

LETTER FROM THE DEI DIRECTOR

Editor's note: On July 12, Kadari Taylor-Watson started her position as the first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion director at U.S. Figure Skating. She will work closely with the DEI Task Force and U.S. Figure Skating staff to set goals necessary to achieve the organization's diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. In this column, Taylor-Watson introduces herself and shares her vision for the future of the association.



Hello. My name is Kadari (pronounced Kuh-dar-rhee). I am a granddaughter, a daughter, a sister, a niece, an aunt and a friend. I am a teacher, a researcher, a femtor, an activist and a lifelong learner. I enjoy practicing yoga, traveling internationally, designing textiles, learning about holistic health as healing and spending valuable time with my family.

I was born in the Gateway City of St. Louis, but raised in part of America's Historic Triangle in the city of Williamsburg, Virginia. My favorite quote during this time of my life is by Maya Angelou, who said, "I've learned that in life people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

I am excited to join U.S. Figure Skating as the first director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. As a young girl, one of the first things I learned about was Sankofa. Sankofa is an African symbol that expresses the importance of reaching back to knowledge gained in the past and bringing it into the present to make positive progress.

In the spirit of Sankofa, I believe that understanding the past of U.S. Figure Skating as it relates to DEI will allow us to be more considerate in how we create an organization that reflects the beautiful diversity of our country, encourages inclusive spaces and pushes for equitable policies for our members and athletes both on and off the ice.

U.S. Figure Skating was founded in 1921 during unmatched technological innovation, extreme racial violence and transformational gender legislation. In 2021, 100 years later, the organization has taken the necessary first step of looking in the mirror to reflect on its past to reshape its future.

My vision in my new role is to humanize DEI by facilitating courageous conversations using intensive data collection, intentional partnerships and ongoing educational training at every level within the organization. To humanize DEI, is to put people first. People are the greatest asset of our organization and meaningful diversity amongst those people is what will make our organization sustainable for the next 100 years.

When we invest in our differences and allow those differences to show up within a supported space, we can begin the imperative work to resource equitable initiatives exposing and inspiring new communities to join in on the love for ice skating. Within this new position, I welcome the opportunity to have a seat and say at the table as it relates to current perspectives, programming and policies reflecting the need to create a more inclusive, diverse and equitable America at the institutional level.

Before joining U.S. Figure Skating, I spent two years at the Third Future Schools Network in Colorado Springs where I was recognized as an exemplary teacher. There, I gained expertise in creating differentiated levels of assessment for kindergarten through eighth graders. Before moving to Colorado Springs, I lived in West Lafayette, Indiana, as a full-time graduate student at Purdue University. At Purdue, I learned top-tier research skills, program development, and the unique teaching experiences integral to support my role as a successful director and educator for all members of our skating community.

As I near securing my doctoral degree, I am motivated to enter a career that will continue to challenge me intellectually while empowering me to advocate for and implement equitable policies on a large scale.

In June, I had the amazing opportunity to travel to Nashville, Tennessee, where I met with the Board of Directors and other leadership to conduct my first DEI training. It was clear to me from this visit, that the love for the sport extended into the love for one another as people, and that U.S. Figure Skating is a family.

We all know that no family is perfect and often it is within the family that we learn toxic perspectives and behaviors that maintain the very systems of inequality that we want to dismantle. All of us have a lot of inner work to do that will support the outer work needed to accomplish our DEI goals. It is my sincere belief that the staff, leadership, athletes, club members and fans want U.S. Figure Skating to welcome, encourage and support people to skate as they are by cultivating genuine relationships. This work will not be easy, but it is necessary. I look forward to building a better U.S. Figure Skating organization with each of you.

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