

The First, the Few, the Only

author: Deepa Purushothaman

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Synopsis

author	Deepa Purushothaman
readBy	Deepa Purushothaman
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Axiom Award Bronze Medalist for Women / BIPOC in Business

A deeply personal call to action for women of color to find power from within and to join together in community, advocating for a new corporate environment where we all belong and are accepted on our own terms.

Women of color comprise one of the fastest-growing segments in the corporate workforce, yet often we are underrepresented among the first, few, or only ones in a department or company. For too long, corporate structures, social zeitgeist, and cultural conditioning have left us feeling exhausted and downtrodden, believing that in order to fit in and be successful, we must hide or change who we are.

As a former senior partner at a large global services firm, Deepa Purushothaman experienced these feelings of isolation and burnout. She met with hundreds of other women of color across industries and cultural backgrounds, eager to hear about their unique and shared experiences. In doing so, she has come to understand our collective setbacks and the path forward in achieving our goals.

Business must evolve and women of color have the potential to lead that transformation. We must begin by pushing back against toxic messaging including the things we tell ourselves while embracing the valuable cultural viewpoints and experiences that give us unique perspectives at work. By fully realizing our own strengths, we can build collective power and use it to confront microaggressions, outdated norms, and workplace misconceptions; create cultures where belonging is never conditional; and rework corporations to be genuinely inclusive to all.

The First, the Few, the Only is a road map for us to make a profound impact within and outside our organizations while ensuring that our words are heard, our lived experiences are respected, and our contributions are finally valued.

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