



# DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY

Twenty Nine Years of Service to America's Diverse Communities

SEPTEMBER 16, 2019 — WASHINGTON, D.C.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE *THE SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE — ANCIENT WISDOM, LIGHTNING TECHNIQUE*



DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY, Inc. has begun the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month with its own annual recognition of the role of Latinas and the Latino heritage as it concluded its thirtieth year of programing with the Entrepreneurship and Information technology Conference on September 10<sup>th</sup>, hosted at the **Microsoft Innovation & Policy Center**, Washington, D.C. In attendance were an eager assemblage of entrepreneurs, technology mavens, and education profes-sionals from the Washington metro area and beyond. This year-ending Entrepreneurship program is supported as well by the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs for the District of Columbia and collaborating organizations.



A traditional Welcome to attendees was voiced by the Dialogue's President **Ma. Cristina Caballero** and **Suhail Khan** for the sponsoring Microsoft, and by **Franklin Garcia**, the U.S. "Shadow" Representative for the District of Columbia.

**Luís Borunda**, Maryland's Deputy Secretary of State, appeared at the outset by way of overview, recounting the lessons of a successful career as entrepreneur, owner of a graphics production firm. The quintessential laboratory case for the analysis of entrepreneurship and its many routes to fortune, is just the sort of shop of modest size, piloted by a productive design or technique, carried out by dexterous craftsmen or diligent operatives of whatever skill level, backed by a judiciously measured dollop of advertising and rationally articulated set of bylaws and financial undergirding. The arena in which bold owners seek to prove their skills. The entrepreneur must be willing to work at night and cannot expect a payoff every week – or every year.



The District of Columbia's pronounced pro-small business leaning, a centerpiece of the present city Administration's home policy, has generated a thoroughly articulated Department of Small and local Business, with such sub-departments as the provocatively named Office of Innovation and Equitable Growth., which has afforded fertile ground for the establishment and flourishing of enterprises such as those that are the subject of the present Conference.



A Special Guest for the day and highlight of the agenda was the new national President of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, **Ramiro Cavazos**, who for the ten years just past has served at the helm of the San Antonio, Texas HCC, and may count a long career as city planner and urban design go-to expert for the metropolis. Mr. Cavazos recounts his sense of obligation when the presidency of the venerable USHCC was proposed to him. The organization had experienced a confused and troublesome decade and Mr. Cavazos, as the new chief coming on the scene, found it a broken organization. He makes his debut before the assembly of delegates at the USHCC national conclave September 30<sup>th</sup> to October 2<sup>nd</sup> at Albuquerque, New Mexico (the city where the U.S.H.C.C. was founded! ). His task as he organizes the levers of control, therefore, is to establish an unexciting régime of order and amity in the rebuilt administrative structures, and to fashion a newly articulated voice of aid and inspiration for the world of Latino business activity in the broad and deep reaches of American Society's economic universe.

Midday session speakers include the familiar figure of **Gregory L. Rohde**, former Assistant Secretary of Commerce and NTIA head, and subsequently heading e-Copernicus, a firm specializing in counseling and design of IT systems for firms dealing with governments and other large clients here and abroad. Mr. Rohde, holder of a Doctorate in Sacred Theology from CUA and thus viewing contemporary technological progress with a uniquely long and focused perspective, sees in Nicolaus Copernicus, the sixteenth Century astronomer and mathematician, the origins of the enlightenment view of history and our place in it. In this view the governing technological and economic revolutions have had their origins in the stimulus of novel conceptions, occurring at discrete intervals in the social history of nations, produced by inventive, typically unorthodox intelligences. His basis in the present conference, however, harks back to his creative and influential role in the turbulent era of the internet's infancy and the attempts, moving ahead in fits and starts, to forge a system of regulation of the new medium. The resulting hodge-podge of regulatory thrusts have left the internet relatively untrammelled in its content and style, while a perceptible, and often controversial, degree of content regulation still affects the conventional broadcast industry. This situation forms a provocative counterpoint to the newly arising agitation for a broader goal than profits for the business sector of the American economy — the role of various elements of legal regulation in giving shape to this humanized corporate ethic will be a prime issue in public policy in the decade ahead.



