POEM

I am an Engineer who happens to be a woman who is Black

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Engineering I loved it, but it did not love me back. Is it because I am a woman or because I am Black? These are traits, by which I am defined. Labeled, placed in a box, I have been confined. I need to escape, I am ready to go. Who am I really? This I need to know.

My intellect, my own abilities, I am beginning to doubt. To gain back self-worth, I must get out. Others too, sad to say, will face this same dilemma, before graduation day. Is this degree worth it? Am I the right fit? They will ask, before they finally quit.

Give up on a dream, a path they took. Discouraged from persisting, simply because of how they look. Engineers we need more . . . in the USA; this we hear the privileged say; as they push the “other” away.

What will it take to get more Americans to innovate? Unconditional love? A little less hate? Recognition and acceptance that we are all great. Giving everyone a chance to participate. Recruitment and retention . . . buzz words administrators speak. Yet their efforts are far too weak.

Inclusion, acceptance, and diversity too; but only for those who are most like you. Deny who I am. Ashamed of who I was born to be? Just to earn an engineering degree and to be doubted daily. Even by those with less education than me.

Contribute to society & make a difference in this life; have kids, get married, and become a wife. This is the choice many have made; to avoid heartache if they had stayed. Stayed in a career, as an unwanted guest; even when they have given their best; EXHAUSTED . . . so they decide to rest.
Gregory

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Why so few? Why do they leave? If I told you the truth, you would not believe. Yes, they had the ability to achieve. Yet, what they needed, they did not receive. The freedom to be authentic and free; a chance to exhibit their unique creativity. When all can agree that our differences make us great, this will give us the power to innovate. Develop novel things, not just replicate.

When everyone is allowed to join in the game; appreciated for not being the same; acknowledged as part of the team... permitted to live the American dream. If being an Engineer is a dream of mine; include me, allow my light to shine.

Recognizing my light will not cause yours to diminish; Instead it gives energy... helps you replenish. United, as one, working side by side; giving each other permission to excel with pride. My chosen profession, I am teaching it how to love me back... to accept me as an engineer who happens to be a woman, who is also Black.

A poster encouraging women to pursue technology studies at University of Valle, Cali, Colombia. It reads: "If it’s not appropriate for women, it’s not appropriate. Women and technology.” c. 2000. Some rights reserved.

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