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THIRD ISSUE | EDITION 3 | JULY - SEPT

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BlackVybez Magazine™ strives to empower, educate, and provide a platform that highlights the active voice of the Black community. Our desire is to showcase Black empowerment and create our narrative by sharing our triumphant experiences. We are here to empower, inform and entertain.

OUR MISSION is to create our own narrative and change how Blacks are perceived by society. Our hope is to bring Unity amongst Blacks in our communities; Freedom to express our concerns and opinions without filter; and Pride, for us to celebrate the advancement and uprising of our culture on a platform created for us.

DEAR GOD we come to you meek and humble. We honor you and adore you, but most of all we are thankful for your favor which allows us to tap into our purpose. We ask you to continue to guide us and protect our spirits as we attempt to make history with the gifts you've given us. We know that the journey will have tough trials that will magnify your work and lead to the greatest testimony.

Let BlackVybez manifest into greatness. We thank you in advance.
AMEN!





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BLACKVYBEZ MAGAZINE

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BlackVybez Magazine was founded in 2020 by Jennifer Wilford and Tremaine Humphrey Sr., birthed in 2021. Their dream was to create a publication where our views as African Americans can be expressed without fear and to discuss topics openly and honestly, that are important to the Black community. The idea became more than just a dream, it became a reality and BlackVybez was created.

BlackVybez Magazine™ strives to empower, educate, and provide a platform that highlights the voice of the Black community. Our mission is to showcase Black empowerment and create our narrative by sharing our triumphant experiences. We will highlight Financial Literacy, Black Leadership, and Spirituality and how those things impacts our community.

We will also focus on:

- Entertainment
- Personal Development
 - Business
 - Career Growth
 - Wellness
- Personal Finance
 - Style
- Social Awareness
- Home and Gardening
- Life, Love, and Relationships
 - LGBTQIA

BlackVybez Magazine™ will be a quarterly magazine that will be published digitally and in print. Our on-line platform will be updated monthly with fresh content. Our target audience is the African-American community. Our goal is to change how we are perceived by society, but first starting with how we see ourselves..

We are here to
Empower, Inform and Entertain.

#CatchTheVybe #BlackVybez

BLACKVYBEZ™

M A G A Z I N E

CREED

I WE STAND FOR EVERYTHING THAT WE SUPPORT AND YET CHALLENGE THAT STANCE TO PRODUCE COMPLETE EXCELLENCE.

II THE FOUNDATION OF THIS COMPANY IS LOVE FOR YOURSELF AND IN TURN STRENGTHENING THAT LOVE BY LOVING EACH OTHER TO GENERATE A PASSION TO ILLUMINATE THOSE THAT WE SHOWCASE.

III THESE ASSURED ELEMENTS FEED THE COMPANY'S INTEGRITY DAILY TO GUARANTEE THE PURITY OF ITS INTERNAL GROWTH. SO WHEN WE SAY IT, WE BELIEVE IT, WE FEEL IT AND WE MEAN IT.

IV THIS CONTINUED EFFORT OF TEAMWORK GIVES US THE REFINED LEADERSHIP WE NEED FOR OUR COMMUNITIES. SO KNOW THAT ALL OF OUR DECISIONS ARE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF PURITY.

WRITTEN BY: DDRUNKENPOET

WE WELCOME YOU TO THE VYBEZ OF REASON

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YOLONDA ROSS

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WHAT TROUBLE TAUGHT ME!

by Dr. Oscar T. Moses

Trouble is a master teacher! There are many lessons that trouble can teach you. Trouble can teach you what you can't learn on campuses of academia such as Harvard or Yale. There are some things you learn from the school of hard knocks.

This message is for the person who seems to be hit with trouble on every side. It's for the sick person, the broke person or for the couple whose marriage is on the rocks. This message is for the person that tells the wrong people about their troubles. The message is tailored to teach that trouble is a teacher. David wrote this psalm based upon trouble in his life. His message to us is, be a good student of trouble because trouble is the kind of teacher that does not mind giving repeat lessons.

This psalm is taken from a period in David's life when he was knee deep in trouble. He was on the run from King Saul. His life was at stake. During the time David ran from Saul he spent a lot of time hiding out in caves. This psalm was written from David's experience either in the cave of Adullam or the cave of En Gedi.

Jealousy, envy, and rage drove Saul to hate David and to seek out his life. David found himself in a cave crying and complaining and telling God all about his trouble. David learned some valuable lessons during his times of trouble. The first lesson he learned was:

1. TROUBLE TAUGHT DAVID ABOUT GOD:

David cried unto the Lord and complained about his trouble, he had reached the boiling point and was overwhelmed. Yet he realized that God knew about it. David said in verse 3 that his spirit was overwhelmed but the Lord knew his path. That may seem insignificant to some but when trouble comes your way the first somebody you should want to be informed is God. David said the Lord knew His path. Therefore, he trusted God to show him the way through His troubles. God knows where the traps are. God knows where the enemies are hiding. God will also navigate him through troubled waters. Trouble taught David that God knows the path you are traveling and if He knows the path, He will lead you through.

2. TROUBLE TAUGHT DAVID ABOUT HIS ENEMIES:

David also said in verse 3 that his enemies privily laid a trap for him. The word that stands out is privily. The secret traps that enemies set can be vicious. The private conversations that enemies have to plot and plan one's demise can be treacherous. Here lies the tension in the text. This was David's path in life. He had to walk this way. He had to encounter enemies that would persistently attempt to trap him. Trouble taught David that life brings with it enemies that are strategically stationed by Satan to create trouble in your life.

3. TROUBLE TAUGHT DAVID ABOUT HIS FRIENDS:

Trouble has a way of making friends disappear. Listen to David's words in verse 5. I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul. David's friends denied him. King Saul was such a powerful tyrant that no one wanted to be associated with David. That's people! Some are with you when you're up and doing well but when you're down and out they will not return your text, calls or emails. Trouble taught David that friends will let you down.

4. TROUBLE TAUGHT DAVID ABOUT HIMSELF:

He's crying in verse 1 and in verse 5 he is still crying. He is at a low point in his life and his enemies are picking up speed. David learned three things about himself:

Trouble taught David that he trusted God to make a way. This is repeated behavior for David. This is not the first time he has been in trouble. David trusted God when trouble surfaced.

Trouble taught David that he was not as strong as he thought he was. He learned that some of his enemies were stronger than him. There are some battles that were not meant for you to fight. You must turn them over to the Lord.

Trouble taught David about premeditated praise. David asked the Lord to bring him out of this prison of trouble so that he may praise His name. He had a made-up mind to praise God even though he was going through a difficult time. He literally says I want to praise you in public around the people of

God. Therefore, he says the righteous shall compass around me and watch you bless me. Trouble taught David that trouble does not last always, and that praise should be intentional.

Perhaps you are experiencing a time of trouble in your life. As a matter of fact, you are in class with trouble now. This story of David is a reminder that trouble is a teacher and what troubles teach us depends on what trouble finds in us. When trouble comes your way there must be something within that propels you through the difficult times. I heard one adult say, It's not the size of the dog in the fight. It's the size of the dog in the dog. Lucie Campbell in a song said, It's something within.

What is that something within? Hope! Hope becomes the defiant resistance not to resign in your trouble and the divine inspiration to live another day. Hope says I know that troubles will not last always and that God will make a way somehow.

Still Learning!

Dr. Oscar T. Moses

PRE-QUALIFIED 101

by Deidre Spears

Photo by Tierra Mallorca on Unsplash

Client: Hi Deidre, I was reaching out to you because I want to buy a house.

Deidre: I can absolutely help you with that! Have you been pre-approved by a lender?

Client: (Silence) (Crickets)

Deidre: It's ok, I'm here to help you get started.

That is how approximately 80% of the conversations start when I'm first contacted by a client seeking my services. And it's ok! We don't know what we don't know. This is something I had to learn on my own, as I was never really taught about anything related to finances to be honest. Purchasing a home was never even on my radar growing up, so I never bothered to get educated about what the process entailed. It wasn't until I was looking to purchase my own home that I was forced to learn the ropes. And there are a lot of ropes! But with the right guidance from a REALTOR® such as myself, you can be on your way to the home of your dreams.

So, what's a pre-approval you ask? A pre-approval is you proving your creditworthiness prior to having a contract to purchase a home in place. This starts when a loan officer has looked at your finances (monthly income, debt, assets, and credit history) and determines how much you can afford as a monthly payment, how much money you're eligible to borrow, and your interest rate.

You will also hear the term pre-qualified thrown around as well. They are not the same. Pre-qualified means a lender has determined that you'll most likely be approved for a loan up to a certain amount based on your current financial situation. No information is verified with a pre-qualification, it is simply based on what you say without actually proving anything. If you're simply tinkering with the idea of a home purchase, then a pre-qualification may be the direction to go in. Some of the benefits have no effect on your credit score, it gives you an estimation of what you can afford, and there are normally no fees associated with it.

Just to reiterate, during a pre-approval you provide your pay stubs, bank statements, asset information, monthly financial responsibilities, and an actual credit report is pulled. This information is then verified by the lender; hence you are obtaining a pre-approval vs. a pre-qualification.

There are benefits to obtaining a pre-approval prior to home shopping. First off, you will rarely be able to obtain an experienced REALTORS® service without one. If you are unaware of what you can truly afford or know if you're even

in a financial position to purchase a home, it can be a waste of time for all involved parties to begin home shopping. Having a pre-approval also lets a seller know that you're serious about purchasing a home. A seller needs to be confident that you have the means to complete the transaction, so not having a pre-approval can be a huge detriment to even getting a purchase contract accepted.

Now for the other side of a pre-approval. It does not guarantee you getting a loan! I repeat there is no guarantee of a loan because you have a pre-approval. You must clear what's referred to as underwriting before your loan is 'clear to close'.

Underwriting is the process by which your lender verifies your income, assets, debt, and property details in order to issue a final approval on your loan application. This final approval sometimes happens only days prior to the closing of your home. They want to make sure your financial well being has not substantially changed just prior to closing. Essentially, they don't want the 'okie doke" pulled on them. People's financial circumstances can change from the time the home search begins until they find a home. Unfortunately, people lose jobs, lose spouses, or have some catastrophic event(s) take place that ultimately hinders their purchasing power. It is an underwriter's job to find out if an unfortunate situation occurs or even irresponsibility, so they dig 'all up in the business"! They're being nosey, and rightfully so. I mean they will potentially be loaning you hundreds of thousands of their company's dollars to execute your purchase.

So that is pre-approval in a nutshell. It is generally the very first step taken when you are serious about purchasing a home.

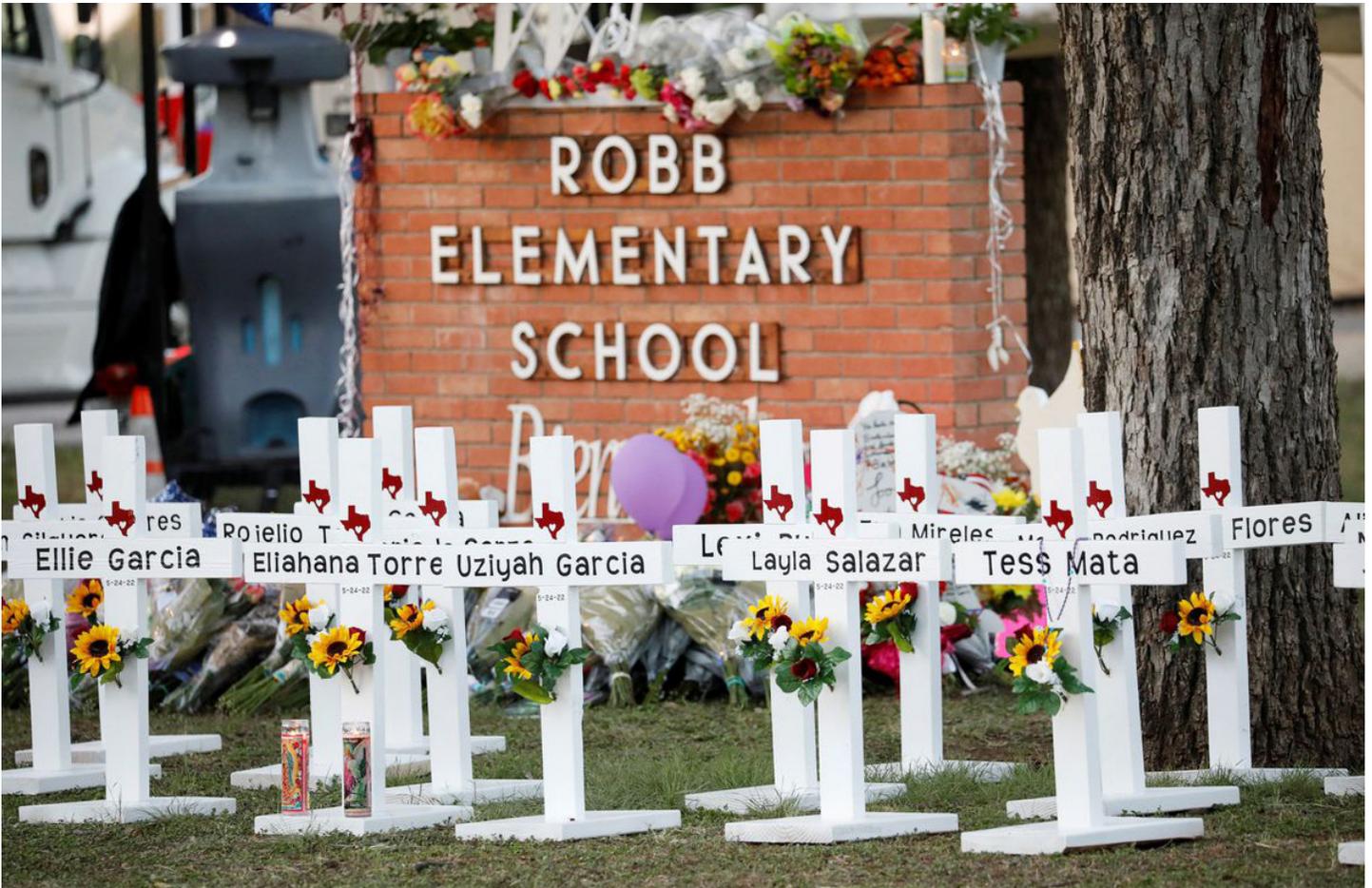
If you're in the Dallas Ft. Worth area, and need any help navigating the process, or just have questions please reach out to me at my email address or call me. I got you! Email me at dspears.blackvybez@gmail.com.

