

FEBRUARY 2023 ISSUE | VOLUME 2 | U.S. \$3.50

C.O.B.S.

CIRCLE OF
Boss SISTERS

QUEEN'S COURT

SHELL-ANN MCKENZIE, RN

CEO & FOUNDER OF HELP FOR HEALTHCARE
PROFESSIONAL, INC. (HHCP)

FASHION CORNER

FELICIA PEACE

FOUNDER OF DIFFERENT BY DESIGN

ARTIST'S CORNER

MARY DANIELS

CEO OF CHOKE.HER.SKINS

WOMEN WERK

SHEILISA MCNEAL - BURGESS

FOUNDER & CEO OF FRIA JEWELRY

WOMEN INNOVATORS

BRITNY ELLINGTON

FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
OF THE CROW HEAL PROJECT, INC.

KING'S COURT

ALVIN IRBY

FOUNDER & CHIEF READING
INSPIRER AT BARBERSHOP BOOKS

10 INFLUENTIAL
BLACK WOMEN



Essynce
Moore

CEO OF ESSYNCE COUTURE LLC

FEBRUARY!

NO - FEAR - MONTH

WRITTEN BY: DR. TREVI BOOKER PERSHAY



Welcome, February! We are in the second month of the year, and I want to make sure that your passion is very much alive from the day you made your resolution. February is a popular month known for Valentine's and President's Day great sales. Valentine's Day is all about couples expressing their love for one another and single individuals are focused on self-love. My husband and I stopped participating in the Valentine's Day ritual. After 37 years of marriage, we celebrate the simple things in life and not living to impress each other. Gifts are awesome but the gift of love is a blessing.

Let's talk about my topic for consideration – **February No Fear Month**. I want to encourage you to make February the month of you becoming fearless. A fearless attitude is when you're uncomfortable with facing your fear and you become bold enough to **DO IT AFRAID**. Never let **FEAR** paralyze your goals, your dreams and never allow **FEAR** to motivate you to quit. Being uncomfortable is a good place to jump start that business. It is best to be challenged in your comfortability because eventually it will introduce you to the possibilities that you **CAN** do it. If you're not challenged, you won't see change. Staying in your comfort zone means you're afraid of change.

Just remember this once you're prepared to give birth to that vision of yours. **OBSTACLES** is here waiting to discourage you from making it happen. Be careful because obstacles live in your **EX-CUSES**. Excuses are crutches that temporarily paralyze your pursuit to go forth. You must face and handle your obstacles because it comes with the journey, and it will show what you are really made of. Obstacles are here to test your endurance, faith, fear, and zeal. You must start looking at obstacles as an opportunity, not just a problem. When I am faced with an obstacle, I think how I am going to move, get around or jump over this thing that is in my way. Obstacles can be moved when your mind set is focused on winning. I see obstacles as an opportunity to prove that I am determined to win.

I invite you all to take on the month of February as the Month with no Fear. Do it afraid, do it with no money, do it without support, and most important Just Do It!

Blessing,

Dr. Trevi Pershay

Dr. Trevi Booker Pershay

BLACK

HISTORY MONTH



YESTERDAY • TODAY • TOMORROW

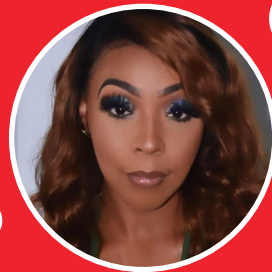
MEET THE C.O.B.S. TEAM



Trevi Booker Pershay - Editor-N-Chief
Trevi Booker Pershay is Editor-N- Chief and Founder of C.O.B.S. – Circle of Boss Sisters. Trevi wears many hats she is CEO & Founder of PDM Performing Arts Corp., Trevi Pershay Productions Inc, PDM Productions LLC and she is author of the book “A Different Type of Church Girl – The Battle of the Calling on Amazon. Trevi is also Senior Pastor of Restoration, Hope and Deliverance Center, mentor, dance teacher and she is known as Tyler Perry of the Hood and the Purpose Pusher.
CONTACT: IG – trevipershayproductions. EMAIL: pdmperformingart17@gmail.com or trevipershayproductions@gmail.com



Tinika Thomas
Co-Editor-N-Chief/Beauty Editor
Tinika Thomas is CEO & Founder of Shay Beauty Consultants, she currently is Vice President on the Board of Directors for Trevi Pershay Productions, PDM Performing Arts as well as business advisor/manager to Trevi Booker Pershay. Tinika juggles many hats, she is a mom, soon to be wife, make-up designer and enjoys being with her 3-year-old grandson Cam.
CONTACT:
IG – tinikashay
EMAIL: Tinika.thomas@pdmperformingarts.com or shaybeautyconsultant@gmail.com



Arielle Pershay - Fitness Editor
Arielle Pershay wears many hats, she is CEO & Founder of Astar Dance Movement – which she choreography dances for weddings parties, dance competitions, music videos, and private parties. Arielle is the Artistic Director of PDM Performing Arts as well as a Music writer for Trevi Pershay Productions theater and movies soundtrack.
CONTACT:
EMAIL: pershayarielle@gmail.com IG: astardancemovement



Rodnisha “Nisha” Pershay - Hair Editor
Nisha Pershay specializes in taking care of weaves; therefore, you will have them for a long time. She is CEO & Founder of The Traveling Salon 2. Nisha holds down a full-time job with an investment company as well as she is Sound & Stage Manager for Trevi Pershay Productions Inc.
CONTACT:
IG: nishadahairweavekillla , EMAIL: rodnishapershay1@gmail.com



Abdullah Khan Aka gfxmentor606
Designing & Magazine Layout Director
Abdullah Khan is Computer Engineer, Adobe Certified Graphics Designer, TOP-RATED Freelancer, Designing and Magazine Layout Director of C.O.B.S. – Circle of Boss Sisters, Founder and CEO of Software House, worked with Multinational Companies i.e. Adobe, McDonalds, Forbes and now Providing Services all over the world.
CONTACT: Website: www.Maklion.com EMAIL: abdullah@maklion.com IG & FB: Maklion Creations



Danielle Durham
Danielle Durham is a New York City native who is an author, spoken word artist, and life coach. According to those who know her, her pen is her most loyal companion. On Instagram, she’s known as the “hope dealer” because she believes that it is her life’s goal is to spread hope that will awaken the world’s answers by any means necessary.
CONTACT: IG: Coach_Genesis Email : ladyGenesis3@gmail.com



Rosemarie Berghout - Newsletter Editor
A native of Brooklyn, NY, Rosemarie Berghout is the Chief Executive Officer of Fresh Grounds Inc., a non-profit organization that provides community resources throughout metro Atlanta. Rosemarie is also the co-founder of R&R Exp. Productions, providing entertainment platforms for local artists in Atlanta, GA. as well as providing a social networking vehicle for an array of spotlight and fundraising events. With a passion for creativity and expressive writing, Rosemarie created her first newsletter publication for her home church in Brooklyn, NY and after relocating to Dacula, GA., she continued publishing newsletters for a local church in Atlanta, GA. as well as providing other social media and event publications for various professional clientele.
CONTACT: FB: Rosemarie Berghout , EMAIL: rosemarie.berghout@gmail.com



EARN YOUR DEGREE BY NOVEMBER OF 2023!

IT'S YOUR TIME!

0

DAYS REMAINING

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ESSYNCE COUTURE

MEET FOUNDER/OWNER OF ESSYNCE COUTURE LLC

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Welcome to C.O.B.S Magazine. We are super excited to be speaking to a 20-year-old entrepreneur, child fashion designer/stylist, author, actress, celebrity, motivational speaker, and fashionista Essynce Couture. Essynce brings a positive vibe to her peer and others. Essynce is our youngest entrepreneur to grace our cover. Essynce, can you briefly walk us through your backstory before entrepreneurship?

ESSYNCE COUTURE:

Before becoming an entrepreneur at the age of 10 I was simply doing what I loved to do which was designing clothes, acting, and writing, and it was all just for fun. My mom began to notice that I was tearing the sheets of the bed and turning them into gowns. I was actively writing short stories as well at the time. I would have never imagined that the journey I was on would eventually lead me to start my own business.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Can you tell us about your business Essynce Couture LLC? What led you to launch a children's wear brand? What sets you apart from other companies like yours?

