



DRIVING FOR INCLUSION

The important legacy of Clearview Golf Club and its visionary founder

BY DEE ROBINSON

IKE ALL GOLFERS, I'D LOVE TO get the opportunity to play some of the sport's best-known courses. But the one I am most looking forward to stepping out onto one day hasn't been the scene of some famous rounds.

I want to tee off at Clearview Golf Club (www.clearviewgolfclub.com) in Canton, Ohio, to pay tribute to the courage and vision of the late Bill Powell, and his daughter, Renee. Powell founded it as the first African American-owned golf course in 1948—open to anyone and everyone—after being denied permission to play at white clubs.

Today, Clearview is described as “a triumph of perseverance over discrimination,” and run by Renee. She inherited a love for the game from her father, taking her first swings at just three years of age, and went on to become only the second Black female player on the PGA circuit.

Tiger Woods' subsequent phenomenal career successes may have inspired more people of color to pursue golf as an activity, but a huge imbalance still exists. I've been encouraged by the PGA's commitment to encouraging diversity and inclusion, but there is yet much work to be done: currently around only 130 of its 25,000 members are African American. And only eight of them are women! Of around 360 Hispanic/Latino members, 22 are women.

Why does this matter so much? Because golf is so much more than just a sport—though, significantly, it is one that people can enjoy for an extended period in their lives, with all the attendant health benefits that brings. But it's not just about improving our health, important as that is.

The golf course is a safe place for young people to exercise and develop themselves. As much a mental game as it is a physical one, golf encourages discipline, dedication and determination—all the kind of qualities that are beneficial in making the most of yourself. And it is a significant place to build relationships and do business; it prepares people for corporate America in a way no other sport can.

Golf is also a great metaphor for life. Every hole is an opportunity to start over, to face your fears and persist, to improve your skills and to push through. As such, I believe it is important that Black and brown youth see more people that look like them participating in the sport—playing, on the business side (it's an \$80 billion industry) and in senior roles—and are provided with opportunities to make that possible.

With all this in mind, as the chair of the PGA's charitable foundation, I am keen to look at ways we may be able to support Renee as she continues the legacy of her father, who passed away in 2010. In addition to grounds improvements, Clearview needs a history center to tell its pioneering story for visitors, while she continues to provide opportunities to create a more inclusive game.

Both Renee and her father have displayed the kind of quiet courage that, when they saw something wrong, they determined to find a way to make a difference, and drive for more inclusion in golf. ♡

Dee Robinson is founder and CEO of Robinson Hill, a concessions management firm specializing in retail and restaurants at airports and other nontraditional venues, and sits on several corporate boards. An author and speaker, she is a trustee of PGA Reach, the PGA's charitable foundation, and co-chair of PGA Works.