Uvalde

HORROR IN A SMALL TOWN

by Lisa Jones

Photo by uvalde.tx.gov



Uvalde Texas, a small town with a population of a little over 15,000 and predominantly Hispanic is located in the South Texas region approximately 50 miles east of the United States–Mexico border and sits at the crossroads of the nation’s two longest highways, U.S. 83 and U.S. 90. These highways go from Canada to Mexico and Florida to California. Honey from Uvalde hives was well known across the country and Uvalde was named the honey capital. A small town of citizens who dream big and take pride in their community.

For most, routines are part of the norm. Hit the snooze on the alarm just enough times so you aren't late starting the chores of the morning. Crawl out of bed, wake the kids, make breakfast, get them off to school and start your day to accomplish all the things you need to before it's time to pick up the kids from school or meet them at the bus stop. Hearing their voices, feeling the warmth of their hugs and the coolness of their wet kisses on your cheek is at times the only things you need to make everything right in the world.

How does one go about preparing themselves to pick up the pieces after such a horrible tragedy? Why does the same nightmare keep happening all over again and how do we begin to fix this problem?

Left with so many questions and no answers, the world was stunned and heartbroken at the events that would occur on the morning of May 24, 2022, at Ross Elementary School. Nineteen students ranging in ages 9 to 11 and two teachers who taught in the same fourth-grade adjoined classrooms were killed in a senseless and pure evil act of violence at the hands of 18-year-old Salvador Ramos. Why are assault weapons sold to the public? Why would an 18-year-old need a weapon of this magnitude? One has to wonder if these questions went through the mind of the person and store that sold the weapons to this crazed gunman.

As parents were notified of the shooting, they were instructed to wait at the city's civic center for news and updates on their loved ones. Some would choose to wait in local churches to pray that their child was safe. DNA samples were taken from parents as officials worked to match the victims with their parents. Sitting and waiting in turmoil, grief, and fear for hours to learn the fate of your child has to be an excruciating and unimaginable pain. As parents watched other parents reunite with their children and embrace and hold them tight, some waited only to hear the unthinkable news that their child was one of the 19 who had

lost their lives.

It has been reported that a teacher saw the gunman outside of the school shooting into classrooms. A 911 call was made and soon after the police arrived. Parents and bystanders pleaded with police to enter the school to stop the shooting. Local law enforcement is being heavily scrutinized as further reports have surfaced stating they waited for an hour or more before entering the school and did not act quick enough to stop the gunman. Was it fear, miscommunication, improper training, or all of the above? In the wake of chaos, several factors come into play with little time to react or make sound and sensible decisions. Time is of the essence and every second and minute that goes by without taking action is far too long. With parents continuing to search for answers to their unanswered questions as to what happened and why they didn't respond sooner, frustrations continue to grow, patience is running thin and the tears will not stop for a long time to come.

President Joe Biden has called for a ban on assault weapons and enforcement of 'red flag' laws which are defined as; a gun control law that permits police or family members to petition a state court to order the temporary removal of firearms from a person who may present a danger to others or themselves. It's not enough. Much stricter gun laws are necessary and it's time to act before this happens again. Is it too much to consider metal detectors in schools, state-of-the-art security features that allow cameras in every classroom, lock-down of doors from the outside, and bulletproof windows for all classrooms? The United States spends billions of dollars every year but is any of that money being used wisely? How many times must we go through the same old song and dance?!

In a statement from the Uvalde Consolidated Independent School District Superintendent Hal Harrell, no students or staff will return to the Robb Elementary campus next year, and

arrangements will be made to accommodate them at other schools until another location is determined. The children who survived this horrible attack are left with permanent scars that will take time to heal. Understandably, some children and educators will never return to school as the wounds are too deep. I pray for the survivors who faced evil on this day as I know their struggle and healing are just beginning and it will be a long road ahead. To 11-year-old Miah Cerillo who covered herself in a deceased classmate's blood and played dead, you were so courageous.

Instead of planning birthdays, summer vacations, and watching their children grow, 19 families will prepare to bury their beloved children. Instead of the families of Eve Mireles and Irma Garcia laughing and hearing about the tales of their students, they will prepare to bury their beloved educators. Sadly, Joe Garcia, husband to Irma Garcia died of a heart attack two days after the shooting. The family believes it was due to a broken heart. High school sweethearts, they were married for 24 years and planning to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary in one month. They were buried side by side and together entered into their eternal resting place.

To the angels who lost their lives, we pray in remembrance of you. Prayer for change and peace. Prayer for hope and a brighter day. Prayer for stricter gun laws and prayer for the world to stand up and take action. Prayers and condolences to the family's loved ones and the community of Uvalde who are all left with unbelievable grief. Prayers that they find hope and strength to make it through. Your lives will not be in vain and you will never be forgotten.



Alexandria "Lexi" Rubio, 10
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THE POWER OF DIVERSITY: Our Differences Matter

by Dr. Louis D. Wilford, DBA

Diversity brings about a competitive advantage in any setting. We must understand that our differences should not be viewed as barriers. What if we all were the same? What if everyone looked the same, dressed the same, spoke the same language, enjoyed the same music, had the same ideas, and comprehended the same? Your coworkers, business partners, and team members, what if they were all the same as you? If that were so, there would be no new ideas or inventions, nothing to inspire us or lead us to grow and innovate.

We are taught to find similarities in others and view them as strengths. Shying away from those who are not like us is a warranted norm. So why should we value differences? The most diverse places of business tend to be the most profitable (Gaskell, 2019). There is value in diversity. Diversity is absolutely fundamental to our survival, but it is also key to our thriving. Valuing differences and workplace diversity produces higher-performing teams, enhances productivity, and boosts morale (Thom-

as and Ely, 2019).

In this article, the goal is to express the importance of creating work environments that respect and include differences by recognizing the unique contributions of others without bias and engaging team members and or employees in conversation by asking questions about their triggers that contribute to personal bias. Being diverse and inclusive takes practical engagement and effort. One must learn to overcome the challenges of cultural differences, identify and maximize the benefits of diverse teams in the workplace, and how to identify and manage your personal biases.

How do we value differences? We can start by recognizing the value that different perspectives and cultures bring to an organization and not letting our personal biases limit our chances of building better relationships and teams in our businesses and on the job. We cannot dive deep into the significance of diversity without highlighting the critical need for equity and inclusion. Diversity, equity, and inclusion serve as

threefold concepts. Valuing all aspects of identity is diversity. Equity ensures fair treatment for all people and that efforts are being made to reject the barriers that block certain groups of people from realizing their full potential.

Why is it important to understand cultural differences? It is rather silly to think that our own culture is all we should know. Our culture influences how we see the world; it shapes our lens. Having a variety of viewpoints from people with different cultures and wide-ranging personal and professional experiences allows opportunities to see the world differently. Understand that valuing the differences of others will foster an environment where people can innovate and create new opportunities without fear of limitation because of the biases and cultural differences of others.

In the workplace, there are many types of cultural differences. These cultural differences can serve as barriers, which will decrease productivity. Generational, ethnic, educational, religious, and socioeconomic status are some of the cultural differences listed in most organizations and can significantly impact the workplace. Examples of some of the impacts of cultural differences are dress code, feedback, communication, teamwork, and lack of diversity. Cultural differences should not be discouraging, nor should they be a threat. Overcoming cultural differences and lack of diversity is advantageous and can increase profits. Practices that can aid in overcoming the challenges of cultural differences would be to seek understanding without judgment when there are different perspectives, enter conflicts with curiosity instead of conflict, celebrate differences, and work towards accommodating cultural differences by recognizing unconscious biases.

For as long as I can remember, I've witnessed people being mistreated or excluded because of their differences. The exclusion of others because of their cultural differences is limiting, making the world small. Cassandra Brené Brown, American research professor, lecturer, author, and podcast host, says, "only when diverse perspectives are included, respected, and valued can we start to get a full picture of the world." When leaders, coworkers, and teams can value differences, it benefits organizations with the wealth of knowledge and experience that diversity brings. Diverse ideas and varying perspectives can improve decision-making in the workplace.

Great leaders know how to identify and maximize profits and performance from having diverse teams. A diverse workforce inspires creativity, fosters trust between employees, improves team relationships, and resolves conflict. In addition, capitalizing on cultural differences in the workplace would benefit because it advocates cultural awareness, encourages empathy and compassion, boosts employee motivation, and improves employee engagement. Diversity is an advantage.

As we now know the critical need for diversity in all aspects of business and human survival, what can cause people to lack a diverse mindset? Does the word biases come to mind? Biases are absolute. The tendency to favor one thing over another is considered to be biased. I see biases as subliminal hindrances that can undermine impartial decision-making. Although some of our biases are natural, we must learn to overcome our biases, and we can do that by learning how to identify and manage our personal biases. We can start to identify and manage our biases by accepting that

we do have personal biases. Start bringing those biases to light, having an open mind, expanding our horizons and looking for new experiences, pause and reflect by studying ourselves and our reactions to differences, and having someone hold us accountable.

The key focus is for us to uncover our differences and allow the space to get to know others. Do not let our differences be a barrier, which we now know are growth opportunities. We must learn to be curious about one's differences and not judgemental. Mahatma Gandhi once said, "no culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive." To my people of color, do not mask who you are to mirror others. Your value is in your uniqueness. We learn from our trauma and triumph. Let us not dwell on how whiteness outweighs. In his book *Black Magic*, Chad Sanders explains how he could never play a white guy as well as a white guy. I interpreted his statement as we are not effective in operating according to the standards of others. We must embrace our differences and never put a lid on our capacity to grow. Our differences are the key ingredient to our success.

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GIVE ME A MOMENT

by Richard Wilford



LOVE, LIFE, AND RELATIONSHIPS

If the truth be told, everybody needs a moment. It was the picture I purposely snapped unbeknownst to her. The year was 2022, Palms Springs, the old Hard Rock Hotel, ninety degrees, in the middle of the desert and the pool. The water was three to four feet deep and she located a flotation device in the shape of a white rainbow dragon or unicorn. I don't remember. She had forced me earlier to consume a frozen concoction with strawberries. I yielded. As she mounted the white steed of buoyancy, I knew it was about to happen. It was the moment that I had planned and hoped for. I call it, "A Moment for a Moment!!"

Everybody needs a moment.

We had spent several days together hand in hand and face to face practically every waking moment because that's what lovers do. This moment was the one I was hoping for. The mistake most make in love is taking and sharing every moment together with no separation and or breathing room. Lack of separation robs a person of that which is most valuable, a Moment. Let me explain....

Photo by Richard Wilford

Every year when I would go and visit my parents in California, they would always offer advice on my first day of arriving. My mother would say, "Nobody knows you, so relax and enjoy yourself." It was a reminder to unwind, loosen up a bit and let my hair down. For a few days, I would not be forced to live under the scrutiny of the public eye, the critical and their opinion. What a relief.

My father's advice was somewhat different but was just as valuable. He would say, "Regardless of how many days you spend here on vacation, take at least one day, go down to the beach and spend a day all by yourself!!" Spend a day in solitude so you can think and reflect. What a mind blowing idea!! Every visit, I would take him up on the offer to take a quiet moment and sit on the beach alone for a day. What a blessing and benefit!!!!

Everybody needs a moment.....

A chance to think, reflect, gather your thoughts, pray, meditate, soak up the sun, talk or even better, listen for direction from GOD and thank Him. Everybody needs a moment. He who hoards someone's space and time is really afraid that if that person has an intelligent moment, they may come to the conclusion that something may need to be deleted, namely them. The point is, You have to give people space and moments.

It was this advice and opportunity that I sought to make available to my Queen. I knew she would love the ocean and palm trees, great food and drinks, sights and sounds, smells and activities, my hugs and kisses of course, but I really knew she would enjoy A MOMENT!!

Anytime she is quiet and I ask her why? She always replies, "I'm absorbing!!" Moments

are necessary so absorption can take place. We packed a million activities in a small amount of time but the greatest of these for me was to watch her have "her moment."

I am learning that the sweetest expression of LOVE at times can be affording Moments to and for your mate. She deserves it so I search for it. We started poolside and then went into the pool for some water fun. The sun was right, the music was bumping and the atmosphere was perfect. As she mounted her white rainbow Unicorn, we



floated together for a moment and then it happened. She floated away in the distance allowing the pool to relax her. I was watching for pool gators who enjoy gazing and looking for their next meal. There was a couple of ladies, a married couple, a cowboy and a weird chick that kept walking back and forth smiling. We were safe.

When I looked over at my Queen, her eyes were closed. She was floating in aquatic bliss. YES!!!!!! I didn't interrupt her and I was willing to stay and stay away as long as it took for her to have "her moment."

At home, she does a lot and is responsible for a lot. Heavy is the load she carries on a day to day basis. I want to lift and relieve her, not add and make life heavier for her. As long as she is with me, my aim is to be a blessing to her. I aim to be her moment maker.

A great lesson for some insecure person would be, "If you allow them to have an uninterrupted moment of reflection alone, they will lovingly invite you to be a part of their moment." What was once their private moment will become a moment to be shared."

After a while, she reached for the reins and led the white rainbow Dragon/Unicorn over to me in the middle of the pool in Palm Springs. She turned "her" moment into "our" memory. People will appreciate you more when you bring PEACE more than chaos.

I took a picture while she was in a solar trance, being serenaded by the pool music and the blue waves. Of course, I was rewarded generously for my efforts. The white rainbow unicorn and my Queen had a moment!! I assume all of this. I could be wrong. You would probably have to confirm this with her. Maybe riding the four

wheelers in the middle of the desert with snow capped mountains in the background was her moment. I'm not sure. Either way, I enjoyed watching my moment watching her have her moment!!!

How sweet!! Please remember, "Everybody needs a moment!!!"

#LoverOfInflatableUnicornsAndMYQUEEN
#LovableWIL
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HOME AND GARDENING





Photo supplied by: Lisa Jones

Coloring in the Lines

By Lisa Jones

You've found your perfect home. The location is ideal for many reasons. Close to family, a 20-minute commute to the office which isn't that bad considering the rise in gas prices, and you are close to shopping which is your favorite past-time! The price could have been better, but you truly got a great bargain so complaining will do you no good, and besides, no one's gonna listen anyway. The only thing left to do is start packing to prepare for your grand adventure.

If only it were that easy! In most stories there is often a 'but' somewhere just waiting to jump out and yell, surprise! If 'caption this' was an option it would most certainly be UGH!

