Introduction
The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of African American women who studied abroad at the University of Texas at Austin. Numerous studies show that Black women do not study abroad. However, at UT Austin something is happening—a movement! Black women are increasingly going abroad. I believe this is largely due to the impact of the Fearless Leadership Institute (FLI). FLI is a program that operates within the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (DDCE) at UT. DDCE global initiatives aim to increase the number of African American and Latino students who study abroad. This study will examine the unique experiences of African American women who have studied abroad at UT since 2013, the summer of DDCE’s inaugural program.

Methods
The current study includes both a qualitative and quantitative analysis. Focus groups were conducted to acquire case studies and a supplemental survey was used for demographic information on participants.

Literature Cited

Results
This study validates that Black women are more likely to study abroad if it has been marketed to them by a Black faculty member, staff or peer. Marketing materials that include Black woman studying abroad are very influential as well. Additionally, study abroad departures across universities must realize that if they desire for Black women’s participation to increase, it is necessary to have Black faculty and staff in leadership roles for the program. The implication is that Black women will go where other Black women (or men) are. They will also go where other Black women have been; peer to peer influence was a strong force in the increase of Black women at UT going abroad. All these factors help to push against the traditional barriers (see graph below) that keep Black women from gaining global experience.

Barriers
Many of the students stressed that affordability was a barrier to studying abroad. In addition to applying for financial aid, scholarships, taking out loans, and setting up a GoFundMe, one student became an overnight entrepreneur. With her earnings, coupled with a FLI & DDCE scholarship, she was on her way!

Parental and familial concerns were the second largest barrier to participants studying abroad. Many parents tried to apprehend their daughter by instilling fear in them based on misconceptions and a lack of travel experience. One mother feared that her daughter would be kidnapped in China and they would never be able to see her again.

Impact
“I realized I was beautiful.” That’s what Ogu said about the impact being in South Africa had on her. She explained that all her life she was considered the “nice girl” in the group. It wasn’t until she went to South Africa and was surrounded by people who looked like her, that she felt beautiful... Ogu.

This study supported the longstanding notion that studying abroad has a holistic impact on students who participate. All participants returned inspired, transformed and ready for the future. Many found what they were passionate about in life and therefore changed their academic pursuits.

Conclusions
The Fearless Leadership Institute under the auspices of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at UT Austin is positively impacting the number of Black women who study abroad. We are exposing a generation of African American women to global experiences and we are helping them to push past barriers that have excluded them in the past. There is a movement going on at the University of Texas at Austin, and I encourage other universities across the nation to take notice because what starts here changes the world.