

## THE LAURA FLANDERS SHOW

### AUDIO EXCLUSIVE: MAKING THE MUSIC INDUSTRY BETTER FOR BIPOC COMMUNITIES

**JANET HERNANDEZ:** Black artists are some of today's biggest musical acts, but pull back the curtain, and the industry as a whole is much different. In one study, only 19% of top executives are part of underrepresented racial groups. This may come as a surprise to the average music fan, but BIPOC in the industry know the reality all too well. A survey among Black music industry professionals found that 65% say they've been passed up for a job opportunity because of their race.

**HILARY GLEASON:** A Black music industry professional has a different experience every time they walk into a conference room to sign a contract, or walk off a tour bus to play a show. They're being greeted with internal biases, microaggressions, macroaggressions and true racism. And that is something that they are holding with them.

**JANET HERNANDEZ:** This trauma adds on to a history of racist treatment, and it takes a toll on Black mental health.

**ANDREA BROWN:** Black musicians and even stage crew couldn't go through the front door. We had to go through the back door, right? And so remember, we're starting from that place and we still carry with us the scars when we couldn't.

**JANET HERNANDEZ:** In that same survey, only 36% of respondents say they seek help via therapy, but industry members are at serious risk of developing a mental health illness.

**HILARY GLEASON:** We have a laundry list of reasons we look at. An inconsistent financial status, there's also a lack of health insurance. The music industry also has a long history of substance abuse.

**JANET HERNANDEZ:** It was these findings that shaped a new partnership between Backline, an organization linking industry professionals to mental health resources, and the Black Mental Health Alliance, who offers those resources to the Black community. Together, they're working to improve the quality of care available to Black patients by training clinicians to be culturally competent.

**ANDREA BROWN:** It does not mean that you have had to walk a mile in my shoes, but it does mean that you have had some understanding, and training around how to show up for Black people and people of color.

**JANET HERNANDEZ:** In this moment we've seen a lot of people try to be allies. What has to be done to keep this momentum going?

**ANDREA BROWN:** Let's call this thing out, but then let's have a real call to action. It really means digging into the truth, digging into what can be available to people, and making it available.

**JANET HERNANDEZ:** There have been many nights where I've gone to a concert and scanned the stage for anyone who looked like me — from the pool of artists, tour managers, photographers, stage crew — but on most occasions, I didn't see a single one. The lack of diversity is discouraging, it is hurtful, and it led me to ask if I'd ever be able to work in the industry, or even fit in it as a music fan. I do remember pledges to diversify that seemed to come from everyone in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. But if the industry won't hold these promises to support BIPOC, then they'll find communities of their own. The partnership between Backline and the Black Mental Health Alliance is just one example of that, especially through the support groups and the open forums on mental health that they host. When BIPOC can talk about shared experiences, and feel seen by their peers for the first time, that's how we'll get to real change and community healing.