

Dear Mrs. Katherine Johnson,

I want to start off this letter by stating how inspired I am by you. Growing up as a young African American girl in America, I've greatly looked up to you. I just saw the amazing movie about you and two other inspiring African American female role models, *Hidden Figures*. I loved the movie, but I still have lots of questions for you. I would really like to know how it felt to be degraded and overlooked for being a black woman. Even though you were the smartest one there, you were not given the same opportunity to succeed like the other whites at NASA. I thought that was ridiculous. You even had to face discrimination at work! One day at work, you poured coffee from the coffee pot everyone else was drinking from into a mug. The next day, there was a "Colored" coffee pot next to the normal one... and it was empty. That completely showed that the whites did not think you were worthy of even drinking coffee from the same pot as them. They didn't care enough to fill it up. If I were in your shoes, I would have felt defeated. But you were so brave. I would also like to know how it felt when you had to run for 45 minutes just to reach a "colored" bathroom, because they did not have any bathrooms for you to use near your work area. That meant that you had to miss work time. That must have been an awful experience for you, but you were brave.

What was your motivation to stay at NASA even though it was hard for you? Maybe it was the fact that you had a family of beautiful children and a loving husband at home. Maybe it was your urge to stand out in the crowd and be a role model to the black community. You may have wanted to prove others wrong about racial and gender assumptions. Either way, you achieved your goal and helped John Glenn to take off in a rocket ship to become the first man to orbit the earth in 1962! Even John Glenn himself requested for you to double-check that the landing position for the ship was accurate. That proves that you were incredibly smart. I'll bet lots of

people look up to you, because if you have that spark of imagination and determination that inspires others. You played such a huge role in such a huge moment for America, yet people are just starting to give you credit. I guess that's why they called your book and movie *Hidden Figures*, because you were such a big help to NASA but no one really knew who you were until now. That's one of the reasons why I honor you so much. You changed the world, yet no one really knew. This made you different from other well-known African Americans I honor, like MLK, Rosa Parks, and Harriet Tubman. I wonder why you were kept secret for so long! What was holding people back from giving you credit and honoring you? Maybe they did not believe that a black woman should have been honored or appreciated for anything successful they had done. I know for sure that a white woman would be recognized immediately for something that big of deal like helping the first man ever to orbit the earth land safely. You were even underestimated because of your gender! You had to work a little bit harder just to get into a "male only" conference room. Back in that time, I guess that girls were looked at as lower-class citizens. But you weren't afraid to stand up for yourself after they said you could not go into the conference room. You were brave, and you were finally let inside. In fact, you were the change you wanted to see yourself, because after that NASA had integrated conference rooms and bathrooms. You changed the world.

"I felt most proud of the success of the Apollo mission. They were going to the moon and I computed the path to get there."

-Katherine Johnson

I want to be like you one day, to be humble yet change the world. I want to shoot for the stars and go down in history, just like you.

Your biggest fan,

Leah