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It's Time to Bring out the Good China

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To: [Steve Johnston](#)

It's Time to Bring out the Good China

Black founders don't want your free tickets. We want you to sacrifice your privilege.

Sherrell Dorsey
Jun 7  

Following 70+ days of eating my own cooking during quarantine, I've reverted back to various forms of takeout several times a week now that the hot bar at Whole Foods is a thing of the past and I refuse to buy into the unseasoned food delivery fan fare Instagram has been stalking me with all year.

Because I'm not a complete animal, I always unpack my delicacies and serve myself on actual plates. I use real utensils to scoop out my pad woon sen and turn another lonely meal into a dining experience that reminds me I'm still somewhat human.

Now that I've gotten through the worst of a series of depressive episodes and the highs and lows of living in our new dystopian normal along with the centuries-old habit of police killing Black people for sport, my distaste for disposable dining runs parallel to the harsh and palatable truth that our assumed leaders and counterparts have still refused to do the reading.

As a Black woman founder building a [distinctive Black tech journalism platform](#) that has seen more eyeballs in the last few days than I have in the four years I've been growing the product, I am at the mercy of the syllabus those of us who are not white are required to read to survive a space where very few of us are invited to rooms to be served with the good china.

The interest in Black America over the last few days is still one of value extraction. Our contemporaries are not required to read the literature that defines us. It is evident in the mass text messages and tweets by our colleagues and "friends" who have reached out to ask us to explain systemic racism or "don't know what to do". We are required to process our own trauma while alleviating theirs.

You could not have been a living, breathing, leader or brand tweeting in the era of protest without having said *something*. So words became cultural

currency, no matter how hollow, they were at least on the record.

And for those of us in position to field the flurry of requests to translate centuries worth of violence and apathy toward Black people in America, many of us, for the first time, were invited to attend the party but to leave our appetite for full, unbound inclusion at home.

Take for instance my run-in with CB Insights and its founder Anand Sanwal this week. Sanwal offered 50 free tickets to "amazing" Black founders to attend his upcoming tech conference featuring top venture capitalists and business leaders, a mostly male, mostly white endeavor. Because he did not do the reading, he thought this gesture was generous.

By reaching out to Black founders with platforms to help him advertise his generosity, without compensation, he was met with significant push back from Black women founders who called him out for allowing us in the room, but providing no sacrifice of space at the table.

We would be given a free \$1,500 ticket, but the good china was off-limits. Considering the virtual event would cost far less than in-person, the offer was not one of sacrifice. So after a few tussles with his event planning team, he tossed me a bone, skipping the china, asking me to moderate a fireside chat with a notable investor.

There would be no provided compensation for my time, or at the least, no donation on my behalf to an organization of my choice for helping him to save face and assuage Black voices.

Let's be clear: Sanwal owes me no favors, not even his seat, but he does owe the world in which he is defined as a leader, his competency in having done the reading.

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Needless to say, I won't be speaking at CB Insights this year. Perhaps they'll find another Black person to help them save face. Or not. Either way, I'll eat at home until something delicious and sacrificial makes its way to my inbox.

Sanwal, in this example, is not alone. There are countless Black founders, Black women founders in particular, that have shared how they've turned down unpaid, tokenized "opportunities" where there is no value and no good china.

I predict the vast majority of those 190+ companies and CEOs that have shared a statement and donation in the name of Black Lives Matter will

atrophy their commitments as the months fade away from our memories and business returns to usual. I predict that the lack of internal accountability will remind us that reading our syllabus is not worth it. That they will never see us as their peers, and that yes, we will still be required to do our work and eat from a place of disproportion.

I'd like to be proven wrong, however, and for the leader of a futuristic society to be a deep systems thinker that has read our syllabus and has an appetite for emotional, empathetic, and the social intelligence to build the kind of tools we'll need in the new world to ensure that everyone is fed.

The good china costs a lot more. It means stepping down from the table and offering a seat to the person who has not had the chance to eat yet.


If you aren't planning to feed us, don't invite us over for dinner.




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