



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**Greater Boston Chamber and City Awake Announce  
2020 Fierce Urgency of Now Festival**  
Featuring Morgan DeBaun, Founder & CEO, Blavity, Inc.

The [Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce](#) (GBCC) and [City Awake](#) are pleased to announce the third annual [Fierce Urgency of Now](#) festival, a five day festival dedicated to amplify the experiences, challenges, and opportunities for young professionals of color in Greater Boston. This year, the festival will feature more than 30 virtual events hosted by organizations and companies.

After the 2017 City of Millennials report identified a divergent experience regarding affordability, economic security, and belonging for millennials of color in Greater Boston, the GBCC and City Awake launched the first Fierce Urgency of Now festival in 2018. The title, “Fierce Urgency of Now,” is attributed to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech: “We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism.”

Dr. King’s words are still true today. As the region works through a pandemic and a racial reckoning after the murder of George Floyd, the Greater Boston business community must take action to create spaces of belonging and equity. With intention and urgency, the region’s systemic racism and bias can and will be transformed into systemic opportunity. The Fierce Urgency of Now festival events will directly address equity and belonging to create an even more inclusive business community.

The opening event on September 16 features [Morgan DeBaun](#), Founder and CEO of [Blavity, Inc.](#), the largest network of platforms and brands for Black millennials. On September 17, Mayor Martin J. Walsh and Dr. Karilyn Crockett, the newly appointed Chief of Equity, will discuss how they are making equity a reality and how young professionals can be engaged in the most pressing issues facing the region. Other events include keynotes, day parties, workshops, and workouts. To continue the celebration, GBCC and City Awake will announce during the festival the recipients of [the Chamber’s Ten Outstanding Young Leaders Awards](#), which includes leaders who are breaking barriers and addressing equity to create a diverse and inclusive future.

James E. Rooney, the Chamber’s President and CEO, explains the importance of the festival to this region and retaining diverse talent. “Now, more than ever, it is critical that the business community listen to and uplift young professionals of color. While the region navigates the pandemic and racial reckoning after the murder of George Floyd, we must make it our collective priority to create systemic opportunity for young professionals of color. Participating in ongoing discussions and adopting inclusive practices can help Boston attract and retain diverse talent.”

“I am excited about this year’s festival – the first time we are fully virtual! One of the reasons that we started the festival three years ago was to provide access to physical spaces around the city where young professionals of color don’t traditionally feel welcomed. While we won’t be able to provide that experience this year, we now have the opportunity to reach an even bigger audience – right in their own homes. Having to go virtual started out as a roadblock, but turned into a new tool for accessibility and equity,” said Sheena Collier, Senior Advisor of Economic Opportunity at GBCC.

Amber Haskell, Corporate Citizenship and Diversity Analyst at MFS Investment Management, highlights the importance of advancing inclusivity and equity: “With the renewed focus on systemic inequality, it is more important than ever for Boston’s business community to bring together people of diverse backgrounds to create an inclusive community. On behalf of MFS, I am proud to be part of the festival and excited to learn from amazing young leaders of color.”

“The Fierce Urgency of Now Festival is an important platform that acknowledges the experience of young professionals of color in Boston. John Hancock is proud to partner with City Awake and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, as they work towards building a more equitable economy and community,” said Annie Duong-Turner, Senior Manager of Community Investment at John Hancock.

“This festival acknowledges head-on the real challenges people of color in Boston face – especially young people – and the disparity of experiences across the region. The event recruits a range of locations and industries across Boston, offering different perspectives on a shared challenge or vision,” said Lanna Tokuhiko, Associate Director of Brand Strategy at Arnold Worldwide and City Awake Advisory Board member.

The virtual 2020 Fierce Urgency of Now festival is supported by many, including Presenting Sponsors the Barr Foundation, John Hancock, and P&G Gillette; Platinum sponsors Allen & Gerritsen and J.P. Morgan Chase; and Gold sponsors Iron Mountain and Verizon.

### **About City Awake**

City Awake empowers the next generation of Greater Boston leaders through programming that builds community and engages young professionals in dialogue about the most pressing issues facing our region. Through this work, we hope to deepen their connections to the broader business and civic communities and recognize their important contributions to our thriving economy. Learn more at [CityAwake.org](http://CityAwake.org).

### **About the Greater Boston Chamber**

We are the convener, voice and advocate of our region’s business community, committed to making Greater Boston the best place for all businesses and all people to thrive. We help our members and Greater Boston succeed by convening and connecting the business community; researching, developing and advocating for public policies that contribute to our region’s economic success; and providing comprehensive leadership development programs designed to grow strong business and civic leaders. Learn more at [BostonChamber.com](http://BostonChamber.com).