



Glitter Cat's Commitment to Black Coffee Professionals

June 11, 2020

Glitter Cat began as an organization dedicated to changing the face of what top coffee competitors look like. The wide umbrella of marginalized communities allows us to make an incredible far-reaching impact in flooding these competitions with BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, womxn, and disabled coffee professionals who have historically been excluded from opportunities to showcase their talents and advance their careers. In our first year, we also recognized that leaving that definition too broad could ultimately hurt the cause and miss out on many of the people we wanted to give the resources they deserve. Our first cohort was, from our view, a diverse one and they have made us proud. It was also a visibly white one and this became painfully clear when a photo of our Glitter Cat trip to Colombia showed a group that wasn't fully representative of our mission. Two of the three POC in that cohort were unable to take that trip and that image, and criticism that came as a result of it, made it clear to us that we weren't doing enough. This was solidified when only one Black competitor made it to the USCC nationals across all competitions.

For year two of Glitter Cat, we knew that we had to do better in our selection process, which was guided to choose the most intentional and promising applicants and then address the makeup of the group to make sure that we were doing what we set out to do. In expanding to four bootcamps, we [committed](#) to have majority non-white cohorts and specifically to ensure that more than one Black coffee professional would be in each. Below is a breakdown of applicants and their eventual cohorts as it relates to our goals:

Barista Bootcamp:

BIPOC applications: 54% (32/59)

Black applications: 10% (6/59)

BIPOC acceptances: 60% (6/10)

Black acceptances: 30% (3/10), half who applied

Brewers Cup Bootcamp:

BIPOC applications: 47% (9/19)

Black applications: one applicant

BIPOC acceptances: 56% (5/9)

Black acceptances: one applicant who applied

Roasters Bootcamp:

BIPOC applications: 29% (5/17)

Black applications: two applicants

BIPOC acceptances: 50% (5/10)

Black acceptances: both applicants who applied

CIGS Bootcamp:

BIPOC: applications: 65% (11/17)

Black applications: 18% (3/17)

BIPOC acceptances: 70% (7/10)

Black acceptances: 20% (2/10), two of the three who applied

In all of those cases, we feel confident in how the cohorts represented the demographics of those who applied as the percentages of those accepted closely aligned with and in most cases exceeded those who applied. We had aimed to keep a non-white majority in the cohorts and succeeded in three of the four cohorts. We also recognize that moving into another competition season, we have not had enough Black applicants. This is especially evident in having only one Black applicant for Brewers Cup and two for Roasters. Black coffee professionals who want to compete do not yet see the means to do so, nor do they see Glitter Cat as an avenue for them to gain access to training and resources that are due to them, either because they are unaware of the program or don't see enough people who look like them in the program or competing.

We attribute our increase in Black applicants for the 2020 season to three resources: Anthony Ragler (GC, 2019) and Adam JacksonBey personally implored many of the 2020 Black Glitter Cats to apply and Michelle R. Johnson promoted the Glitter Cat 2020 application process specifically to Black coffee professionals through her platform @thechocolatebarista. All three encouraged Black coffee professionals to apply without our solicitation.

We owe a lot to Michelle, Adam, and Anthony, not just for how they aided our application process but for what they continue to teach us about equity and the specific need to provide resources long denied of Black coffee professionals. Glitter Cat's approach in providing resources under the large umbrella of marginalized identities must have targeted approaches to serving specific communities. In the case of Black baristas, reparations from an industry that has benefited a largely white upper echelon are due to the Black folx who should have benefited from the increasing popularity and financial windfall that specialty coffee in particular has seen over the last few decades.

The following represents Glitter Cat's immediate commitments to Black coffee professionals:

Creation of a Diverse Board:

Glitter Cat's board of directors (currently three white voting members) has voted to invite four new members, which would make the voting board majority-nonwhite. This board will influence the direction of the program and assist in expanding the program to have a greater impact outside of competition. Board nominees have been asked to join and an announcement of the full board will follow once all have accepted. We are also in the process of bringing on non-voting members of an advisory council to include more voices in our plans and operations.

