

B/ACE

2022 HOLIDAY ISSUE

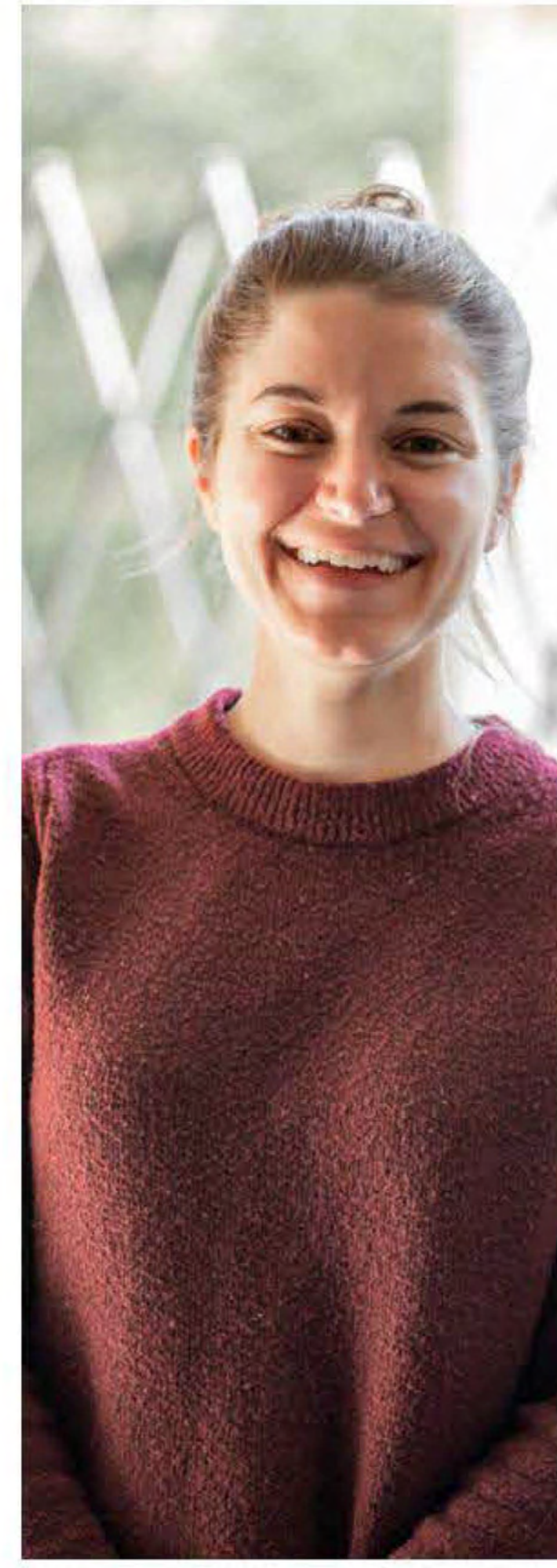
**B/ACE 2022
INFLUENTIAL
WOMEN**



**COMPLETED
PROJECT**

THE NEW UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS OUTPATIENT
SURGERY CENTER &
SPECIALTY CLINICS

5
Year
ANNIVERSARY



B/ACE 2022

INFLUENTIAL

WOMEN

The world is finally beginning to appreciate women and the wonderful talent that they bring to organizations. While the road to true gender equality remains an uphill battle, more and more women are becoming key influencers in the construction industry. With this year's 2022 Most Influential Women in Construction, B/ACE Magazine is shining a spotlight on some of these amazing women who never take no for an answer. The women featured are at the helm of key organizations that are utilizing their position to leverage opportunities for underrepresented communities and to open doors that were once locked for persons of color. They are influencers who are leading with grace, strength, and most importantly resiliency!