**Roberta Rincón**, Senior Manager, Research for the Society of Women Engineers (and a valued Director of Dialogue on Diversity), speaks again from her vast information on the studies and achievements of younger women in the preparatory leaning, rare but valuable, in the brisk market for top class engineering skills. The inquiry into the differential engagement in STEM studies by gender and ethnicity and region, and, of course, other variables, among these the quality of previous educational attainments, is a significant key to any cogent argument for income advancement and professional effectiveness. While the participation of young women in these professional (STEM-related) lines of endeavor is measurable with some subtlety with the advanced methods available to investigators such as Dr. Rincón, the fact readily enough emerges that the technical professions appear to be less than the most attractive choice for the women's side of the gender divide — this despite the evidently handsome income potential on offer. If medicine and law, in which the influx of women over the last thirty or so years has transformed the gender profile, and perhaps the performance style of those professions, then a perceived specially “human” dimension in the subject matters may be thought to have greater appeal for young women. Engineering, at all events, is the fashioning of infrastructures and instruments that are the intimate environment of human subjects, and for that reason can be an equally human-oriented undertaking.



A ray of insight on the outbreak of rapid entrepreneurial advance in the South American country of Bolivia (now quite properly: The Plurinational State of Bolivia) so explained **Natalia Campero-Romero**, its Consul General in Washington, brings into a sharp focus the remarkable advances in economic activity and social reform that are fundamentally transforming the country. That advance is seen most strikingly in the explosion of productive activity in its Eastern-most Department, Santa Cruz, and in the city of the same name (full name: Santa Cruz de la Sierra), a score of years ago a small provincial place, now a metropolis of well over a million, replete with new skyscrapers, modern commuter rail lines, and such urban amenities as museums. Ms. Campero-Romero emphasized such features of the whirlwind of modernizing changes as the requirement for an at least 50% representation of women in the legislature. And also, for our North American audience, the rationale, through the term, and the reality, of a *plurinational* entity, voicing at last the fundamental recognition by Bolivia's national community of the plurality of the fully articulated and empowered ethnic and historical polities within the larger national compass. The progress in literacy and the accompanying interest throughout the population in public affairs are further facets of the transformation of the Bolivian entity.



Now heading the Capital Region Minority Supplier Development Council **Sharon Pinder** updates an audience eager to learn the nut and bolts of the intricate ties linking large industrial and other, much smaller economic entities. Ms. Pinder had initially made a name for herself as owner of her own IT enterprise, and subsequently, heeding a call of conscience for public service, as a vigorous proponent of the anti-discrimination initiatives in the bureaucratic maze of state government. At the present juncture in her career she has found in the concept and practice of supplier diversity a key to the fortunes of the world of small business enterprises. Large firms with their voracious input demands (those that a prudent management sees it is not economical to produce in-house) vis-a-vis the myriad of small firms, usually highly specialized and awesomely skilled at fabricating a narrow range of goods that precisely fill the notches in the mega production lines of the industrial behemoth. The complex and voluminous tasks of fostering a market process of bidding and pricing among the eager smalls and the shrewd search tasks facing the bigs, is the province of organizations such as Council that Ms. Pinder manages — an “Unsung Hero” in the large productive engine that, without any overall command structure, solves the key problems in adjusting the functions of production within a never quite understood economic society: the economic JATO, getting the small-minority-firm supplier diversity system smartly off the ground.

A more detailed glimpse of the impact of IT developments on a range of economic and social phenomena was explored in presentations on two major growth points, the proliferation of Internet of Things (IoT) systems, and the swift evolution of “Artificial Intelligence”, in the form of an rapid-fire dialogue between **Fernando Torrez**, a previous speaker in the Dialogue’s programs and the founder and head of the Nanotech Computers firm in Alexandria, Virginia, and **Jeremy Greenberg**, Policy Fellow at the Future of Privacy Forum, also a redoubtable source of IT expertise for our programs, both well-informed figures in the metro area IT intelligentsia. IoT has grown to be a pervasive technique in as many fields as there are that have formerly been managed by alert overseers, standing perpetually at the ready behind their control boards. They may find themselves in many cases on a long vacation – in itself a social problem of no mean dimensions – as the multiple gadgets and sensors that they have managed are now linked one to the other across increasingly broad networks, apprehending the state of the often quite vast system and adjusting the functioning of the constituent parts through the internal calculations of the IT center. The gains achieved in accuracy of system management are to be set against the social problem of labor displacement and also the peril of privacy impact, multiplied by the volumes of data being ceaselessly juggled and the “nodes”, or points of potential information leakage, inhering in the system. AI, for its part, represents a further stage in the complexity of information technology functioning, designating features of systems in which continued operation contributes modifications to the essential protocol of rules in the underlying program governing that functioning. Just as man, the reasoning animal, learns from mistakes and doubles down on successes, the machine, without all the niceties of our subtler, emotion-colored thought, modifies features in its own functioning without further external prompting. Whether this constitutes a menace to human independence, or worse, self-respect, as journalists fret, is, at this point, a bit far-fetched. We are a wily bunch.



