

My name is Tiffany Brown. I'm an advocate for equity, diversity and inclusion in art and architecture. One of my earliest childhood memories is learning how well my mom and dad could draw. You know, they were two of the greatest artists that I can think of. My dad drew a flipbook in a notebook with a man running, jumping and doing a flip... and from that point on, I wanted to do that. I wanted to become a great artist... I wanted to draw all things. I wanted to use the creative side of my brain for writing, for art, for music... all of these things.

Today, I work in architectural design and construction management. And I realized throughout my career that there are very few people who look like me... and last year, the 400th African American woman became licensed. Architecture has been my inspiration, it's been a vehicle to a lot of things that connected life for me. And one of those vehicles took me to Richmond, Virginia, who next year will be honoring the 400th year that slaves arrived to the United States. So I decided after that trip to send my DNA to be tested and learnt that I have ancestors there. And that's the reason why I felt a connection at that site, which was actually a slave burial ground and slave jail. So the number 400 kept presenting itself to me at different stages throughout the summer last year and after the 400 African American woman became licensed, I decided to create a program called *400 Forward*, where I will seek out the next 400 group of women with an underlying focus on African American girls for the profession of architecture.

Growing up and I grew up in a neighborhood where both my mother and my father grew up, I remember being referred to as 'disadvantaged youth'. I didn't like the way that that made me feel, it made me feel like they thought there was a limit to what I could do. There was a limit to opportunities that were out there for me. So today, when I go and speak to kids in those inner city schools, like the ones where I grew up, I always make sure that I

don't refer to them as that. I use encouraging terms and remind them of a quote that I learned from an actress named Yara Shahidi that says, "You are the anomaly if you succeed and the expectation if you fail", I want to make sure that girls know that the obstacles that they face in life, they can be used to their advantage. The ones that I faced in my life, I learned that they are meant to be tools for me to teach others. And that's what took me to *400 forward*.