

# Blacks Navigate Burdens of Invisible Work at Home & Workplace, Highlighting Urgent Need to Address these Systemic Issues

*Black executives detail need to moderate their hair, tone and attire while managing composure to meet societal and organizational expectations in the workplace*

TAMPA, FL, UNITED STATES, December 16, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- New

Article in the Root Outlines the Challenges that Black Executives Routinely Face

Invisible work, stereotype management, and “the glass cliff” phenomenon create emotional and psychological stress for Black executives, who must also navigate systemic barriers and

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We must actively work towards dismantling systems of oppression and valuing the contributions of Blacks and other marginalized groups...by acknowledging, valuing, and compensating for invisible work”

*Drs. Wells and MacAulay*

microaggressions. This is one of the conclusions of Janelle E. Wells, Ph.D., and Doreen MacAulay, Ph.D., esteemed authors, academics, and workplace experts, who write about it in a new article [published on The Root news website](#).

Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay maintain that due to systemic racism and discriminatory practices, Blacks are disproportionately performing invisible work - unpaid labor, tasks, and responsibilities at home and the workplace that are not compensated or recognized as valuable or essential in our society. Simultaneously, Blacks must manage racial stereotypes.

The article also notes that Black executives recount experiences with the glass cliff. This phenomenon refers to the trend of underrepresented individuals, particularly Blacks, being appointed to leadership positions in corporations and organizations when the entities face significant crises or complex challenges. They are put in vulnerable situations where they can be easily blamed for failures, even if they begin to turn things around. This phenomenon, a significant challenge for Black executives, adds to the invisible work they must manage.



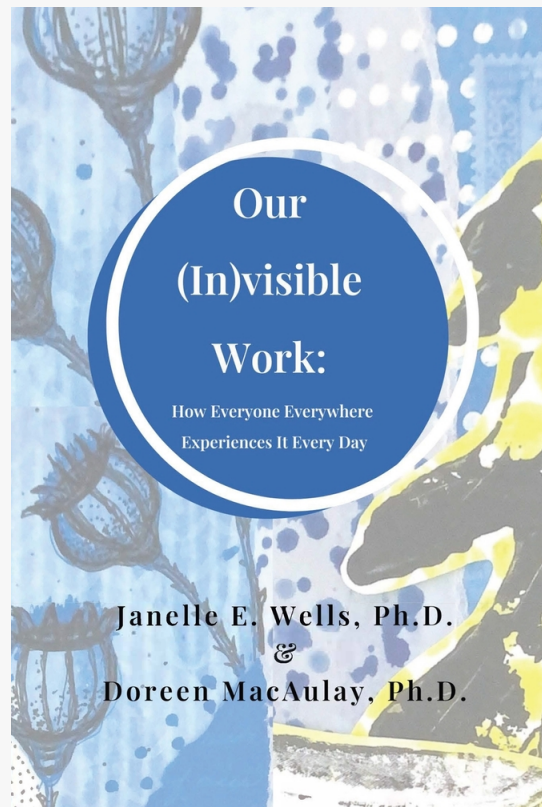
In August, Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay published a new book, *Our (In)visible Work*, which examines the causes and dangers of invisible work in our society, concluding that Blacks, other people of color, and women are affected the most. Their extensive research and expertise explain how unseen labor often forces people to undertake chores, duties, and responsibilities without recognition or compensation, and they cite the consequences of doing so. The consequential new book, *Our (In)visible Work*, is available [for purchase](#).

In The Root article, Black executives interviewed for the book detail some of their unique encounters with invisible work. They discuss being forced to moderate their hair, tone, and attire while managing their emotions and maintaining composure to meet societal and organizational expectations. This can be exhausting and lead to emotional dissonance.

“Evidence of the glass cliff has extended to racially and ethnically underrepresented executives,” Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay write, adding that a [study](#) by professors Alison Cook and Christine Glass analyzing Fortune 500 companies found that Blacks and women were more likely to be promoted to a CEO position after an organization experienced a decline in performance.”

The article quotes Khalil, who is in his 40s and has over 15 years of leadership experience, recalling that most, if not all, his promotions were to fix dysfunctional scenarios throughout his career.

“I find myself in these leadership positions — the repair mode of fixing things others can't fix,” Khalil says. “Or they recruit people like me, people of color and women, to fix it. We are put in dysfunctional scenarios to save the day. It is an uphill battle. No matter what you do, you'll never really feel as though you're making progress. However, you're laying enough of a foundation for someone else to learn later that you did make it better; you fixed the foundation. Instead of getting the legacy positions or inheriting a successful team to come in and fine-tune the bells



Dr. Janelle Wells and Dr. Doreen MacAulay

and whistles. We don't tend to be put in those same positions; we get the fix-it opportunities."

In the Roots article, Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay assert that invisible work may go unnoticed, but its impact significantly shapes our society. "Let us not overlook the invisible work done by Blacks, but instead, give credit where credit is due and strive for a more inclusive and equitable society," they write. "We must actively work towards dismantling systems of oppression and valuing the contributions of Blacks and other marginalized groups, especially by acknowledging, valuing, and compensating for invisible work."

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Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay have created a groundbreaking interactive web space, [wellsquest.com/ourinvisiblework](http://wellsquest.com/ourinvisiblework). This platform, designed with empathy, fosters a sense of community and understanding among those who endure invisible work. It provides a safe space for individuals to share their experiences, learn from others, and gain support. We encourage you to visit the site and join the conversation.

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For broadcast or print interviews with Dr. Wells and Dr. MacAulay, please contact Michael Frisby at [Mike@frisbyassociates.com](mailto:Mike@frisbyassociates.com) or 202-625-4328. Digital copies of our (In)visible work are available for review.

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