ESSYNCE COUTURE:

I started Essynce Couture at the age of 10 years old when my mother took notice of my love for fashion designs. Even at the age of 6 years old I was sketching and designing my clothes. My mom asked me if I would love to change my love for designing into a business. That was the day my life changed drastically. Essynce Couture LLC is one of the 1st children's clothing lines designed by a child with learning in mind. We focus on styling our clothes to compliment all sizes, races, and colors of all children

around the world. In addition, we offer great incentives through our Essynce Couture membership program to the children that support Essynce Couture LLC. We allow them to show and prove their achievements by uploading their report cards, certificates, and awards to any of Essynce Couture's social networks; to which they are selected and rewarded with Essynce Couture LLC incentives. This encourages the children to continue to do well in school and reminds them that education is important. What sets me apart is my purpose, my ability to use my voice and move mountains with my words, both written and spoken. Now I am carrying the torch for my business into the next phase showing my generation it can be done.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

How do you get people to notice your brand and get buyers' attention?

ESSYNCE COUTURE:

I have learned to not only market the brand via social media outlets but embody my brand as well. I demonstrate that embodiment by wearing the clothes that I design and by actively using my products. I've learned that when it comes to capturing attention the best way to do that is by using your resources.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What are some of the top tips you offer to a designer wanting to start their own children's wear brand?

ESSYNCE COUTURE:

My top tips that I can offer to future designers would be to be creative and dare to be different.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

The online world is changing along with the industry. How do you continue to keep up with the latest trends? What



role does networking play?

ESSYNCE COUTURE:

Yes, the internet can be a rather rapidly moving space. However, I try to concern myself less with following trends and more with making them. The internet is always changing and as humans, we naturally change with the times. I always tell other individuals to move in your flow. Networking is very important and my advice would be just to be yourself. Be raw and authentic because that is how people relate to you. Try not to focus on just building business relationships but building friendships as well. Creating friendships is truly how I succeeded in networking.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

If you had the opportunity to style three celebrity's children who would it be?

ESSYNCE COUTURE:

If I had the opportunity to style three celebrity children it would be Willow Smith, Jaden Smith, and Zoe Kravitz.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Every entrepreneur has a secret to their success. Can you give me three ingredients that have helped with your success? How important does the role of leadership play when trying to achieve long-term success?

ESSYNCE COUTURE:

My three ingredients would be it's not what you know but it's who knows. Make sure you define the word success for yourself and what it means to you. Most importantly I have learned with running a consistent business is very important. Leadership is a major part of being your boss. Being a leader is a huge responsibility however, you must have the will to lead yourself and lead others, and it's important to also keep in mind that you learn from other leaders during this process as well.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

You are not only a fashion designer but an actor, actress, motivational speaker, author, and fashionista. How do you create a balance between your personal life and your business life?

ESSYNCE COUTURE:

Yes I have written three books called The Middle School Chronicle Series that are mandatory readings in certain districts. I am the only teen author who has written three books that are mandatory readings for several school district curricula including Hillside, NJ School District; Brooklyn, NY Chart School(s); and Orange, NJ School District. I've been in Time Magazine, Black Enterprise, BET, and more. I give speeches around the world as a motivational speaker. I have also created a natural body product line for children, tweens, and teens labeled Wynk. I try to balance my life the best way I can but it's a journey where you have to be patient with yourself to continue to learn along the way.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Do you experience moments of frustration when you are ready to throw in the towel? Who/What keeps you motivated during those difficult obstacles?

ESSYNCE COUTURE:

Absolutely, I think we all do. In those moments I try to remember why I started this business journey in the first place. I remind myself of that little girl who had a child's passion for fashion and I carry her with me close all the time. My mom has been the greatest motivator she is one of many flames behind the fire.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What direction do you hope to see your company going in the next five years?

ESSYNCE COUTURE:

I would love to see children around the world wearing the Essynce Couture LLC brand as well as being pampered with my Wynk products. I want to make sure that I am headed in the direction that symbolizes my growth and the evolution of my very existence.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Here at COBS Magazine, we love to share daily affirmations. What is the daily affirmation? Can you please share your company website and your social media platforms for us to continue to follow? COBS Magazine wishes you continuous success.

ESSYNCE COUTURE:

I love that. One of my many affirmations is "I attract love and light because I am love and light." I do have one more favorite affirmation "I release what does not serve me with ease." Please visit my website www.essyncecouture.com and to purchase my natural body products please visit www.essyncecosmetics.com. My social media handles are IG: @essyncecouturellc and @essyncemoore. Thank you for the opportunity.



SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE, RN

MEET CEO AND FOUNDER OF HELP FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS, INC. (HHCP)

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

In this month's section of Queen's court we have the pleasure of speaking with Atlanta-based nurse leader, clinical informatics strategist, educator, speaker, advocate, founder, and non-profit executive Shelli-Ann McKenzie. Shelli-Ann strives to empower those in her space to be the best version of themselves.

Can you please give us an overview of your background growing up?

SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

I grew up as an only child. I lived with my grandmother and father in Jamaica, West Indies. They were Seventh-day Adventist Christians who instilled the importance of daily worship and continuous praise, regardless of circumstance. I participated in various programs at church, sang in the church choir, and was a member of the Pathfinder club. I played the piano, swam at the YMCA, and played badminton. I traveled regularly to the United States and the United Kingdom, then migrated to the USA when I was 12 years old and resided in New York City. My mother ensured that I continued my involvement in activities that provided me the opportunity to stretch my curiosity, be culturally aware, and lead in my community. I continued singing in church and was a member of a gospel trio that competed in music competitions as part of an A Capella chorus. Our tours took me to places including Quebec, Annapolis, and Maryland. My musical talent was further developed as I learned to play the piano and clarinet. When I graduated from high school this talent also served as a source of income as I sang for a Chamber Music and Jazz Ensemble while pursuing my pharmacology degree. The opportunity to be the lead in planning the Homecoming event at my high school was most memorable and rewarding. This created long-lasting relationships not just with students but also with various members of the business community who sponsored our events. A near-death experience just before my 18th birthday ushered in the path for my new journey, as after this occurrence my mother encouraged me to explore nursing.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Can you tell us about your organization Helps for Healthcare Professionals, Inc.? What does your organization offer? What is your organization's mission?

SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

HHCP, Inc. is a nurse-owned, registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization leading a community dedicated to supporting our frontline heroes across Georgia. We are a group of healthcare professionals passionate about supporting our colleagues, family, and friends by providing healthcare services on the frontline. Our mission is to mobilize people and resources, reciprocate care for healthcare professionals, and

strengthen our frontline.

Our vision is shaping a society where support is provided to healthcare professionals, through awareness, education, and crisis relief, ensuring the preservation of workforce wellness. We offer various programs which include the Frontline Care and Recovery Program which offers custom care packages, food assistance, personal protective equipment, and appreciation events. The Workforce Defense Program offers various efforts to advocate for a sustainable healthcare workforce. The Crossroads Education Program offers health careers awareness for communities, scholarships, financial assistance, and the CBO VaxBridge Vaccine program.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Your organization's emphasis is on workforce wellness. Can you please explain why workforce wellness is so important? What are some of the basic elements of preserving workforce wellness?

SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

Healthcare workers have dedicated their lives to keeping our community safe and healthy. Most healthcare workers suffer from high levels of stress and mental health issues. The research shows that nurses reported significantly more depression, anxiety, and stress. To preserve workforce wellness, we need to mobilize all available community resources, regardless of industry. Why? Healthcare workers are an integral part of our community. There is less than one degree of separation between a healthcare worker and members of the community. Create heightened awareness of the benefits and career pathways in healthcare from elementary school through college. Also sharing the issues we face, related to staffing shortages, license restrictions, unsafe staffing ratios, workplace violence, the importance of advocating for change, more recruits, education, and providing scholarships and financial assistance for members of our community who want to join the healthcare and first responder workforce. We need to identify interested individuals and organizations passionate about supporting the healthcare workforce. Form long-term partnerships and collaborate with various entities to ensure there is ongoing mentorship, monetary incentives, and skills training for entry-level healthcare workers. Continuously supporting them through terminal degrees which include mental and spiritual wellness support

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What made you transition to a life of



entrepreneurship? What have been your greatest challenges in starting your organization?

SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

I have not fully transitioned to a life of entrepreneurship. I own several businesses but continue to work full-time. Building each business gradually, not biting off more than I can chew. For my nonprofit, fundraising has posed a challenge, at times. Also, we are 100% volunteer-led and there is a high turnover in that aspect. Creating a stronger pipeline of volunteers and forming the right long-term partnerships is a priority.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

The pandemic, new variants of COVID rising, and the RSV virus affecting babies has taken its toll on healthcare professionals which can be physically and mentally draining. What are some of the obstacles you see to helping medical professionals with mental health issues? What do you feel that can be done?

SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

Major challenges include the increased volume of medical professionals in need of mental health assistance. Shortage of professionals trained to provide appropriate treatment. Lack of awareness of genetic contributing factors that make some prone to mental illness. Cultural apprehensions about mental health therapy. The solution is to recruit, train, and certify more mental health professionals and first aid workers. Conduct healthcare workforce wellness surveys with targeted questions to screen for mental health needs. Build relationships with community-based organizations to provide free-of-charge mental health assistance and treatment for healthcare workers.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What did you learn from the pandemic as a business owner?

SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

I learned that truly innovative thinking, creativity, and pooling of community resources is a major component to the success of a business.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

You are also the co-founder of another non-profit organization. Can you tell us about that organization? What was your mission when

starting the organization?

SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

Yes, I am the co-founder of Black Women Leaders in Nursing which is a global entity with more than 8,500 nurses in our network. Our mission is to inspire and empower women and promote diversity in nursing leadership across the globe.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Do you feel that there has become a lack of trust in the health care system amongst certain communities? How can healthcare organizations earn back the trust of these communities?

SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

Yes. Members of underserved and minority communities tend to mistrust the healthcare system. We need to provide true health equity, and better access to healthcare, treatment, and insurance coverage.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

The recent conservatory in the healthcare profession is nurses fighting for better wages. The nurses are saying management is forcing them to strike due to the understaffing leaving patients at risk. You have some individuals saying it is unethical for nurses to strike. What is your opinion regarding this topic? What role would your organization play in such a situation?

SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

Is it unethical for a bus driver to strike or for gas prices to increase? Overall, we need to work together to find creative solutions to societal and economic problems. Today, our biggest issue is the nursing shortage. The goal is not to point fingers, but find the middle ground. HHCP would organize a series of healthcare town halls for all involved stakeholders including patients, representatives of the multidisciplinary healthcare team, payers, community leaders, and legislators. We could facilitate discussions, share best practices across the country, brainstorm, and then implement change in our various communities.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Where do you think the US healthcare system is heading and what needs to be done?

SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

That is a pretty loaded question as there are many aspects of healthcare to consider. The healthcare ecosystem is suffering and in a true State of Emergency. With 350 million people living in the United States, I do know that we have ample resources to deliver better healthcare. One of the biggest challenges is that we are living in such a state of chaos and healthcare, multiple issues compound making things more complex. We can't seem to shake COVID-19, Monkey Pox, RSV, and the standard recurring diseases. Research continues to show significant health disparities with limited access to care. Although we have expanded our reach into underserved and rural communities, with Telehealth, we still face staffing shortages, payer issues, mergers and acquisitions (M&A), and their impact on quality patient care and safety all must be factored in. But let me take a step back and discuss this as it relates to the ongoing healthcare workforce shortage issue. Those who work in healthcare know there is extremely high stress and turnover in our day-to-day. This tends to lead to physical and mental burnout. Some staff is forced to work in areas they are not fully trained for. Staff is frustrated and voice their concerns about inadequate compensation, high patient ratios, and the need for improved health benefits. Staff feels hopeless because they understand the negative impacts on themselves and their patients. The recent strikes, both here and abroad speak to the levels of frustration. We've successfully used technology to compare historical data and identify patterns to help us pinpoint areas with the highest healthcare

workforce shortages. Ongoing Workforce Wellness surveys will help us predict the true needs of the workforce and how best to ensure sustainability. Honestly, there are healthcare delivery strategies we can adopt from other countries around the world. As healthcare and community leaders, we need actively participate in advocacy to ensure equity, equality, and access to quality healthcare. Each member of the community NEEDS TO GET INVOLVED in advocating for healthy communities and healthcare policy changes.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

As an entrepreneur how do you equally prioritize the demands of your career and the demands of your personal life? What do the hardest days look like? What do the easiest days look like?

SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

If I am, to be honest, some days I don't have it all together. I am still a work in progress. As much as I work, I make it to 95% of my children's track meets basketball, and baseball practices and games. My hardest days consist of working a full day as a nursing informatics leader in telemedicine, attending multiple meetings, and managing my team. After work, I drive my children to practice or doctor's appointments. While I wait, I alternate weekday evening meetings with my other teams, boards, and advocacy groups. I also attend networking events, dinners, and galas to support various associations and community partners. Because I am passionate about everything I commit to, my easiest days consist of similar activities, with a lower volume of meetings and events combined. Essentially getting my children off to school, work my day job, and watch my children practice their favorite sports.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Can you offer a piece of advice that someone shared with you when you launched your businesses? What goals would you like to accomplish for yourself and your company in the next few years? Can you please share your website and social media handles for our readers to continue to follow you? Continuous success on your journey.

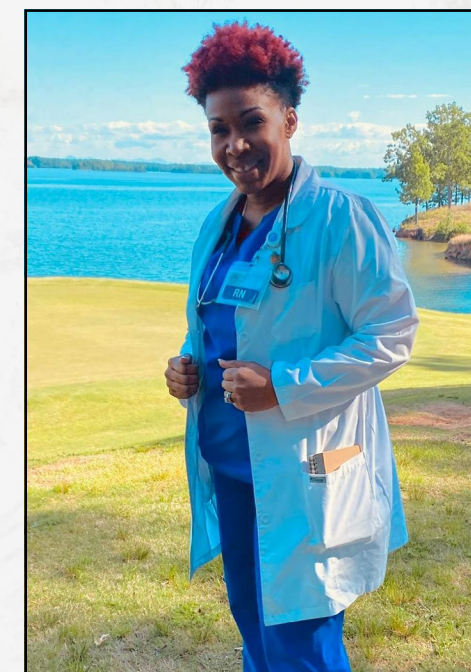
SHELLI-ANN MCKENZIE:

My advice would be confident in yourself and your dreams. Have integrity, be professional, and give your all in everything you do. Always raise the bar higher. My personal goal for 2023 is to celebrate some major milestones in our family. We are planning for college, navigating scholarships, big birthdays, high school graduation, our daughter's wedding in the UK, and welcoming a new grandbaby. We will also be reflecting, as this will be the first year after losing key family members in 2022. All that to say...I pray daily to remain healthy and praise God that I am blessed and built to serve my family and community... Oh yes, and more date nights with my husband



of 16 years! HHCP's 2023 Focus and beyond is to secure recurring contributions through corporate, and NGO partnerships and individual donors to support our mission. If interested, email partnerships@hhcpinc.org. Our goal is to raise funds to fully launch our Crossroads Education and Skills Training Program and to fund training and certification for new nursing assistants (CNAs) and first responders (EMTs). To provide scholarships for high school graduates aspiring to join the healthcare/ first responder workforce. Host HHCP's Inaugural Glam & Gratitude Fundraising Gala which will be held on April 1, 2023, in Atlanta, GA. This event commemorates our 3rd anniversary and HHCP's commitment to supporting more than 21,000+ healthcare workers and first responders.

For more information about our gala please visit our website at <https://hhcpinc.org>. By 2025, our goal is to sponsor at least 250 program graduates and deploy them into new healthcare roles. General Inquiries: info@hhcpinc.org Donations: Zelle donate@hhcpinc.org, PayPal, or CashApp. Follow us: **Facebook:** @hhcpinc2, **Twitter:** @hhcpinc2, **Instagram:** @hhcpinc2, **LinkedIn:** hhcpinc2. Thank you.



TINIKA THOMAS

Inside tips for everyday make-up routine – regardless if you are a newbie or experienced in the makeup world.

