9/11 first responders have been diagnosed with cancer and that the number of post 9/11 related deaths has or will exceed the number of deaths on 9/11 itself – incredibly heart-breaking.



Retired New York City firefighter and exhibit volunteer, Bob Favara, looks over a mosaic of images made from different stops along one side of The Tunnel to Towers traveling exhibit on the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

For the past two years my family has participated in the annual Tunnels to Towers 5K run which starts in Brooklyn, goes through the Brooklyn Battery Park Tunnel (for those New Yorkers, now known as the Hugh L. Carey Tunnel), and ends at the steps of where the Twin Towers once stood. There is much symbolism in this run. The run follows the path of deceased firefighter Stephen Sillars who, on 9/11, had been assigned to Brooklyn's Squad 1 and had just finished his shift when he got word over his scanner of a plane hitting the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Stephen returned to Squad 1 to get his gear and drove his truck to the entrance of the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel, but it had already been closed for security purposes. Determined to carry out his duty, he strapped 60 lbs. of gear to his back, and raced on foot through the tunnel to the Twin Towers, where he gave up his life while saving others. During the run, many firefighters participate wearing full gear in Stephen's honor.

9/11 was a scary day for me personally. I was living in NYC and working at the federal courthouse for my clerkship in the Southern District of New York. When I stepped out of the subway as part of my normal commuting routine, I saw people starting up at towers a few blocks away. The first plane had already hit and the rumors were swirling — we thought it was a helicopter or some other flying object. We stood watching the flames when, within a few moments, we saw the second plane crash into the towers and a massive explosion. Rumors turned to terror as we now knew this was something more. After quickly running into the courthouse to check on colleagues, I became part of the mass

exodus of people running uptown, stopping only at public pay phones to try to call loved ones. Thousands of people ran north like I did, only stopping for a short period of time watching in awe as the towers inverted and crumbled.

But not all people ran away — the brave first responders like Stephen Sillars ran to the burning towers. To this day, seeing what I saw unfolding at the towers, I still cannot comprehend the utter bravery of these people. In addition, the air quality for weeks or months after 9/11 was horrific in lower Manhattan, yet the first responders spent hours and hours trying to save people and, then sadly, human remains.

I know so many of us who were deeply affected by this tragic day. It's why we have started running the 5K and getting involved. The 5K — whether you walk it or run it — is truly inspirational. When you exit the tunnel in Manhattan, the streets are lined with current first responders, holding pictures of fallen heroes. Bagpipes play and cheers erupt. The streets are also lined with junior ROTC members—teenagers who aspire to be next-generation heroes.

Both years we ran in the pouring rain! Good thing the tunnel is covered. But it did not matter. Coming out of the tunnel is an incredibly sad/uplifting/inspiring moment and, no matter the weather, we will be returning. I have included some pictures and video clips of the run from the 2 years and a link to the t2t foundation.

The T2T Impact...



Educating
650,000+
through the 9/11
NEVER FORGET
mobile exhibit



1200+
mortgage-free
homes delivered or
in progress



95 cents of every
dollar donated
goes directly to
t2t programs



500K+ event
participants at more
than 80 events in
National Run, Walk
& Climb series

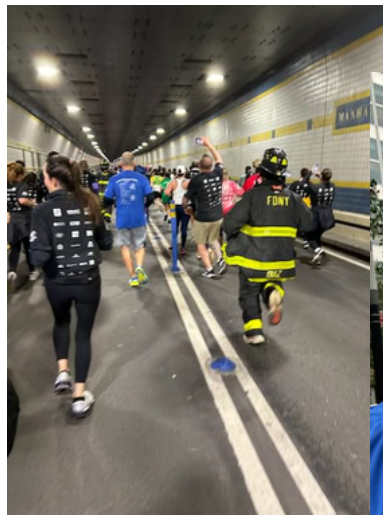


Photo Captions: (top) view from the run in the tunnel with firefighters in full gear. (left) Rachel and Eric post-run.



Saving Beautiful Bangladesh

A TEAM MEMBER'S EYE-OPENING TRIP AND TOP TAKEAWAY

BY CASSIE WITTE

In May 2019, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to travel to Bangladesh on a study-abroad trip with my undergraduate school, Muhlenberg College. The purpose of the trip was to study the effects of climate change and sustainability practices in a country heavily impacted by environmental changes. During this journey, we met with key policymakers, think-tank leaders, and government officials to discuss the country's efforts toward sustainability.

