

READ THE EXCERPT FROM HIDDEN FIGURES. SHETTERLY DESCRIBES WHAT HAPPENED WHEN KATHERINE GOBLE ASKED IF

READ THE EXCERPT FROM HIDDEN FIGURES. SHETTERLY DESCRIBES WHAT HAPPENED WHEN KATHERINE GOBLE ASKED IF THE SEEMINGLY SIMPLE QUESTION CHALLENGED THE ESTABLISHED ORDER AT NASA DURING A PERIOD OF INTENSE RACIAL AND GENDER SEGREGATION. MARGOT SHETTERLY'S COMPELLING MEMOIR AND THE EXCERPT FROM HER BOOK, HIDDEN FIGURES, REVEAL THE PIVOTAL MOMENTS WHEN KATHERINE GOBLE JOHNSON, A BRILLIANT MATHEMATICIAN, DARED TO QUESTION AUTHORITY AND PUSH BOUNDARIES IN A RACIALLY DIVIDED WORKPLACE. THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES THAT EXCERPT IN DEPTH, SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KATHERINE'S QUESTION, AND HOW HER COURAGE CONTRIBUTED TO BROADER SOCIAL CHANGE.

UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF HIDDEN FIGURES

THE ERA OF SEGREGATION AND DISCRIMINATION

DURING THE 1950S AND 1960S, THE UNITED STATES WAS DEEPLY DIVIDED ALONG RACIAL LINES. JIM CROW LAWS MANDATED RACIAL SEGREGATION IN PUBLIC SPACES, INCLUDING WORKPLACES LIKE NASA'S PREDECESSOR, THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR AERONAUTICS (NACA). BLACK EMPLOYEES OFTEN HELD SUPPORT ROLES AND WERE BARRED FROM PARTICIPATING IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES OR EVEN SITTING IN THE SAME ROOMS AS THEIR WHITE COLLEAGUES.

SIMULTANEOUSLY, GENDER DISCRIMINATION WAS RAMPANT. WOMEN, ESPECIALLY BLACK WOMEN, FACED LIMITED CAREER OPPORTUNITIES, LOWER PAY, AND SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS THAT CONFINED THEM TO SECRETARIAL OR CLERICAL ROLES. DESPITE THESE BARRIERS, MANY WOMEN DEMONSTRATED EXCEPTIONAL TALENT AND DEDICATION, OFTEN GOING UNRECOGNIZED.

KATHERINE GOBLE JOHNSON'S ROLE AT NASA

KATHERINE GOBLE JOHNSON WAS AMONG THE MOST TALENTED MATHEMATICIANS AND SCIENTISTS WORKING AT NASA. HER CALCULATIONS WERE CRITICAL FOR THE SUCCESS OF EARLY SPACE MISSIONS, INCLUDING JOHN GLENN'S ORBITAL FLIGHT. YET, HER CONTRIBUTIONS WERE OFTEN OVERSHADOWED BY HER RACE AND GENDER.

HER STORY EXEMPLIFIES RESILIENCE AND BRILLIANCE NAVIGATING A LANDSCAPE RIFE WITH SYSTEMIC OBSTACLES. HER WORK NOT ONLY ADVANCED SPACE EXPLORATION BUT ALSO CHALLENGED THE RACIAL AND GENDER NORMS OF HER TIME.

THE EXCERPT: KATHERINE'S BOLD QUESTION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

SETTING THE SCENE

IN THE EXCERPT, SHETTERLY RECOUNTS A MOMENT WHEN KATHERINE GOBLE JOHNSON, WORKING AS A "COMPUTER" (A TERM USED FOR HUMAN MATHEMATICIANS), APPROACHED HER SUPERVISOR WITH A QUESTION THAT SEEMED INNOCUOUS BUT CARRIED PROFOUND IMPLICATIONS. SHE WANTED TO VERIFY CALCULATIONS FOR A CRITICAL NASA MISSION, BUT HER QUESTION WENT BEYOND TECHNICAL CONCERNS—SHE INQUIRED ABOUT HER ROLE AND THE AUTHORITY TO ACCESS CERTAIN INFORMATION.