TIPS FOR REMOVING YOUR MAKEUP WITHOUT MAKEUP REMOVER

The one complaint that I hear often is that makeup wipes are too harsh for my sensitive skin. Then the question becomes what are the alternatives? SOS!!! The one thing is you never want to go to sleep with your makeup you will regret how your skin looks in the morning. I will be giving you other options for removing your makeup without makeup remover.



1. COCONUT OIL:

Coconut oil contains very natural oils that play a major role in moisturizing your skin. Coconut oil is also an anti-bacterial and anti-yeast that helps heal wounds, treat acne and protect the skin from harmful bacteria which can come from unclean makeup tools. I recommend using organic cold-pressed coconut oil for makeup remover. I do recommend to double cleansing your skin to avoid the oil from clogging your pores.

2. CUCUMBER JUICE:

Cucumber is one of the hidden ingredients that can do magic on your skin. The mixture is simple combining cucumber juice and mixing with water to use to remove makeup. The use of cucumber juice will help you get rid of every ounce of makeup on your face as well as keep your pores in the best possible shape.



3. BAKING SODA AND HONEY:

Not only does the combination cleanse your face but it will also gently exfoliate your skin too. These are two common ingredients that you can find in your home. All need to do is get a washcloth to pour about half a teaspoon of honey along with a half teaspoon of baking soda and begin to gently scrub your face to remove your makeup. Then simply rinse with water.

4. MICELLAR WATER:

Micellar Water has a high presence of micelles. For those that do not know micelles are compounds that are effective at removing dirt and oil to keep skin looking flawless. Any Micellar Water solution that has always been used as a facial cleanser to assist with the removal of makeup, dirt, and oil from the skin. This product is excellent for anyone who suffers from sensitive skin.



5. ALMOND OIL:

Almond oil is one of the most common ingredients used in many natural makeup products. Almond oil is often used as a cleanser or moisturizer. All need to do is put an adequate amount in your hand and gently begin to massage all over your face. You want to focus on your eyes and the area around them. Then dampen a cotton ball with water and gently begin to rub your makeup off.

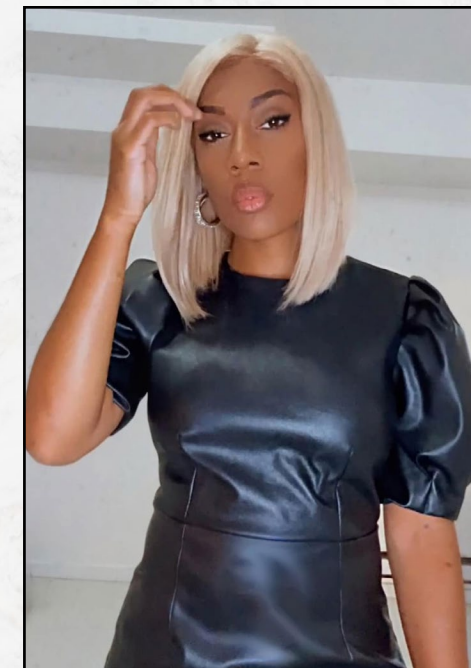


6. ALOE VERA:

Aloe Vera has a gel consistency and is very gentle and moisturizing on the skin. Since the texture of Aloe Vera is so smooth it is perfect as a makeup remover. This is a great alternative to makeup remover or if you are not a fan of using oil-based products. Use a little bit of Aloe Vera gel on a cotton ball, and gently massage the Aloe Vera into the face removing your makeup.

COME ALIVE

WRITTEN BY LADY GENESIS



“

Views can be exciting
But it's the things
we see with our eyes shut
that seem more inviting

Dreams takes us places
That our life mistakes can't erase
But somehow in a way make
them
feel even more distant

In an instant you hear a sound
that is bound to wake you
but its your decision to
to make it a reality or
Continue to hit snooze

The way thoughts travel
from our ventricles

So simple yet complicated

Similes metaphors
Dreams and idioms
possibilities we can't even fathom

But I love my imagination

As a people we get caught up
In stadiums that weren't built
With our hands
so we get jobs in them to feel
as if We are apart of the plan

And somehow we've made it

Wake up to your dreams !
Impossibilities made possible
Why wonder and watch things
Happen
be apart of it
We have more resources than

the Ones who started it
Marching
yea I'm talkin about
Malcolm rosa and Martin

Just to name a few
but instead
of reigning with our crowns we are
laying on our backs
prostituting ourselves
for things like
SNAP

not realizing that system is
not a set up but a set back
Write the vision make it plain
The bible is the book that I live by

We are a generation of
Overcomer's and acheivers'

The problem is we don't believe in
us

Illegal Hustling has become
an epidemic like aids
My heart aches
to see my fellow melanated skin
kin

Chasing things that's fast
instead of their dreams of sub-
stance
and realities that can last
Past their expiration

The last shall be first
A Scripture worth the exploration
Because our time is now

Get busy in the things
that lead to Your make believes
believing in the reality
you'll be achieving

Mind tingling things
that make your spine
straighten to stand tall
and awaken to your life
It's yours for the taking

Eat and feast on things
that'll make you take
over this world like a beast
Make a difference in the
4 walls of your home

A strong start
is an art you must form
not only in your mind
but in your heart
can't you feel it beating
ITS TIME TO COME ALIVE

ALVIN IRBY

MEET FOUNDER AND CHIEF READING INSPIRER FOR BARBERSHOP BOOKS

COBS MAGAZINE:

Welcome to COBS Magazine King's Court. We have the pleasure of speaking to a former kindergarten teacher turned award-winning social entrepreneur, international speaker, comedian, and author. Can you tell us a little bit about your background growing up?

ALVIN IRBY:

I grew up in Little Rock, AR in the early 90s. My mom was an elementary school teacher raising three children on her own. Reading wasn't something I did as a kid but school was always a priority in my home.

COBS MAGAZINE:

Let's talk about your business. Can you tell us about your organization Barbershop Books? What were your vision and mission when you started the program? What makes your program unique?

ALVIN IRBY:

Barbershop Books is a national literacy organization that inspires Black boys and other vulnerable children to identify as readers and to read for fun. We create child-friendly reading spaces and provide early literacy barber training in barbershops. We currently support reading in more than 200 barbershops across 50 cities and 20 states. When the pandemic led to widespread barbershop closures, we developed a variety of digital and virtual programming to expand reading opportunities beyond the barbershop. Our Reading So Lit Summer program hires and trains male high school students of color to lead fun literacy explorations with Black and Brown boys



ages 6-8. We are expanding on this work to launch the Reading So Lit reading identity exploration and assessment platform in the Fall of 2023 with select school districts. The Barbershop Books E-Library is a free online collection of children's books published by independent Black authors.

COBS MAGAZINE:

Nowadays, this generation is learning through television, videos, and social media so why is reading so important?

ALVIN IRBY:

Even with the advent of new technologies and media, reading remains popular for communication, learning, and entertainment. Brain research related to the science of reading has revealed a variety of positive benefits of print text over digital formats including higher comprehension, better absorption, fewer distractions, and help support a culture of reading. Technology can be a great way to expand reading access and opportunities as well as support academic enrichment and interventions. Children should be encouraged to engage with the text in a variety of formats including environmental print such as signs, advertisements, nutrition facts, and clothing labels to name a few. Helping children identify as readers and read for fun builds a foundation for life-long reading.

COBS MAGAZINE:

What were your greatest challenges when you started your program? What was your most victorious moment throughout the process?

ALVIN IRBY:

Limited capacity and resources are common challenges that Barbershop Books and many nonprofits face. Collaborations with diverse partners together with financial support and advisement from individuals, mission-aligned foundations, organizations, and corporations have enabled Barbershop Books to deepen its impact and expand its reach over the past 9 years. The past year, Barbershop Books has experienced significant growth in our team, community partnerships, and in the number of children that our programming reaches.



COBS MAGAZINE:

When you started this program giving books to barbershops did you ever envision that it would turn into an organization that now supports several shops?

ALVIN IRBY:

I felt that the positive and transformative reading experiences that I was witnessing in Harlem barbershops could be replicated in Black barbershops across America. However, I didn't imagine it would spark a national movement to promote early literacy in barbershops, reaching over 10,000 Black boys annually or that it would allow me to speak on national television, throw out the first pitch at a Yankee game, or receive a check at half court during a New York Knicks halftime show at Madison Square Garden.

