

How Black Women Describe Navigating Race and Gender in the Workplace

Although my work does not revolve around the workplace, the workplace is a crucial component when it comes to addressing bias and intersectional issues. In the article, “How Black Women Describe Navigating Race in the Workplace”, Maura Cheeks interviews 10 women of color about their treatment in the workplace. Cheeks is a student at NYU pursuing her MBA in the business school, and has had work published in well known journals regarding intersectionality. All issues mentioned by the interviewees happened daily, but were heightened at work. Women felt judged, subconsciously tied or associated with other people of color, and forgotten. A woman, not named, specifically said, “My mentors talk to me about dimming my light. I always thought I had to bring that down to make people comfortable.” This woman noticed that this organization’s structures did not support her, and did not create an inclusive environment where she could feel like herself. The most fascinating part about this is that there is a premeditated assumption made when the mentor told her to be more silenced. The mentor, recognized bias against people of color, and created her own biased opinion and advice to avoid tension. Cheeks, the interviewer, also being a woman of color, recalls how she felt the very same way, and was conditioned by society to keep her head down, and be “okay” with the circumstances that were against her. Cheeks ends her conclusion about her interviews by stating that homogeneity and bias can have the most damaging career consequences for black women, and even notes her own bias. She mentions that without thinking of her own experiences when asking these women questions, she would not have been so driven with her project.

I think this source is an excellent addition to my work because it addresses how bias and intersectionality challenge each other when it comes to the lives of women of color. At first, I never thought one of my primary sources would be regarding a workplace with the topics I have chosen, which just shows the interconnected nature of all these issues. Not only is race and gender bias coexisting together, but biases within those who are marginalized. I love this source because it supports Rupert Brown’s and Luke Zaphir’s similar arguments, that one can not label bias as faulty because within it lies experiences and emotions. To do so would strip away the values associated with something, and furthering inequality. Zaphir’s point that prejudice and bias can be turned into something good and beneficial is perfectly executed with Cheeks’ thinking. Her bias turned into determination. Her project flourished. If it weren’t for this bias, she would not have published the interviews, and I would not have found this source and connected it to multiple other scholars’ thinking.

<https://hbr.org/2018/03/how-black-women-describe-navigating-race-and-gender-in-the-workplace>

