

THE  
ECONOMIC  
CLUB OF  
CHICAGO

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On Wednesday, January 10, the Club's Young Leaders Committee hosted Chair Mellody Hobson at The Mid-America Club for an evening program moderated by Young Leaders Committee Chair Kristen Prinz, principal at The Prinz Law Firm.

Below are selected questions and Ms. Hobson's answers from the conversation that evening:

**When asked about being the first black, female chair in the Club's history:**

"It's not lost on me that being the first black woman to chair the Club in 90 years is significant. I mean, it took 90 years. I take the responsibility very seriously, and I say to myself, 'what is the legacy that I will leave?' And the legacy that I hope I leave first and foremost is the best programs that ever were. I say, go big or go home. Every speaker we have is going to be huge. But also that we include all people, and speak to all issues. It was no accident that Mary Dillon who runs Ulta was the first speaker. We brought people into the conversation that maybe hadn't been there before, and yes we shocked some men in the audience by saying men's makeup might be the next thing."

**When asked how you bring diversity to the room:**

"You decide that's what you're going to do. Every single person in this room has power. Every single person in this room is going to be hiring people if they are not already. Every person in this room has influence, because by virtue of being in the Club, I know you have influence. So the question becomes, how do you decide that that's important? That you want to see something that pushes you into new ideas and new perspectives that you wouldn't have if everyone is the same. Challenge the status quo. I truly believe that leads to a better outcome."

**When asked how the business community can support the Obama Presidential Center in light of recent push back:**

"Fight for it. If you have to take to the streets, fight for it. First, it's the legacy of the first black president of the United States. Secondly, Chicago needs a win desperately. That would bring precious jobs, resources and opportunity to our city and that community. We're splitting hairs on crazy stuff. [...] Fight for them. Write editorials. Stand up for them."

**When asked about her mantra to be unapologetically black, and unapologetically a woman:**

"When I had this idea of being unapologetic really thrust upon me, it was profound. And I thought I can think of all the ways I've apologized for who I was and as of that moment I decided to stop and said that I would never do it again."

After the conversation, members in attendance were invited to remain at The Mid-America Club for drinks and hors d'oeuvres.