

## **Congratulations to Schenae Rourk, WTS-LA Rosa Parks Diversity Leadership Award Recipient**



*Schenae Rourk (WTS-LA Rosa Parks Diversity Leadership Award Recipient), 2020*

### **Honoring history by taking action today...**

We all know of Rosa Parks and her bravery, determination, and unshakeable belief in justice. But what many people don't know is that on that momentous day, December 1, 1955, Parks did not set out to make history. In fact, she routinely avoided that particular bus driver, Mr. Blake. Distracted on that day and not noticing who was driving, she boarded the bus and sat down. Then, she decided in the moment not to relinquish her seat when Mr. Blake asked. Her belief in equity was so strong, so fundamental to her being, that she just launched into unpremeditated action. Today, we recognize her depth of belief and commitment to action with the WTS-LA Rosa Parks Award and bestow it on someone who demonstrates those same qualities—Schenae Rourk.

Currently the volunteer executive director for the California chapter of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO-CA) Corporate Board Pathways Program (CBPP). The CBPP equips, educates, and positions high-potential, diverse, women business owners, executives, and leaders for corporate board leadership through mentoring and coaching. Rourk also previously served two years as volunteer president of the NAWBO Los Angeles chapter and serves NAWBO-CA as Vice President. But that's not all.

A staunch believer in workforce development, Rourk also serves as chairperson of the Transportation Business Advisory Council (TBAC), a consortium of "professional business associations representing an array of industries and trades." In both her NAWBO and TBAC roles, Rourk fosters mentoring opportunities and leadership development programs for women-owned and women-of-color-owned businesses. She also actively participates in the Los Angeles Business Federation (BizFed) as an executive board member and the Advocacy Committee as co-chair. In each effort she routinely brings leaders and stakeholders together for collaborative advocacy and initiatives. She is also an active steering committee member for the official ballot campaign for [VOTEYesonProp16.org](http://VOTEYesonProp16.org) to reinstate affirmative action. She also increases membership for each organization, increasing business participation, and increasing awareness of each organization. But that's only a snapshot of some her public sector work.

Rourk also founded her own company, Redwood Resources, where as president she assists businesses with development, marketing, growth strategies, strategic alliances, and engagements. The company also develops business programs like mentor-protégé, youth, and stakeholder engagement programs – all with a community and inclusion lens. With clients ranging from the architecture/engineering industry to contractors and a number of other industries, Rourk focuses her advocacy and devotion to equity for

Post Date: Oct. 30, 2020

Small Business Enterprises, Minority Business Enterprises, Women Business Enterprises, Disabled Veterans Business Enterprises and emerging 8(a) certified businesses. In short, Rourk looks to help those who are typically marginalized, underutilized, and overqualified. She brings up the tough conversations about inclusion and equity, highlighting where bias and processes and procedures can be exclusionary. And what is her preferred method of instruction? She mentors, as she believes that relationship imparts the most profound learning experience. And Rourk's efforts have not gone unnoticed by her peers.

“As a person of high conscience, Schenae is willing to start the hard conversations to move our communities and institutions closer to a more just and fair society,” explains Trisha Murakawa, president of Murakawa Communications and WTS-LA Small Business/TBAC/Diversity Recognitions Chair. “As an advocate and leader for inclusion and equality, Schenae demonstrates great strength and moral courage to always do the right thing in her quest for equality for everyone. I've seen her do this as chair of the Metro Transportation Business Advisory Council many times and in her roles with NAWBO and the LA County BizFed.” In many ways, that sounds very much like a description of Rosa Parks herself.

On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks boarded a bus in Montgomery, AL, just heading for home. She road into history, though, because of her deep-rooted belief in equality and her penchant for action. Schenae Rourk shares the depth and breadth of that belief, as well as Parks' commitment to action. For that reason and all of the others cited previously, that is why she richly deserves to receive the 2020 WTS-LA Rosa Parks Diversity Leadership Award.