Moving into a new home is one of the most exciting adventures. It's a blank canvas for new beginnings, crafty ideas, and a heaping pile of DIY projects that are brewing in your mind. As you begin to visualize your space, both inside and outside of your home, there will be many ideas. Some will allow you to add just the right amount of appeal, however, they might not be too friendly for the budget you have set aside. Other ideas look nice but you aren't quite sold on what you are seeing. Trust me, if you have to look at it more than 5 times to convince yourself this is the one, you won't be happy with the end result. So, back to the drawing board you go in hopes of finding the perfect solution that will not only be easy on the eyes, but allow you to remain inside the boundaries of your budget, and a project that is well within the possibilities of doing it yourself.

TIP: Google is your friend. Search for ideas on what you envision for your space and take notes. You are bound to find what you want and the moment you see it you will know without a shadow of a doubt. Use the idea as your backdrop of inspiration and make it come to life.

When most people see DIY they run for the hills. The fear in doing it yourself is that you will ruin the space or make a few mistakes, and quite honestly that is what makes the process so much fun and worth your while. At the end of the project, you get the honor of stepping back and saying, 'I did that!' You won't be able to stop telling everyone about the time you did that thing. One rule of thumb and something I live by before starting a project is getting plenty of rest! Don't start something that will take you a few hours to a few weeks to complete when you are exhausted both mentally and physically. Not only will it show in the finished result, but it will also feel like some type of weird self-inflicted punishment.

Now, let's get started...

INSIDE:

Stepping outside of the box can be very daring. Not all colors will work for some, but this is your space, so get crazy with it, keep it mellow and mild, or play it safe. No matter what you choose, it's your party and you can paint the walls red with a mix of purple and yellow if you like. Color is extremely fun, it adds emphasis to what you are feeling and it speaks without the need for an explanation. I like to call it the silent form of expression.

You've decided to paint over that room with the boring Grey walls that kinda feels like chalk to the touch. The new color is a toss-up between Sea Blue or Midnight Blue in a satin finish that will be smooth to the touch. Hearing the names causes an instant visual of both. I see a deep blue sea and the darkest midnight blue of the sky on a clear summer night. There is a moment when you doubt this color, especially once the first stroke of paint hits the wall because it looks absolutely nothing like what you have chosen! Panic sets in but you are no quitter, so by all means, keep going. As the paint dries and you cover more and more space, the true color will begin to show and your panic will begin to fade away.

TIP: If you are not a pro I would suggest taping off the areas you want to keep paint free and covering any space with drop cloths to prevent paint splatter from getting all over the place. If the weather permits, crack a window due to the fumes or keep a fan running nearby. Most importantly, invest in higher quality paint. You will find much more vibrant colors and pigmentation than lower-quality paint. Better pigmentation equals even better coverage.

As you look at your freshly painted walls that you did yourself it's time to gloat for a minute. When darker paint colors are chosen it can make a room feel much smaller and sometimes that is the goal. If the space will be used as a bedroom, spruce up your bedding with brighter colors that

will accompany the deep colors of the wall beautifully. Too much of the same color all over will cause the room to drown instead of pop. If instead, you want this space to be your relaxation room, add paintings of varying colors. Find furniture that will fit the space without causing a feeling of overcrowding. Last but not least, add a bit of warmth to your space with an area rug. I like to add this piece last after the paintings have been hung and the room has been accessorized. This allows you to pull in several colors from all over the room, creating an oasis of colors that will surely excite you every time you enter your amazing new space. Never be afraid to mix and match. Colors can surprise you if you allow them to be amazing. Take a small break in between projects to give yourself time to recover from the efforts of the last DIY adventure. Once you are ready to move to the next room you are mentally prepared for a brand-new makeover!

OUTSIDE:

Curb appeal can make a bold statement. It says my thumb is green and my yard looks amazing! If the yard makes you go ooh and ahh and take a few mental notes, the wheels in your brain begin to move in a constant motion, and just like that the DIY madness has begun. The color wheel and possibilities of the outside are just as beautiful as what the inside has to offer, if not more. The time and effort it takes to make your space amazing is back-breaking work. I will not tell you it is easy, however, I will tell you it is rewarding, the effort pays off in the long run and over the years the watering, pruning, and shaping are well worth it for years to come.

While the spaces inside vs. outside are both very similar there are vast differences between the two. The maintenance required for outdoor space will depend on your region, what will work best for your zone and what types of flowers and colors you are going for. If you live in a colder climate you have approximately 5 months of growing and blooming, which in turn requires roughly 7 months of work. This all depends on what Mother Nature has to say!

So playing in the dirt is what's next on your agenda. You have your green thumb ready and pray that you will be blessed with a successful growing season of vibrant and blooming flowers. As important as it is to choose your plants wisely based on the amount of sun vs. shade your space receives, it's equally important to simply get what you like. At times plants that are labeled part sun or part shade will do well with more or less of either.

TIP: If you plan to plant in the ground, I find it better to stick with perennials that will return year after year. Planting in the ground requires a bit more work to prepare, so you want to make the most of your space and time. Perennials will do very well in planters around your garden as well, however, if you find beautiful annuals that you must have, it's fun to try something different now and then. As your plants grow they will require more and more water. Too much and the plants will drown, too little and the plants will begin to wilt. Educate yourself on the type of plant you have chosen and water accordingly.

Nature is beautiful all by itself. From time to time we attempt to bring those elements closer to our view. If you love the flutter of butterflies or the amazement of hummingbirds, here is a beautiful mix of perennial and annual flowers which will create a happy space for the little creatures to give you a show from late spring to early summer.

- **Phlox**
- **Coneflower**
- **Lantana**
- **Marigold**
- **Black-Eyed Susan**

- **Salvia**
- **Zinnia**
- **Petunia**

Perhaps you stumbled upon a beautiful arrangement in the local nursery, but the price is a bit out of this world. Try creating your own flower garden in a planter. Choose smaller starter plants that are much less expensive. Start with a hanging vine that will eventually drape and cascade over the sides of your planter. A favorite I love to plant is Coleus, it has so many color varieties, and they accompany other plants quite nicely. Add a couple of leafy yet colorful Begonias and a few Petunias and you have created the same thing that would have cost you two times more. As the season continues your plants will grow and fill in the planter. People will wonder where you purchased such a beautiful arrangement of flowers.

By the end of your DIY projects, you have most likely vowed to never do something this crazy again. And then you rest and realize it's not that bad! Decorating and gardening remind me of coloring. It was fun, a great past-time and it required a certain level of focus and commitment. The end goal was to ensure you were coloring in the lines. It was neat and looked so pretty when it was all said and done.

As always, have fun with whatever projects you decide to conquer. Never let the fear of the unknown keep you from exploring the possibilities of your next DIY adventure. ~LJ

Photo by: Nate Watson on Unsplash

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT

DRAPER WYNSTON

A MAN OF COLOR THRIVING
THE STORY OF DRAPER WYNSTON

BY ASWANI J NABWENDE

> IBE
EVERYTHING

Photos by Vanguard Affinity Group

The film, art, and production industry has proven to be a challenging place for people of color. However, many actors of African descent have found their place and are soaring heights doing what they love – acting. We had a sit down with actor and film director Draper Wynston to learn how he has been able to navigate the dreaded waters and thrive while at it.

DRAPER WYNSTON: The 40-year-old African American actor not only found his purpose in the film industry but has been able to grow into other fields by paying attention to his interests.

In his published self-development book, *Letters to My Beginnings*, the renowned actor invites readers to learn from his personal experiences of trying hard enough to get to where he wants to be and reaping the benefits of his hard work.

“I realize there are so many people who know what they want to do but don’t know where to start” Wynston stated, “Although you may have other life destructions happening, if you work five to ten minutes each day, you will one day wake up and realize that you are actually living your dream” he proceeded to explain

Letters to My Beginning is set out to motivate people not to settle and to go after what they want in their lives. It encourages people to enjoy and leave the life that they desire. Wynston explains that he wanted people to know through his book that they are not facing the challenges of life and becoming

ing on their own.

The actor, who is currently working on his second book, admits that it was acting that opened doors for him to publish his first book.

“Before anything else, I am an actor. When I was younger I loved to entertain my family during gatherings and to impersonate other people” he told us. “acting is what has opened doors for me to do other things, like the book and the podcast which now has over 106 episodes”

Draper Wynston also owns a production company.

He recognizes the challenge that is there for black people to find their space in Hollywood and strives to be part of the solution.

Since he got serious about acting in 2018, Wynston has been cast in many films and shows. He explains that he is proud of shows like *The Black Panther* which created opportunities for black actors but also understands that such shows are only a handful.

“There are not so many opportunities for us as black people as there are for other people,” he explains, “We, therefore, have to create opportunities for ourselves” he proceeded to say.

Wynston appreciates producer Tyler Perry and the role that the famous producer has played in creating opportunities for black people in Atlanta.

He expresses his understanding of

the challenge in the industry but calls on other actors to bridge the gap by creating opportunities and being part of the solution rather than complaining about the problem.

“I keep auditioning, if I get the roles, great, but if I don’t then I continue to support initiatives that create for our own” the family man expressed.



Draper Wynston gets a lot of support from his wife and kids. He expresses his need to succeed so that he can keep his wife and his mother proud of him while proving to his children that hard work can get you anywhere.

'I want to continue making my wife proud, I want a better life for my family. He explains.

Apart from his family, Wynston has surrounded himself with people who motivate him and inspire him to reach for his dreams. He and Dave Hollister met at his first stage play. They have been friends since, often bouncing ideas off of each other.

He also met Terri J Vaughn at a stage play. Wynston admits that Terri gives golden advice about the industry and is quite humble in their interactions.

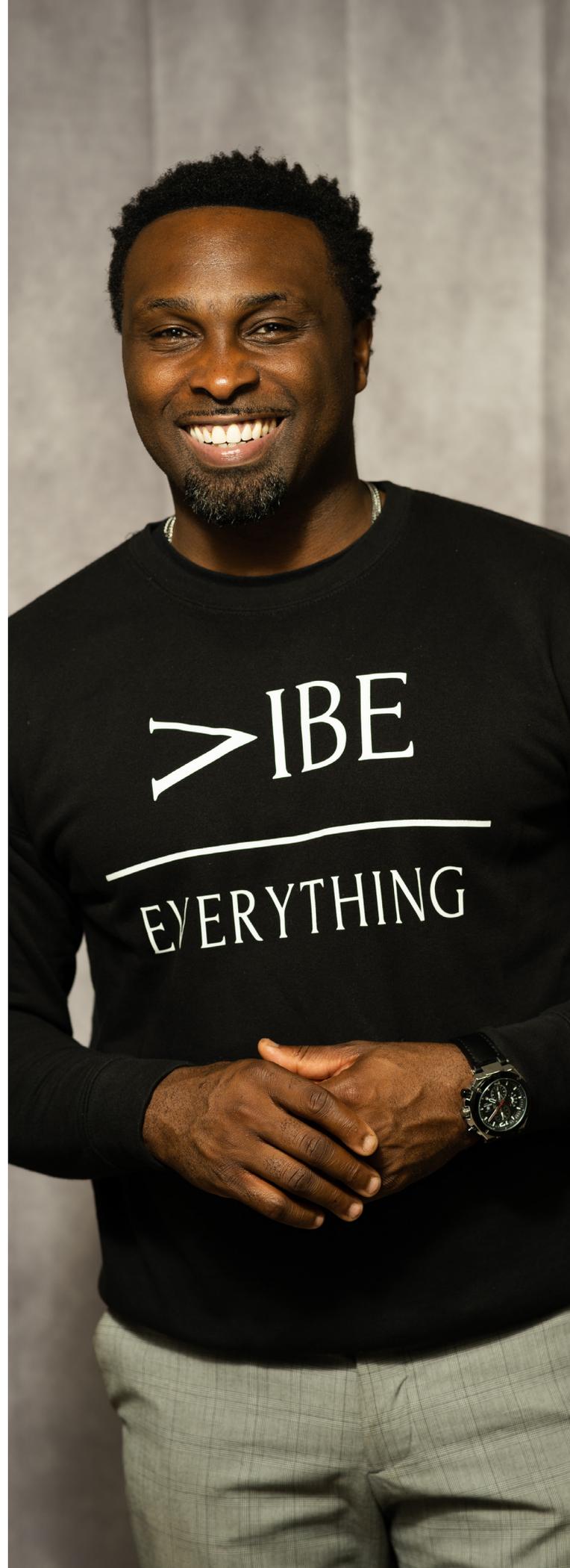
Wynston goes to Kirk Franklin for spiritual nourishment and advice. The two of them talk easily and he is a man that the actor can confide in. Snoop Robinson and Marvin Walker have also played a key role in the actor's life and continue to help him navigate the acting industry.

The actor continues to express the need for people of color to continue pushing for their dreams and help each other get to them.

He concluded the interview by expressing that although he has set the path to his destiny, he still knows that he has to put in more work and effort in setting up to achieve the goals that he has set.

Draper Wynston is a perfect example of a person following his dreams to prosper and who is willing to take others with him while at it.

• VIDEO INTERVIEW BY DAVID MOSES

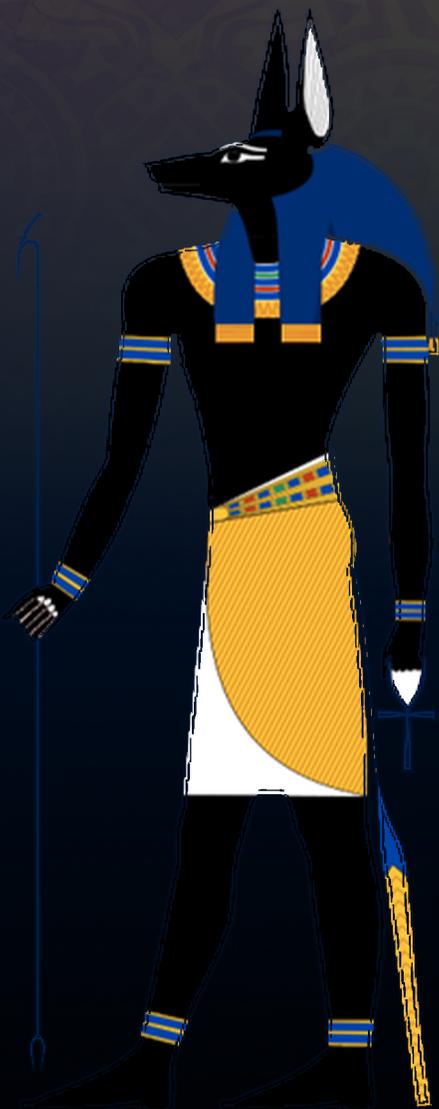




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HOUSE OF ANCESTORS





COVER STORY

Photographer: Mallory Tally

YOLONDA ROSS

QUEEN OF “THE CHI”

BVM: Tell us about your childhood, growing up in Omaha, Nebraska.