COBS MAGAZINE:

As a former teacher I am sure that you have dealt with students that have had some difficult challenges that you had to mentor them through. What made focus on books and reading instead of a mentorship program?

ALVIN IRBY:

Barbershop Books is a mentoring program. Supporting fun reading experiences in barbershops increases black boys' access to black male reading role models. Less than 2% of K-12 teachers in the U.S. are black males and more than 50% of black children are raised by single mothers. So, many black boys have limited access to

black male reading role models at school and at home. Social psychology research suggests that same-sex role models can help improve confidence in one's academic ability and support positive academic attitudes, which greatly impact engagement with and motivation to engage in academic activities such as reading, math, and science.

COBS MAGAZINE:

Few relationships are as intimate as the one between a barber and their client. You are combining those intimate moments with reading. Why is it important that element of bringing back those sacred places within the barber shops?

ALVIN IRBY:

American society has created and continues to support hostile living and learning conditions for Black boys and men. Barbershops have historically been a safe space for black males and a hub for the black community. In some black neighborhoods, barbershops are some of the only local black-owned businesses. Many barbers view their work as more than a job but a community service and an opportunity to improve their clients' lives. The Barbershop Books program provides barbers another way to positively impact their communities both now and in the future.

COBS MAGAZINE:

You also have a show called Ted Talk? Can you tell us about your experience having a Ted Talk with over 1 million views?

ALVIN IRBY:

In 2017, I had the opportunity to participate in the TED Residency program. During this innovative cohort-based program, I connected with and worked alongside innovators from across the world as we each developed Ted Talks about our respective areas of expertise. It was a humbling experience

to meet so many interesting, inspiring, and brilliant people with diverse interests. Sharing my personal and professional path to becoming a literacy advocate and discussing the mission and work of Barbershop Books on TED's global platform have been one of the highlights of my professional journey.

COBS MAGAZINE:

Since starting Barbershop Books what elevation have you witnessed happen within the program?

ALVIN IRBY:

The Barbershop Books program has grown to over 200 barbershop partners across more than 50 cities and 20 states. By July 2023, the program will add 80 additional barbershops to its national network and collaborate with library systems, school districts, and other community partners to expand into several new cities. It has been inspiring to work with individuals and organizations to expand reading opportunities for black boys and to witness first-hand how Barbershop Books' mission resonates with communities.

COBS MAGAZINE:

In your bio, it states that you are a stand-up comedian. Can you tell us how you became interested in becoming a comedian? How do you use your comedic platform to continue to spread the importance of reading?

ALVIN IRBY:

I have been performing standup for 13 years and counting. Like many other comedians, I was told from a young age that I was funny and enjoyed making people laugh by doing impressions of people and telling funny stories. Growing up in Little Rock, I never imagined that I would ever do standup comedy and certainly didn't think anyone would pay me to do it. In 2016, I was one of ten national finalists selected for NBC

Universal's Standup NBC competition out of more than 600 comedians who auditioned nationwide. This competition allowed me to perform at the Hollywood Improv in Los Angeles for the first time. I enjoy standup comedy and view it as another avenue for me to teach and share my perspective.

COBS MAGAZINE:

Becoming an entrepreneur is never an easy journey. What is the best advice you ever received that you can share?

ALVIN IRBY:

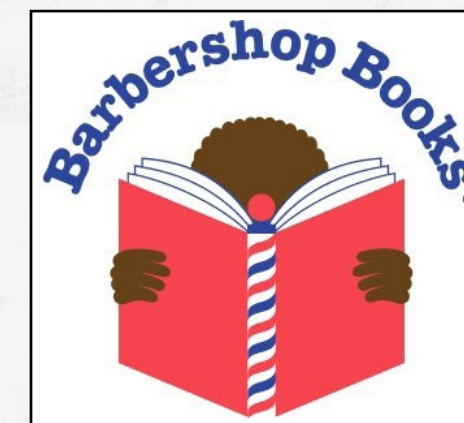
Embrace life-long learning, be humble, and build a network of friends and colleagues who can offer advice and encouragement throughout your entrepreneurship journey.

COBS MAGAZINE:

Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years? What would do you hope your ultimate goal will be? Can you please share your website, how people can donate to your program, and your social media platforms? We wish you continuous success.

ALVIN IRBY:

My ultimate goal with Barbershop Books is to create systemic change for Black boys in terms of expanding reading opportunities, improving reading outcomes, and ultimately helping children identify as readers and read for fun. Over the next 5 years Barbershop Books program will expand to more than 500 barbershops and our organization will develop and launch a web-based reading identity exploration and assessment platform that will be used by schools and community-based organizations to help over 1 million PreK-5 students better understand and articulate their reading preferences. To learn more about or invest in Barbershop Books visit <https://barbershopbooks.org>.



10 INFLUENTIAL BLACK WOMEN IN 2023

Written by Tinika Thomas-Foreman

In February, in accordance, with Black History, C.O.B.S Magazine wanted to celebrate our selected 10 influential black women. When Black women lead we all win. Black women have a deep understanding of the nature of freedom because they have sat at different intersections of oppression. We are celebrating their commitments and achievements that have given each of us a voice. Please let us give honor where honor is due.

1. MICHELLE OBAMA:

Michelle Obama is an attorney, philanthropist, and the former first African American First Lady in U.S. history. During her time in office, Michelle created the Let's Move program to target the ending of childhood obesity. In 2019 Michelle became a best-selling author of a book entitled Becoming. This iconic woman continues to advocate for the education of young girls, and the overall health of children. Even after Barack's presidency, Michelle's influence continues to remain high.



2. ISSA RAE:

As the creator of the award-winning show Insecure, Issa Rae is proving that there are no limits to what you can accomplish. Issa has broken into the television and film industries by producing, directing, and starring in multiple projects which led to her starting her own production company. Issa Rae is dedicating her career to keep creating storylines and platforms for artists and actors of color.



3. IBTIHAJ MUHAMMAD:

Olympic medalist Ibtihaj Muhammad is the first American woman to wear a hijab during an Olympic game. Ibtihaj is a world champion and 5-time senior world medalist who has released two books, including the best-selling children's book, The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family, as well as memoir Proud: My Fight for an Unlikely American Dream. As an entrepreneur and advocate for Muslim and African American women in sports, Ibtihaj continues to inspire others to defy the limits society places on them.



4. BIANCA BEA:

Bianca Bea is a determined Afro-Mexican proving that la Cultura has power in the business world. Bianca is the founder of the clothing and lifestyle brand Yo Soy Afro Latina which brands put the Afro in Latindad and whose brands speak volumes about her representation and pride towards her culture. Bianca saw the need to make an empowering statement that young, bold Black Latina women could wear proudly, to feel celebrated and revolutionized. Bianca's goal is to encourage women to embrace their cultural identities, Latina and Black.



5. AMANDA GORMAN:

Amanda Gorman shook the world with her outstanding poem which was recited at the presidential inauguration. Amanda is the youngest poet that has been part of inaugural history. This American poet and activist are known for her addressing Black identity, feminism, marginalization, and climate change. Outside of being a well-known poet, Amanda also started her nonprofit organization called One Pen One Page which provides free programs in creative writing for underprivileged youth.



6. MISTY COPELAND:

This young spirit started her ballet career at the age of 13. Misty is the second African American female soloist and first African American principal dancer in the 75-year history of the American Ballet Theater. Misty is not only the best ballet dancer of this time but she is someone who has caught the imagination of a generation who are demanding equity and social justice in all areas of their lives. Misty has advocated the end of that. Her famous quote is, "Start unknown, and finish unforgettable."



7. CATHY HUGHES:

Cathy Hughes is a media pioneer who has demonstrated the power of one. She represents one woman, one vision, and one company known as Urban One formerly known as Radio One. As the Founder and Chairperson of Urban One, Inc. which is one the largest African -American owned and operated, broadcast companies in the nation. Urban One generates original content across the spectrum of radio, television, and digital media. Cathy Hughes's ambition is to empower African Americans with information and to tell stories from their perspective. In the present day, Cathy Hughes's company is publicly traded on the U.S. Stock Exchange where it continues to serve as the chairperson for Urban Radio.

