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# Hidden Figures: NASA's Pioneering Women

#### By Nsenga K. Burton, PhD

Unless you've been hiding under a rock, you know that the already-celebrated film Hidden Figures is coming to a theater near you as it reaches its nationwide release Friday. Based on a book by the same name, Hidden Figures is a historical drama set in 1960s Hampton, Virginia, that chronicles the personal and professional lives of three African-American female mathematicians who defied the odds and overcame many societal obstacles to help NASA put an astronaut into orbit around the Earth.

Deemed an important film by critics and audiences because it brings the largely untold story of three dynamic black female scientists to the big screen, Hidden Figures is also well done from a stylistic and narrative perspective. By keeping the stories of the black female leads primary, the film sidesteps the Hollywood trope of privileging the white character's story in order to satisfy white audiences. Although the white characters are important, they do not overshadow or diminish the importance of the stories of Katherine Johnson (played by Taraji P. Henson), Mary Jackson (Janelle Monáe), and Dorothy Vaughan (Octavia Spencer).

Hidden Figures has also received a major advertising push from 20th Century Fox, which is unusual in Hollywood for a film with three black female leads. Historically black organizations have made viewing the film a social and civic occasion, with sororities, fraternities, and the like sponsoring screenings in cities across the nation. Fox has also sponsored screenings for high school students in New York City and Los Angeles. It's clear that there's a movement to make Hidden Figures more than a film, but does it deliver?

In a nutshell, yes. Directed by Theodore Melfi, who also co-wrote the screenplay, Hidden Figures documents the pervasiveness of institutional racism and how the mistreatment of targeted groups becomes normalized. The irony of an organization like NASA, which is committed to pushing boundaries and literally exploring the universe, limiting the career trajectories of women in general and black women in this story is preposterous.

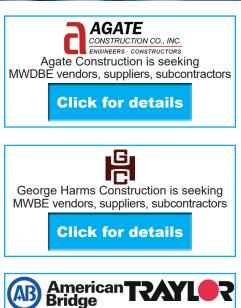


Melfi does a solid job of showing the absurdity of Jim Crow laws through the characters, including Al Harrison (played by Kevin Costner), Paul Stafford (Jim Parsons), and Vivian Mitchell (Kirsten Dunst). Harrison is the department head who is too

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IS SOLICITING COST PROPOSALS FROM NEW YORK STATE CERTIFIED MWBE SUBCONTRACTORS/VENDORS North River WWTP Cogeneration and Electrification Project NYC Department of Environmental Protection Contract No. NR-38 Bid Date: February 8, 2017

#### **Description of project:**

The contract includes the installation of a cogeneration system of five cogenerating engines, heat recovery, exhaust treatment, noise reduction, and other auxiliary equipment that will supply combined heat and power to the WWTP. The city has preselected the equipment that will constitute the cogeneration system to be installed under this contract (the "pre-selected equipment") and has entered into a supply and services contract with the designated supplier of such equipment. The contractor will be required upon notice to proceed to enter into a contract with the designated supplier for the purchase and performance of the pre-selected equipment. The contract also includes removal of (5) five main sewage pump combustion engines and drive systems, removal of (5) five multi-stage process air blowers, installation of (5) five three-megawatt generators, installation of new heat recovery and dissipation systems and associated equipment required for the cogeneration system, installation of (1) one new main sewage pump, piping and valves, and a complete pump power train (PPT) for each of the (6) six main sewage pumps. The PPT includes, at a minimum, electric motor, motor controller, shafting, speed reducers, and intermediate line shafting.

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KANSKA USA CIVIL IS SOLICITING COST PROPOSALS FROM NEW YORK STATE CERTIFIED MWBE SUBCONTRACTORS/VENDORS Enhanced Station Initiative Program Package 2 Project MTA New York City Transit Contract No. A-36622B Bid Date: January 24, 2017

#### **Description of project:**

The work focuses on improving the customer experience, the continued responsibility of providing a state of good repair in stations, and the development of underlying station aesthetics through construction and design innovation. The work will include make the stations cleaner, brighter, and easier to navigate, by utilizing means such as improved lighting and more intuitive way-finding and will provide amenities such as Wi-Fi and cellular connectivity. This will involve architectural finishes (including painting and signage), structural repairs and modifications, electrical (including lighting, communication, and technology) and mechanical work. The contractor shall undertake the work so as to achieve all the following overall goals:

- A. Enhance the customer experience at each station
- B. Make the stations cleaner, brighter, and easier to navigate C. Improve the aesthetics of the stations
- D. Facilitate increased ridership on the New York City Transit System
- E. Bring the stations to a state of good repair
- F. Expedite the delivery of the work

#### Subcontracting opportunities include, but are not limited to:

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If you are interested in bidding on this project, please contact Skanska's Outreach Coordinator: Julia.Omanoff@skanska.com



IS SOLICITING BIDS FROM MWBE SUBCONTRACTORS AND SUPPLIERS CERTIFIED WITH THE PORT AUTHORITY OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY Replacement of Suspender Ropes and Rehabilitation of the Main Cable George Washington Bridge between New York and New Jersey PANYNJ Contract No: GWB-244.048 Bid Date: January 12, 2017

Subcontracting opportunities include but are not limited to Painting, Lead Abatement, Containment and Disposal, Electrical—Temporary and Permanent Utilities, Luminaires, Necklace Lighting, Mechanical Piping-Dehumidification Lines and Equipment, Hazardous and Contaminated Material Haul and Disposal, Clearing, Grubbing, Soil and Rock Excavation, Rebar-Furnish and Installation, Fence-Furnish and Installation, Architectural Finishes-Pedestrian Walkway Tiling, Railing, Signage, SS Mesh etcetera, CMU Wall—Furnish and Installation, Armored + Armorless Joints—Furnish and Installation, Line Striping, Engineering, Detailing, Concrete Sawcutting-Pedestrian Sidewalk, Bolt + Welding Inspection, Structural Steel, Precast Concrete, Dehumidification Cable Wrapping, Dehumidification Cable Sleeves, Dehumidification Equipment, Rebar, Concrete, Formwork, Bridge / Roadway Joints, MPT Materials, Wire Splicing Materials, Main Cable Wire Wrapping Materials, Suspender Rope Materials, Bearings-Elastomeric and Multi-Rotational, Backfill Materials, Sidewalk Pedestrian Railing. Please see contract documents for further opportunities.

Interested firms please contact John Papagiannakis at Skanska Koch Inc., john.papagiannakis@skanska.com



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