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New TV series (finally) shows off the achievements of women of color at startups

A new reality show wants to re-educate you on what an entrepreneur looks like.

Quit Your Day Job, which premiered Wednesday night on Oxygen, is looking to be a clear counterpoint to pop culture's perception that entrepreneurs can only be young guys in hoodies by shifting the focus to women, particularly women of color.

The show tapped Lauren Maillian, Randi Zuckerberg, Sarah Prevette, and lone male Ido Leffler to meet, mentor, and consider investing in companies led by ladies.

"I've heard so many entrepreneurs of color tell me that they don't feel like the investor is listening until the pitch is over and the investor realizes they've worked at all the right companies, went to all the right schools, and have a kickass advisory board," Maillian, an entrepreneur and the founder of Gen Y Capital, which funds startups with

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founders under 35, tells *Mashable*. "It's like, "Can you start the presentation over? I'm listening now."

"The biggest misconception about entrepreneurs of color is that they aren't qualified, or that they haven't done their homework," Maillian says. "And there absolutely are — but they feel that they're being overlooked or that they aren't being given the same opportunities."

Randi Zuckerberg, the CEO of Zuckerberg Media and the former marketing director at Facebook, told *Mashable* that Oxygen piqued her interest with its pitch that the show would be all about giving female entrepreneurs of color some space to shine.

"Oxygen is a television network for multicultural young women, and they said we really want to change the face of what an entrepreneur looks like in America," she says. "We want women across the country to feel like they can see investors and entrepreneurs that look like them."

Zuckerberg, who's also a member of the board of directors for the Professional Diversity Network (and yes, that other Zuckerberg is her brother), has been prioritizing adding more startups founded by women — especially women of color — to her investment portfolio.

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Women still paid less than men

The show begins airing at a time when some are actively trying to change the largely homogenous face of the startup world in Silicon Valley.

Just last week, the Warren Buffett-funded NoVo Foundation said it would funnel \$90 million of investments in companies led by women of color.

It will take more than that. Women of color face well-documented difficulties in attempting to make it big as entrepreneurs.

A report released in February by #ProjectDiane looked at over 60,000 startups and found only 88 led by black women.

That report also found that black women only receive about .2% of all venture capital funding.

A quick glance at Zuckerberg's angel investments shows that four out of eight of the companies she has invested in have a female founder.

"There are a lot of entrepreneur shows on television, and I think most of them reinforce the stereotypes of who entrepreneurs are rather than changing that on its head," Zuckerberg says.

Quit Your Day Job's most obvious reference point is ABC's *Shark Tank*, in which entrepreneurs get a few minutes to make their best elevator pitch to angels like Mark Cuban, Robert Herjavec, Kevin O'Leary, and Barbara Corcoran.

And on *Shark Tank*, data shows that women get less money than their male counterparts, reflecting a reality of the Silicon Valley venture capital community.

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Shark Tank has made attempts to diversify its entrepreneur pool. In 2013, One Three Media — the production behind the entrepreneur reality show — tapped entrepreneur Rodney Sampson to serve as its executive-in-charge of diversity and inclusion, and one of his first tasks was to find more women and minorities to compete on the show.

There have been other attempts to change how entrepreneurs are represented in the media. In October 2015, the #WOC in Tech Chat group made stock photos of women in color free to use under creative commons.

But Zuckerberg and Maillian would certainly agree there's more work to do in changing who society accepts as an acceptable entrepreneur — and changing the culture in Silicon Valley, where women of color have not been warmly embraced.

In the meantime, Maillian has some advice for the entrepreneur of color walking into a VC pitch — whether it's on the brightly colored set of *Quit Your Day Job* or a stuffy conference room in the depths of Silicon Valley.

She says that you should do two things up front: acknowledge your credentials and the elephant in the room, which is oftentimes race.

"Acknowledge the elephant in the room in an attempt to command their respect and attention, and go on with your bad self."

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