MS. ROSS: My childhood was quiet. Memorable. I was always making things and selling things. I was a little entrepreneur. I remember, in kindergarten, I sold taffy that I made, for one cent. During lunch, somebody stole my earnings. I was very pissed about that. But, when I really think back to what it was like growing up in Omaha, it makes me think of TV, like growing up in the ‘Wonder Years’, sort of. I played sports, soccer, track, and volleyball, and was in the marching band (playing the flute, tunable bass drum, and tri-toms). I had a three-wheel ATV and a minibike, and at times I thought I was Evil Knievel. We would dig holes and build unstable ramps from supplies that were laying around for new homes to be built. It was fun. Where we lived was a big open sky and green alfalfa, as far as you could see. We grew up outside of the city limits, which are now sprawling subdivisions.

BVM: Who was your biggest inspiration as a kid? Why?

MS. ROSS: My parents were my biggest inspiration. I saw them as solid, hard-working people that took care of me and my siblings and kept us from harm. They always planned and did for us, so that we would be able to have opportunities in our future that they maybe didn’t have. They made us understand the value of money and our value. They were parents, not friends.

BVM: What was the biggest challenge you faced once deciding that you wanted to pursue acting?

MS. ROSS: How do you make money? How do you pay your weekly, and monthly bills, when you have no guaranteed work, and it’s not up to you if you get hired or not? That’s a big life change when you’re coming from a world with regular pay, 401k, and 2 weeks of vacation, and days off.

BVM: What has been your most challenging role to date?

MS. ROSS: My most challenging role to date? I have two. Becoming ‘Treasure’ in ‘Stranger Inside’ was challenging, but more so enlightening, because it was many firsts for me. I was learning about the craft, my own creative abilities, and the business of acting and filmmaking. The second was ‘Woman Outside’, where I played an unhoused woman in downtown LA. Though this was short, it was very challenging. Being someone that people actively avoid looking at, or coming near, is very isolating, though you’re right there in the public’s eye. The biggest challenge was having complete thoughts in your head, but only portions of it come out of your mouth. It makes you think about what people are suffering, and what they’ve been through to get them to that point. A positive out of this, while we were outside, this woman and her husband saw me in character sitting on a fire hydrant. I saw them walk by, but then the woman came back over and gave me three dollars and change. It shocked me out of character. I let her and her husband know we were filming. It was nice to see

that there are still people in the world that take the time to give.

BVM: Have you ever had a role that you turned down because it may have compromised your beliefs?

MS. ROSS: Yes. Early on in my career, I think it was my third or fourth job, I got the script for ‘Antwone Fisher’. I told my agent I had to pass ‘cause I couldn’t molest this child on film. My agent asked me to take another look at it and stressed that this was going to be Denzel’s directorial debut, so it would be big. I took another look, and what I missed the other two times was the fact that all the abuse that was happening was off-screen. So, I did the audition. I walked off-camera during the taping as was written in the script. After we shot that film, Denzel told me that he hired me, because I had the courage to walk off-screen and not be seen. That was the biggest commercial job that I had booked, at that time. It felt good knowing I had the courage to be real and true to my character and it paid off.

BVM: Tell us about how you prepared to step into the role and become Jada, on The Chi.

MS. ROSS: Preparing for Jada was an easy one. Jada is my sister, my aunts, my friends, every black woman out there that’s holding it down in life, for her family and loved ones, and who knows her self-worth. It is a privilege to bring the US to life on screen. What I find to be my job, is really showing the small details, that maybe the average person doesn’t take the time to see, when they see a Jada.

BVM: When realizing that her character would suffer with Breast Cancer, how did that affect you? Was there ever a moment where the character's illness became too much to bear?

MS. ROSS: I knew going into this, I was going to learn, and that I would be shedding light on a subject matter that we don't always get to see ourselves having to deal with. While visiting the Tatisa C. Joiner Foundation and doing zoom talks with women who were talking about their experiences, it came to mind that I needed to be careful of internalizing and manifesting. When I become a character, I feel what that person is going through. I know in my own life, I have manifested things to happen, which can make the body react, and since cancer is something nobody wants to go through, I made sure I was keeping my head clear, and differentiating Jada and Yolonda while filming. These women though, are everything to me. They were the epitome of beauty and strength. Anybody that can face, and kick cancer's ass, when your lover fails you, your job fails you, and your body is fighting you... deserves all the blessings. That's why I wanted to photograph some of the women in Tatisa's group, who are called 'Butterflies', as they go through a metamorphosis during their cancer journey, which I thought was so fitting of these beautiful women.

BVM: According to breastcancer.org, about 1 in 8 U.S Women will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of her lifetime. Jada developed breast cancer during Season 4. How did you prepare yourself to step into this role? Did you visit or spend time with actual breast cancer patients or survivors?

MS. ROSS: Once I found out Jada was going to be fighting cancer, I reached out to friends of mine, that had gone through it, and put out the word that I wanted to speak to whomever could get me in touch with organizations on the ground, in the neighborhoods, that were helping women of color. The one name that kept coming up was Dr. Melissa Simon of Chicago's Northwestern Hospitals & The Feinberg School of Medicine. She is a medical dynamo, that is helping women of color in multiple ways, with her non-profit The Center For Health Equity Transformation, which helps change the root cause

of healthcare disparities that are in the medical system. She also introduced me to the organizations Equal Hope, and the Tatisa C. Joiner Foundation. All of these organizations are grass roots, and helping women of color along this journey, to not just make it through, but to thrive.

BVM: After playing such an emotional role, what is the most important thing you want people to realize when facing this type of diagnosis with their loved one?

MS. ROSS: Don't shy away from loved ones who are diagnosed with cancer. They may not want to talk about it. They may not understand everything that they're going through, and don't want sympathy, but nobody wants to be alone, especially not when going through something that's so life changing. Be an ear for them. Check in, say hello, bring up things that can get their minds off of it for a minute. Offer a ride and /or your time, to go to a doctor's appointment with them. Having someone there, with them to take in information, when maybe, they can't take in any more information. The biggest thing is for them to know they are not a burden, and not alone.

BVM: What is your biggest fear?

MS. ROSS: Not accomplishing all that I was put here for, in this lifetime.

BVM: Who is the one person you reach out to, when work gets heavy or life gets the best of you?

MS. ROSS: I don't really reach out to people. God and my angels.

BVM: After a long day on the set, meetings and sometimes just dealing with life, it can become very overwhelming. What do you do to relax?

MS. ROSS: Brown Estate's 'Chaos Theory' (A Red Blend from a Black owned winery) , a great meal, some music, or a good documentary. I also LOVE relaxing with great food, drink, and friends, while sharing interesting conversations.

BVM: Do you feel that Black Women as actresses are finally getting the recognition and opportunities to play positive roles or do you think we still have a long way to go?

MS. ROSS: We are getting more opportunities than in the past, but the roadblocks and mindset, that we only belong in certain kinds of stories, and only certain versions of us are valued in this industry is still very real.. We still have a long way to go before the American Black actress is considered equal to the American White actress, which is reflected in our opportunities, and in our pay.

BVM: Out of all of the TV shows, and movies that you have participated in, what has been your favorite character thus far?

MS. ROSS: My first, 'Treasure Lee'

BVM: Have you ever had a project that you worked on that wasn't as successful as you'd hope it would be? If so, what challenges did you face and how did you use that experience for your next project?

MS. ROSS: I've definitely had projects not do as well as I wanted them to, like 'Go For Sisters', which starred myself and LisaGay Hamilton. It was a good film, with great actors in it, directed by John Sayles. When it came out, you hadn't really had Black women 'buddy movies'. We had something unique, a storyline that didn't have two black women going at each other, or any of the predictable plots that had already been done. The unfortunate thing here was, the film was small. The press would not cover me and LisaGay or the film, even though I was up for an award for my work in it. Very disappointing, when you have something that WE are looking for, but then we don't support it. It takes press from all, to get projects like these on the map, and in the theaters, as there's no big studio paying for the film to be on screens across the US and to have commercials running everywhere, all the time



Personally, I can't do much of anything, when I am just the actor in a project. I can hire a publicist, reach out to my connections, make an appearance at film festivals, but that doesn't necessarily translate into viewers or the success of a project. As a filmmaker though, I think strategizing while putting your project together, finding out what sources you can work with to help broadcast about your project is key. Social Media is a big help these days with getting information out.. Things are much different than they were five, ten years ago.

BVM: We know that you have a very busy schedule. How do you balance your professional life from your personal?

MS. ROSS: Haha, I don't really have a personal life. If I'm doing anything, it's usually part of my work, one way or another. My brain never stops. Not to say that's a bad thing. I just mean, I take in my surroundings and people,

no matter what I'm doing, which then I can use for characters or stories.

BVM: If you were to meet your younger self today, what advice would you tell her and those coming after her?

MS. ROSS: Listen to your gut. Your first perceptions of people and situations are usually right.

COVER & CONTENT PHOTO:

Art Direction: Frank Guyton
Photographer: James Weber
Makeup: Frank Guyton
Hair: Derick Monroe, Ryan Burrell

PHOTOS ON PAGE:

Photographer: Mallory Talty

Photographer: Mallory Talty

UNDERSTANDING HEALTH LITERACY

by Dr. Brandi Wilford, DNP

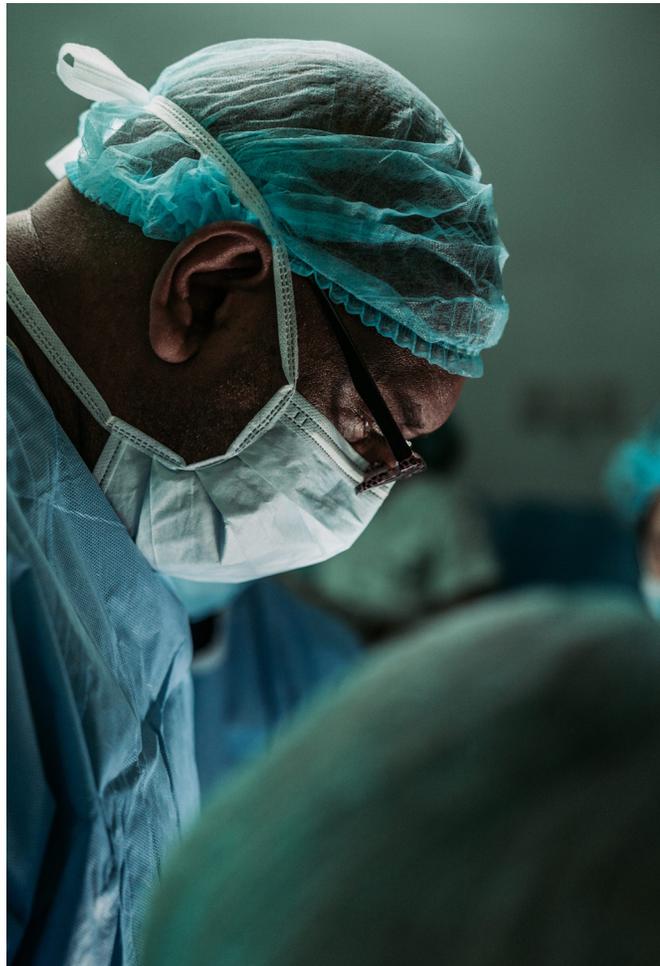
Understanding health information can be complex. Despite being an experienced healthcare professional, there are times when I have difficulty understanding the health information provided to me. I can only imagine the confusion and fear a person with little to no health care knowledge experiences when given health information they do not understand. Health literacy is a person's ability to receive and comprehend health information to make informed choices. A person can have high literacy overall but low health literacy (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion [ODPHP], 2022). Some populations are known to have lower levels of health literacy. The elderly, minorities and those with low income who receive disproportionate health care compared to other groups may have lower health literacy (Health Resources & Services Administration, 2019).

Health literacy is critical because lack of health literacy may negatively impact a person's ability to understand written health information and communicate with health care providers. Difficulty communicating with health care providers can lead to poor health outcomes, increased hospitalizations, reduced adherence to medical treatments, and increased

emergency department visits. Children of parents with low health literacy face poor health outcomes because the parents may

not understand the child's health needs (ODPHP, 2022).

The problems encompassing health literacy are significant. Muvuka et al. (2020) state that 87 million Americans suffer from low health literacy. The majority of the United States' complicated health care and health insurance modalities require an advanced level of health literacy to navigate their care appropriately. Most health information is written at a high school level or higher. The relationship between education, low health literacy, and race plays a significant role in one's ability to comprehend health information and navigate the healthcare system. Residential segregation and prejudice perpetuate narrowed avenues to excellent education amid African Americans (Muvuka et al., 2020). Unfortunate educational practices and prejudice seep into our health.



“African Americans are twice as likely to die from diabetes than Whites.” -(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, 2021)

According to Muvuka et al. (2020), 58% of African Americans have primitive or below levels of health literacy compared to the 28% of their White counterparts. The mistrust of the healthcare arena is deeply rooted in African American communities. Difficulty understanding health care concepts and lack of trust increase the odds of health disparities among African Americans. Health care providers play a significant role in low health literacy among African Americans because they fail to recognize, acknowledge, and accommodate the needs and desires minorities have for their method of health information delivery and the benefits offered (Muvuka, 2020).

Sadly, African Americans are the frontrunners for many diseases and illnesses. Nayak et al. (2020) indicate African Americans are more than two times more likely to suffer from heart failure and be hospitalized due to the condition. African Americans are twice as likely to die from diabetes than Whites (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, 2021). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate African Americans suffer from high blood pressure at a rate of 54%, and African American males are more likely to suffer from the condition. Based on data from the American Lung Association (2020), African Americans are amongst the highest group of those with asthma. The staggering rates of chronic illness combined with increased levels of low health literacy among minorities and the socioeconomically disadvantaged are a recipe for health and financial disasters.

Low health literacy is costly. About \$238 billion of health care costs are linked to low health literacy. It is estimated that patients with low health literacy incur \$1000 more in hospital costs due to their inability to understand the health information. Additional health care costs for most people can be challenging to manage, and those that are already dis-

advantaged may have more stress when a lack of health knowledge raises their healthcare costs. Hospitals face increased costs due to patients' low health literacy. Challenges caused by low health literacy have cost hospitals approximately \$12.6 billion annually (Leuck, 2017).

