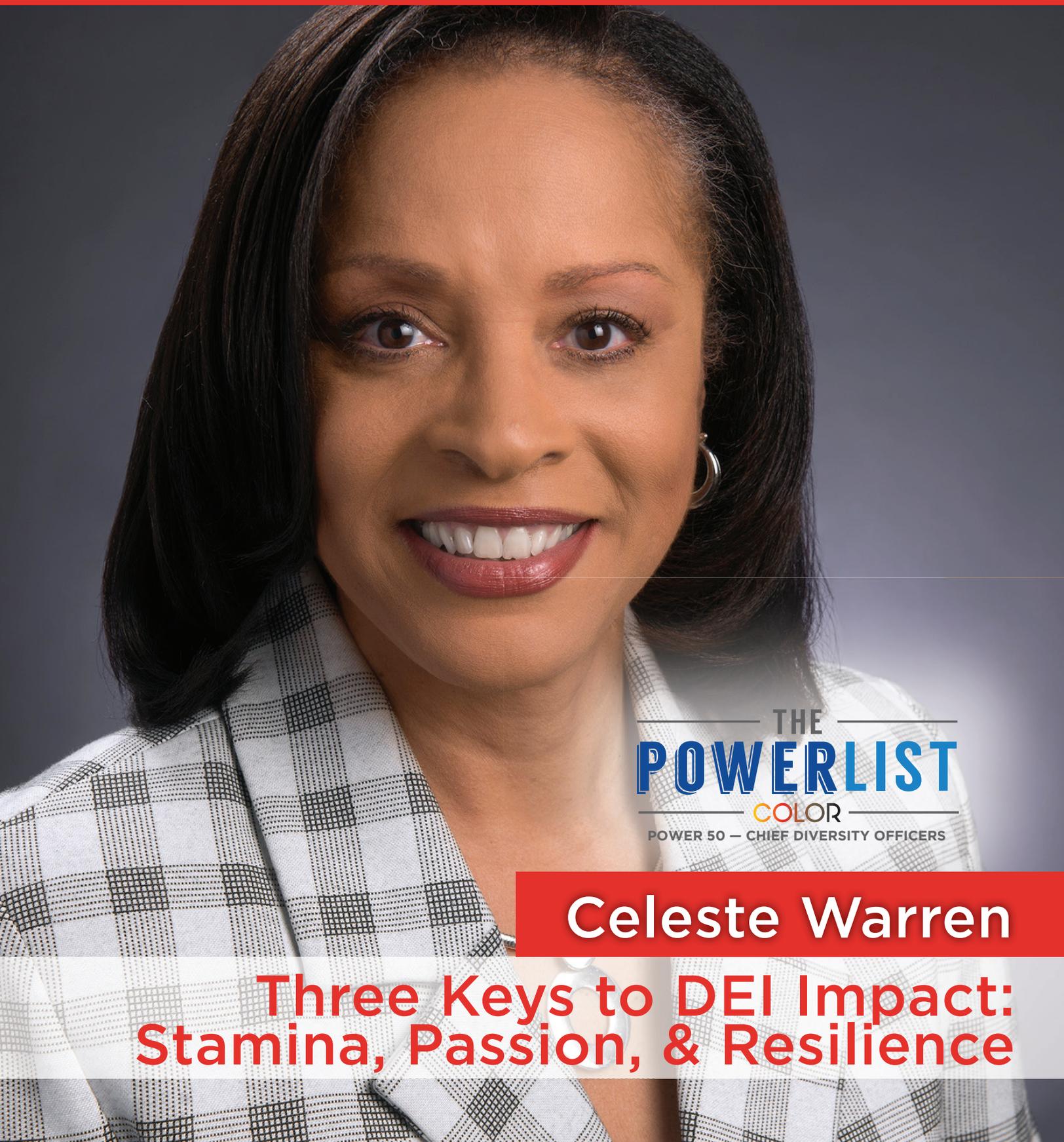


COLOR

DIVERSITY · EMPOWERMENT



THE
POWERLIST
COLOR
POWER 50 — CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICERS

Celeste Warren

**Three Keys to DEI Impact:
Stamina, Passion, & Resilience**



CELESTE WARREN,
Vice President of Global D&I at Merck

Celeste Warren's Three Keys to DEI Impact: Stamina, Passion, & Resilience

By Evan J. Cutts

Celeste Warren leads Merck's Global Diversity & Inclusion Center of Excellence as its Vice President of Global D&I. In the last eight years, Warren developed diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategies and roadmaps for advancing and embedding D&I throughout the organization while working with global leaders, enhancing employee experience, and maximizing business performance.

Celeste's expertise is also called upon through membership to CNBC's Workforce Executive Council and World 50's Inclusion and Diversity Impact Community. Her inclusive leadership is recognized by Black Enterprise, Savoy Magazine, Women's eNews and others.

What does it take to be an impactful Chief Diversity Officer?

It takes stamina, passion, and resilience to be an impactful Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer. But you cannot just be passionate about DEI, you must be a practitioner. You must be able to understand the components of change management so you can mobilize the employees at every level to drive change within an organization. To be successful, DEI cannot be viewed as something on the outside looking in at the business -- it must be a key component and foundational element of the business' success.

What were some of your childhood and early adult influences?

I have always been inspired by my late parents. My father was the first black teacher and principle in western Pennsylvania, so I learned from him what that was like and watched him in his struggles and triumphs as a black man. My mother was his champion, his confidant and the one who dusted him off, built him back up when he came home at the end of the day tired and frustrated so he could go right back out the next day and take on the world.

How has Merck supported professionals and communities of color throughout the pandemic?

First, I would like to say that we did not just start supporting professional and communities of color during the pandemic. We have a robust health equity strategy that involves partnering with local communities to build trust and eliminate the barriers preventing our patients of color from experiencing optimal health outcomes. For our employees, our Global Benefits organization worked tirelessly to develop mental and emotional health services for our staff and concierge assistance programs to help our families throughout the pandemic. We [also implement] specific sourcing strategies to recruit candidates of color as well as development programs to enhance their leadership skills.

What is on the horizon for Merck in 2022?

I believe we are poised to make impactful change within the organization in 2022. Our new CEO, Rob Davis, is passionately committed to driving DE&I throughout the organization as are our Executives and management teams. We have augmented the roles of our Employee Business Resource Groups to continue to make a lasting change for our employees; We have integrated DE&I into our drug discovery, development, manufacturing, marketing, and sales processes; and finally, we continue to look for ways to transform the business landscape through such things as our Environmental and Social Governance, global supplier diversity, and health equity strategies.

Can you offer a few words of wisdom facing new challenges in 2022 and beyond?

Do not let the disappointments or personal setbacks impact what [you] must do on behalf of the people in the organization; people are counting on me to be their champion and I must always remember that.

Always find an opportunity to elevate your voice in the work of DE&I, no matter who you are or where you sit in the organization. You must speak up for those who haven't found the power to raise their voices and speak their individual truths.