8. SERENA WILLIAMS:

Serena Williams is an American professional tennis player who has changed our culture, community, athletics, and the way we view them. Serena has influenced athletics all over the world by winning over 23 major singles titles more than any other woman or man during any open era. Serena has always been more than a sports star, she has been an inspiration to a generation of women, especially Black women by giving the power and belief in themselves to strive to do their best.



9. GAYLE KING:

We all know Gayle King as the familiar face that graces the television screens of millions every morning on CBS This Morning. Gayle is also an author, journalist, and editor at large of Oprah Daily wasn't enough to add to her resume, Gayle also hosts her own Sirius XM Satellite Radio show entitled The Gayle King Show. Over the years, Gail has made film and television appearances as well as worked on numerous television specials and documentaries. For her work, she has won numerous awards which included an Emmy Award. "When people don't want the best for you, they are not the best for you," Gayle King.

10. ANGELA DAVIS:

Angela Davis is a well-known Professor and activist. Angela Davis was a major activist from the late 1960s to the early 70s. Angela joined the Communist Party and became an affiliate of the Black Panthers. Angela ran as the Communist vice-presidential candidate in the 1980s and 1984. Angela made her mark by lending her ideas and voice to a variety of issues. She spoke out about prison reform, women's rights, racial equality, and the inequality of capitalism. Angela still believes that America can be transformed into a more equal society. Angela has a kind of openness and generosity that makes her not just an elder but an active participant in change.



NISHA PERSHAY

Nisha's 101 hair tips, tricks, and trends for 2023!

This is a new year but also can be a new you and with that in mind why not try some different with your hair? For the year 2023, we all need to explore and break out of our comfort zones. Now with the sensation of social media, these new hairstyles are rebirthing from the iconic early 90s and 2000s. We have to big up Gen Z's for taking an oldie and making it a new goodie.

It's almost as if we are in a time machine but with more products, versatility, and budget-friendly DIY. Major points with keeping us in the loop are the Genz's with their creativity, bold ideas, and use of repurposing trends to make it stylish for all ages. I am noticing some of the popular trends are not only fashionable but easy to do in the comfort of your home. Here are some of my favorite trends that I think you should consider trying this year!



THE PAST HAIRSTYLES VS TODAY

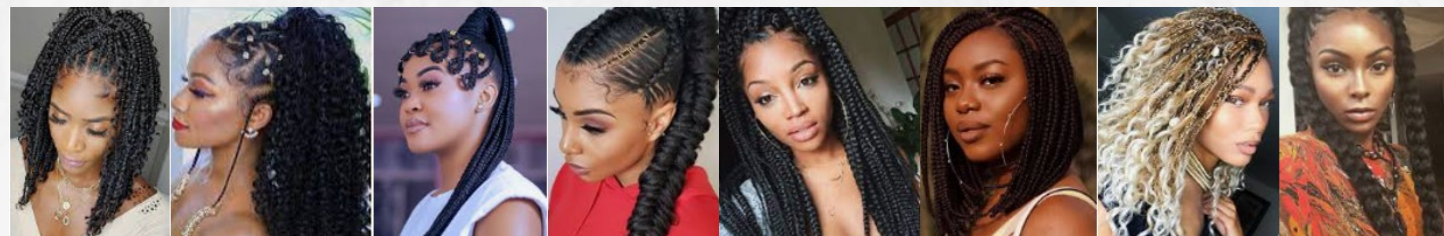
Up do's, half down half up, flat twist, braids, cuts, and more!

The images below are classic styles that are now making a comeback/throughout Today's girls are adding a twist to these hairstyles and making them work for any occasion. Most of these styles are easy to do but hairstyling can always run to YouTube for a quick tutorial to help or find a talented hairstylist. Some important items to purchase for this style are Flexi-rods, bobby pins, holding gel, and lastly good hair.



Braids, dreads, twists, and corn rows -

You can even do these styles with your natural hair, relaxed hair, or even a full lace unit. Each style has a different technique, some styles will be complicated if you are not good at using hair tools. Braid styles are both stunning and low-maintenance, and that's why naturals love them so much. If you're looking for a trendy, chic braided hairstyle for your next outing. You can wear them long, short, large, small, and even with curly ends. The most popular styles are small box braids and jum-bo box braids.



A DIFFERENT TYPE OF CHURCH GIRL

NOW AVAILABLE ON AMAZON.

“

TENNIELLE JONES

"THIS BOOK IS ABSOLUTELY POWERFUL! PAINTS A STORY THAT IS SO RELATABLE ON ANY LEVEL! JAW DROPPING AND YOU WONT WANT TO PUT THE BOOK DOWN OR FOR IT TO END!! A MUST READ"

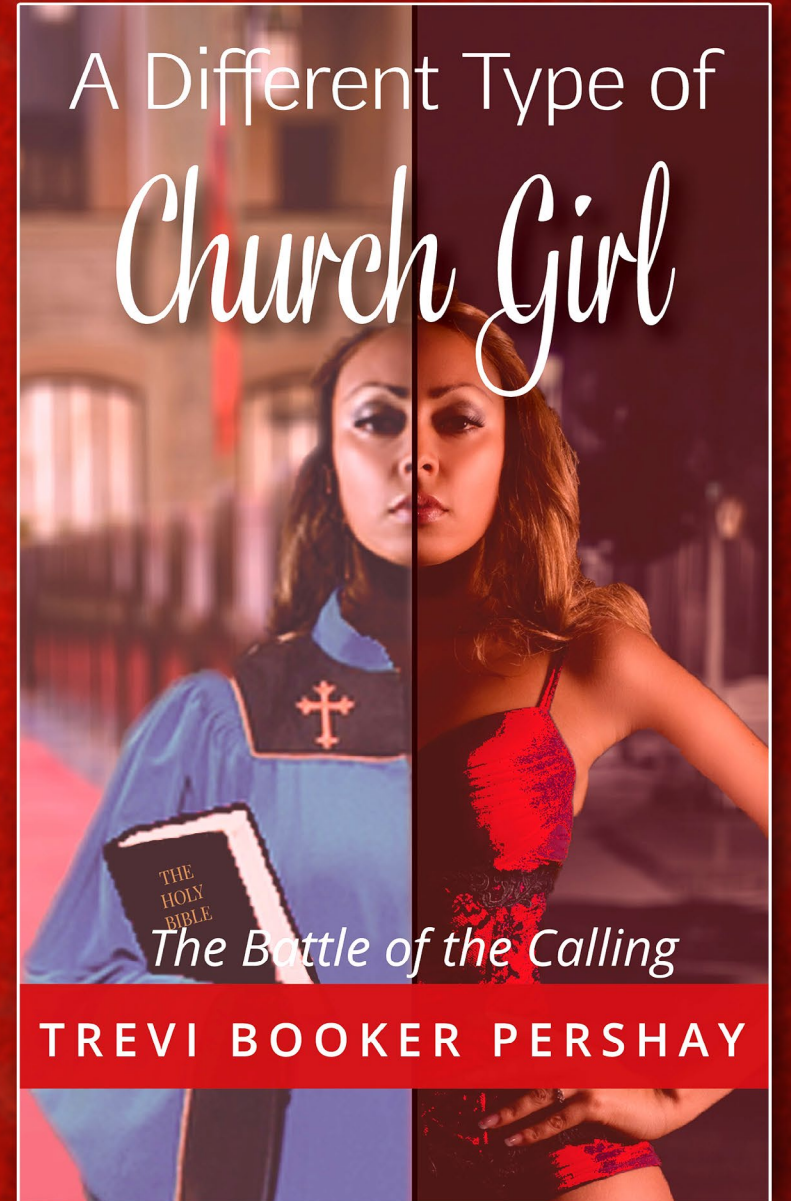
RACHEL BALDWIN

"I read this book in one sitting...that's how good it was! I just could not put it down! It was more of a short story to me....but it was soooo full!"

I loved everything about this book, but most of all I loved the JESUS in this book!!!! Awesome job! U knocked it out the park! Will definitely be on the lookout for more books by this author!"