Increase Black Applicants:

For the next application period (TBD based on USCC's announcement of a 2021 season), Glitter Cat pledges to take steps that will aim to increase the amount of Black applicants by 100% in the Barista and CIGS disciplines and 200% in Brewers Cup and Roasters. Leading up to that application process and during it, Glitter Cat will prioritize Black stories within our community and in the industry at large to make clear to those who engage with our social media and ads in coffee publications that Glitter Cat is a resource for Black coffee professionals to excel in the US Coffee Championships and network and build

community with Black coffee professionals and coffee professionals of other marginalized identities. Our application will also be more intentional in letting Black coffee professionals know that they belong in these cohorts and on those competition stages.

Increase Black Instructors:

Glitter Cat aims to increase Black instructors in each discipline. This will be a longer process. For the past two years, Glitter Cat has had one Black instructor across all disciplines, the only Black person to win a US Coffee Championship and coach one winner. Black coffee professionals will see the program as being one available for them if they see that they can learn from successful professionals who look like them. Glitter Cat competition training is from champions, coaches, and head judges who can help trainees win these championships. We recognize that there is a wealth of incredibly talented Black coffee professionals in the US and always aim to have them on our selection committees and as our partners in various endeavors. Because of systematic oppression and unconscious bias in competition and in the industry, we have few Black coffee professionals in the US who have won championships, coached winners and finalists, or taken on roles as head judges. As we continue to take targeted approaches to increasing Black representation in these competitions, we will have a greater field to consider for instructors as they win championships or take on roles as successful coaches and judges. Plainly, we aim to see Black Glitter Cats win these competitions so we can have them teach more Glitter Cats how to win these competitions.

Events and Police:

Glitter Cat is committed to putting on community events that are safe spaces for coffee professionals of marginalized identities. We take full responsibility for the safety of all who attend these events. We are committed to de-escalation in the event of conflict and aim to have event organizers and volunteers go through de-escalation training. We are currently researching best options for de-escalation training and will share our intentions and resources in late 2020 well before our next public event. Those who violate Glitter Cat's Code of Conduct will be expelled and banned from events. Organizers and volunteers will do everything in their power to deal with crises and not involve the police so as not to turn a crisis into a potentially violent interaction with little accountability. Glitter Cat strongly supports the defunding of militarized police departments and increased funding to community organizations, whom we will continue to promote and make donations to as long as we are in operation. Thus far, we have donated to [Reclaim the Block](#) and [SNaP4Freedom](#). We will be constantly evaluating where to send funds and are open to suggestions.

Business Accountability Project:

Glitter Cat commits to working with businesses to help develop anti-racist hiring and operational practices. One reason we struggle to find more Black applicants is that specialty coffee shops have done a largely poor job of establishing themselves as welcome workplaces and community spaces for Black professionals and consumers. While hiring notices claim that everybody is considered regardless of race, business owners scratch their heads and claim they can't employ Black baristas when they don't apply. Moreover, unconscious bias makes coffee shops largely seen as unwelcome spaces for Black customers.

Businesses need to make commitments similar to ours above to specifically benefit a Black workforce and customer base. That commitment must address de-escalation, bias, and achievable goals and must not rely on free Black labor.

Glitter Cat commits to working with one or more businesses directly in the creation of a manifesto on anti-racist hiring and operational practices with outcomes being a document that will be shared as a resource publicly and commitments to transparency in follow-ups that will also be public. Once the document is complete, we will urge business owners in a campaign to adopt the practices laid out or create their own specific to their businesses.

In doing so, we commit to anti-racism as an ongoing project and not just one that flares up when national tensions are high and our Black community members are suffering. We call on any business partners who are interested in doing this heavily researched work with us and will be reaching out to businesses who can have the greatest impact in implementing these practices.

Creation of Commitment to Indigenous Coffee Professionals:

This document is specific to our commitments to the Black coffee community and comes at a point where all organizations should have already had plans in place. In creating this commitment, we recognize the need to make commitments to other communities. Our aim is to next work on a commitment to increasing representation of Indigenous coffee professionals in competition and the industry at large. A one-size-fits-all approach to benefiting a marginalized community cannot be an effective one and we owe a great deal of resources and opportunities to Indigenous folk.

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We thank those who have cared enough to offer constructive criticism to our ongoing efforts and to those who have concerns with how we have handled ourselves in the past or our plans for the future, our defenses are down. This program only works if it gives voice to those who have been silenced and to all of you, we owe our resources and gratitude.