THE QUESTION THAT CHALLENGED THE STATUS QUO

KATHERINE ASKED, ESSENTIALLY, WHETHER SHE COULD REVIEW THE RESULTS OF THE CALCULATIONS PERFORMED BY HER COLLEAGUES, OR WHETHER SHE NEEDED PERMISSION TO DO SO. THIS WAS NOT MERELY ABOUT SCIENTIFIC ACCURACY; IT WAS A QUESTION ABOUT AGENCY, RECOGNITION, AND RESPECT WITHIN A SEGREGATED AND HIERARCHICAL ENVIRONMENT.

HER INQUIRY PROMPTED A TENSE MOMENT. IT WAS A DIRECT CHALLENGE TO THE NORMS THAT KEPT BLACK WOMEN IN SUBSERVIENT OR SUPPORT ROLES, SILENCED FROM SPEAKING UP OR ASSERTING THEIR EXPERTISE.

THE IMMEDIATE REACTION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

ACCORDING TO SHETTERLY'S ACCOUNT, THE SUPERVISOR'S REACTION WAS MIXED—SOME COLLEAGUES SAW KATHERINE'S QUESTION AS A SIGN OF CONFIDENCE AND COMPETENCE, WHILE OTHERS PERCEIVED IT AS A THREAT TO THE ESTABLISHED ORDER. THIS MOMENT UNDERSCORES HOW QUESTIONING AUTHORITY WAS DANGEROUS YET NECESSARY FOR PROGRESS.

THE INCIDENT BECAME A CATALYST FOR CHANGE WITHIN THE TEAM. IT PROMPTED DISCUSSIONS ABOUT INCLUSIVITY, RESPECT, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF VALUING CONTRIBUTIONS REGARDLESS OF RACE OR GENDER.

THE BROADER IMPACT OF KATHERINE'S QUESTION

BREAKING RACIAL AND GENDER BARRIERS IN THE WORKPLACE

KATHERINE'S QUESTION SYMBOLIZED A REFUSAL TO ACCEPT SYSTEMIC INEQUALITIES. BY SIMPLY ASKING WHETHER SHE COULD ACCESS THE INFORMATION, SHE CHALLENGED THE IMPLICIT ASSUMPTIONS THAT BLACK WOMEN WERE INFERIOR OR LESS CAPABLE.

HER PERSISTENCE HELPED PAVE THE WAY FOR:

- GREATER INCLUSION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN TECHNICAL ROLES
- RECOGNITION OF WOMEN'S INTELLECTUAL CONTRIBUTIONS IN STEM FIELDS
- SHIFTING WORKPLACE CULTURE TOWARD MORE EQUITABLE PRACTICES

INFLUENCE ON NASA'S ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

WHILE CHANGE WAS GRADUAL, KATHERINE'S COURAGE CONTRIBUTED TO A TRANSFORMATION WITHIN NASA. OVER TIME, HER COLLEAGUES AND SUPERVISORS RECOGNIZED HER EXCEPTIONAL SKILLS, LEADING TO HER INVOLVEMENT IN HIGH-PROFILE PROJECTS AND HER EVENTUAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT AS A VITAL MEMBER OF THE TEAM.

HER STORY INSPIRED SUBSEQUENT GENERATIONS OF WOMEN AND MINORITIES TO PURSUE CAREERS IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS (STEM).

THE LEGACY OF KATHERINE GOBLE JOHNSON AND HIDDEN FIGURES

RECOGNITION AND HONORS

DECADES AFTER HER GROUNDBREAKING WORK, KATHERINE GOBLE JOHNSON RECEIVED NUMEROUS ACCOLADES, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM IN 2015. HER STORY GAINED WIDESPREAD RECOGNITION THROUGH BOOKS, DOCUMENTARIES, AND THE 2016 FILM HIDDEN FIGURES, WHICH BROUGHT HER STORY—AND THOSE OF HER COLLEAGUES—TO A GLOBAL AUDIENCE.

LESSONS FROM KATHERINE'S COURAGEOUS QUESTION

HER QUESTION EXEMPLIFIES THE POWER OF ASSERTING ONESELF IN OPPRESSIVE ENVIRONMENTS. IT REMINDS US THAT:

1. CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO CAN BE UNCOMFORTABLE BUT NECESSARY FOR PROGRESS.
2. RECOGNITION AND RESPECT ARE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS, NOT PRIVILEGES.
3. BRAVERY IN ASKING QUESTIONS CAN LEAD TO SYSTEMIC CHANGE.

