

## **EPISODE: #9 Hosting Kimberly Shaw, Regional Black Contractors Association**

### **Shannon Bryant(host):**

Greetings and welcome to the ninth installment of our podcast series the Work Force Lens brought to you by Tarrant County college in North Texas I am Shannon Bryant executive vice president for corporate solutions and economic development and I will be your host moderating strategic conversations with employers and economic developers on all things related to preparing in growing the workforce today in the future. Today help me welcome our guest this Kimberly Shaw president and CEO of the Regional Black Contractors Association the regional black contractors association maintains a very effective working relationships with state municipal and corporate leaders the mission is to advocate for an advanced the development and growth of African American owned businesses welcome Kimberly.

### **Kimberly Shaw:**

Thank you so much and I thank you for having me here today

### **Shannon Bryant(host):**

we are so glad to have you here today so can't really let's get started and if you could please tell us a little bit about the history and the mission of the regional black contractor's association.

### **Kimberly Shaw:**

Absolutely the regional black contractors association is actually a spinoff of what was formally the black contractors association the BCA that was founded in the late nineties and it was founded by a group of construction owners who just felt the need for advocacy in the construction market for a minority businesses and black businesses in particular and so that group of people how were the originators they form the board and from there it became a membership association over the years in two thousand and twelve the former city manager Richard knight who is recently passed away it is no longer here with us but left a very lasting legacy in this metroplex in the city in the country and Richard knight passed the torch on to our chairman John Proctor and when they made the switch they had to do a few at new management things and rename the association the regional black contractors association and from there we were birth many of the former members came over and joined the R. B. C. A. as well and then we've been so blessed to have you know new businesses and new minority businesses and black owned businesses and even you know non-minority firms it's a group you know it's a big group so that's the birth of how the RBCA was formed back in twenty fourteen when John proctor took it over.

### **Shannon Bryant(host):**

So, we wouldn't sit when you say regional one is the region of the contractor's association.

### **Kimberly Shaw:**

So, originally it was intended to be the North Texas region when we first started it however it has grown and we're in Houston which is not North Texas. Now and I think with anything you start something and then as you build it evolves and it grows and you just have to kind of go with the flow and go with what it's telling you to go

where the need is and so now when we say region, I'd like to think of it as us growing into new markets in the whole southern region.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

So then what is your membership look like right now at this moment.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

So right now, we've got a little over one fifty in our membership base and growing and that's you know in Texas and we also have members in other. Geographic markets New York Tennessee Atlanta Chicago and Baltimore so well the work is.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

That's wonderful important mission so can you are the president and the CEO and so if you could tell us a little bit about your journey to leadership and how did you end up in this role.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Very interesting I actually have a human resources background I had no idea that I was going to end up in construction what so ever but it's quite funny how you know God puts. Your path together and you just go with it my HR background led me to the North Texas toll way authority where I worked there in human resources for several years and then I left that because I really wanted to do something different of I felt some type of entrepreneurship in me I didn't really know what it was but it was some burning desire to just. Kind of get out.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

You know I have to figure it out.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Yes, I did and so I worked for a lady who sold traffic control she sold barricades and cones and the things that go up on the highway when you're doing a road so I'm everything that slows us down right his friend orange beryl yes those.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Yeah.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

So she was selling our system to this company and was looking for business development now person and I wasn't doing anything at the time and so I agreed to this position and it was really interesting because that was the first time I was in this very unfamiliar industry this market I knew nothing about coming from human resources in a corporate environment to basically you know you wake up and you have to create your own business and that was a big shocker for me but I did it because that's just kind of what we do right we just get it done at that point I started driving around to construction trailers and anywhere that I saw a job site because that's who I knew would be the customer and I began to do that and then that work led me into the networking circles of the construction industry getting out there meeting more general contractors meeting more companies and that's how I ended up meeting John Proctor the chairman of the regional black contractors association and when I met him Mr. proctor had actually just taken over as chairman maybe six

months seven months prior to me meeting him and when he took over the association it was just him and there were a few board members from the previous leadership and there was no staff or anything like that and so he also had his own company and so some of his staff would be doing RBC a staffing and any. At me and said will you be my secretary.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Okay.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

And I said sure. Because I didn't want to turn down the opportunity of a stable income at that point because my business development job I was dealing with a hundred percent commission single mother you know two kids I needed something that was stable and so little more sustainable exactly so I said yes to that but I still did the business development on the side because I could use that network of contractors within the R. B. C. A. to sell the traffic control to she also sold safety PP so that was another big selling market in DFW airport end up being one of her clients that I was able to bring in for her but long story short so he asked me to be his secretary in six years later I'm now the CEO So, while I.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