Advocating for improved health literacy is vital. Health care providers can assist with their patient's understanding of health information by speaking slowly in a considerate and non-condescending tone. If you have difficulty understanding health information, ask questions! Your provider can provide or draw graphics or pictures to aid your understanding of health information (Institute for Healthcare Improvement, 2014). Providers that will not accommodate your health literacy needs can be replaced. Find a health care provider willing to meet all of your needs, including providing the information you understand. A family member or friend who may have more health knowledge than you can be invited to attend doctor's appointments with you. Take notes at your doctor's appointments and read all written information you are provided with. If you are unsure about any of the terms associated with your condition, look them up.

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THE DALLAS CELEB FASHION AWARD PRESENTS

Shine BRIGHT LIKE A DIAMOND

SAT. AUGUST 20, 2022 • DOORS OPEN @4PM • SHOW STARTS @6PM

THE STATLER HOTEL • 1914 COMMERCE ST. DALLAS, TX 75201

ENTERTAINMENT

The Dallas Celeb Fashion Award presents **Shine Bright Like A Diamond**, a star-studded award and fashion show honoring black celebrities who have created iconic fashion brands. The honorees; FUBU, Karl Kani, Cross Colours, Baby Phat, Dapper Dan, and PMiller Designs have all been household names in the African American Community. FUBU, which means For Us By Us was created by 4 friends, Carlton E Brown, Daymond John, J. Alexander Martin, and Keith C. Perrin was founded in 1992 when John mortgaged his home for \$100,000.00; Karl Kani was created in 1982 by American Fashion Designer Carl Williams who when he was younger had a dream of creat-

ing his passion of hip hop with fashion; Cross Colours was launched in 1989 by Carl Jones, launched on the premise of producing clothes without prejudice, brought in Thomas Walker and from there the clothing line spread; Baby Phat was established by Kimora Lee Simmons in 1999 as an offshoot of her former husband Russell Simmons. She created a collection for women by using her own body type as a guide; Daniel Day known as Dapper Dan is an African American Fashion Designer who introduced high fashion to the Hip Hop World; PMiller Designs known as Master P has created PMiller Designs and Official Moneyatti.

• THE EVENT CO-HOSTS FOR THE EVENING ARE •



LeTitia Owens
Entrepreneur and Philanthropist



GRIFF
Nationally Syndicated
On-Air Personality



Ro Parrish
Red Carpet Host/Interviewer
is Dallas's own Emmy Award
Winner & Turner Sports



About CEO of M3 & ME Productions & Celeb Events

LISA STROUD

Entrepreneur, Philanthropist, Talk Show Host, and Public Speaker

Lisa Stroud, a native of Shreveport Louisiana has been in the entertainment industry, with over 20 years in radio, 6 years in television, and 16 years as a Celebrity Event Planner. She created this event to honor Blacks who have paved the way in the beauty and fashion industry. Stroud is a mother to her 3 sons.

• EVENT HONOREES •

FUBU baby phat.



Dapper Dan



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- WPS Television <https://www.wpstx.tv/about/>

FOR TICKETS, GO TO: www.dallascelebfashionaward.com or contact info@dallascelebfashionaward.com

TIM MONTGOMERY

FROM BREAKING WORLD RECORDS TO TAKING OVER

THE WORLD

BY DAVIEN NEAL



Photos provided by: Tim Montgomery

TIM MONTGOMERY *has redefined what it means to be resilient. From challenging beginnings in the small town of Gaffney, South Carolina to becoming a track superstar and the fastest man on the planet. Tim Montgomery once held the world record for the fastest time, running the 100 meters in 9.78 seconds. He had everything that he could dream of; gold medals, money, superstardom, and everything in between. This was his life, until one day he lost it all. His records were stripped away from him, leaving him to return to the only thing he knew: the streets. This being a decision that landed him in federal prison and left his name in the headlines for the wrong reasons. It is easy to say what you would have done until you place yourself in the shoes of the individual. These decisions molded Tim into the person he is today. He has one of the greatest comeback stories of the decade. Now a trainer, entrepreneur, motivational speaker, and author: he beat the odds. I sat down with Tim Montgomery to talk about his story.*

THE INTERVIEW

BVM: Tim, just give a little bit about your background and how you became who you are.

TIM: My name is Tim Montgomery. I'm from Gaffney, South Carolina. Gaffney was known for football and Friday night lights. When I was younger, my father came home from Vietnam, and he liked to party. My uncles would come over, and if I was up crying or misbehaving: The party would be cut short. So, at an early age, my uncles used to give me alcohol in my bottle and feed me pizza. It deteriorated my stomach lining. I couldn't digest food or take food in for a long period of time which caused me to be a small kid. I was in and out of the hospital for stomach problems which I still suffer from now. When I would watch football with my father, it would put a smile on my face to see a smile on his face. So, I tried out for football and was one of the best little league running backs in the state of SC. I was the first ninth-grade player to be on a high school varsity team. The varsity players were so mean to me in the locker room that I suffered a lot of broken bones and ended up quitting football. That was the first time that I let someone interrupt my dreams and goals. In Junior High

school, I saw a guy with a letterman's jacket on. I thought it was the coolest thing to have a letterman's jacket on in junior high school because a letterman's jacket meant you played a high school sport. When I asked how he got it, he told me that he ran track. I used to race the older guys on the block for money. I also used to go hide their drugs whenever the police raided. They couldn't catch me. So, I went and asked the coach to be on the track team. He said, well the track season has already started. He looked at me and asked, "are you fast?" He said, "you're Tim Montgomery, right?" "You played football for our high school team," I said, yea I did. He said, "I heard you were fast but never seen you run before. I tell you what...go line up with those guys over there about to run the 100 meters." So, I lined up. All I heard is set and a gun go off, so I just took off. When I got to the finish line, I started to walk away. He was like, "Hey Montgomery, get over here. Do you know what you just did?" I'm like, I really don't know because I just blanked out and went. He said, "you just beat all of my seniors." From that point forward, I was on the track team. Towards the end, I planned to quit. The coach asked why I wanted to quit. I said, I only came out here for a letterman's jacket. He said that's it? You don't want to go to college? I'm like not really. I'm a street guy from the block. I'm not into school. He convinced me to continue. I went on to break the state record for the 200. I made the front page of the papers which made my dad so proud.



THE INTERVIEW CONTINUED....

BVM: Wow, ok. Fast forwarding a bit...speak a little about when you made it to the Olympics and became the fastest man on the planet. What was that feeling like, holding a world record and gold medal? How were all the things that came with it?

TIM: The feeling is mentally based on what you have put in to get to that point. When you know what you put in, it's a surreal feeling. It's a high that I can't explain because I never been that high before (laughs). You know? It's a feeling that you would have every single day if you could. Trying to describe the feeling is something I just can't do for a person. If I could explain it, then I would figure out how to have that feeling all the time

BVM: 100 percent. I know your story...but for those that don't: Explain how you went from track superstar to a federal prison for 5 years.

TIM: During the time that I was training, I started making money, so money took me away from training. It took me away from striving to be the best. Instead of striving to be the best, I ended up cheating. I was suspended from competing for using steroids. If I had gotten a degree, I could have used that once this happened. But MY degree was in the streets. So, I took the money I had and went right back to the streets...and the streets put me in prison. The day that I got caught was one of the grimmest, lowest, and heartfelt feelings. It's almost like losing somebody, you know? You lost all the nostalgia and work you put in because of that one mistake. The time that I was in prison was also the time that I learned myself. A man asked me, "how do you know that gold is real when you find it?" He said, you have to take gold and put it in the fire until you burn all the trash off of it. I asked, so once I burn all the trash off, how do I know it's ready? He said it's ready when you can see your reflection. So, life was burning all that trash that I learned about the streets because the streets ain't what you think it is. Neither is prison. So, I'm really gold right now because I can see my reflection. I see my purpose.

BVM: So, once you came home from prison in 2012, you started your company, "NUMA Speed". How did you bounce back from that experience?

TIM: When I came home, I started working in construction. The guys on the job knew who I was. One of them said, "You are just like a 100-dollar bill. No matter what I do to a 100-dollar bill, people still want it. I could step on it. I could rip it and they would tape it back together because it's a 100-dollar bill. They still want it. Everything that you've done that's great...they can't take that away from you. A lion is considered a beast, but it only kills if it's threatened or feels hungry. It sleeps 21 hours of the day, because it knows if it doesn't have enough strength to hunt, it cannot eat to survive. So, you have to keep your beast mentality. You have to wake up every day and hunt, and use your God given ability to the fullest. Only mean harm to someone if they mean harm to you. That's why the lion is the king of the jungle. Because it has the ability to do more, but it only does what it's supposed to do. That's what a king does. From this, I created NUMA Speed. N.U.M.A means Never Underestimate My Ability.

BVM: So, what do you have going on right now? Are there any projects or anything you would like to share?

TIM: Yes, so Kevin Hart and HartBeat productions are doing a movie about me. They have already greenlighted the project. Thank God. We are waiting on the final drafts to come through so we can get started on that. Also, I have my book coming out called, "Project World Record." That should be out in 2 months. I have my business facility in Gainesville, Florida called NUMA Speed. You can go to NUMASPEED.COM to check us out. Also, I do speaking engagements around the country.

BVM: Is there anything else you want the world to know about Tim Montgomery?

TIM: I feel like the only way for the world to know me is to be around me. You know what I'm saying? I'm just pushing forward everyday and trying to do what's right.



MEET

LGBTQIA



Photos provided by: O. Harris

QUAHMIERE HARRIS

ACTOR • MODEL • TRANSMAN

Affectionately known in the LGBTQIA Community as “TMODELMIERE”, we had the privilege of sitting down with the man himself, Mr. Quahmiere Harris... Let’s Talk

BVM: Tell us about Quahmiere...Where did you grow up?

QUAHMIERE: Born & Raised in Camden, NJ.

BVM: What was life like growing up there?

QUAHMIERE: I was abused and neglected as a child. I didn’t grow-up with my family. I was in and out of foster care.

BVM: At what age did you notice you weren’t like the average kid/teenager?

QUAHMIERE: It actually started when I was 5. I didn’t know I was a girl until I reached a certain age.

BVM: When/What if anything made you realize you were trans? Did something happen to cause the desire to want to change?

QUAHMIERE: No, nothing happened to me. I just felt like at the age 7 I wasn’t in the right body . I realized I wasn’t like other kids. I was more on the tomboy side vs being girly.

BVM: What are some things you think the community can do to aid in trans* visibility and help to create a safe environment, based on your personal experience?

QUAHMIERE: Build more homes, stop gun violence against trans, just let us be human..

BVM: At what age did you decide you wanted to go full trans?

QUAHMIERE: At the age 14 is when I started everything. I literally felt good once I started.

BVM: Did your family and friends accept your transition?

QUAHMIERE: I don’t really talk to my family besides my older brother and niece. But I definitely loss a lot of friends due to me being myself.

BVM: As mentioned before, I totally support your decision and support you for standing in your truth. What influenced your decision?

QUAHMIERE: Literally me. I motivated myself and I wasn’t happy, so I was telling myself like I really want to be a boy. So, I went in from there with the help of my social worker.

BVM: After your first surgery, and you looked in the mirror, how did you feel? How was your mentality at that point? Were you afraid?

QUAHMIERE: I was so excited to see my chest fully gone. I was probably flexing in the mirror for a week straight lol. My

mental was mind blown. I’m telling myself that I really did it.

BVM: What are some of the most hurtful questions you have been asked? How did you correct them?

QUAHMIERE: What is in between my legs. It doesn’t hurt me, but it just bothers me to the point were I would say.” Are you my gf? or Did I sleep with you?” Like it’s technically no one’s concern. But I do have a penis.

BVM: What is the biggest misconception about transgender lives you would like to dispel?

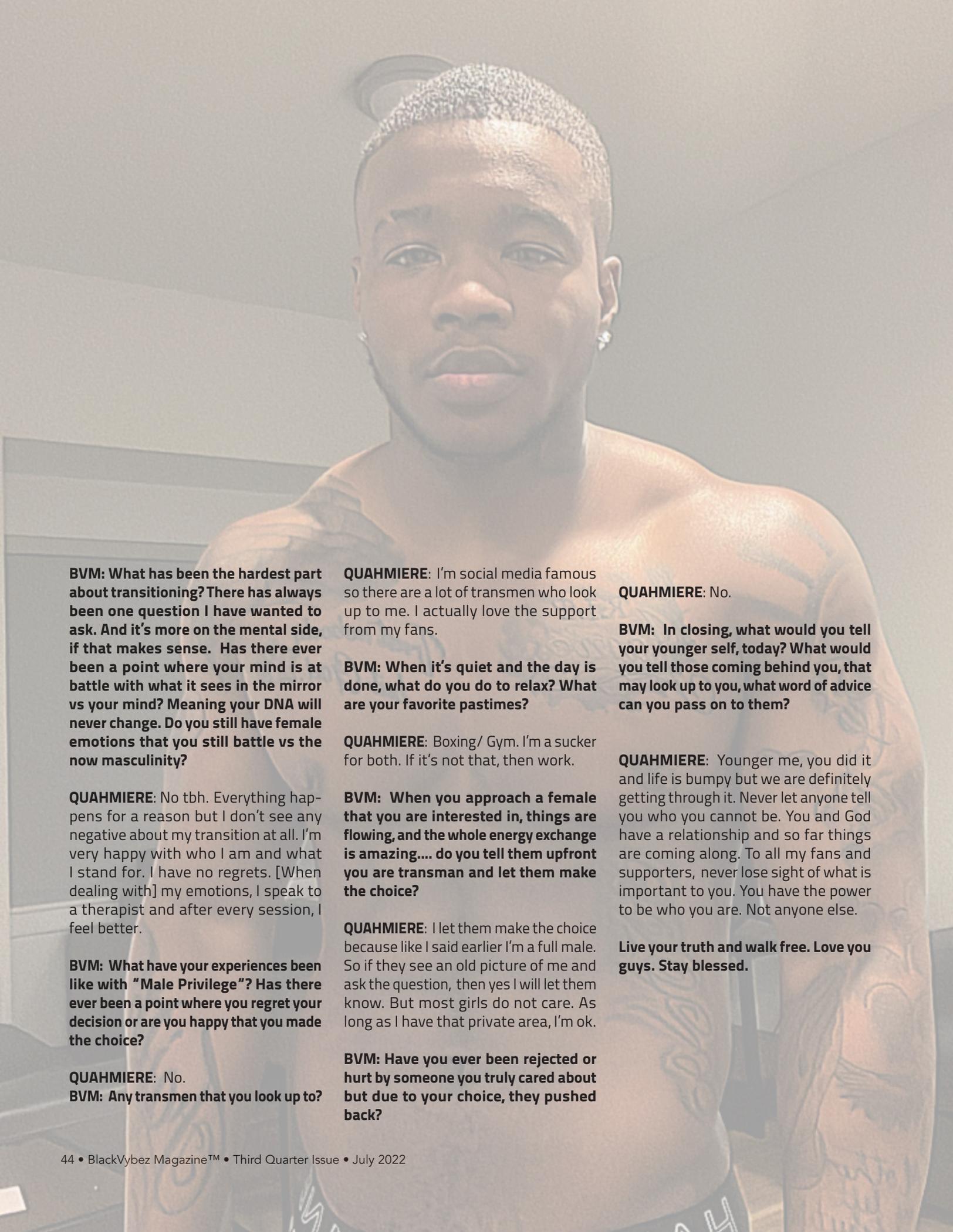
QUAHMIERE: Let the person you’re talking to know that you are trans. Gun violence.

