



WOMEN IN SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP AWARDS HONORS & CELEBRATES 10 NEW SUSTAINABILITY TRAILBLAZERS

May 20, 2021 – The WSLA Alumnae Group announced this year’s stellar sustainability leaders in a virtual Women in Sustainability Leadership Awards (WSLA) ceremony May 19. This was the first awards ceremony that the group held independently since it became a nonprofit organization. The WSLA Class of 2021 will join the most powerful women at the forefront of sustainability who are making a difference in the world by initiating lasting change. No other organization recognizes highly accomplished women in sustainability from such diverse, global, and multi-professional segments that relate in some way to sustainability.

Over 80 people logged onto the uplifting virtual ceremony. Starting with an introduction by awards emcee Rochelle Routman, WSLA Alumnae Group’s President, toasting HMTX lead Diamond Sponsor HMTX Industries with a signature WSLA basil gin gimlet, Routman welcomed the new winners into the WSLA fold. “By recognizing women that are doing important work in sustainability, we are elevating them and their work by providing new pathways to even greater accomplishments in their chosen field,” said Routman. “With each new woman that is recognized for her work in sustainability, all our voices are raised, and the world benefits as a result. We are a diverse organization of women with a strong track record of meaningful and lasting change.”

WSLA Alumnae Group Vice President Lisa Colicchio set the stage for Spoken Poet Artist Awa Ndiaye, whose work explores various themes including identity, social justice, and climate change. Said Colicchio in introducing Awa, “She curates spaces where people connect intentionally, share vulnerably, and reflect critically. Her poetry beautifully holds these spaces by allowing people to access a deeper place within themselves and to connect through shared emotions. Awa’s words are her gift to the world.” Her spoken poems evoked her passion for diversity and inclusion and sparked an emotional response in the audience to her utopian concern for identity, social justice, and the relief from the effects for climate change for us all.

Keynote speaker **Kaye Husbands Fealing**, Dean of the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts at the Georgia Institute of Technology, spoke eloquently about her journey from being a shy young Barbadian immigrant to becoming a giant in the field of science and innovation policy in her speech addressing “Diversity of Opinion: A Catalyst for Positive Change”. She revealed how underrepresented groups can easily remain invisible, creating a roadblock to meaningful change, and the need for organizations to develop a scalable

strategy that sustains diversity within the nationwide scientific workforce. “We cannot have robust innovation without incorporating principles of diversity, equity and inclusion,” she said. “It’s not about us, it’s about all of us. Be the person whom others can rely on to advise, guide and confide in as they make *their* way to their own excellence. Lift while you climb!”

Kathleen Smith, WSLA Alumnae Group Board Member, then introduced the 10 winners of the WSLA Awards Class of 2021!

- **Jessica Aldridge**, Director of Sustainability and Zero Waste Programs, Athens Services
- **Mona Benisi**, Executive Director of Morgan Stanley; Head of Sustainability, Global Real Assets, Morgan Stanley Investment Management.
- **Dr. Marilyn Black**, Vice President and Senior Technical and Strategic Advisor, Underwriters Laboratories Inc.
- **Sonja Bochart**, Regenerative Design, Sustainability and Biophilia Consulting
- **Christine Brunel-Ligneau**, Sustainable Agriculture Strategy, Bayer AG CropScience Division.
- **Gina Ciganik**, Chief Executive Officer, Healthy Building Network
- **Robyn Eason**, Long-Range Planning & Sustainability Manager, City of West Hollywood
- **Dr. Jennifer Holmgren**, CEO, LanzaTech; Director and Chair, LanzaJet, Inc.
- **Rachel Hodgdon**, President & CEO, International WELL Building Institute (IWBI)
- **Elaine Hsieh**, Co-Founder, Head of Corporate Partnerships and Marketing, Third Derivative (D3)



Said Routman, “We have come into our own: the nonprofit WSLA Alumnae Group is more solidified than ever before, a result of our independence, the talent within the organization, the executive team and the board, and our loyal alumnae network. We look forward to hosting an in-person awards ceremony in 2022!”

The 10 Class of 2021 winners will join the ranks of the WSLA Alumnae Group: over 85 of the most influential women and previous WSLA Awards recipients who have become a powerful force in creating a more sustainable world. The group's summits, service activities, and mentorship opportunities are paving the way in sustainability and for future leaders in the field.

ABOUT THE WSLA ALUMNAE GROUP

The WSLA Alumnae Group consists of a community of WSLA award winners, focusing on fostering mentorship to further shape the future of sustainability. Today the WSLA Alumnae Group's members have become a powerful force in the profession. For more information, visit <https://www.wsla.global>

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