That is awesome you never know what kind of life is going to take you.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

You really down. And out. And it's been it's been such an amazing journey and I'm so grateful to have. Comment at the time I came in with the John Proctor because also to know him is to love him he is you know of one of a kind had I not been able to experience all of these growth moments that were not only grows changing in life changing for the association but internally the things that you go through when you're building something from scratch it's a very beautiful process.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Well, it has been beautiful working with you because I know when I came to Texas a few years ago I think you were just coming into the rolled out same time I was coming into this role and we've kind of grown together and I've seen the wonderful work that you've been doing. See you everywhere so that's great so I do know that the RBCA also supports a number of community focused programs and I want you to speak a little bit to those today so kind of going to the website knowing a little bit more about the association you have different initiatives like the go giver fundraiser scholarship program the re-entry program which I really want you to focus on also senior home repair can you speak to those a little bit share.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Absolutely so one of the biggest things that go the R. B. C. A. prides itself on is that community engagement and giving back we were always and have always been very focused on building companies and building businesses but even more so online help being what we call the least of these and those are people who don't necessarily have the same opportunities are the same accessibility or the resources or the voice even sometimes to speak up and really voice their concerns or get what they need and so we know that the black community is really impacted by the

criminal justice system and people you know being incarcerated we know that there is lower health care accessibility in some of these underserved neighbourhoods we know that some of the students that are going to high school don't always have the resources to go to college they don't have the financial resources to do that and so some of these programs that we have now created were just things that we wanted to do to help people in the community one person at a time and overtime we were able to get donors and sponsors and people that you know committed to helping us stop some of these issues and so the go giver fundraiser campaign that actually came last so I'll save that for last but the scholarship and the senior home repaired literally just started because people knew John would say you know if miss Mabel down the street needs a new hot water heater you know in December we need to go get one if miss Mary as needs a new roof because her roof is leaking we're going to get some contractors over there and fix a roof and it just started like that and then from there people began to call and the city of Dallas picked up and said they have a lot of you know they're helping a lot of people now please don't get funding from them to do this but that's kind of where the recognition started coming from and we said that we need to turn this into an actual program over getting dollars to help you know real rebuild people's houses and do their bathrooms make sure that they can you know they have ADA accommodations and all of that so that's how that started.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Really hard work.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

So, we're really out yeah and then the scholarship program that came about because again just wanting to make sure that we gave people an opportunity to go to college so we work with the I. S. D. N. four with I. S. D. and we would give out scholarships and so far we've given out fifty five thousand dollars in scholarships today. And we continued to ask our sponsors and donors to give to that cost.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Do those individuals have to go into the construction industry?

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Its construction stem cell any science, technology, engineering and math in any of the trades you can go to a 2 or 4 years program that teaches like construction management or any of the trades or you can just goes directly to a trade school so we accept any of all and all of those you.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Do any of those scholarships also cover credentials or when your certificates?

**Kimberly Shaw:**

We just give the money directly to the school of their choice.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Okay.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

And whatever that covers the master it covered.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Yeah, great so it's not specifically tied to an economic program it could be a short-term certificate or credential of some sort.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Absolutely yeah in the go giver fundraiser campaign was just a means to again raise funding and raise capital for those programs we are non-profit so we have to heavily rely on the go givers and people that are excited to give to other causes the re-entry program that one's a big one so how much time do you work more about that.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

That's a great transition okay so the RBCA as a training partner both Dallas college and also Tarrant County college as it ties directly to the work force development around the second chance program this is an effort to provide technical skills training job placement and wraparound services to help combat recidivism tell us about the successes of this programme and why is it so imperative to our community.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

This program is really the pinnacle of what we do. There are so many people that are able and ready to work and ready to be a contributing member of society a lot of people in some in underserved neighbourhoods come from a very rough background and they have a lot of obstacles that are in their way from birth and still having programs like the second chance program which helps people who have been formally incarcerated or people who may have never been through that the penal system but they just need a hand up and they just need somebody to help walk with them through the career journey and through the skills training journey and so what we've been able to again create is a program which what started off with was John proctor just hiring people and always has from back in the seventies he started his construction company in San Diego and he would hire people with the background onto the construction sites and so that's what he did and then we came when the game is the chairman of the RVCA is just something that they did we would then put the obligation on our members on those black contractors to hire black work force we would see that the unemployment rate for black men and women was of the highest we would see that the poverty levels were also the highest in so how do you combat that and how do you combat recidivism with the job and how do you also tackle some of those things like self-esteem and self-worth and being a contributor to your household into your family and gaining the respect back of your family after you've committed a crime you know and have done your time and by providing people with the job that helps you know eliminate those things maybe not eliminate but it definitely helps it helps the sting so.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Exactly Why some of the obstacles