Bangladesh, a South Asian country, is bordered by India to the west, north, and east, Myanmar to the southeast, and the Bay of Bengal to the south. It's renowned for its lush greenery, vast river networks, and flat topography. The landscape is dominated by the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna River Delta, the largest in the world, which makes the land fertile but also highly prone to flooding.



The country's topography is primarily flat, with about 80% of the land lying 39 feet above sea level. Hills are located in the southeastern Chittagong Hill Tracts, where the terrain becomes rugged and forested. The Sundarbans, one of the largest mangrove forests, is home to diverse wildlife, including the Bengal tiger, and serves as a natural barrier against storms and cyclones from the Bay of Bengal.

Bangladesh is one of the countries most affected by climate change, despite contributing relatively little to global greenhouse gas emissions. The country faces immense challenges in managing the increasing risks posed by climate change due to its geographical location, vulnerability to extreme weather events, high population density, and widespread poverty. This paradox is common: countries that contribute the least to climate change often suffer the most from the extreme weather events, pushing them further into poverty or devastation.

We traveled in June, during the monsoon season, and witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of extreme weather events. Throughout the trip, we stayed in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh; lived on a riverboat in the Sundarbans, and visited the Chittagong Hill Tracts (where I may or may not have fallen off a 35-foot cliff).

In the Sundarbans, our group had the opportunity to meet with an organization focused on policy initiatives to further sustainability efforts in the face of traumatic weather events. Discussing these opportunities with the key policymakers who propose policy developments to the government, NGOs, the UN, etc., was enlightening.

This trip was eye-opening in countless ways and one of my greatest takeaways was the importance of individuals working to reduce their carbon footprint. While it is known that large conglomerates bear the greatest responsibility for their enormous carbon footprints, small, everyday actions by individuals can make a significant impact in combating climate change on a global scale.

Every step toward sustainability, from conserving energy to reducing waste, adds to a larger movement that benefits the planet. For instance, investing in reusable glassware helps limit the use of single-use plastics; using reusable water filters instead of single-use plastic bottles makes a difference in landfills; trying to eat vegetarian or vegan meals once a week reduces meat consumption and production; and switching to energy-efficient appliances, or simply unplugging devices when not in use, can contribute to a more sustainable lifestyle. Individual efforts may seem small, but collectively they can contribute to reducing carbon footprints and mitigating the effects of climate change.



The World Risk Index 2023 ranks Bangladesh ninth worldwide for climate disaster risk.

By 2050, Bangladesh will lose 17% of its territory due to rising sea levels, resulting in the loss of 30% of the country's agricultural land.



Photo captions: (top left) Dhakeshwari National Temple in Old Dhaka; (top right) Rickshaws in the city of Dhaka; (bottom right) Cassie immediately post-cliff fall with makeshift sling.



DEI SOCIAL PILLAR: POTLUCK LUNCH

HONORING DIVERSITY THROUGH FOOD AND CULTURE

BY CHRISTINA CASSIDY

At our recent 2nd Annual DEI Potluck in NJ, we gathered not just to share meals but to celebrate the flavors, cultures, and connections that make our firm unique. The event was a hit, and as everyone tasted their way around the room where two crowd-favorite dishes emerged as winners: savory pulled pork sandwiches (Justine's husband) and a sweet and irresistible cornbread (Deanna). I am excited to highlight the creators behind these winning dishes—and, for those eager to recreate the magic at home, we've included the recipes!



An Interview with Justine Vincent - NFC's "Savory" Winner

Christina: Can you tell us about the inspiration behind your dish?

Justine: There was no particular inspiration behind the dish other than love of different foods. It is easy to make and takes little preparation.

Christina: Is this dish connected to your cultural or family traditions?

Justine: It is not connected to any cultural or family tradition. It's just a dish that the household has had before and enjoyed so I practiced it until I felt like it was perfected. The dish is a new dish to add to my list of specialties.

Christina: Do you have any memorable moments from the potluck you'd like to share?

Justine: Just love when the firm comes together for potluck, and we get to sit and catch up with people we may not have had a chance to have a lengthy conversation with recently.

