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MIZZOU

A Growing Force

Read a Q-and-A with the 2013 Black Women Rock! coordinators.

Story by Kelsey Allen

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Robbie Cox–Chatman, a senior business marketing major with a minor in black studies from St. Louis, and Sirrah Joof, a junior journalism major from Chicago, are co-coordinators of the third annual Black Women Rock!, an event held at MU each spring. Modeled after the BET award show *Black Girls Rock!*, the event honors black women in Columbia who are making a difference. Black Women Rock! gives 10 awards in categories such as “Young, Gifted and Black” to “Trailblazer” to “Living Legend” and honors students, faculty, staff and community members.



Sonja Steptoe, BA, BJ '82, center, meets with students in Respect Hall before the 2012 Black Women Rock! ceremony March 10, 2012. The building's fourth floor was named in her honor. Photo by Rob Hill.

Black Women Rock! is March 9, 2013, at Conservation Auditorium. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. The ceremony begins at 6:30 p.m., and the reception follows at the Gaines/Oldham Black Culture Center.

MIZZOU sits down with Cox-Chatman and Joof to discuss the importance of events such as **Black Women Rock!** at MU.

Q: What is the goal of the Black Women Rock! event?

Joof: To highlight the unsung heroes in the community, the people who are doing so much that you don't see and who don't look for recognition.

Cox-Chatman: With the media, a lot of the TV shows out there [feature women being] nasty [to one another], and that's not real life. When you grow up, you're not going to be 40 [years old] bickering back and forth with females. We need

to show that we are unified. We do appreciate one another. We do show support.

Joof: That's why Black Women Rock! is so important. Last year after it was over, people were saying that they felt so good and wanted to go out and start an organization or do something. It's pushing people to do something. Whatever your heart desires, by all means, go ahead and do it. The black community needs that. We need somebody always reminding us how powerful we are. Sometimes we forget that. Sometimes we feel like we can leave it up to somebody else. But it will never happen if everyone has that mentality. It's an amazing thing to see how many people come to Mizzou and are like, "There's something I want to see done. I have to be the person to do it." That's a strong black woman.

Q: What does make a black woman rock?

Joof: Somebody who puts others in the community before herself because she knows the importance of lifting our community as a whole. We don't realize the person we sit next to in class everyday in Conservation Auditorium

has started something like **Black Women Rock!** or Dream Outside the Box or Fluffy Girl Summit or Natural Hair Summit. There are so many black women on campus — women period — doing such amazing things that an event like this is necessary because we don't get that enough. It's just a day to say we do a lot and we appreciate one another.

Q: Why does an event such as this need to exist at MU?

Cox-Chatman: The black community here at Mizzou is small. It's growing, but it's still small. It's needed — just like a lot of other black events — to know that you have a voice. What you say is important. So that's what we do. When [recipients] come up to give their acceptance speech, whatever you have to say, whatever you have to show, you can do it here. We're a growing force.

Joof: But this is not just a black event. This is Mizzou's event. We want everybody on campus to see these women's faces, to know who these women are, because they are doing such great things.

Read about four more black women who are making a difference on campus.

Topics: Community, Web Exclusives

Tags: Students

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