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Tammy Butler Robinson: Building a legacy by inviting others to the table

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TAMMY BUTLER ROBINSON
VIEWPOINT

It was not my dream to be the CEO of a company dedicated to engaging with clients to create effective solutions for their specific business challenges.

I thought I was going to be a lawyer; I even applied to law school. After not getting in, I decided to pursue a career in urban planning in the public sector. I helped oversee contract work and built relationships with others in the community.

This reality was good, but two other Black women and I decided we wanted better. We three later connected a fourth, a Black man, and together we birthed Engaging Solutions.

We wanted to create a legacy for our families, to pave the way like so many did before us. My children will be able to stand on my shoulders just as I have stood on the shoulders of my grandmother who owned land and her own upholstery business while raising five children. They will see me accomplishing goals

others said were out of reach, just as I heard stories of my other grandmother buying her own home after saving money from cleaning people's houses. I am a beneficiary of the work Black women before me have done, and now I get the chance to be the benefactor.

By being in the room where major decisions are made, I can leave the door open for others. Doors my partners and I had to knock on continually and break down, until someone finally heard us. As a result, I can invite other people who look like me to walk through.

Women of color do not have to be the last choice after all the other options have failed. We do not have to be the subconsultant on projects when we are more than qualified and capable of being the primary. We do excellent work and deserve a seat at the table.

I feel blessed that I can hand out my own invitations and set the table. It is at these tables Black women can come together and not only foster relationships but help build and impact whole communities.

It is within community that the quality of life for everyone can be improved. Health disparities can be reduced, and health equity can be increased. I am proud to lead a business that witnesses and participates in these changes. The connections I have made with other women serve as examples that Black women not only work well together, but we get results. We understand the work we do is greater than each individual project we work on, but it will be the sum of these works that speaks for us and the next generation of women to come.

My history as a Black woman in America and the histories of my mother and aunts and grandmothers influence how I show up in

the world. The work I do can never simply be about business. I aim to use my voice to inform, involve and impact. I strive to invest in people, connect them to resources and create opportunities for the generations to come.

I might not have dreamed of helping others find solutions in this way, but my reality is much better. •

Robinson is CEO of Engaging Solutions LLC.

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