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Retelling the educational pathways of Black women physicists: Stories of experiencing and overcoming obstacles in life¹

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This is an empirical study on the underrepresentation of people of color in scientific careers. Grounded in critical race theory, the paper examines the lived experiences of six Black women physicists and addresses obstacles faced in their career paths and strategies used to overcome these obstacles. Data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews and coded for emergent themes. The findings reveal that college recruitment and funding were fundamental for these women to choose physics over other STEM fields. In addition, Black women experience unique challenges of socialization in STEM, particularly by exclusion of study groups. We suggest physics departments provide a more inclusive environment to support Black women in science.

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