”

A Different Type of Church Girl



TREVI BOOKER PERSHAY

FOR SIGNED COPIES EMAIL: TREVIPERSHAYCEO@GMAIL.COM

MARY DANIELS

MEET CEO OF CHOKE.HER.SKINS

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Welcome to C.O.B.S. Magazine Artist's Corner. We are elated to speak with 57 years young mom, grandmother, and leather jewelry designer Mary Daniels. We will be discussing her journey since publicly introducing her business in 2017. First, can you give us a little insight into your upbringing?

MARY DANIELS:

Hello and thank you for allowing me to share my story and brand on your platform. My beginnings were family oriented towards both parents in the household. My Dad and Mom were productive workers inside and outside of our home. I grew up with six siblings, one of whom is deceased. My faith has sustained me throughout life and I continue to rely on my God Jehovah. It was important that our home was orderly and the respect for individuality was upheld. I was surrounded by art and was engaged in multiple creative classes at an early age. My mom kept us busy with activities which I've sure kept her sanity with six children. LOL!

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Before we discuss your business ventures your bio mentions your race to maintain your chronic illness. Do you mind sharing what your illness is called and your daily battle living with this illness? How do you keep yourself encouraged?

MARY DANIELS:

Yes, I have (ILD) Interstitial Lung Disease. This is a chronic lung condition that unfortunately is irreversible. It's accompanied by Lupus which affects my skin and joints attacking my weakened lungs. A mouthful, right? I must stay stress-free while following an anti-inflammatory eating regimen. Less sugar, more berries for me! Even though I enjoy staying busy with my two grandchildren too much exertion can take my breath away. Surprisingly I'm a winter girl. I love the cold and what comes along with the season, but my lungs say NO! These are just a few effects of my illnesses and yes even though I'm able to maintain my mental and physical, at times it can be discouraging and cause a halt to my daily routines. Persistent prayer, my family, and close friends who understand what the effects of my condition may produce are very important to me. I believe being translucent about my feelings with those in my circle allows me to comfortably open up for help even though at times I may just need to go into my quiet place. Talking to myself is common and yes, I do answer myself at times. LOL. At the end of my day, I'm left with the residue of coping with my health issues. I'm a Warrior with many fighting along with me. The good news presently is it's been three years since I've been carrying my supplemental oxygen.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Can you tell us about your company Choke. Her.Skins? Where did the name derive from? What was your main motivation for starting your business? What makes your designs stand out from other choker designs? What

do you want your customers to feel when wearing your jewelry?

MARY DANIELS:

Choke.Her.Skins is a name that not only has a connected meaning but bears many questions. I'm asked this often by some with knowledgeable intent others well let's say I hand them the microphone and ask them to interpret. Here's the breakdown... Choke (around the neck) graciously. Her (female) male clients are as well. Skin (Natural leather/ Human skin). One reason that motivated me to start creating my unique designs was seeing women struggling to keep up with their individuality. I would see beautiful women who thought the opposite of themselves because of what they saw in others instead of the mirror facing them. It was as if they stepped over their own body to stand in someone else's presence! Hello, you're just as beautiful but even more 'uniquely so!' That bothered me. Over time my health issues caused my thinking of design to change the simple process of putting on a necklace or other accessories that had clasps as closures. My joints would swell from inflammation caused by pain and my body from the steroids. I wanted my clients to have an easier way of connecting and securing their jewelry with ease. Therefore, all my leather art designs are closed by straps for easy closure and size variations. I know these are factors in my designs that are unique from other designers. Also, not one of my handcrafted leather creations is duplicated by color or design. Some details have become my trademark when creating such as flowers, petals, tassels, and whimsical shapes. When my leather art is placed on my recipient I want that self-love, dope feeling, and original beauty to flow thru her and only HER. The skin-to-skin is now in effect! Fortunately, I've been able to humbly witness this energy!

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What was your biggest fear when starting Choke.Her.Skins?

MARY DANIELS:

Of course, choosing a new course in life can cause fear or hesitation. Some say it's the fear of the unknown, but even knowing you're about to move forward with a plan can be fearful. We want our decision to work and fly without any walls in the way. My biggest fear was my health. I never knew when I would go into a compromising flare that could instantly shut me down to immobility. I've experienced it several times but I'm thankful that I recovered and I'm still here.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What drew you to become a jewelry designer and inspired you to start with your brand?

MARY DANIELS:

Jewelry has always been my way of completing the fashion choice, especially an expressive necklace! It had to say something and not just match the outfit. So of course, when I started designing chokers, I wanted my pieces to accent the neck is the part of the



body that holds our figurative crown. I wanted my leather jewelry to speak to the mood and vibe of the wearer. My brand describes purpose and energy.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What are some of the materials you use in your jewelry collection? How do you come up with such beautiful designs? Do you design custom pieces?

MARY DANIELS:

Leather is my main material when designing my chokers. This includes not only natural hides and skins but recycled vintage leather which is a plus for the ecosystem. I notice a love for denim, so I use it often in my collections. I'm very conscious about not being wasteful with my materials while designing so using recycled hardware and fabric is important but whatever I create leather is always included in my designs. Thank you, I appreciate the compliment. This is one of my favorite questions when it comes to my inspiration for the design. Being created ourselves is such an amazing act of love. So, when I look around and see a bird fluttering its wings, and flowers shaped as if they just bloomed, I'm inspired to create. Even a conversation or emotion can inspire a handcrafted jewelry piece. Art has no limits when interpreted by the artist. Customs pieces are available but limited. I like spontaneous creativity without time limits and commitment.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Can you share the advantages and disadvantages of being a business owner? Do you feel this is the smartest decision you made for yourself?

MARY DANIELS:

Having your own business will have its advantages and disadvantages. The freedom to start working at my schedule and not be confined to someone else's rules is a plus yet I'm learning to stay focused and not scatter myself too thin. Working from home and self-employment can cause inconsistency and become complacent putting my original purpose to be self-sufficient at risk. I know the importance of my choice to be a business owner. Success in whatever I do means doing what I need to do successfully and completely. The decision to become a business owner up to this point in my life has been fulfilling. Having health limitations with the freedom to design in my private space is limitless.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Who have been your biggest mentors in this industry and what is the best advice they have ever given you?

MARY DANIELS:

My mom will always be my first woman of design. If she saw the opportunity to design and create something beautiful, anything within her view, I became her canvas from the ceiling to the floor. I was surrounded by strong domestic women raising their families but indulged in decorating to enhance their homes these were my beginning to create on my canvas. I'm currently alongside other creative and dope designers Shannon of BagCrush, CandyCoatedKicks, DetroitChicDesigns, and my amazing coach and friend Natasha Lee the founder and CEO of That girl! Shandera of ShadededbyShandera and the Brand ambassador of Choke.Her.Skins continuously encourage me to express my leather art genuinely without hesitation and never undermine my work and worth.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

You mentioned in your bio that business opportunities are manifesting before you. Can you please share what other platforms your jewelry line has been featured on?

MARY DANIELS:

Designing became even more meaningful when people from different areas locally and globally started reaching out to me. Their interest in my leather designs and the various forms of creating introduced collaboration opportunities and business relationships. Magazine brands invited me onto their pages so others could hear my story. My leather suppliers began to follow my journey sending leather as a kind gesture for always recognizing them as an important part of my design. The world was waking up to Choke.Her.Skins and I was noticing. Staying true to what I believed and receiving positive affirmations

to continue designing my leather art so that it could become a part of my collectors' fashion closets confirmed that my purpose was being authenticated. The ThatGirl brand invited me to design an exclusive faux leather line of chokers and wrist cuffs. Also, I was allowed to display my leather jewelry in a Marketplace here in Michigan and even though I am no longer in this establishment my experience of marketing was successful. Presently I'm enjoying collaborating with Natasha Lee in her partnership with the Detroit Pistons.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Do you have any other jewelry designs that you will be adding to the collection for 2023? Where do you see your business growing in the next couple of years?

