

## **The Beauty of Diversity**

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We often look to social or political leaders for civil rights inspiration, but rarely do we ever consider scientists. Often overlooked, scientists throughout history have acted as both social and scientific leaders in their defiance of societal limitations and geoscientific boundaries. One leader who fits this description to look to is Zelma Maine Jackson, a prominent African American female geologist who broke boundaries all across the board. In the face of discrimination, Zelma Maine Jackson rejected her society's notion of what a geoscientist should be and showed them what it could be.

In the early days of her career, Jackson decided that her passion for geology surpassed the pain of racism and sexism. She found that she deeply resonated with the empowering nature of the geosciences and so spent her hot, dry days on drill rigs, searching for mineable uranium. Throughout her professional work, she encountered ostracism and racial slurs that failed to deter her determined nature. Instead, the small bit of kindness and inclusivity she had encountered ignited her to continuously thrive forward. Her work led her to be one of the most accomplished geologists of her time, but it was her strength that defined her as a leader.

Although trailblazing Jackson made history, it is our generation's duty to continue that legacy. With less than 3% of African Americans pursuing a degree in geoscience and below half of them being women, greater representation and diversity is essential, for it promotes group work ethic, creativity, and critical analysis. Stereotypical boundaries implemented by society restrain the beautiful synergy that underrepresented groups contribute to the geosciences. Zelma Maine Jackson is only the beginning to what an earth scientist can be as she represents the possibilities that the geoscience community can accomplish with elimination of all racial and gender-based barriers.

### **Works Cited**

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