BVM: Have you ever been outed by a friend or relative that you were trans? What are some microaggressions that you have had to face?

QUAHMIERE: My sister cannot get over the fact that I am a guy now. So, her being smart, she continues to call me she. When I correct her a lot.

BVM: Who is your biggest supporter?

QUAHMIERE: Du’Mure Versailles. They are a house I’m in for the LGBT Community. It’s basically your walking down a runway getting based on how you look.



BVM: What has been the hardest part about transitioning? There has always been one question I have wanted to ask. And it's more on the mental side, if that makes sense. Has there ever been a point where your mind is at battle with what it sees in the mirror vs your mind? Meaning your DNA will never change. Do you still have female emotions that you still battle vs the now masculinity?

QUAHMIERE: No tbh. Everything happens for a reason but I don't see any negative about my transition at all. I'm very happy with who I am and what I stand for. I have no regrets. [When dealing with] my emotions, I speak to a therapist and after every session, I feel better.

BVM: What have your experiences been like with "Male Privilege"? Has there ever been a point where you regret your decision or are you happy that you made the choice?

QUAHMIERE: No.

BVM: Any transmen that you look up to?

QUAHMIERE: I'm social media famous so there are a lot of transmen who look up to me. I actually love the support from my fans.

BVM: When it's quiet and the day is done, what do you do to relax? What are your favorite pastimes?

QUAHMIERE: Boxing/ Gym. I'm a sucker for both. If it's not that, then work.

BVM: When you approach a female that you are interested in, things are flowing, and the whole energy exchange is amazing.... do you tell them upfront you are transman and let them make the choice?

QUAHMIERE: I let them make the choice because like I said earlier I'm a full male. So if they see an old picture of me and ask the question, then yes I will let them know. But most girls do not care. As long as I have that private area, I'm ok.

BVM: Have you ever been rejected or hurt by someone you truly cared about but due to your choice, they pushed back?

QUAHMIERE: No.

BVM: In closing, what would you tell your younger self, today? What would you tell those coming behind you, that may look up to you, what word of advice can you pass on to them?

QUAHMIERE: Younger me, you did it and life is bumpy but we are definitely getting through it. Never let anyone tell you who you cannot be. You and God have a relationship and so far things are coming along. To all my fans and supporters, never lose sight of what is important to you. You have the power to be who you are. Not anyone else.

Live your truth and walk free. Love you guys. Stay blessed.

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CHEF JEN:

I BAKE WITH PRIDE, NOT WITH WAR

by Ashley Williams

Join us as we sit down with Chef Jen!

BVM: Please provide us with a brief introduction of who you are.

CHEF JEN: I am afro Latina (Cuban and Puerto Rican) born in The Big Apple- Queens raised by two beautiful strong willed women, my mother, and grandmother along with my two siblings. I moved to Dallas, Texas when I was 13. I was always in the kitchen with my grandma who loved cooking family dinners and Godmother who catered for parties. I graduated from le cordon bleu dallas in 2017 with my associates in Culinary and a certificate in Pastries and Baking. I've always had a gift but went to school to hon in on my skills.

BVM: What inspired you to pursue a career as a Pastry Chef?

CHEF JEN: My Godmother inspired me to be who I am today. I remember growing up and on Halloween she would always make these adorable themed desserts for us. It was the smallest thing but it made us happy and that's what I want to do. I want to bring joy to people with my creations.

BVM: When the opportunity allows, what is your favorite pastry to make at home for special occasions?

CHEF JEN: Puff pastries stuffed with Guava and Cream Cheese it reminds me of home, sitting in front of tv at grandmas with Guava and Cream Cheese.

BVM: Do you believe that creating aesthetically pleasing desserts increases customer satisfaction?

CHEF JEN: No, it's not always how something looks, it's the taste. Does it remind you of home or childhood? When you cook there are 4 senses: smell, look, presentation, and emotional connection. These are the senses that develop memories which is exactly what I do.

BVM: On a rainy day, have you ever created new pastries with the intention and hope to brighten someone's day? What have you created?

CHEF JEN: Yes, the pastry chef left and there was desert tasting menu that needed to be done so I stepped up to the plate (pun intended) making a Decorative layered dessert using Ginger, Apple, Pecan Crumble, toasted meringue with Raspberry syrup and an assortment of berries.



BVM: Are there any desserts or recipes that have created challenges in designing for a customer? Name the most challenging one and explain why.

CHEF JEN: Yes, the recipe was not complicated but the design was. It was a buttercream cake for a historical Latina painter, Frida Kahlo. I had never ventured in something like this nonetheless free hand art.

BVM: When you are not at work, where is your favorite place to go for a good pastry?

CHEF JEN: Home, it's where I can put what I want and how I want it.

BVM: How do you manage your time when you receive multiple dessert orders at one time?

CHEF JEN: I like to use my time wisely. I break everything down over a week's time Day 1 is making the icing Day 2 baking cake Day 3 making cake decor Day 4 coming up with a design Day 5 double checking supplies day 6&7 is assembling everything together and final touches.

BVM: As a member of the LGBTQIA+Community, how do you celebrate Pride?

CHEF JEN: I don't celebrate it, it's my life. I speak with pride, I walk with pride, I love with pride, something I didn't do many years ago. I'm blessed for the many people that have come before

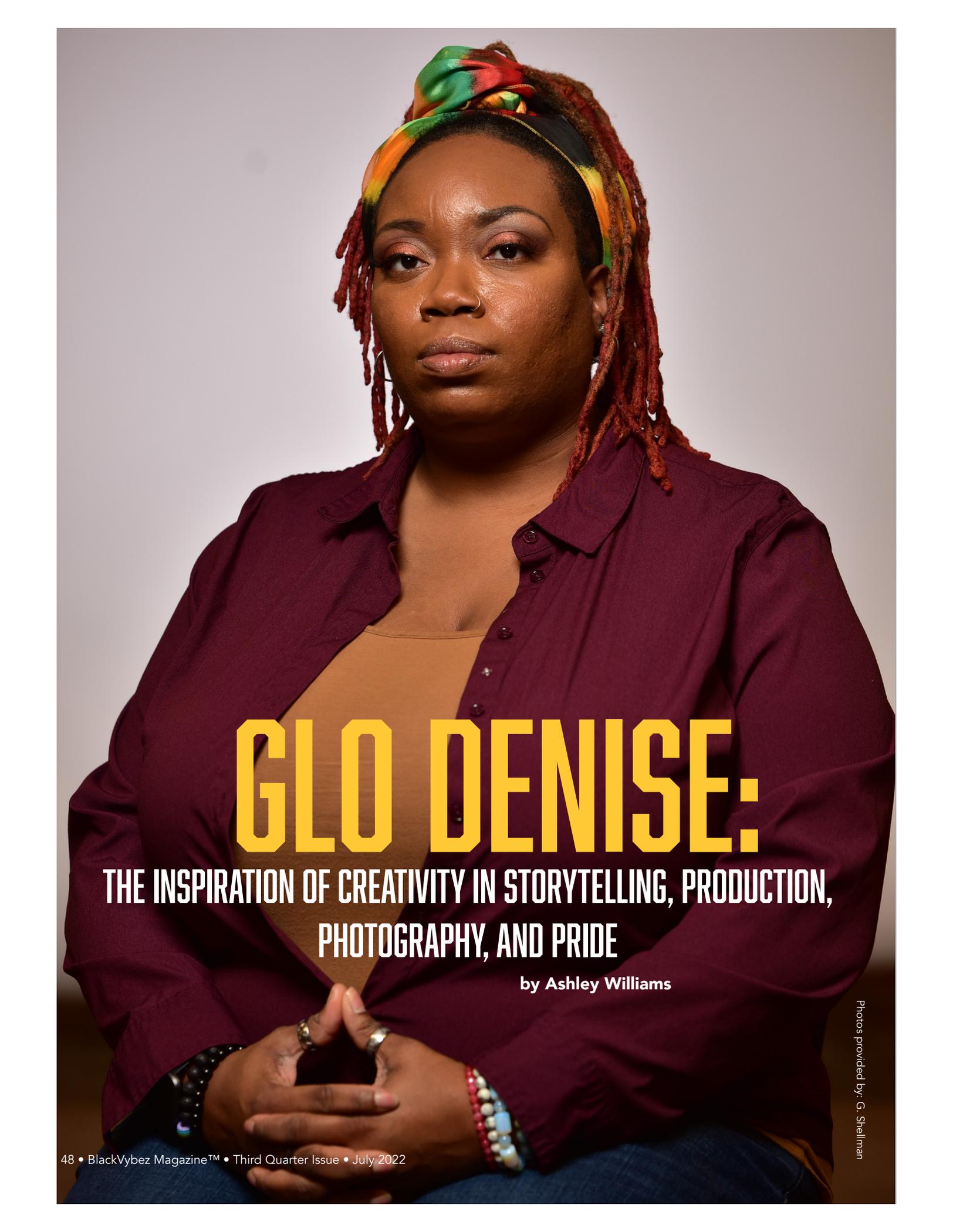
me to sacrifice so much so that I'm seen as equal.

BVM: If you had the opportunity to have a conversation with your younger self, what would you say?

CHEF JEN: Don't be afraid to be you. Don't dim your light to help other people shine because we can all shine together.



Photo by: Calum Lewison Unsplash

A portrait of a Black woman with red and brown dreadlocks, wearing a colorful headwrap and a maroon button-down shirt. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. Her hands are clasped in her lap, and she is wearing several rings and bracelets.

GLO DENISE:

THE INSPIRATION OF CREATIVITY IN STORYTELLING, PRODUCTION,
PHOTOGRAPHY, AND PRIDE

by Ashley Williams

Photos provided by: G. Shellman

A DALLAS, TEXAS NATIVE, BORN AND RAISED...

...you will always find her behind the lens of a Nikon camera, directing, producing and writing phenomenal scripts. She produces new ideas daily and allows the creativity to flow from a delicate and inspirational realm into a remarkable masterpiece. Her name is Glo Denise!

I had the wonderful opportunity to sit and chat with this vibrant and joyous soul of a content creator and here is her introduction:

GLO DENISE: "My name is Gloria Shellman. For intents and purposes, I go by Glo Denise. I am a social worker by day, writer, producer, photographer, director by night/weekends. I love people. I love helping people and supporting people. Of course, I love being an advocate for women, black women and gay black women."

With that being said, Glo Denise has created a pathway of shining an intense light on how important it is to love people---no matter who you are.

BVM: What does Pride Month mean to you?

GLO DENISE: "For me, Pride Month is about having pride in who we are as LGBTQIA+ people. It is an opportunity for us to one, love on one another, because I don't think we have as many opportunities to do that. It is an opportunity in a way to kind of showcase who we are. We get a lot of hate. We get a lot of disrespect. Even biblically, the greatest thing is LOVE. We know how to love one another. I want the world to see us for who we are and to love us as such. So, for me, Pride Month is about just showing people we are just like ya'll. There is nothing different with us. We are human just like y'all are. We love God; the Universe. We are who we are and we have PRIDE in who we are and who we were created to be."

BVM: What is an issue the LGBTQIA+ community is facing that many people might not know about?

GLO DENISE: "I would say....that is a really great question. For me, there are a lot of things. I just think, in general, there's a lot of talk (and rightfully so) about cops killing

black people, but we don't hear as often about how many of us (LGBTQIA+) in this community that are persecuted and killed for no reason as well---just for being who we are. I don't think that it is out there enough. I don't think there are enough people bringing it to light so that the world can see just like all these other unarmed people are being killed, there are a lot of us unarmed---the only thing that we are armed with is LOVE---and we are still being killed. So, for me, that is one of the biggest things that the world doesn't see, because they don't put it out there. 'Mainstream', so-to-speak, doesn't want to see us (LGBTQIA+ people) on TV, because then they will have to admit that they see US. They don't want to see US."

Glo Denise also made a very powerful statement by mentioning that, "You can't fight for the rights of one set of people and you are not fighting for the rights of all people".

BVM: Who is/are some of your LGBTQIA+ role models?

GLO DENISE: "Oooww! That is a good one! Lena Waithe, for sure! She is a phenomenal LGBTQIA+ writer and director. She is on the path and laying the path for things that I would like to do and working towards doing as well. Just seeing her, it seems like she has such an amazing spirit. I follow her on Instagram and she is always cheery. She doesn't seem like a rude person and she seems like she is genuine with who she is. I really most definitely respect that."

"So, I'll also say this---it's kind of a weird one, but it's kind of not---I am a Marvel/DC comic book fan. In my lifetime, we were able to see two black gay superheroes. We saw Thunder on Black Lightning and we saw Batwoman. They were both black lesbian superheroes. I think that was just a phenomenal thing just to put that out there like that. I have to say the queen, Queen Latifah. I studied the writings of Audre Lorde and James Baldwin. Some people did not know that he was gay, but he was gay. I guess that's all for now."



Godmother, from Amazon Prime's Original, "Cinderella", which debuted in 2021, Billy Porter! You are an amazing and phenomenal role model within the LGBTQIA+ community and around the world. We, BlackVybez Magazine, salute you!

Glo Denise also added that Billy Porter and Janelle Monae are considered a part of her LGBTQIA+ role models as well, because they are very free-spirited people and they do not care what you may think about who they are. They are an uplifting and outgoing inspiration as their "status" helped Glo Denise to finally feel free and motivated enough to come out as a lesbian in 2016.

BVM: How do you plan on celebrating Pride this year?