CONCLUSION: THE ENDURING SIGNIFICANCE OF THAT FATEFUL QUESTION

THE EXCERPT FROM HIDDEN FIGURES REVEALS A DEFINING MOMENT WHEN KATHERINE GOBLE JOHNSON, THROUGH A SIMPLE YET PROFOUND QUESTION, CHALLENGED THE ENTRENCHED SEGREGATION AND DISCRIMINATION AT NASA. HER COURAGE NOT ONLY ADVANCED HER OWN CAREER BUT ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO A BROADER MOVEMENT TOWARD EQUALITY IN SCIENCE AND SOCIETY. HER STORY CONTINUES TO INSPIRE COUNTLESS INDIVIDUALS TO QUESTION INJUSTICE, RECOGNIZE THEIR WORTH, AND PURSUE THEIR DREAMS DESPITE OBSTACLES.

BY UNDERSTANDING THIS PIVOTAL MOMENT, WE GAIN INSIGHT INTO HOW INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF BRAVERY CAN CATALYZE SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION. KATHERINE GOBLE JOHNSON'S QUESTION WAS MORE THAN ABOUT DATA OR CALCULATIONS; IT WAS ABOUT DIGNITY, RESPECT, AND THE FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH THAT TALENT AND INTELLIGENCE ARE UNIVERSAL—WORTHY OF RECOGNITION AND OPPORTUNITY.

KEYWORDS: HIDDEN FIGURES, KATHERINE GOBLE JOHNSON, SHETTERLY, NASA, RACIAL SEGREGATION, GENDER DISCRIMINATION, WOMEN IN STEM, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, WORKPLACE CHANGE, SYSTEMIC RACISM, COURAGE, SOCIAL PROGRESS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT SPECIFIC SITUATION DOES SHETTERLY DESCRIBE WHEN KATHERINE GOBLE ASKS A QUESTION IN 'HIDDEN FIGURES'?

SHETTERLY RECOUNTS AN INCIDENT WHERE KATHERINE GOBLE ASKED A QUESTION ABOUT THE CALCULATIONS NEEDED FOR THE SPACE PROGRAM, WHICH INITIALLY LED TO HER BEING OVERLOOKED OR DISMISSED DUE TO RACIAL AND GENDER BIASES.

HOW DOES SHETTERLY ILLUSTRATE THE CHALLENGES KATHERINE GOBLE FACED WHEN QUESTIONING AUTHORITY?

SHE HIGHLIGHTS INSTANCES WHERE KATHERINE'S INQUIRIES WERE MET WITH RESISTANCE OR CONDESCENSION, REFLECTING THE SOCIETAL AND INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS SHE ENCOUNTERED AS AN AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMAN IN A MALE-DOMINATED ENVIRONMENT.

WHAT DOES THE EXCERPT REVEAL ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSISTENCE IN KATHERINE GOBLE'S CAREER?

THE EXCERPT SHOWS THAT DESPITE BEING IGNORED OR DISMISSED, KATHERINE'S CONTINUED QUESTIONING AND DETERMINATION ULTIMATELY HELPED HER GAIN RECOGNITION AND CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO NASA'S SUCCESS.

How does Shetterly portray the significance of Katherine Goble's questions in advancing her work?

She emphasizes that Katherine's questions were crucial for clarifying complex calculations and pushing boundaries, which played a vital role in her groundbreaking contributions to space missions.

What societal issues are highlighted through Katherine Goble's interaction with her colleagues in the excerpt?

The excerpt underscores issues of racial segregation, discrimination, and gender bias that affected Katherine's opportunities and how she navigated these obstacles through resilience.

Why does Shetterly include this particular moment of questioning in her narrative about Katherine Goble?

She includes it to demonstrate Katherine's inquisitiveness, intelligence, and courage in challenging the status quo, illustrating her role as a trailblazer in science and civil rights.

What message about perseverance and advocacy does Shetterly convey through Katherine Goble's experience when asking questions?

Shetterly conveys that asking questions, despite facing obstacles, is a powerful act of advocacy that can lead to recognition, progress, and societal change.

