



Healing a ‘Shadow Pandemic’ of Unpaid Women’s Labor Will Foster Stronger Economic Recovery, Melinda Gates Says Thursday at Virtual Texas Conference for Women

Gates joined actor and producer Issa Rae and National Book Award winner Elizabeth Acevedo to headline event with more than 10,000 participants

Thursday, October 1, 2020 – Although more men are dying from COVID-19, women are suffering from a “shadow pandemic” economically by shouldering the burden of caregiving and other unpaid jobs, global philanthropist Melinda Gates said today at the all-virtual Texas Conference for Women.

“The key infrastructure in this society that needs to be built back properly is this unpaid labor, this caregiving work that women so often do,” Gates said during a sweeping conversation with media executive and TEDWomen co-founder Pat Mitchell. “If we can build that system back in a way that really supports families, and supports jobs and capitalism, then we are going to be better off as a society in the next decade and the next 50 decades ahead.”

More than 10,000 people from across Texas and the nation – as well as from other countries – participated in the 21st annual Conference at its debut virtual event. Gates joined actor Issa Rae and National Book Award winner Elizabeth Acevedo to headline the day themed “Leading the Way Forward.”

Rae, an acclaimed producer, actress and writer, called it vital for women to surround themselves with a supportive community.

“I have to foster a community of women who support one another. I think that is so essential because we are constantly pitted against one another and underestimated and I think there is nothing more valuable than a support group of women who understand,” Rae said.

Thursday's highly interactive Conference also gave attendees opportunities to network with each other and with speakers, support women-owned businesses in a virtual exhibit hall, and participate in career coaching and resume reviews.

"After so many months of being apart, today offered a unique opportunity to come together as a community, even in a virtual setting," said Carla Piñeyro Sublett, President of the Texas Conference for Women Board of Directors. "Being connected in this way, and hearing from such inspirational speakers, truly empowers women to lead the way forward at this challenging time."

Renowned presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin made a surprise appearance to remind participants to vote on November 3rd. And breakout sessions on a variety of topics offered wisdom and tools for navigating challenges amid a global pandemic and economic crisis that is heavily impacting women. The sessions were led by a host of high-profile women in business, as well as experts and best-selling authors including James Clear, NYT bestselling author, *Atomic Habits*; Priya Parker, author, *The Art of Gathering*; and Michelle Kim, founder and CEO, Awaken.

The Texas Conference for Women is part of the [nation's largest network of women's conferences](#), with two more virtual events in 2020: [Pennsylvania](#) on Nov. 11th and [Massachusetts](#) on Dec. 10th.

TEXAS CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN SPONSORS

The Texas Conference for Women is presented by [Liberty Mutual Insurance](#); and generously sponsored by [Target](#); [Cisco](#); [Dell Technologies](#); [Deloitte](#); [Accenture LLP](#); [Amazon Web Services](#); [Apple Inc.](#); [Broadway Bank](#); [Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, New Jersey, U.S.A](#); [Phillips 66](#); [Raytheon Technologies](#); [UnitedHealthcare](#); [Arm](#); [Cirrus Logic](#); [Dover Fueling Solutions](#); [H-E-B](#); [Huston-Tillotson University](#); [National Instruments](#); [Planview, Inc.](#); [Q2](#); [Silicon Labs](#); [Tokyo Electron \(TEL\)](#); [USAA](#) and media sponsors [Austin American-Statesman](#); [The Texas Tribune](#).

"Liberty Mutual is committed to helping women, and all people, during these difficult and changing times. We are proud to be the presenting sponsor for the Texas Conference for Women, which today offered extraordinary speakers and innovative opportunities for attendees to connect and gain inspiration," said Melanie Foley, executive vice president, chief talent and enterprise services officer for Liberty Mutual Insurance.

HELPING WOMEN IMPACTED BY THE PANDEMIC AND WOMEN-OWNED RESTAURANTS IN TEXAS

This year, as part of its mission to support women helping women, the Texas Conference for Women gifted tickets to several women whose jobs had been impacted by the pandemic, essential workers and students. The Conference also donated \$177,500 to 71 women-owned restaurants across Texas. In an effort to help those impacted by a pandemic-battered economy, the [Texas Conference for Women](#) donated the funds to the [Texas Restaurant Association](#), which paid \$2,500 to each grant recipient to help pay employees and defray other costs. A list of the grant recipients can be found [here](#).

TEXAS CONFERENCE FOR WOMEN, TARGET, HONOR INSPIRING TEXANS

The 2020 Texas Conference for Women also joined Target to honor three Texans who have stepped up during the COVID-19 pandemic. The women, recognized as part of the Storytellers contest sponsored by Target, are: Judy Reed, of Austin, who faced a breast cancer diagnosis and volunteered amid the COVID-19 pandemic to sew masks and drive seniors to medical appointments; Alyssa Garza, of San Marcos, who secured grants to help underrepresented people be counted in this year's Census; and Nakeenya Wilson, of Austin, the Executive Director of Black Mamas ATX, which works to help eliminate the disproportionate risks black women face in maternal healthcare.

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