GLO DENISE: "You know, I have never been to a parade. I really want to go and I want to dress up as my feminine side and I want to be out there and just really enjoying the day. Like, yeah! I'm even tempted to braid these locks down and put on a long and flowing wig. I really want to be out there amongst my people, getting to know new people, getting to see new sights. I'm not a big clubber or a bar-type person, more so small settings, but I really want to see what we got here in Dallas because I have never done any Dallas Pride stuff. Every year I say I'm going to do it and stuff keeps happening and I end up not being able to go, so...when stuff happens, you have to move forward and I really want to do that this year."

Okay, Glo Denise, we are going to shift gears here and bring in a different set of questions; however, if the questions render a response to defend anything LGBTQIA+ related, please feel free to express your thoughts and talk about it.

BVM: How did you get into this line of work?

GLO DENISE: "Hell, which one?! LOL!" *Let's talk about Film and Production* "When I first got into it, for some years, I just kind of struggled with who I was. I had been writing and I had my first poem published at the age of four. I was writing before I started school and once I got in school, I just got better at it. I have been writing (we're not going to say how old I am), but let's just say 30+ years. I have written poems. I have written stories. I have written scripts. I kept saying, God I don't know what I am supposed to do with this stuff.

You have given me this talent and people like it, what am I supposed to do with it? And it wasn't until meeting a couple of people here in the area that were already doing it. What really pushed me was joining the drama ministry at Friendship West Baptist Church (Dallas, TX). I met the drama leader at that time, the phenomenal Kenneisha Thompson. She has done everything from Blockbuster movies to small screen films. And in talking to her after our first conversation, she basically said, you are going to be one of my number twos, because she saw the passion in me for writing and that's where everything took off. We did a lot of Broadway productions at the church. I actually got the opportunity to write my own as a ministry fundraiser and we did a full production play. We more than sold out. We went over capacity and people were like I don't mind sitting on the floor. People were still pouring into the building to come and see what I wrote and when I say this was the best feeling in the world for the staff to come backstage and say, hey we've run out of chairs. People are saying that they can sit on the floor, is that okay? And I'm like, I'm back here, I can't see what's going on down there, but yeah, tell them to sit on the floor. That's fine.

I mean we had a packed house and it was phenomenal. Before that day, when I first got started and actually wrote my first skit for the church and saw how well-received it was, I said, yeah I know what I am supposed to be doing. For me writing gives me a way to, I haven't done it here as much but I do it in my own JMT writings, always include characters from the LGBTQIA+ community. I do that because I want us to be seen. WE NEED TO BE SEEN! A lot of the stuff that I write, and maybe it is out there and I just haven't seen it, there is a quote that says, 'If you haven't seen something that affected you or impacted you, maybe it is because you need to write it.' [Author unknown] I don't think that we have enough origin stories out there, because there are so many people that are struggling with their sexuality. So many people are struggling with accepting who they are because so many people don't accept it. I want to write stories and write films and write plays that tell them it is okay to be who you are, even if this person over here doesn't love you, you have a whole community of people over here that do. And sometimes, you will find in this community that everything that you have been missing is over here. You didn't need it from the people that you thought that you needed it from. Just being able to tell the stories that ain't nobody else is telling and I have had so many friends who have had horrible coming out stories. I did not. I had a great one, for the most part, but not everybody else did. To be able to encourage someone and say you may not be able to come out right now or feel comfortable today, but here's proof that you can and will be able to do it one day.

BVM: What about this career path has surprised you?

GLO DENISE: "The level of difficulty. It is easy in a way for the photography side; it is easy to book certain people, because those people that you have taken pictures of before, they recommend you to other people. That part I am very grateful for, but that's the easier part of it. The difficult part is the writing and producing, because in Dallas, there are so many people doing it and if you are not in the right circles, nobody pays you any attention. I'm not going to cry, but that is what has been difficult. I've worked with some amazing people that I met through my day job that are out there, and phenomenal and they are doing huge things. One of my big sisters, she is out there and she is even in movies. She started doing comedy and touring, but it didn't come easy for her either. Unless you know the right people, you are in the right areas and circles, it is difficult to get stuff off of the ground, especially if you don't have your own crew or cameras. I have at least five scripts ready to go. I just don't have cameras or production-quality cameras, so it is difficult. Then if you do find someone that is out there and they are doing it, then it is hugely expensive to utilize them and....I ain't got no money like that! I wish that I did. If I could pull it off of the trees, I would. God knows my heart. If I got it, then I am going to give it. That's who I am and that's how I have always been. I

am going to give opportunities to everyone, especially our LGBTQIA+ community and our black LGBTQIA+ people and black women. Not being connected to the right people, it is what makes this career path most difficult. Typically, I am incredibly shy around people, but when I am in my element, I am good. I am rock solid."

BVM: What's your annoying habit?

Glo Denise: "So here's the deal!" *as she laughs* "I'm a Virgo, so I am very, very meticulous and I like for things to be a certain way. I like for things to be in order, and if it is not in order, then I freak out just a little bit. Yeah, I completely freak out! For instance, if you are at my house and you move a pen from here to here, I'm going to notice that you moved the pen from here to here. It is very annoying to other people, but it is even more annoying for me that you moved the pen in the first place. So, I'm going to say that is my annoying habit. Everything has a place and if everything is not in its place, then it annoys me. It throws me off and makes me feel some type of way. So yeah, I'm that person."

BVM: What advice would you give to your younger self before getting into this career?

GLO DENISE: "One thing that I would most definitely say, I would tell my younger self, it's okay to be you---go ahead and write it. It doesn't matter what anyone thinks about what you write because what you write is what you feel. It is okay to get those thoughts out there. It is okay to put it on paper, read it back to yourself and understand who you are, because who you are is going to shape what you do in the future. If I knew then what I know now, I would have been doing this. I didn't get started until 2010-2011 and that's when I got serious about it. I didn't start JMT Production and Entertainment until 2014. I would tell my younger self, you like all of this different stuff for a reason. Don't let the box that people try to keep you in confine you. I am very eclectic. Like, if you hit play on my playlist and hit random, you are going to be like, okay she is bipolar or something because there is a whole bunch of stuff going on. It'll go from Old School hip hop, to New School country, to Pop---it is a mixture of everything. That's how I am with movies and everything. I would tell my younger self, that's okay. It is going to shape who you are and your future."

BlackVybez Magazine would like to take this time to thank you, Glo Denise, for your wonderful personality, time and talent to be presented in this publication! Continue to put your best foot forward and follow the purpose that God has provided just for you.

Follow Glo Denise via social media (Facebook and Instagram) at JMT Production and Entertainment!



B.M. JACKSON

The Eternal Triangle

B.M. Jackson

INFERNAL TRIANGLE

The Civil Rights Prints of Billy Morrow Jackson

by Michael K. Butler

Compared to the other prints, at first glance, the “Sovereign Scarecrow” is relatively simple. It is centered on a scarecrow. The scarecrow is vested with the confederate flag and covered by numerous crows. The face belongs to Ross Barnett, the former governor of Mississippi. There is a question regarding print effectiveness as a scarecrow. It appears that rather than scaring the birds, he is serving as a roost for them. It could be that we are missing the point. He may not be in place to scare the birds. Rather is he there to scare the Blacks?

There is also a nest in his top hat with eggs. Today’s crows will be replaced by a new generation. In perpetuity? It was Ross Barnett, who attempted to prevent the entry of James Meredith into the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss), but was ineffective. Barnett is seen to be as the “straw man” (cowardly) in real life, as he is portrayed in this image.

One of Barnett’s arguments in support of his segregationist views was states’ rights. The governor believed that the States rights doctrine gave the State of Mississippi sovereignty over its institutions and allowed it to “interpose and nullify” federal statutes, effectively letting state laws supersede federal laws. This argument has been adjudicated in many venues and was found not to be credible or constitutional.

One of the most heinous acts of savagery against the Civil Rights campaign was the murders of Schwerner, Goodman, and Chaney. They were northern students who journeyed south to aid in the voting rights campaign. They were abducted, tortured, mutilated, and ultimately killed by a combination of law enforcement officials, Klansmen, and Klan sympathizers. Their bodies were buried in an earthen dam on the property of one of the perpetrators. It was several months before

the bodies were discovered. This incident was immortalized in popular culture in Don McLean’s epic song — “American Pie.”

These murders occurred in Philadelphia, Mississippi. The site would become infamous, even more so, as the place where Ronald Reagan launched his bid for the presidency. This is an example of “nod, nod, wink, wink” letting the south know that Reagan was on their side and represented a continuation of Nixon’s southern strategy. (Hardly Coincidental!!)



Michael K. Butler, MD,MHA,CPE is Executive Director of Griots' Gallery and Academy in Miami, FL. He recently retired from the Jackson Health System (Miami) where he served as the Chief Medical Officer and the Chief Medical Administrative Officer. Dr. Butler is married to the late great Marion Thompson Butler and is passionate about African American Art and American history. He has also collected art for over 31 yrs.



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LIFE FORCE ENERGY: THE MISSING LINK TO YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

By Davien Neal Ausere



Photo by FLY:D on Unsplash

..”Correcting spiritual imbalances can in turn heal the physical”

Did you know that your spiritual life force energy directly affects your physical health? Most people do not think about their sickness or physical conditions being caused by their own spirit or life force energy. They assume because the symptoms are in the physical body that the origins must also be physical. When you become ill, your first stop is most likely a physical doctor. While the physical body must be cared for, it should not always be the first thing you treat when you have a condition. All sickness or dis-ease starts from an imbalance in your life force energy or what the Chinese call “chi” or “Qi.” The idea is to have a strong flow or spiritual energy flowing through your body to prevent any physical condition from occurring in the first place. Prevention is better than treatment. If you can keep your chi or life force energy at a certain level, then you are much more likely to avoid certain physical conditions.

There are times when one may feel unwell but a trip to the doctor turns up nothing. In this case you should take a closer look at your spiritual health. Many of us do not realize that trauma is stored in the body. If you have childhood trauma or PTSD from any life altering events; that energy can be trapped inside of your body, resulting in health challenges. For example, you may have issues speaking up for yourself. This creates a block in your throat chakra. A blocked throat chakra can result in conditions such as laryngitis, chronic cough, thyroid disorders, and hoarseness. Another example is that you may have never gotten over a relationship or loss of a loved one. This literally leads to a broken heart. Grief and heartache can affect your heart chakra. If not dealt with, this can result in heart disease and other heart related illnesses. Both examples show how imbalances in our spiritual bodies can affect our physical bodies. Pain in the upper back, shoulders, or neck can mean you are burdened or carrying too much of a load. Another thing to note is that your emotions are associated with certain organs of the body. For example, fear is associated with the kidneys and adrenals. Excess fear can cause bladder and kidney issues. These are just some examples of how different energies affect the body. We could explore several topics on the chi, the chakras, and spiritual illness. The focal point here is to make you aware of how your spiritual health is affecting your physical body. We should not neglect our physical health.

We tend to focus more on the physical body than the spirit. The physical vessel is a temporary vessel for the spirit. Once the body is gone, the spirit will still exist. It is just like you getting inside of your car and driving it. The car does not move unless you are inside the car to operate it. Likewise, the physical body does not move without the spiritual life force energy that drives it. Therefore, we need to go within and pay particular attention to our emotions. If you have pain or certain conditions, then you should learn the emotions and chakras associated with that particular part of the body.

Once we identify stuck emotions, we can begin to release them. If you are familiar with your chakras and how to clear energy blockages, then you are in the driver seat. Practices such as deep breathing, meditation, and forgiveness can help you fix energy imbalances. Also, things such as reiki healing, acupuncture, and massage therapy can help by working on the meridians in the body. That said, there are things that you need to do to keep your chi and chakras working harmoniously. The key is to keep your vibrational frequency high. When your frequency becomes too low, spiritual illness can occur. Just as when your immune function is low, physical illness can occur. Your vibrational frequency is like your immune system for your spirit. It is important to note that spiritual illness also leads to physical illness. Correcting spiritual imbalances can in turn heal the physical. This is not at all saying that we should neglect the physical body itself. Physical exercise and proper nutrition go a long way. One should live in a way that the mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional bodies are all balanced. Hopefully in our communities, we will start to take more time to get in tune with our spiritual bodies to heal ourselves.

PLEASE NOTE: This is for informational purposes only. Contact your healthcare provider for medical advice.

BOOKS BY BLACK AUTHORS

by Jerid Woods

FUNDAMENTALS

FUNDAMENTALS

It's June...

We're at the halfway mark of the year, and when we should be reflecting on things we find ourselves, instead, repeating them. At this point, America has had at least 246 mass shootings this year. Disgustingly so, we are right where we are supposed to be—if our goal is to have as many as we had last year, the worst reported year since they started being recorded in 2014. That would mean we would reach 692 by the year's end.

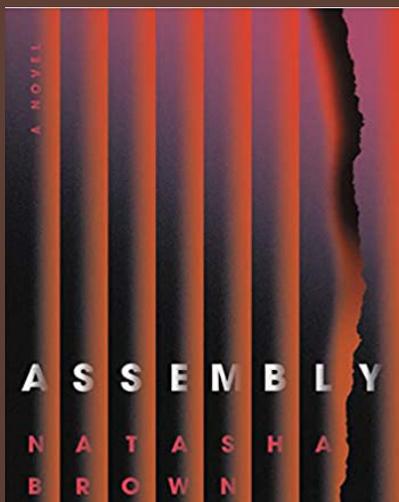
That's a lot of death to go...

...And yet, we have no solutions. We have suggestions, yes, but they leap from the minds of those with their best interests in mind, and I don't say that to say that I've saved my words as mentioned earlier only for politicians—no, not at all. These words easily fit about the neck of those who argue in their cars at stop lights, in coffee shops, and in living rooms about the blood that is on all of our hands like the little ones who once presses their painted palms to construction paper for parents they'll never see again in classrooms we have yet to properly protect.

We have failed them...

We have failed those gunned down everywhere, in churches, supermarkets, graduation parties, malls, hospitals, everywhere because nowhere is safe. America isn't safe. And I feel we've known that for a while. I feel like the certainty of unsafety wraps us all up like shawls in the winter and we are comforted only by the inevitability of more of the same. The inevitability of the vacuum doing what it does, hold our screams for later, so that when we scream again they'll be someone there to greet the sound, hold the fury, and remind us of the nothing we like to do in the wake of such things.