Additional Resources

Read the excerpt from *Hidden Figures*. Shetterly describes what happened when Katherine Goble asked if

in the annals of American history, few stories highlight the intersection of perseverance, intellect, and societal barriers as vividly as that of Katherine Goble Johnson. In the book *Hidden Figures* by Margot Lee Shetterly, readers are introduced to the extraordinary journey of Johnson and her colleagues—African American women mathematicians whose calculations proved pivotal to NASA's success during the space race. A particularly compelling moment recounted in Shetterly's narrative occurs when Johnson, driven by her relentless pursuit of excellence, dares to ask a seemingly simple yet profoundly significant question: "If." This moment encapsulates both the personal courage of Johnson and the systemic obstacles she faced.

This article delves into that excerpt, exploring the context, the significance of her question, and the broader implications for understanding the challenges faced by these pioneering women. We will analyze how Johnson's inquiry became a catalyst for change within NASA and the civil rights movement, illustrating the power of curiosity and resilience in the face of institutional resistance.

Contextualizing Katherine Johnson's Environment: A Society and Institution in Flux

Before dissecting the moment when Johnson posed her question, it's essential to understand the environment in which she operated. The 1950s and 1960s were turbulent decades in American history—marked by the Cold War, the space race, and the burgeoning civil rights movement.

Societal Segregation and Racial Discrimination

During this era, segregation was institutionalized across the United States, especially in the South. African

AMERICANS FACED PERVASIVE DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PUBLIC FACILITIES. FOR WOMEN, SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS OFTEN RELEGATED THEM TO DOMESTIC ROLES OR LIMITED THEIR PROFESSIONAL PROSPECTS, PARTICULARLY IN STEM FIELDS.

NASA AND THE SPACE RACE

NASA'S EMERGENCE AS A NATIONAL AGENCY TASKED WITH SPACE EXPLORATION INTENSIFIED THE DEMAND FOR PRECISE CALCULATIONS AND INNOVATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING. THE AGENCY RELIED HEAVILY ON MATHEMATICIANS AND ENGINEERS, BUT RACIAL AND GENDER BARRIERS MEANT THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS AND WOMEN WERE LIMITED AND OFTEN OVERLOOKED.

THE HIDDEN FIGURES OF NASA

DESPITE THESE SOCIETAL CONSTRAINTS, A GROUP OF AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN—CLASSIFIED AS “COMPUTERS”—BEGAN WORKING AT NASA'S LANGLEY RESEARCH CENTER. THEIR ROLES RANGED FROM DATA ANALYSIS TO COMPLEX MATHEMATICAL COMPUTATIONS. KATHERINE GOBLE JOHNSON WAS AMONG THE MOST TALENTED, OFTEN PERFORMING CALCULATIONS THAT SURPASSED THE CAPABILITIES OF EARLY ELECTRONIC COMPUTERS.

UNDERSTANDING THIS CONTEXT UNDERSCORES THE MAGNITUDE OF JOHNSON'S QUESTION. IT WAS NOT MERELY A TECHNICAL QUERY BUT A CHALLENGE TO A SYSTEM ROOTED IN SEGREGATION AND GENDER BIAS.

THE MOMENT WHEN KATHERINE JOHNSON ASKED “IF”: SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPACT

IN SHETTERLY'S RECOUNTING, JOHNSON'S QUESTION—THOUGH SEEMINGLY SIMPLE—REPRESENTED A PIVOTAL ACT OF INQUIRY AND ASSERTION OF AGENCY. IT EXEMPLIFIES HOW A SINGLE QUESTION CAN CHALLENGE PREVAILING ASSUMPTIONS AND OPEN DOORS TO NEW POSSIBILITIES.

THE NATURE OF JOHNSON'S QUESTION

WHILE THE EXCERPT DOES NOT SPECIFY THE EXACT WORDING, IT REVOLVES AROUND JOHNSON QUESTIONING THE ASSUMPTIONS OR PROCEDURES THAT HER COLLEAGUES OR SUPERIORS TOOK FOR GRANTED. FOR EXAMPLE, SHE MIGHT HAVE ASKED:

- “IF WE TRY IT THIS WAY, WHAT HAPPENS?”
- “IF WE CONSIDER THIS VARIABLE, DOES IT CHANGE THE OUTCOME?”
- “IF I CAN VERIFY THE CALCULATIONS INDEPENDENTLY, WILL THAT INFLUENCE THE DECISION?”

AT ITS CORE, HER QUESTION WAS ABOUT TESTING THE BOUNDARIES OF EXISTING KNOWLEDGE AND PROCEDURES—AN ACT ROOTED IN SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY BUT ALSO IN A DESIRE FOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND VALIDATION.

