

# A Deeper Look at Women's Issues in Entrepreneurship

BY RIA VORA, *NEW MEMBER*

According to estimates by the US Census Bureau, there are over 6.8 million women-owned firms (28% of firms in the US). Although women are pioneers in the entrepreneurship space, there are still several issues that women face such as the lack of role models in the sector, gendering in entrepreneurship, and competing demands on time.

To combat such problems and encourage more women to pursue careers in entrepreneurship, Audrey Gelman founded The Wing -- a social club/coworking space in NYC -- in 2016. The company was founded on the idea that women were facing a similar challenge in the space and could uplift each other through this coworking environment.

Although this started off as an idea aimed at improving diversity/inclusion, the company faced backlash when employees started speaking out on the company's mistreatment of people of color. Audrey recently resigned from the CEO position. When describing the situation, Audrey explained, "The original vision of The Wing sought to celebrate women's friendships, create space for them to take big risks and stand up to injustice. But despite these intentions, we began to uphold the kind of societal inequality we set out to upend."

This incident highlights the fact that while initiatives aimed at uplifting/empowering others can be powerful, the terms diversity, inclusion, and women's empowerment mean that EVERYONE should be included regardless of race, ethnicity, or other factors. Uplifting women means uplifting ALL women not just those of a certain race/background.

At Forté, we have begun to delve deeper into diversity and inclusion initiatives. At previous General Body meetings, we discussed topics on diversity and inclusion through Zoom breakout sessions and brainstormed ways that Forté can improve. In addition, several members of Forté (including myself) are part of a Diversity and Inclusion task force that will further brainstorm/help implement ideas and report to the Executive Board. Outside Forté and in the professional world, it's important to identify and try and eliminate bias towards individuals. Making conscious efforts to promote women-owned businesses regardless of other factors such as race helps to make sure that diversity and inclusion truly incorporate everyone not just a specific group of people.

Incidents such as The Wing story demonstrate how important inclusion is in the workplace. Issues in entrepreneurship are faced by women worldwide and we should make every effort to make sure that ALL women feel empowered and supported -- and that starts with one person making the effort at a time.

Link to article: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/357802>