

Trap Fitness is making space for Denver's young black professionals to pursue physical and mental health

“Get fit and get lit.”



Trap Fitness members flex their abs as they hold a pose during their workout. (Courtesy of Trap Fitness)

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Denver's changing rapidly, and some of those changes have made it difficult for young black professionals to find spaces catered to them. Trap Fitness is here to make that easier.

Cameron Douglas, a founder of Trap Fitness, started the organization in 2016 with the intention of giving him and his friends an opportunity to meet up and work on their fitness. Their mantra — “Get fit and get lit” — pretty much summed up their plans, and that's what they began to do as they entered Denver's brunch-and-fitness culture with a new take. One that was specifically catered to their needs.

“Culture is something that you share,” Douglas said. “We can have this feed into what we're doing — high energy and positivity, mind-body and soul all at once.”

What Douglas unwittingly tapped into was a void in cultural spaces that specifically catered to young black professionals. Lesley Pace, “The Ebony Yogini” and leader of trap yoga, said she became more aware of that missing element in Denver once she returned to the city after studying at Howard University. For her, that missing energy was a motivating factor in her decision to link up with Trap Fitness. She feels that adding those culturally responsive spaces is increasingly necessary as the city continues to grow.

“Once I graduated, I wanted to bring that back into the space. When it grows, I wanted the young black professional community to grow with it,” she said. “With all the new people coming in, I wanted them to be able to find those people and access those things. It was a task of mine to create those spaces.”

Along with the fitness classes, yoga classes and meet up events, Trap Fitness provides meal plans and clothing apparel. Their events usually fall on Saturdays, but with such a plethora of events, the easiest way to keep up with them and participate with the Trap movement is to follow them on social media. They often host events at the Urban Sanctuary in Five Points, but you can also catch them getting fit and lit at Red Rocks and around downtown Denver. Just make sure you check out the event beforehand so you don't dress for brunch and end up doing single leg jumps all the way up the Red Rocks stairs.

Agazi Abay, a 28-year-old transplant from California, said an option like Trap Fitness would have been well received several years ago when he arrived. He has observed that most of the founders and people involved are transplants as well, and having this space helps facilitate their arrival into Denver and more specifically what he now calls “black Denver,” mimicking other cultural spaces formed for subcultures like #blacktwitter for example.

“We're coming from different walks of life but being in similar positions as young black professionals in this growing city,” Abay said. “... It's definitely nice to have a place that's centered around us. I say that because the majority of spaces we're in aren't catered to us, they're catered to others, and we're just allowed in them.”



Trap Fitness members take a group picture after a workout. (Courtesy of Trap Fitness)
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What's also important for Trap Fitness is it presents an opportunity for black millennials to achieve the physical and mental balance Pace said so many in her age group are looking for. She noted how her peers admonished classic American sentiments like working 70-hour weeks and instead appreciated things like travel, developing relationships and self-care.

In her experience in the world of yoga, the inviting space has allowed her to introduce her practice to a new and often reluctant audience: black men.

"I find it challenging to get men into my classes. So when they're bringing all their homeboys with them and they're doing yoga after, that made me feel really good," she said. "Trap yoga, doing meditation, doing yoga at home, doing yoga with other men, I think that's a really awesome thing in defeating the lack of attention placed on mental health. Making sure you're taking care and finding that peace and rest for your life."

They also believe Trap Fitness will give them an opportunity to thwart some of the negative health-related tropes that have plagued black Americans over time.

"I mean, it's the kind of a wave. People are all of a sudden going plant-based, talking about veganism, how it's better for your body. It's a wave of healthy diet and nutrition in our communities," Abay said.

Perhaps most importantly, the Trap Fitness team hopes these bonds can carry over outside of the gym.

“It allows for people to grow roots,” Pace said. “There’s definitely potential there for more social interaction beyond the activities themselves.”

With its success in the Denver area, Trap Fitness has plans to branch out to other cities and will start with the ones the founders came from. Douglass wants to bring this conscious Trap energy to his home city, Chicago, as soon as he can. They already have satellite entities in Fayetteville, N.C., Atlanta and Delaware.

To keep tabs on classes and meet-ups, find Trap Fitness on Twitter (<https://twitter.com/trapfitnessco?lang=en>), Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/trapfitnessco/>) and Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/trapfitnessco/>).



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