BREAKING THROUGH INSTITUTIONAL RESISTANCE

NASA, LIKE MANY INSTITUTIONS OF THE TIME, WAS STRUCTURED WITH RIGID HIERARCHIES AND EMBEDDED BIASES. JOHNSON'S QUESTION CHALLENGED THE STATUS QUO, PROMPTING COLLEAGUES TO RECONSIDER ASSUMPTIONS AND PERHAPS EVEN QUESTION THE INSTITUTIONAL RELUCTANCE TO FULLY INTEGRATE AFRICAN AMERICANS INTO THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE AGENCY.

THE PERSONAL COURAGE OF ASKING “IF”

ASKING SUCH A QUESTION WAS NOT JUST A TECHNICAL MOVE BUT AN ACT OF COURAGE. IT REQUIRED JOHNSON TO:

- ASSERT HER EXPERTISE IN A DOMAIN DOMINATED BY WHITE MALE ENGINEERS AND SCIENTISTS.
- CHALLENGE AUTHORITY IN A SETTING WHERE QUESTIONING WAS OFTEN DISCOURAGED.
- NAVIGATE SYSTEMIC BIASES THAT MINIMIZED THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN OF COLOR.

HER WILLINGNESS TO ASK “IF” WAS A CATALYST FOR BROADER RECOGNITION, BOTH OF HER ABILITIES AND OF THE NEED FOR

SYSTEMIC CHANGE.

BROADER IMPLICATIONS: HOW THIS MOMENT REFLECTS SYSTEMIC CHANGE AND PERSONAL AGENCY

JOHNSON'S QUESTION DID NOT OCCUR IN A VACUUM. IT SYMBOLIZED THE BROADER STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL AND GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN SCIENTIFIC AND GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS.

CHALLENGING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

HER INQUIRY EXEMPLIFIED HOW QUESTIONING ASSUMPTIONS—WHETHER TECHNICAL OR SOCIETAL—CAN SERVE AS A LEVER FOR CHANGE. IT ENCOURAGED COLLEAGUES AND SUPERIORS TO:

- RECONSIDER THE EXCLUSION OF WOMEN AND AFRICAN AMERICANS FROM CERTAIN ROLES.
- RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES IN SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM-SOLVING.
- FOSTER A CULTURE WHERE CURIOSITY AND CRITICAL THINKING ARE VALUED OVER CONFORMITY.

INSPIRING FUTURE GENERATIONS

JOHNSON'S ACT OF QUESTIONING HAS HAD A LASTING LEGACY. IT INSPIRED GENERATIONS OF WOMEN, ESPECIALLY WOMEN OF COLOR, TO PURSUE CAREERS IN STEM FIELDS. HER STORY UNDERSCORES THAT:

- CURIOSITY IS A FORM OF RESISTANCE AGAINST SYSTEMIC BARRIERS.
- ASKING "WHAT IF" CAN OPEN PATHWAYS TO INNOVATION AND INCLUSION.
- PERSISTENCE AND CONFIDENCE ARE VITAL IN CHALLENGING ENTRENCHED BIASES.

INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES SPARKED BY HER COURAGE

THOUGH INCREMENTAL, JOHNSON'S QUESTIONS AND ASSERTIONS CONTRIBUTED TO:

- THE EVENTUAL INTEGRATION OF NASA'S WORKFORCE.
- RECOGNITION OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN SCIENCE.
- BROADER SOCIETAL SHIFTS TOWARD CIVIL RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY.

TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HER INQUIRY

JOHNSON'S QUESTION HAD BOTH TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL RAMIFICATIONS WITHIN NASA AND BEYOND.

TECHNICAL SIGNIFICANCE

FROM A TECHNICAL STANDPOINT, HER INQUIRY PUSHED FOR:

- VALIDATION OF CALCULATIONS THROUGH INDEPENDENT VERIFICATION.
- RECONSIDERATION OF COMPUTATIONAL PROCEDURES, LEADING TO MORE ROBUST AND ACCURATE RESULTS.
- INCORPORATION OF DIVERSE EXPERTISE IN PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESSES.

THIS APPROACH IMPROVED THE RELIABILITY OF SPACE MISSION COMPUTATIONS, WHICH WERE CRUCIAL IN SENDING ASTRONAUTS SAFELY INTO SPACE.

CULTURAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

CULTURALLY, HER QUESTION CHALLENGED THE PREVAILING NORMS BY:

- DEMONSTRATING THAT WOMEN AND MINORITIES POSSESSED THE EXPERTISE NECESSARY FOR HIGH-STAKES SCIENTIFIC WORK.

- ENCOURAGING A CULTURE OF QUESTIONING AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.
- EMBODYING THE SPIRIT OF SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL CHANGE.

HER ACT BECAME EMBLEMATIC OF THE FIGHT FOR INCLUSION AND EQUALITY, ILLUSTRATING HOW INDIVIDUAL COURAGE CAN INFLUENCE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE.

LEGACY AND LESSONS FROM KATHERINE JOHNSON'S QUESTION

KATHERINE JOHNSON'S ACT OF ASKING "IF" SERVES AS A POWERFUL LESSON FOR INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS ALIKE.

EMBRACING CURIOSITY AND CRITICAL THINKING

HER STORY ENCOURAGES PROFESSIONALS TO:

- NEVER SHY AWAY FROM ASKING QUESTIONS, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT CHALLENGES ASSUMPTIONS.
- RECOGNIZE THAT CURIOSITY CAN LEAD TO BREAKTHROUGHS—BOTH TECHNICAL AND SOCIAL.
- UNDERSTAND THAT QUESTIONING AUTHORITY, WHEN DONE RESPECTFULLY AND WITH EXPERTISE, CAN CATALYZE CHANGE.

RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF DIVERSITY IN STEM

HER EXPERIENCES REINFORCE THAT DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES ENHANCE PROBLEM-SOLVING AND INNOVATION, ESPECIALLY IN COMPLEX FIELDS LIKE AEROSPACE ENGINEERING.

THE POWER OF PERSONAL AGENCY

JOHNSON'S EXAMPLE ILLUSTRATES THAT INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF COURAGE—SUCH AS ASKING "IF"—CAN HAVE RIPPLE EFFECTS, INFLUENCING POLICIES, ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, AND SOCIETAL ATTITUDES.

IMPACT ON CIVIL RIGHTS AND STEM INCLUSION

HER STORY IS A REMINDER THAT BREAKING BARRIERS REQUIRES BOTH SYSTEMIC CHANGE AND INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE. IT UNDERSCORES THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING ENVIRONMENTS WHERE QUESTIONS ARE WELCOMED AND DIVERSE VOICES ARE HEARD.

CONCLUSION: THE ENDURING SIGNIFICANCE OF KATHERINE JOHNSON'S QUESTION

THE EXCERPT FROM HIDDEN FIGURES HIGHLIGHTING KATHERINE GOBLE JOHNSON'S QUESTION ENCAPSULATES A MOMENT OF PROFOUND SIGNIFICANCE. HER INQUIRY WAS MORE THAN A TECHNICAL CHECK; IT WAS AN ACT OF DEFIANCE AGAINST SYSTEMIC BARRIERS AND A TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF CURIOSITY AND CONFIDENCE. JOHNSON'S WILLINGNESS TO ASK "IF" CHALLENGED ASSUMPTIONS, VALIDATED HER EXPERTISE, AND HELPED PAVE THE WAY FOR GREATER INCLUSION WITHIN NASA AND THE BROADER SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY.

HER STORY CONTINUES TO INSPIRE, REMINDING US THAT PROGRESS OFTEN BEGINS WITH A SIMPLE QUESTION—A "WHAT IF"—POSED BY SOMEONE COURAGEOUS ENOUGH TO CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO. AS SOCIETY STRIVES TOWARD GREATER EQUITY AND INNOVATION, KATHERINE JOHNSON'S LEGACY DEMONSTRATES THAT ASKING QUESTIONS, ASSERTING ONESELF, AND EMBRACING CURIOSITY ARE ESSENTIAL STEPS TOWARD ACHIEVING THOSE GOALS. HER JOURNEY UNDERSCORES THAT SCIENCE, AT ITS HEART, IS DRIVEN BY INQUIRY—AN ACT THAT CAN TRANSFORM NOT ONLY EQUATIONS BUT ALSO LIVES AND INSTITUTIONS.

[**Read The Excerpt From Hidden Figures Shetterly Describes**](#)

What Happened When Katherine Goble Asked If

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