“

There's something so special about a woman who dominates in a man's world. It takes a certain grace, strength, intelligence, fearlessness, and the nerve to never take no for an answer.” — Rihanna

JACQUELINE GOMEZ

Executive Director of the Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (HACIA)

Communities Empowered Through Construction (CEC) is no stranger to the Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (HACIA), so imagine the delight when I found out that Jacqueline (Jackie) Gomez was the new Executive Director. HACIA is a construction advocacy, membership and training organization that works to ensure equitable participation of construction industry professionals. In her role, Jackie and her team advocate tirelessly for transformative and impactful policy and legislation that breaks down barriers of entry into the construction industry. Their work also helps to promote the growth of the organizations members and provides free small business and workforce development training to diversify the future of the construction industry.

Jackie is a thought leader on diversity and inclusion in the trades. She has decades of experience, including serving as the Director of Supplier and Workforce Diversity for the Obama Foundation where she was responsible for managing diversity, equity and inclusion programming. In addition, she was responsible for ensuring that the Foundation achieved transformative initiatives related to the construction of the Obama Presidential Center.



Before joining the Obama Foundation, Jackie served as the Director of Cook County's Office of Contract Compliance, where she was responsible for the administration, implementation and development of the County's Minority and Women's Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Program. She oversaw the certification process and ensured equitable participation within County contracts.

Jackie currently serves as a board member for the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority and a Commissioner for the City of Chicago's Department of Community Development. She has served on several volunteer boards and committees including UCAN, El Valor (finance committee member), and the Women's Business Development Center (certification committee member).



SHOSHIWA SHIELDS

Manager of Construction Initiatives at The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership

<https://chicookworks.org/>

Shoshiwa Mabina Shields is the Manager of Construction Initiatives at The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership. In this role, she leads the system-wide development and deployment of scalable apprenticeship and other work-based learning programs to move residents into high potential careers in the construction industry. Shoshiwa has been appointed to numerous board and committees, including the Illinois State Freight Advisory Council, Illinois Workforce Innovation Board's Apprenticeship Committee, Illinois State Highway Toll Authority ECP Advisory Committee, and CTA Red Line Restoration Advisory Committee. She also participated on the Illinois State Apprenticeship Steering Committee where she helped to implement and execute strategies to transition adult, youth, dislocated and incumbent workers into the high demand construction industry.

We love Shoshiwa because she has literally taken the 360 approach to a career in construction. She started as a carpenter and utilized her trade experience to launch her career on the professional side of construction. Her wealth of experience and key influence in the industry, will have a lasting impact for both women and minorities in construction.

What is one of your favorite holiday traditions?

"My favorite holiday tradition is exchanging "together experience" gifts instead of material gifts. For example, concert tickets, sip & paint classes, a vacation at a Bed & Breakfast. Have fun and create memories with those who are closest to you."

What book has most impacted your life?

Toni Morrison's book "The Bluest Eye." She uses two different narrators to tell the story with multiple perspectives and her use of conscious fragmentation. These different narrative styles – alternating between first and third-person omniscient – gave me the freedom to write alongside the works of Henry David Thoreau.

Sandya Dandamudi is President of GI Stone, located in Chicago. Founded 28 years ago by her mother Rani Dandamudi, GI Stone is WBE/MBE certified, a signatory to Union Local 21, and a vital employer. With an impressive resume that includes buildings such as 9 Walton, One Bennet Place, The Ritz Carlton, The Four Seasons Hotel, Wolf Pointe, The Tribune Tower, and Northwestern Outpatient Hospital, there is no wonder GI Stone is the leading stone company in Chicago.

Sandya was selected not only because of her ability to influence hiring opportunities for the Marble Setters Union-Local 21, but because of her personal commitment to utilize her platform to encourage more access for people of color in the construction industry.

As a child of immigrants, Sandya understands what the American Dream is about – her parents realized it and she, along with her two siblings, have greatly benefited from their years of hard work. This family drive has led to her conviction that everyone deserves to participate in that dream. Thus, she contributes her time to several board memberships.

