

Black Women Increasingly Seek the Corner Office



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Melody Hobson, president Ariel Investments penned the foreword of a new report on Black women in the workplace.

By Jessica R. Key
Special to the NNPA from the *Indianapolis Recorder*

In business, there's long been a perception among Black employees that they must work harder than their White counterparts to rise to the top. A recent report suggests Black women in particular are eyeing the executive office more so than their White peers.

A study conducted by the Center for Talent Innovation (CTI), a think tank which conducts research on the challenges diverse individuals face in the workplace, published a report that shows Black women are more likely than White women to aspire to a powerful position with a prestigious title.

"Black Women: Ready to Lead" also uncovers that Black women also perceive a powerful position as the means to achieving their professional goals and are confident they can succeed in the role.

Yet despite their ambition and qualifications, Black women often feel stalled in their careers. This inertia can be attributed to the unconscious biases and the lack of advocacy these women face in the workplace.

The study was inspired by a report conducted last year by CTI that looked at women in the U.S., U.K. and Germany and found women often were not seeking positions of power. When they dug deeper, they discovered other racial groups had ambivalence to power except Black women.

Melody Hobson, president of Ariel Investments and wife of film director and producer George Lucas, penned the report's foreword.

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"What sparked this was through some of the interviews conducted. Some of the African-American executives commented they really weren't seeing an ambivalence to power from Black women," said Tai Green, senior vice president at CTI and co-author of *Black Women: Ready to Lead*. "They said executive leadership positions, they find, are a hard sell for this group."

Green and her team then focused on women in the U.S. to see if the data aligned with their qualitative research. All Black women questioned had a college education and often-times had leadership experience outside of their jobs.

"We saw the narrative around Black women was one that isn't really fraught with talk of the confidence gap or a need to 'lean in' as a group, but is far more likely to aspire to positions of power," said Green.

She added that Black women are three times more likely than their peers to go for the top spot. Why?

Green said Black women responded they were raised hearing statements such as "you need to work twice as hard to be viewed equal to your peers" or "a lot of people strug-

gled and sacrificed to make sure you have the opportunity to compete."

"There was a deeply rooted understanding of what it means to not have a voice in this country for so long that really drove them to go for it," said Green. This attitude stemmed from both obligation and personal ambition.

Green said where Blacks are similar to their white counterparts were among five things: the ability to flourish; to excel; to reach their purpose; the ability to empower others and be empowered; and have the ability to earn well.

Looking closely at attitudes about women's finances, there was a gap. Fifty-four percent of White women listed "the ability to earn well" as being important. For Black

women, it's 84 percent.

"We found that Black women list financial independence as a top goal," said Green.

One possible contributing factor: Black women are more likely to be unmarried and supporting others such as raising nieces and nephews or significantly giving back to their community. To these Black women, having a top job means more money in order to completely and independently fulfill their financial obligations.

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