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**PUSHING
DIVERSITY
TO THE
LIMIT**

**CHERYL
DUNCAN**



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PUSHING DIVERSITY TO THE FOREFRONT

ALIMAH BOYD

An industry innovator who seeks to preserve culture by promoting culture. Cheryl Duncan, the president and CEO of Cheryl Duncan & Company, Inc., has created a public relations firm known for its socially conscious work. Under her leadership, her firm has garnered widespread exposure for clients and projects that range from world-famous entertainers to artistic and cultural events to books and films to social betterment projects. The firm's diverse client list is a testament to Duncan's skill in the world of public relations and event management, as well as to her commitment to making positive changes in the world.

"I'd rather not blow my wind into the sails of something that is going to take society off course," Duncan explained when asked about her enthusiasm about working on projects that are positive and culturally relevant.

Now celebrating her silver anniversary in the field of PR, Duncan has made a career of collaborating with artists, businesses and nonprofit organizations committed to fostering cultural growth for all people. Utilizing a vast network of communications experts, her firm has met the needs of clients that include the New York African Film Festival at the Film Society of Lincoln Center, Jazzmobile, the Sejong Soloists string ensemble, the estate of music legend Issac Hayes, radio personality Shelley Wade and the Reginald F. Lewis Foundation.

The firm's eclectic client list has also included former Ziegfeld Girl Doris Eaton Travis and her book *The Days We Danced*, the Congressional Black Caucus's "State of the African American Male Conference" and *Answering the Call: Ground Zero's Volunteers*, a documentary spotlighting those who, like Duncan herself, volunteered after the 9/11 tragedy. Additionally, the publicity maven helped launch the Great Mountains International Music Festival & School for classical music in PyeongChang, South Korea in 2004.

More recently, the firm was integral in bringing actor and writer Michael Sidney Fosgberg's *Incognito*, his true story of coming to terms with his biracial identity after being raised white, to

CHERYL SAYS...

On Culturally Relevant Projects

"I'd rather not blow my wind into the sails of something that's going to take society off course."

On Social Issues

"My dedication... my concern... and, yes, my warmth about have come to life in my firm... That coupled with my public relations expertise makes the winning combination."

On the Misuse of Media

"In a society that's been upended, where reality TV stars have become role models and a demanding 24-hour news cycle now presents the public with constant images of the minutiae of celebrities' daily lives, it has become increasingly difficult to get other, more relevant stories covered by mainstream media.

"Nowadays, especially in the larger markets, the media are looking to cover projects where the star is a household name. If you have to explain who the person is, he or she is unlikely to be a media draw."

national prominence with appearances in media such as CNN, NPR, SiriusXM Radio, *The Travis Smiley Show* and *The-Root.com*. Her firm has also represented the National Black Programming Consortium's public television series *AfroPoP: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange*, which gives a platform to contemporary stories from across the African Diaspora.

Whether it is the New York City Korean Parade, the Institute for Caribbean Studies, the Japanese-American Harmony for Peace Foundation or the Church of Scientology, Duncan has worked to bring diverse communities to mainstream attention.

Illiteracy, homelessness, racism, child abuse, drug abuse and religious and cultural intolerance are among the societal scourges Duncan has fought, and she's worked to shepherd various nonprofit organizations addressing these issues through the media maze.

Over the years, Duncan has done considerable work in the area of human rights, from working with Youth for Human Rights, which promotes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to working with the Citizens Commission on Human Rights to investigate and expose psychiatric violations of human rights. As the leader of her innovative firm, Duncan continues to expand her company's current roster of clients as she develops new projects focusing on larger global issues like world peace, cultural awareness and quality arts projects in the next few years.

"Cheryl's warmth, her dedication and her concern about social issues have come to life in her firm," said Marisa Pizzuto, executive director for The Giving Planet, an nonprofit that engages young people around the world to share their stories through digital media to foster a new level of cultural understanding.

"That coupled with her public relations expertise makes the winning combination."

Duncan came to the PR world in a unique way. As a teen she watched legendary WNBC news anchor Sue Simmons and Duncan's original career plan was to be the great black female reporter of her



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