A few of her board highlights include:

- **The DuSable Museum of African History Museum**
- **National Indo American History Museum – Advisory Board**
- **Greater River North Business Association – Board Member – 2020-present**
- **River North Resident's Association – Development and Land Use Committee**

“You must be the change you wish to see in the world”



SANDYA DANDAMUDI
President of GI Stone



JACKIE GALLO

When we began thinking about some of the amazing women pushing the envelope of diversity in the construction industry, Jackie Gallo was one that came top of mind. From our first meeting with Revolution Works, Jackie has been open to partnering with us, and as a result, we have been able to transform many lives.

Jackie has been with Revolution Works (RW) since its first cohort of construction trainees in October 2018. Since starting with the company, she's been fortunate to work with hundreds of construction company partners, nonprofit collaborators, a fast-growing, passionate team of coworkers, and – most importantly – an amazing group of alumni. Her best days at work are when a graduate surprise stops by for a visit to check in, show off photos of their work, or motivate the next cohort of trainees. She really can't wait for the first group of RW Alumni to collaborate and open their own construction company. Prior to Revolution Workshop, Jackie worked at nonprofits in Chicago and Austin, TX. She received her BA from Northwestern University.

What are you looking forward to this Holiday Season?

Having all my friends and family sitting at one long table for holiday dinner.

Your favorite Inspirational quote and why?

"Don't be afraid to start the dance floor" - my little sister. "Obviously, it's about something small, but I think it's a good way to think about initiating change. Whether it's the dance floor, a new idea, a social revolution... someone needs to look a little crazy if anything is going to happen."



BILQIS JACOBS-EL

Cook County Director, Facilities Management

When you think about divine connections, meeting Bilqis Jacobs was just that. I was introduced to Bilqis by my good friend in the industry, Jessica Caffrey. When I see someone amazing, you know that I must share them with the construction community. She is a hidden gem and hails as a woman of influence.

Bilqis is a graduate of Michigan State University's College of Engineering. She is currently responsible for maintaining approximately 14,000,000 sq. ft. of property, 20 different unions, and approximately 500 employees in facilities management. She is accountable for the energy-efficient and cost-effective operation of county facilities to provide a safe, reliable, and clean environment for staff and the general public.

Previously, she was an engineering and project management consultant for a private company and lead Regional Manager for the Chicago Board of Education, accumulating more than 20 years of experience in building operations and management. In conjunction with many stakeholders, Bilqis worked to establish the first pre-apprentice trade program for youth detained at the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. This program received a (NACO) award in 2016.

In 2023, under Bilqis' leadership, the Cook County Department of Facilities Management will use American Rescue Plan Act funding (ARPA) to implement a county apprenticeship program in Engineering.

Our team fell in love with Sharla Roberts when we worked together on the UIH Occupational Surgical Center.

Sharla is nationally recognized for her work in procurement and supplier diversity. She currently serves as the Director of the Office of Procurement Diversity at the University of Illinois, the first and only dedicated supplier diversity program at an Illinois public institution of higher education. She is responsible for ensuring that disadvantaged businesses are afforded every opportunity to participate on contracts throughout the University of Illinois system.

Based on her extensive knowledge and experience in diversity programs, Sharla was appointed by the Governor of the State of Illinois, to serve on the Business Enterprise Council which oversees the state's supplier diversity program. She was selected by her peers as Chairperson of both the Certification and Compliance Committees. Additionally, Sharla served on the Fair Practice in Contracting Task Force to research and create solutions to resolve racial disparity in government contracting.

Sharla Roberts has worked diligently to ensure the growth of small and diverse businesses, which is the backbone of our economy. She is a problem solver, a champion for economic sustainability, a results-driven leader, and one of B/ACE magazines women of influence!

A professional headshot of Sharla D. Roberts, a woman with long dark hair, smiling. She is wearing a black blazer over a red top and a pearl necklace. A small red circular pin with the letters 'UIC' is on her left lapel.

SHARLA D. ROBERTS

**Director of the Office of
Procurement Diversity at
the University of Illinois**