**Kimberly Shaw:**

exactly and so the second chance program what we've done we've added the colleges as training partners to just give some credibility to the to the program when people are coming into the second chance program they know that they're going to

get respected number one they're going to they're going to get that respect from the door and they also know that they're going to have people behind the scenes fighting on their behalf in advocating on their behalf and working with partners like Tarrant county and Dallas college to provide that level of education that they would get if they were you know paying for it but this is being offered to them at no cost you know thanks to those programs.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

In Kent when does the education for this program start as of before their room if they're incarcerated before they're released or is it after release and kind of talk to us a little bit about what does that what's that path look like sure.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

For our program what happens after they're released but we work closely with programs that are working with them while they're inside of the prison as well as and that goes into that whole community collaboration community partnerships just as the college is a training partner we have other you know partners that are inside of the prison system teaching them some of those work readiness skills the life skills they may even have like preliminary shop type classes where they can learn how to do different frame mean and hand tools you know operation things like that once they come to us they still need the work readiness training they still need the life skills in the coaching at that point we start introducing financial literacy we help them with housing assistance so if they have any type of homeless situation we will help them with that until they get on the job in on their feet we help them with transportation assistance so that they can get to and from class with no obstacles daily lunches making sure that they eat every day sometimes it's the only meal that they eat depending on who it is yeah we have people who again are homeless we have people who are couch surfing call that homeless too we have people who are established in maybe have worked in construction before but just want to get certifications and new opportunities so it ranges but the services are offered to everyone who needs it until health as well.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

That's great I also have a someone learn more about this program is an application process how do people get selected for the program to enter into the us.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

So you can come by the office at 4315 south Lancaster road in Dallas Texas that's our Dallas address the fort worth office location it is by appointment only for right now because we had some staff change okay but the address there is 5001 brick wood stair road suite one thirty and that's the physical location the email address is our work force director her name is Pam Davis pdavis@blackcontractors.org and of course our website [www.blackcontractors.org](http://www.blackcontractors.org) that work and from there you can apply you can email Pam in our case managers all of the contact information is on the website.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Okay great is there any specific criteria or anything that people should be aware of before looking at the application process?

**Kimberly Shaw:**

We don't turn away anyone so there are definitely different employers who will accept different offenses and different background charges. But, we like to pride ourselves on helping everyone who comes to the door so depending on which offenses or what the charges we will place you with those employers who accept those offenses so it just depends case by case.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

One for one thank you for that information. Collaboration is key in the area of workforce development you always hear me say that you know nope no personal intimacy is an island in this work right it's all about collaboration so can you give us some examples of community partnerships that currently exist in the impact those relationships are having on our economy as it relates to your association?

**Kimberly Shaw:**

The biggest ones that that we've seen are gonna be again with the colleges just that's a. Each community collaboration partner we have a lot of things going on with the Texas workforce solutions is another big person or entity that helps out with the recruitment and even helping find you know employment for the individuals that come to the program we have Tarrant County is it a partner Dallas County as a partner in different school districts forward by its I.S.D, D. I. S. D. and I say these names because where the construction follows the work force opportunities follow absolutely and so all of these public entities are doing construction projects and so with that we're able to you know again. The expectation on our members to participate in the program and so when one goes with the other.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

So, speak a little bit more about the relationships with the I. S. T. is what are you doing in that space because obviously we're talking like the re-entry program that is to help people who've been incarcerated for coming out on the other side what are you doing in the I. S. T. to help younger people to help avoid those pitfalls of going into incarceration and helping them from coming out of high school or completing high school of school for that matter.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Yeah, well what we do on both eyes diss participate it with at this junior and senior level there in Dallas there's a what's called a P Tech they have like construction of focused magnet schools are.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Apparently, a range towards the construction industry?

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Correct correct and sells and with what with I. S. D. going into different schools it and talking to them about the construction career what they can you know potentially make in terms of salary that's always a big because people think that construction is just sweet bean or pick an upper you know.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Palin hammer?

**Kimberly Shaw:**

And hammer and there's so many other facets to construction and so just educating the students on what they're different options are how much they could make you know but then also setting realistic expectations like you have to start from the bottom and work your way up.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

To help define career pathways in the construction industry as well?

