

Building up Black Women in Architecture & Design

WHY

Place and space have the power to affect outcomes in peoples' lives. All people should have access to spaces that inspire them. The people that design these spaces should understand the lived experience of the people they are serving through the power of place. Representation matters in architecture and design.

PROBLEM

US Black Female Population

7%

US Black Architects

2%

US Black Female Architects

0.3%

METHODS

16 Black Women in A&D participated by interview or written personal narrative. The goal was to understand their lived experience in the field and generate recommendations for improving it.

Prompt themes included:

- Instances of "otherness"
- Experiences of marginalization
- Advice for leaders

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KEY PARTICIPANT THEMES



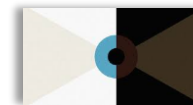
THE INVISIBLE WOMAN

Marginalized
Unrecognized as Individual
Mammy/Jezebel/Welfare Queen
Inequitable Wages
Myth of Colorblindness
Characterized as "a Diversity Hire"



THE ANGRY BLACK WOMAN,
SUPERWOMAN

Aggressive, Hot Tempered
Illogical, Ruled by Emotions
Sassy and Stand-offish
Expectation to work 2x as Hard
Manifest Strength, Suppress Emotion
Obligation to Help Others



WORKING UNDER THE WHITE GAZE

Palatability
Code Switching
Discomfort in "White" Spaces
Conforming to Eurocentric Beauty Ideals
Minimizing Cultural Expression

Recommendations for...

EMPLOYERS AND ALLIES



- Celebrate Black people's contributions to the A&D field
- Hire and nurture grow Black talent with intentionality.
- Pursue design equity

BLACK WOMEN IN A&D EARLY IN CAREER



- Network - expanding your creativity, and a fan base
- Be yourself, this field is enriched by difference
- Practice self-care, whatever that means to you

BLACK WOMEN IN A&D WITH PRIVILEGE



- Bring junior talent under your wings; seek her out and pull her up!
- Volunteer in your community to educate young people about A&D
- Prioritize mentoring and serving others

CONCLUSIONS



The multiplicative impact of intersectionality of race and gender combined with under-representation present unique challenges for Black Women in A&D.

There is a relative permanency of space and place, therefore the consequences of under-representation impact communities of color for generations.

It is critical to seize the energy generated by the dual pandemics of racism and Covid-19 to escalate representation.

LITERATURE CITED



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