

Karen Boykin-Towns Takes her Talents to Sard Verbinen

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Ask Karen Boykin-Towns what motivates her, and you're sure to get an earful because her list is extensive.

After 22 years at Pfizer, and a lifetime of community and social activism, Boykin-Towns has taken her talents to Sard Verbinen & Co. (SVC).

SVC is a global strategic communications firm based in New York with offices in Chicago, Washington, Houston, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston, London, and Hong Kong.

As a Senior Counselor, Boykin-Towns will advise clients on a wide range of issues, including public affairs, healthcare, diversity, crises, and environment, social and governance matters. She will also contribute to SVC's continued growth through business development and strategic counsel across the firm's practice areas, according to company officials.

"I think there are a lot of things that motivate me," Boykin-Towns told NNPA Newswire.

"Growing up in Harlem with a mother who was a nurse's aide and not really being clear in terms of what path I would take, but having great people around me who came into my life at different points and added direction, really helped to get me focused," she said.

A graduate of The College of Mount Saint Vincent and Baruch College, Boykin-Towns is revered for her work as vice chairman of the NAACP National Board of Directors.

Boykin-Towns leverages her talent as a coalition-builder and social change agent through her active participation in various organizations, according to her bio on the NAACP's website.

For 12 years, Boykin-Towns served as a member of the NAACP National Board of Directors.

In 2018, she was elected Vice-Chairman of the Board.

Boykin-Towns also serves as chair of the NAACP's National Health Committee.

Savoy Magazine named Boykin-Towns a "Top Influential Woman in Corporate America" in 2016, and she earned features in Black Enterprise, Bloomberg Businessweek, Ebony, Crain's, African American Career



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World, Network Journal, and Crisis Magazine.

"Karen Boykin-Towns is an amazing talent that the NAACP is honored to have as its Board Vice-Chair," Leon W. Russell, the NAACP Board Chairman, said in a statement.

"She brings a level of accomplishment in the public and private sector, breaking glass ceilings and serving as a model for women of color everywhere," Russell said.

Boykin-Towns said she accepted the new position at SVC for various reasons, including that

she liked the direction of the firm.

"I thought it was an opportunity to make a shift. My oldest daughter is an engineer at Microsoft, and my youngest daughter was going off to college, and I decided to try something different," Boykin-Towns said.

"I was blessed to have had a lot of experiences that could be deployed in other places," she said.

At Pfizer and through her civic work, Boykin-Towns said she was able to leverage her experiences to enhance her

ability to add value to various spaces.

At Pfizer, Boykin-Towns held leadership roles in government relations, public affairs, global policy, and human resources. She served as the company's first-ever Chief Diversity Officer.

"I thought I could expand outside of healthcare, so I took a little time off. They say I retired from Pfizer, but my challenges did not reflect

"I want people who are going to be able to tell it straight.

someone who was retired because I was busy all of the time," she said.

"Over time I thought [SVC] is a great firm with great people and great clients that have a lot of varying issues for which my background could be a really great fit," Boykin-Towns said.

At SVC, Boykin-Towns said the firm would get exactly what she gave Pfizer each day for 22 years.

"I want people who are going to be able to tell it straight. People who will assess a situation and then be able to give you the realities of what it is,"

Boykin-Towns said of her expectations in her new role.

"You don't always have to agree, but as long as the message is delivered respectfully and delivered truthfully, that's what matters," Boykin-Towns said.

SVC presents an opportunity for individuals who are open to ideas and those who are ready to do some great work. Boykin-Towns said.

"I pushed myself to try and have more of an impact because that's what's needed today and we need everybody to step up and give a bit more than what they're already doing," she said.

After helping to lead the NAACP's national convention, changing jobs, and some extensive travel, Boykin-Towns said the past several months had provided a time also for reflection.

She said she'll continue to fight the good fight, particularly with critical issues like the 2020 Census and presidential elec-

tion ahead.

"One of the things I will be looking at, and with the clients that we work with, is to help people realize the power of the Black Press," Boykin-Towns said.

"I appreciate [National Newspaper Publishers Association President and CEO] Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., and the Black Press of America," she said.

"As we look at issues, whether they are issues of election or education or whatever it may be, we must know the trusted and credible news vehicle is the Black Press, and that's where the African American community goes to for information," Boykin-Towns said.

"The Black Press is vitally important more so now than ever before, and so I continue to appreciate and applaud all that they do and the information that they bring to our communities," she said.

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