



RELATIONSHIPS
MATTER NOW



Entrepreneur, author and TEDx speaker Denise W. Barreto is a prominent 21st Century voice on inclusive leadership and storytelling. Whether in her role as a business strategist and managing partner of Relationships Matter Now, LLC or behind the camera as an executive producer and co-founder of Serqet Productions and Media, LLC, Denise is always challenging the status quo and building new, more inclusive narratives and environments across government, nonprofit, corporate and entertainment entities. At Relationships Matter Now, LLC, primarily delivering strategic planning facilitation, organizational and leader development and inclusion and diversity strategy, Denise and her firm has quickly become a go-to resource for non-profit and government agencies and businesses of all sizes who want to better leverage their relationships to grow their bottom line.

Denise and her small firm are leading a new conversation about equity, inclusion and diversity in philanthropic, corporate and government entities across the United States. Challenging and reshaping narratives and social norms, she drives a broader view of diversity, creates alternative systems and focuses on leadership competencies as the cornerstone to building more inclusive environments.

In 2020, Denise accepted an appointment from one of her political s/heroes and joined Cook County Government as its inaugural Director of Equity and Inclusion where she's charged with leading the county to deliver its 2018 Policy Roadmap with a racial equity lens. As a south suburban Cook County native, Denise could not pass up the opportunity to drive structural and institutional change for the second largest county in the United States.

Personal leadership is just as vital as organizational leadership and Denise has excelled professionally and personally. She was twice elected to the Board of Trustees for the Village of Lake in the Hills, IL. Since 2014, Denise has served on the Illinois Business Enterprise Program Council, a state commission that helps to implement, monitor, and enforce the goals of the Business Enterprise for Minorities, Females and Persons with Disabilities Act appointed by former Illinois Governor Pat Quinn. She is in her second year as the chair of the Parks and Recreation Board for the City of Evanston and serves as an advisory board member of the 101 Best and Brightest Places to Work - Chicago Chapter.

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