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Correct that's key yep yep they have to know what's available to them you know and another thing that we've been focusing on is actually young ladies and getting women more engaged into the construction industry in some women and in young ladies in the classes they have like fathers or you know relatives that are in the construction business so they want to be out there doing that they already know what they want to do then there's some ladies that we stand there say no way we want to be in management and we're like okay. We want to just tell them everybody what to do that's a thing want to read it what to do so.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

There you go are you getting a lot of interest from younger.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Yeah. I'm definitely not as much as I think. You know could it right if everybody you know if more people were exposed to it but yes the presently.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Thing so what do I know we already talked a little bit about the some of the conversation about the re-entry program but I'm curious to know from your perspective of you know being the presidency on all the community work that you do what is it that's in your opinion most affecting the African American work force and how does the RBCA advocate for those changes beyond the things we've already discussed.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

The after African American work force to just keep it more surface because there's so many things and you have to know also that a lot of things personally were revealed to me as I began working in the space right because again, I didn't just start in this industry and just knowing my background as a military brat traveling the world very diverse, I come from a biracial family my mother's Caucasian my father's black having relatives on both sides and some of my Caucasian family did not accept us but still all of that to say my lens for scene what I guess what were some issues within the African American culture after the black community the end my awareness didn't really come about until I started really working in this industry and I saw how because I it just it didn't it just wasn't something that I had in my radar.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

You know you don't know what you don't know until you start this like can back the onion right once you get into.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Yeah, and so once I started you know I lived in Allen I worked at NTTA I was like in my own little bubble and I didn't even go south of thirty or you know south of you know Fort Worth and less I had to be there for a meeting or you know I really didn't go there until I started getting into this work and then I started to realize oh it is different it's a lot different and it started to sadden me because they're so there are still many disparities and there's not a lot of equity you know there could be so much more equity in terms of just things that are provided in the communities you know health care grocery stores even where we're at like in fort worth and Dallas we purposely have our offices in underserved hardest hit zip codes so that people can get to us but being there I realized they don't have like a Kroger you know or they don't have you know a healthy food store.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

A lot of food desert.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Exactly and so there's those little things and then there's also like I said the healthcare issue there's also the lack of job and employment opportunities they're actually going to be affordable wages living wages and so I think that a lot of the things again you do you said it earlier education you know we have to really invest into our school systems the kids in these areas you know they do have leaking roofs they do have equipment and desks that have been used over and over and over and over again until you know it's like defective and that's not fair you know because they don't get the same type of they don't get to dream like other kids get to during that have all of those things and so I think it just starts and I don't want to get into the you know too deep but I just want to say that a lot of the issues I mean we could be here all day because they go so deep you know they go so deep to where people almost feel hopeless that they can't change their circumstances and so they. Didn't I guess the necessity of these community programs are to really be like boots on the ground inside of the community so people can actually help start to help fix things one step at a time mental health is a big issue and that's something that needs to be address but with no money or affordable healthcare to get those services you know you go unaddressed and it gets worse and then it might turn into addiction and from their addiction turns into you know you losing your family and that you have a broken unit now your kids are broken and now they have you know it's just like cyclical and so again just addressing some of those things like jobs you know addiction support recovery and knowing that you have people around you in the area that will actually help you and that's what they're there to do I think from that we can just started dressing those things one person at a time.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Exactly one person one community in time and I think it's important to from my perspective of being in higher education is not just about educating the kids as well it's also important to educate parents because especially for underserved communities the parents don't know what they don't know because they themselves never been exposed and it starts because the kids are then influenced by their

parents and so, education teaching them about career pathways job opportunities and encouraging employers in the region also get involved to go out and knock on the doors of those high schools and those you know education institutions in the others underserved communities to say Hey look these kind of jobs are available these are the career pathways and to really get out there and start that communications.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Yeah, I love that hello.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

So, Kim I'm curious so how did the pandemic impact your work and how are you finding the recovery process.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

