

AMBASSADOR
LARISA B. MILLER,
CEO of Phoenix Global

LLC interview with eYs
By Jules Lavallee



In February 2020, you were named Ambassador of the State of the African Diaspora, by Prime Minister Louis-Georges Tin. What are the realities today for women and children in Africa and what are your expectations for the coming years?

As an Ambassador to the African diaspora, and a businesswoman with clients and projects in several African nations, I am fortunate to meet and interact with people across the continent. I am especially drawn to the women and children, as I see both as being critical to the future growth and development of Africa. There is a pride, resiliency and fierce tenacity that I see in African women and youth, and when you combine these qualities with education, skills-building and opportunity, they essentially become unstoppable.

Of course, we all have a responsibility to foster curiosity, make education accessible and give youth – regardless of where they live – regardless of ethnicity, socioeconomics, or gender the confidence to pursue their dreams. However, as women, must also embrace an unspoken mandate of empowerment, uplifting, mentoring and

encouraging one another so that we can collectively have the support, tools and knowledge to allow us to make an impact on our families, communities and to one another.

Did you always want to be an Ambassador?

I never set out to be an Ambassador... in fact, my life path has been an unexpected adventure. When people say that I am lucky, or that I have an exciting life, that's not really a fair observation. I am always curious, I spend my life learning, and most importantly, I pay attention. When you combine these three habits, you open yourself up to experiences and opportunities that guide you down interesting and meaningful – yet unexpected pathways.

To have the opportunity to serve Africa as an ambassador is an honor and privilege that I don't take lightly. I recognize that I have unique access to decision-makers, government and industry leaders who have the power to architect and create the future, and a responsibility to be an advocate for the unheard voices. These people have a right to have



their needs met, and they deserve an advocate for their rights. As an ambassador, I am committed to be the voice for these unheard and often unseen people who are the backbone of society.

How is your company, Phoenix Global, LLC impacting lives? What are a few initiatives in Africa?

As CEO of Phoenix Global, I am committed to making sure our business ventures, investments and projects make a measurable impact to the Sustainable Development Goals. We prioritize technology, agriculture and energy, which are essential to building a strong and resilient future for Africa. As the rest of the world has urban-sprawled itself out of food security, more and more, we will have to turn to Africa for our survival. With arable and plentiful farmland, abundant human assets, and the resources necessary for global survival, we must now recognize Africa as critical to a sustainable future. Therefore, we have a responsibility to help Africa to develop and progress in a strong, transparent and responsible manner.

What are the main reasons people come to Phoenix Global, LLC?

We have a unique strategy where we work one-on-one with clients to customize our consulting solutions for their individual needs rather than simply tailoring a plug-and-play cookie-cutter solution, forcing it to 'fit' the needs. I spend a great deal of time crafting unique strategies, business models and ways-forward for our clients to build their growth, resiliency and profitability, while making them leaders in the market space.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced as an Ambassador?

For me as an Ambassador and proponent for the Sustainable Development Goals, it is a challenge to advocate for responsible and sustainable business and investment in Africa when the challenges of infrastructure and energy make this prohibitive. As Africa generates their national development plans, it is essential that they do so with a mind to the future, using accelerated plans of integration, incorporating disruptive technologies, prioritizing universal connectivity and embracing sustainable innovation.

Tell us about your mentorship to young people. Why does it move your soul?

The youth are our future. We are handing them a very fractured planet, environmentally, socially and economically. We owe it to our young people to prepare them to assume the roles of teachers, innovators, entrepreneurs... we owe it to them to help them be inclusionary and tolerant, embracing a global mentality. We can only begin to heal our damaged planet if we cease the 'us against them' mentality and commit to working together against the problems. Youth will be the ones charged with driving the future, and how successful they are will depend on the skills, tools, resources and examples that we provide and set for them.

Thank you for leaving a positive footprint. What are some of your expectations in 2020?

This year...2020, the inaugural year in the UN-declared Decade of Action, is one of the most disruptive years in our modern history. As we navigate the challenges associated with COVID-19, we must recognize that we are global citizens, all in this fight together.

How healthy we stay, how quickly we recover, and how resilient we are in the future depends on us working together. While life as we knew it is unlikely to return, this is a wonderful time to embrace change on both a macro- and micro-level. We have a blank canvas, and the future we choose to paint on that canvas is up to us. Businesses will need out-of-the-box strategies, schools will need to engage and empower students using alternative resources, and new entrepreneurs will emerge out of the gaps, needs and opportunities which will arise from this new global dynamic. We must be brave enough to embrace this change. While this will be a learning experience for each of us, we must remember that if we make a mess of today, we must forgive ourselves and start fresh with the sunrise.