An Interview with Deanna Edwards - NFC's "Sweet" Winner

Christina: Can you tell us about the inspiration behind your dish?

Deanna: Cornbread has always been a holiday staple in my household. It's always a hit at family parties and it is super easy to make and doesn't take long to bake.

Christina: Is this dish connected to your cultural or family traditions?

Deanna: In African American households, cornbread dates back to the days of slavery when enslaved people were given cornmeal as rations. In my family, we have cornbread at Thanksgiving, and we also eat it on New Years because it is associated with good luck and wealth. The golden color of cornbread represents gold. Traditionally you eat black eyed peas, collard greens and cornbread on New Years to start your year with luck.

Christina: Do you have any memorable moments from the potluck you'd like to share?

Deanna: This is my 2nd DEI potluck, and I think it gets better every year. It is nice to sit and enjoy different cultural foods together as a team and everyone was in a great mood and the room was filled with laughter and positive energy.

Christina: What's one new dish or flavor you discovered at the potluck that you enjoyed?

Deanna: I had never eaten Pakora before and really enjoyed trying it for the first time.

Christina: As a member of the DEI Counsel, what's your favorite part about being involved in DEI initiatives at work?

Deanna: My favorite part of the DEI counsel is learning about the different cultures of our colleagues and being able to have open conversations on issues going on in the world. The DEI counsel feels like a safe place and through the counsel I have formed closer friendships and have educated myself on topics that I was unaware of in the past.



Separately, NFC West came together for their first-ever DEI potluck. Each team member received meal credits to explore a cuisine they hadn't tried before, making this potluck an exploration of flavors from around the world. Gathering remotely and in person, the team shared their experiences of trying new dishes and engaged in a lively food trivia session! The trivia was full of NFC's competitive spirit and highlighted interesting food facts. Congratulations to Clara, who emerged as the food trivia champion. Thank you to everyone who participated and made this gathering a flavorful success!

Our DEI Potluck exemplifies the spirit of community and appreciation that drives our firm's culture. As we savor the memories and celebrate the flavors that brought us together, we look forward to continuing this tradition and sharing even more together. Check out the scrumptious recipes of our winners on the following page!

JUSTINE & PATRICK'S "SAVORY" PULLED PORK...VINCENT STYLE



Ingredients

- 1 pork butt or picnic shoulder
- 2-3 diced onions
- Goya adobo
- Goya mojo
- Brown sugar
- Black Pepper
- Paprika
- Garlic powder
- Onion powder
- Ground Cumin
- Chicken bouillon cubes or powder
- Crushed whole garlic cloves
- Orange juice

Directions

1. Poke holes in pork and stuff with garlic cloves.
2. Season pork liberally with all the dry ingredients, except the bullion and let marinate overnight.
3. In a large pot (Dutch ovens work perfectly), heat oil and half a stick of salted butter. Then sear each side of the pork.
4. Take out the pork and set aside. Put onions in pot. Do not drain out the rendered fat from the pork. Sauté onions until translucent, then deglaze pot with mojo and orange juice.
5. Place pork back into the pot. The liquid in the pot should cover the pork 3/4 of the way.
6. Place covered Dutch pot in a preheated oven at 300 degrees for 1.5 hours per pound, being sure to flip the shoulder halfway through so the top portion of the pork can be braised as well. Pull out of the oven. You will know the pork is done when you can easily pull the bone out of the center of the pork.

Chef's Notes:

- You can also use a slow cooker instead of a Dutch oven after step 5. The only difference is that after deglazing the pot with the liquids, you would pour that liquid over the pork in the slow cooker. Cook on low for 8 hours.
- Boneless pork butts or picnic shoulders work fine as well. However, the bone-in version provides a deeper, richer flavor.

DEANNA'S "SWEET" CORN BREAD



Ingredients

- 1 cup Indian Head Yellow Corn Meal
- 1 cup All Purpose Flour
- ½ cup Sugar
- 3 teaspoons Baking Powder
- 1 teaspoon Salt (optional)
- 2/3 cup Milk
- 2 Eggs
- ½ cup of Oil
- Melted butter to coat the pan

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. In a bowl, combine the wet and dry ingredients and stir until blended.
3. Pour the batter into an 8x8 greased pan.
4. Bake for 20-25 minutes or until golden brown.
5. Enjoy!