The end of the pandemic wow which is still going through right well we're not quite at the level that you had other lids and now Omicron is on the rise so luckily construction and remain the central through the pandemic which was a lifeline for a lot of people a lot of you know families are just keep food on their table I think but at the same token a lot of people weren't you know as fortunate to to be an essential businesses I can see that do the pandemic though and I can speak again for the construction industry in terms of business you have so many federal dollars being pushed down to improve engine infrastructure and to improve like your capital programs your capital improvement programs and so because the government which is trying to stimulate the economy and keep it going. I believe truly that construction is a way of means that they're doing that and so on that front you see. So much better. You know you see multi million dollars billions, trillions now. That are being pushed into the construction industry so in that regard you know things are good but then on that ugly side of it is that you did have a lot of people again who were out of work. You had it. Even on the construction side when we were looking for people to come to our program. They weren't coming some of it was fear of getting out being around people going to the program some of it was. The unemployment checks they were getting out because they didn't want to come out of work. But you know on that side so we're juggling with it constantly internally in the office with the support that the team the staff that runs R. B. C. A. were definitely a hybrid model now I love being able to virtually you know and efficiently, quickly talk to people without having to go places. But I do definitely value and I'm very grateful for the one on one like we're doing today so.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Yes, it's nice to be back together but I agree with you over the virtual setting and having that flexibility certainly nice and curious to know as it relates to the pandemic how did supply chain because for example this past year, I build a home.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Okay.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

And obviously there were multiples of delays because supply chain you know no breaks though wouldn't though you know a lot of things how has that impacted some of the work that you've done pertaining to the work that you're doing.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

yes, supply chain I'm also a realtor okay so yes, I know that I didn't mention that but that's. That's the other thing that I love doing so much house building home building vertically. Infrastructure all of that is that it was crazy and it definitely drove up cost everywhere.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Indeed, it is.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

But Joe root cause delayed deadlines and and at just taught people to be as teaching people to be a lot more patient and flexible and coming up with also is teaching people how to think outside of the box too because now we're trying to find okay we never want to go through that again so what can we do do you know kind of get things closer in in America you know we're not having to it to ship international things like that so in terms of trucking I know the trucking industry there's a shortage on labour's and drivers and so that has helped the second chance program because we've been able to partner with CDL training companies and get them you know to train people so that they can be CDL drivers and you know address that demand on the truck driving side so that's been a positive in in when you ask about the pandemic and just kind of the delays there are so many bad things but then there's so many opportunities that have come out of it and so many different ideas and so I'm really hoping that this is you know challenge a lot of people and it does. You can tell. I guess the people in life who always see the good and who continue to keep moving despite what's down at them those you know those are the winners.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Overcoming the barriers yes, it's sparked a whole new way of you know innovation in the work force for certain indication.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

They did have absolutely.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

So can't help this it did I guess I guess a leader both of us being leaders in the DFW metroplex how do we help to build a more equitable economy for our businesses our work force in our communities from your perspective.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

You have to intentionality the first thing is just knowing. What you wanna do knowing what you want to offer a provider what your end goal is for your business if you want to be an institution or corporation on into T. promote, equity, diversity, inclusion, given opportunities you have to just be intentional about it you know you have to make sure that every decision because sometimes we get so caught up in the bureaucracy is the word I'm looking for so

we get so caught up in the bureaucracy that we forget just the simple intention and letting that intention drive your decisions and so I think that would be one thing and then you know just authenticity In terms of your leadership style and how you interact with people just being genuine authentic your authentic self in when you're authentic you can also be sympathetic with people who can understand you can relate I'm just taking a second to like be present and understand what's going on and that's from bottom up and I think once you do that you naturally create a culture for you know reciprocity and transparency your into your goals are able to be achieved together because you're all in the same page and so I would just start with those two things that should go a long way.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Absolutely and being mindful of all of that that's great that's a great summary well okay I know you mentioned the website you mentioned your office locations if you could just one more time so if there's the listening audience out there if they want to donate they want to become a member of the RVCA or they simply just want to become involved in some capacity mentorship whatever it might be if you could give us your website in your phone number again one more time just so we can get that out there?

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Happy to it's [www.blackcontractors.org](http://www.blackcontractors.org) and the phone number they (214)-565-8946.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Great and so Kim to close what advice can you offer to any young person who is just starting out in the work force.

**Kimberly Shaw:**

Well like similar to my situation I had no idea I would be here but I definitely thought I had it all mapped out and so if you're a person who has it all mapped out just be prepared to go a different direction and be flexible to move in a different direction if that's if that's what the universe is telling you to do that people change the sell it after all and if you're someone who absolutely has no clue what they're gonna do like my sixteen year old son right now. My advice would be to just start somewhere again knowing that your plan is probably gonna change you know all you know over the years you're going to you're going to elevate and grow. In so your plan changes as you grow. In it a young person you. Sometimes don't even know you can't even you can't Fallon into you get to that point so it's hard to say but I would just yet again be flexible and down and start somewhere.

**Shannon Bryant(host):**

Well given I am certainly glad that you are here and I want to thank you so much for your time today on the podcast We really appreciate it and so thank you so much it was an audience we look forward to seeing you on the net the Work Force Lanes thank you.