As it stands, I wonder to myself if hope still stalks the hallways, lurks in the corridors, and hides in those gray strands that sit in the corner of our eyes. Do we still have space for it? I know that reading has always represented things that are both fixed and imaginative, things that have happened and things that could, and I don't know if the books I offer hold solutions but like I said we're halfway through the year... And halfway of 12 is 6, and though the number is often associated with darkness, it is also associated with rest—on the 6th day, for those who are believers, God suggested a respite from the work of creating a world. So perhaps with rest and reflection, we can begin to get things right.



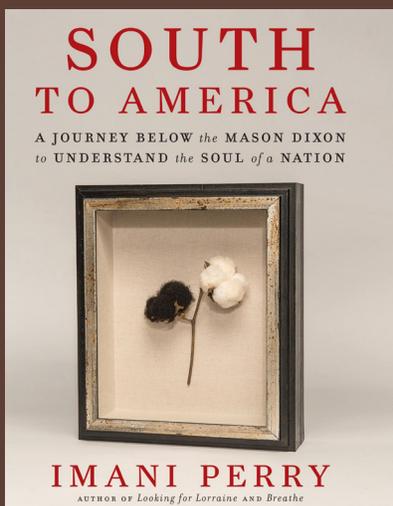
Assembly

by Kai Harris

Assembly by Natasha Brown shows us that we aren't the only nation that has things they're trying to figure out. Set in Britain (London), our unnamed protagonist struggles with what it means to be a black woman across the pond and it is simply amazing. At only 100 pages, it to me is a masterpiece and there are absolutely no pages wasted in it.

It posits a couple of different things for the reader to consider, black exceptionalism, progressivism, race and class, and critiques our responsibility to all of these things including our country. Choice haunts the reader as they come to its end and it will leave you undoubtedly wanting more of her work.

Photo by: Alfons Morales Unsplash



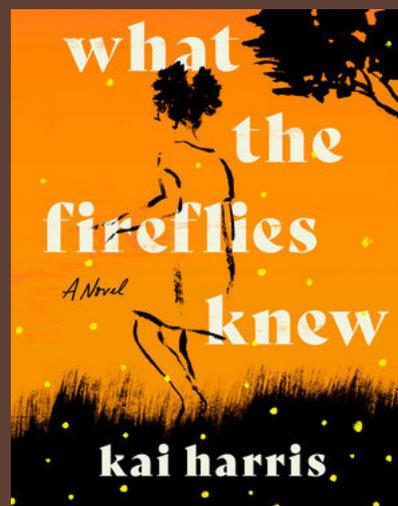
South to America

A Journey Below the Mason-Dixon to Understand the Soul of a Nation

by Imani Perry

South To America by Imani Perry is next. In order to understand this nation and where it's values were made, I think it is extremely necessary to understand the south. Malcolm X once famously said If you are south of the Canadian border, you are in the South, and I think what our shining prince Malik el-Shabazz was that his nation, our current nation as well, was shaped and informed by our nation's relationship to its south.

In this journey through our (I'm from the Deep South, Mississippi to be exact) history, our culture, rituals, language, and relationship to industry, Perry unfolds a tapestry that resembles the south we know and informs us of the south we are unfamiliar with all at once. Its prose is sticky, and its scenes draw you in and make you contemplate how we got where we are and why we've chosen to stay there, leave there, return there, dance there, and cry there over and over again. I can't suggest this tome enough, and I feel it should be required reading.

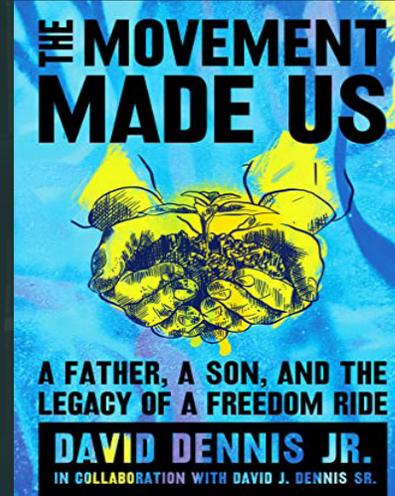


What the Fireflies Knew

by Kai Harris

What the Fireflies Knew by Kai Harris is a story that provides light in darkness in the way that cold drinks seem to do in the most humid weather. When reading it, you'll feel like you've got a grasp on where things are going because they seem to be shaping up for that thing you expect, but they don't, and the experience is wonderful.

It is a novel about family, identity, and how the two shape the lives of all those who come in contact with them. Black girlhood is on full display in a beautifully complex way, providing a landscape for sisters, daughters, wives, and widows to see themselves and their loved ones tussle and grapple with life's constant insistence that we live in spite of.



The Movement Made Us

by David Dennis Jr.

This rendition of #FundTheMentals begins with a blueprint for that, *The Movement Made Us* by David Dennis Jr. is a story about a father, a son, and the legacy of the freedom ride. It is crucial reading in a time such as this one because within its pages the reader finds himself faced with what the life of an activist really entails and what giving one's self to a movement can do to a family.

It's the total package, memoir, critical analysis, and yes, there's even some hope in there. Hope that family can be mended, and the world remade anew. Dennis' story is one that we can all learn from and David Dennis Sr and Jr create a landscape for the reader that will have them walking away ready to attempt to heal a world without sacrificing their loved ones in the process.

What have you guys been reading lately? Let me know! Email me at jwoods.blackvybez@gmail.com and let me know how you've been doing with previous #FundTheMentals articles. I look forward to hearing from you!

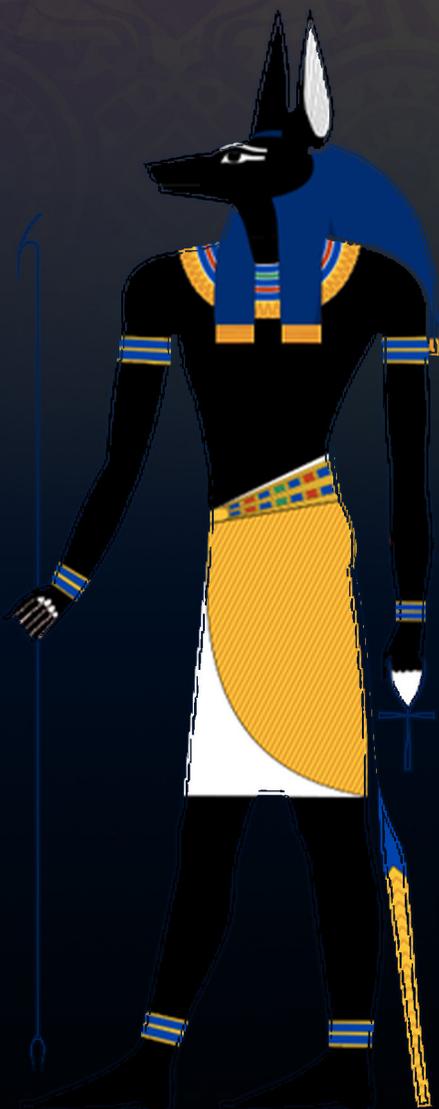
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FOOD FOR THE SOUL

with Chef Fran

Creamy Salmon and Shrimp Linguine

- 1 Boil linguine according to package directions
- 2 Season the shrimp and salmon with seafood seasoning, creole seasoning, Paprika, and saute' (separately) with butter for approximately 5-7 minutes on Medium heat.
- 3 Remove from the pan. Using the same pan, add 2 teaspoons of butter, saute bell peppers and onions on a low to medium heat until just tender. Add the garlic and saute for 2 minutes.
- 4 Add the broccoli, half and half, chicken broth and all the spices and let it hard simmer, while constantly stirring on medium heat until it starts to thicken.
- 5 Add the seafood, noodles, and the Parmesan Cheese. Cook together for 2-3 minutes or until it all blends.
- 6 Season to taste!
- 7 Serve and enjoy with Garlic Bread and a Side Salad. Enjoy!

Chef Fran is the owner and operator of Bella_Delish LLC Catering and private chef services company located in New Orleans, La.

She's also the creator of the Neaux Ya Sauce brand of sauces and condiments. For more information on the Neaux Ya Sauce Line, **EMAIL:** Belladelishllc@gmail.com

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INGREDIENTS

- 8-10** Jumbo Peeled & Devined Shrimp
- 4 oz.** Salmon Filets cut into cubes
- 1/3 lb** Linguine cooked according to box instructions
- 1/4** Sliced Red & Green Bellpeppers (each)
- 1/4** Yellow Onion
- 1/2 cup** Steamed Broccoli (maintain slightly crunchy texture)
- 1 tsp** Minced Garlic
- 1 tsp** Seafood Seasoning
- Creole Seasoning
- Salt to taste
- 1 tsp** Paprika
- 2 1/2 cups** Half & Half
- 1 cup** Chicken Broth
- 1/2 cup** Grated Parmesan Cheese
- 1 stick** Unsalted Buter
- 2 tbsp** Original Red Sauce from The Bella_Delish Neaux Ya Sauce Line



As the memory faded from his mind, Cross pulled into the driveway of the apartment complex. He drove slowly, glancing around. After quickly finding the apartment Keisha lived in, he parked in front of the door. Knowing this will be the first time seeing Keisha since his trial, Cross had to push his true feelings aside. It had taken him years to forgive her for reporting an anonymous tip to the police, or so he thought he had forgiven her. But Fatimah came first in his life and he would never hurt his only daughter by murdering her mother.

He walked up to the door, knocked, and waited. He could hear a familiar voice through the door. Moments later, it opened, and standing in front of him was his sixteen-year-old daughter, Fatimah. At sixteen years old, Fatimah stood at 5'7, with caramel skin, like her mother. Her curly hair was braided and flowed nearly to the center of her back. Her hazel brown eyes lit up at the sight of seeing her father. A smile spread across his face. Fatimah smiled as well, and said, "You're home", surprisingly. "Hey, Princess." Fatimah stepped through the door and embraced her father tightly and in a soft tone, "I'm so glad you're home, daddy", she told him. "Me too, Princess."

TIDES *Cross*

By Shawn Kelley

Photo by Kevin Turcios on Unsplash

Her hazel brown eyes lit up at the sight of seeing her father. A smile spread across his face. Fatimah smiled as well, and said, "You're home", surprisingly. "Hey, Princess." Fatimah stepped through the door and embraced her father tightly and in a soft tone, "I'm so glad you're home, daddy", she told him. "Me too, Princess."

They broke their embrace and Cross stood smiling as she wiped tears of joy from her face. "I just came to visit two weeks ago. Why didn't you tell me you were getting released? I know Porche knew and I'm mad she didn't tell me." Cross smirked and asked her, "Is your mama here? Or are you here by yourself?", as he looked inside through the opened door. "She's not here, daddy. You can come inside." "Naw, babygirl. I'm good. I actually came to get you. Let's go."

Cross and Fatimah cruised the streets after enjoying an expensive shopping spree at the Mall Of Louisiana and an early dinner. Throughout the day Keisha had called Fatimah several times on her daughter's whereabouts. Especially after learning she was with her father. Cross glanced over at Fatimah as she moved her head to the rap lyrics coming from the speakers.

Fatimah loved and admired her father, even though she knew about the lifestyle he lived, and for that reason, she respected him even more. She had heard the stories of the "Bloody Summer War", and her father was referenced as a "Street Legend". For this reason, she was respected among her peers, who gave her the name of "Princess". She also knew her mother was the person who placed an anonymous call to the authorities leading to Cross' arrest. Fatimah loved Keisha, but also hated her for removing her father out of her life.

As evening quickly approached, the sun was setting marking an end to a beautiful day. Suddenly, a familiar face caught his attention inside a passing vehicle. As

soon as he pulled into an empty parking space, Keisha's front door opened and she exited. Much to his surprise, she was still as beautiful as the last time he saw her. She had lost a few pounds from years of sniffing cocaine, but still, she was beautiful. Her hair was freshly done, as well as her nails.

She stood with crossed arms, staring him directly in the eyes, with a sly smirk. Fatimah opened the door and stepped out. After retrieving her shopping bags from the back seat she went around to the driver's side. Cross lowered the window, "Hey, Keisha. It's good seeing you. You looking good", he said. "Mmm-hmm. When did you get out?" wanting to know as she walked towards him. "A few days ago." Fatimah kissed him on the cheek. "Thank you for the clothes, daddy. I had fun", she told him.

"You know daddy's going to always take care of his princess. Call me tomorrow. Maybe we can do this again real soon." "I hope so", replied Fatimah. She turned as Keisha approached and went into the apartment, leaving her parents alone. Cross opened the door, exiting. He leaned his back against the door and lit the marijuana blunt in his hand. Keisha's eyes narrowed and the two stood quietly for a moment.

It was as if they were trying to think of something pleasant to say to the other. Finally, Keisha broke the silence, as Cross blew smoke from his mouth. "Look, Cross. I don't know if you believe me, but I'm really sorry how things happened. I apologized over and over and you will never understand how bad I felt for doing what I did. I know you..." "You good, Keisha. That was the past", he assured her, cutting her words short. "I'm home now and that's all that matters to me. I just know where we stand. I don't trust you and that's the way it is and that's the way its gonna be."

He offered her the marijuana blunt and she gladly took it. She inhaled and blew out the smoke. Cross took the time

to question her about a rumor he'd heard. He asked, "What's this I'm hearing? The streets saying you're messing around with cocaine and popping pills. And you're riding around with all these different dudes. I know you're not out here like that, are you?"

The moment quickly took a turn for the worst. Keisha rolled her eyes and sucked her teeth at the accusations. "Look Cross. I don't need you coming out here questioning me about what I'm doing. I'm grown and I'm not your woman anymore. If you're so worried about me, why you never send me money to make sure my bills were paid? You made sure Porche gave Fatimah money and was taken care of. I bet you made sure that your other baby mama was taken care of. Didn't you?"

"Hold up, right there Keisha", he barked. "You're grown. Isn't that what you just said? So, you don't need me to take care of you and I don't need you coming at me like that. Fatimah's my daughter I'm supposed to take care of her. And as far as anybody else is concerned, its none of your business what I do for them." He snatched the blunt from her and looked at her angrily. "You should've been smarter and kept your mouth closed. But you want to be a Crime stopper. So deal with the consequences."

He opened the driver's door and got in. He started the ignition, eyeing her. "I'ma holla at you Keisha. I have business to take care of and it's not going to get taken care of wasting time here with you." As he drove away he glanced in the rear-view mirror. Keisha stood in the same spot watching as he sped off. Cross didn't get far before his phone began ringing. Porsche's number flashed across the screen. Before he could answer, the sound of gunshots rang out, shattering his rear window. "What the..", lowering his head in a panic, dropping his phone as shots continued to rang out.



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