The Dialogue explores the cutting edge of the American educational enterprise, with the computer training for girls of elementary school age in the courses and tutoring services described by **Alicia C. (AC) Lane**. Ms. Lane, brandishing formidable educational credentials, has mastered an awesome faculty for throwing off, in swift succession, a flock of new ideas for smart projects in the repertory of modern education. Her current specialty is provision of a sophisticated, carefully particularized tutoring regimen, which has succeeded, if not producing mini-Einsteins, in at least turning out competent scholars in the top rungs of the educational ladder – under the name **Acers Lane** – a descriptive that at once harks back to its welcome proprietress’s name. Her services find their proper site in the creative and success-driven ways of the capital. The precision and expedition of AC’s services, the get-down-to-business style in the tutoring tasks, is making its mark.



In another key, the new D.C. Charter School, GIRLS GLOBAL ACADEMY, projecting the inception of operations in 2020 after the long preparatory process for qualifying the school, readying site, faculty, library, and equipment. **Shayne Swift** and **Karen Venable-Croft**, both long experienced teachers in the near suburban Prince Georges County, Maryland schools, are organizing the enterprise, with very specific purposes, turning high school age girls of color into effective Citizens of the World, self-confident and enabled with many skills, through an emphasis on the STEM studies, language, and arts, in a curriculum similar to that prescribed for the International Baccalaureate Degree. This is the dream of twelve years ago, when they first articulated the concept, which in turn came to be less dream than present reality. and is now at the action stage, not the whim of the moment, but a lifetime project powered by the determination mustered by two very



wise and able founders. They estimate an initial enrollment of some 90 young women in its high school level studies, with total enrollment growing to cover full cohorts of the four year curriculum, and with numbers enlarged by a growing repute as the school's influence spreads among youth of the D.C. community. The succeeding enrollment thus will be a multiple of the initial figures. The work of assembling a staff of able teachers much beyond the average in subject matter skills and insight, is of key import, and each educational topic must be brought home to students by an extraordinary faculty for presentation through an imaginative technique, always



incorporating the Citizen of the World impetus. Some of this spirit of achievement is amenable to readily obtained metrics; more is a subtler species of excellence picked up by students as an empowering inspiration.

Washington area business lawyer **Michael Veve** covered the basic ground in the lore of classic business law with his short but thorough seminar at midday, hitting the main points in the subject, bin describing the tasks of conceiving, organizing, and putting a newly formed enterprise into forward motion. Combining the quiet savvy of decades of experience at the job with a personable wit, Mr. Veve issues friendly warnings to would be entrepreneurs on the missteps to skirt and the wise precautions to take in treading the well-worn entrepreneurial path. Make friends with an accountant, a banker, and a lawyer. You will need all three. When a source of capital asks you how much you are going to need to get the enterprise up and runnmg, carefully research all the expenses, then calculate the total. Then Double It. That is the figure to operate with. You will end up needing it all.



Mr. Veve studied law in Puerto Rico and maintains connection with the P.R. legal community. He is perfectly at home in both the Spanish and English languages. He has spoken before a Dialogue on Diversity audience on business law before, in 2015. We

gratefully welcome him

The MICROSOFT CORPORATION, in its Innovation and Policy Center on K Street, was sponsor and host for the day. **Mr. Suhail Khan**, the company's Director for External Affairs, appeared at the midday session for remarks of welcome and greeting on behalf of the sponsor. Microsoft treated our guests to the elegant lunch and to a post-Conference reception in the handsomely designed Eleventh Floor foyer.