MARY DANIELS:

My leather collection includes not unique chokers but also three other components which are ChestHers, HipHers, and WristSprouts (cuffs). New collections will begin in February, one being the SNAP collection which takes on versatility and change in one's life. Also, my brand ambassador Shandera will be designing a limited collection of leather earrings exclusively for the Choke.Her.Skinsbrand. My first showing of ChokerHerSkins on the runway will be introduced soon. Even though 2023 will manifest new opportunities, some evident and others unknown I welcome them humbly remembering my limitations and the importance of keeping balance when conducting business. Where I will be in the coming years will depend on my realistic outlook on the future. The world is changing before my eyes its ok for me to take one day at a time savoring and enjoying each moment. Right now, I'm able to get up with positive thoughts and create a handcrafted leather design inspired by what surrounds me daily.

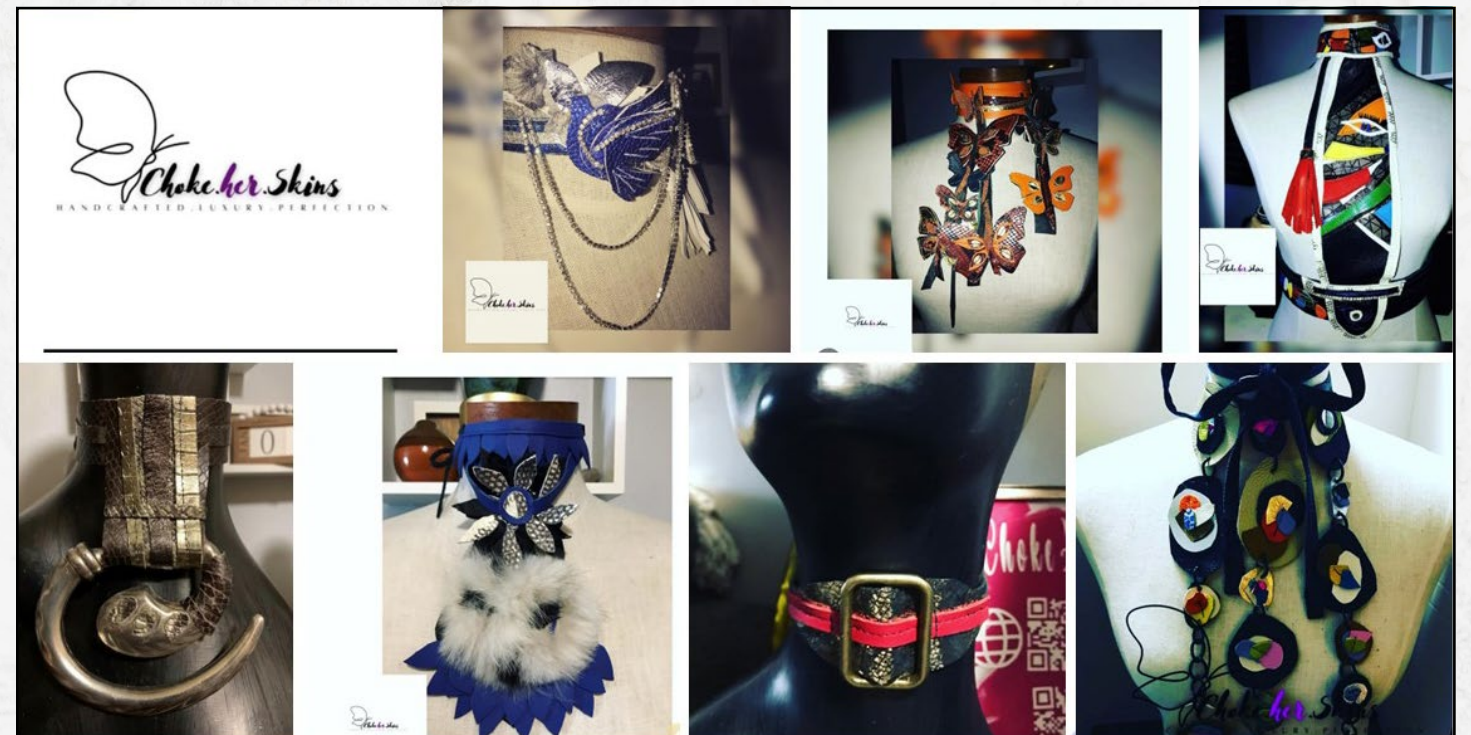
C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Do you have a daily affirmation that you can share? A piece of advice for anyone looking to become an entrepreneur full-time. Please share your website where your beautiful pieces can be purchased as well as social media platforms. We wish you continuous success.

MARY DANIELS:

Being hopeful and wishing the best for myself as an entrepreneur first is important. My business will work only if I fully believe that it's meaningful for myself and purposeful to others. Whatever business journey you choose don't doubt yourself because of opinions from others many will come and go but instead of allowing discouragement or doubt to resonate turn it around and encourage them to start a business and put those opinions to good use. Keep the positivity even in a flowing business world. We're all uniquely beautiful and deserve to be happy in life despite limitations. Don't let fear keep you from starting and growing a productive business. I appreciate you sharing my story as a businesswoman. I welcome those who are interested in my Choke.Her.Skins brand to follow my social platforms:

- Facebook/Choke.Her.Skins
- Instagram/Choke.Her.Skins
- Linktree/Choke.Her.Skins
- Website: Available Soon!
- Linktree/@Choke.Her.Skins



BRITTNY ELLINGTON

MEET FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CROW
HEAL PROJECT, INC. (TCHP)

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Welcome to Women Innovators. We have to pleasure to be speaking to Brittny Ellington. Brittny is on a mission to increase awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences. We will be discussing her organization, her overcoming trauma, and her multibusiness she has created. Can you share a little background about your upbringing?

BRITTNY ELLINGTON:

Certainly. I'd first love to thank you all at C.O.B.S. Magazine for sharing your platform with me and allowing me to tell some of my stories. I'm truly honored to be part of the C.O.B.S. family. Now to answer your question about my upbringing. My upbringing was confusing and pretty chaotic, to say the least. I come from a 2 parent household, my parents were married from a very young age. I have 4 siblings 2 older brother, a younger brother, and a sister, making me the middle child of 5. However, my younger sister, who just turned 18, is my half-sister from my mom's second marriage. Growing up, my dad was a very well-known, well-respected person in my neighborhood (Crown Heights, Brooklyn). He was a living legend and fell off due to alcoholism. He went from being a well-known and respected, humble individual to a well-known drunk. I was a huge daddy's girl, my father could do no wrong in my eyes.

I was his only daughter and he and I were close up until the day he died. He wasn't your typical alcoholic, his mom, my grandmother, was and still is a pastor. He was a very talented pianist and he could recite any scripture from the bible whether drunk or sober. He was a firm believer in God but the battle he had with alcohol was vicious and it eventually cost him his life. When my father was sober, he was the most amazing person ever. He was a very skillful boxer who received his Golden Gloves in prison and he was well known for his fighting capabilities because he was in the streets pretty heavily before he went to prison for attempted murder when he was about 19 years old. When my father was drunk he was very aggressive, verbally and physically abusive to my mom and sometimes me and my siblings. There came a time when it went from him just being drunk here and there to eventually him becoming a chronic alcoholic and him being drunk pretty much every day. So my upbringing was based on survival. I never knew what state my dad would be in and so I was just always prepared for the worst growing up. My mom also battled with substance abuse and she was depressed most times but always really functional so her addiction was not something I knew about then because it wasn't as disruptive as the alcoholism was. After years of household dysfunction, my parents got divorced when I was around maybe 11 or 12, and by that time I was

already really into the streets. I was in a gang and it was a huge part of my life. I fully immersed myself in that gang lifestyle and I guess you can say, it gave me a sense of family and security although it was certainly a false sense of family and security, you can't tell a very confused and angry teenager that. I spent all of what I recall from my childhood fighting off people in the street to protect my father. I took on the role of being his protector and fell deep into it. Deeper than you can probably ever imagine.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Wow, what a powerful story. It's good to hear how you turn your pain into power to help others who have gone through what you've experienced. Tell us about this wonderful organization the Crow Heal Project. When and why did you decide to start your organization? What are your organization's mission and vision?

BRITTNY ELLINGTON:

The Crow HEAL Project The Crow Heal Project is an organization that provides resilience building, awareness, screening, and prevention of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to children, youth, and the adults who care for them. Established in 2022, the Crow Heal Project seeks to be a leader in making America trauma-informed. We are a Crown Heights-based organization championing a trauma-informed, violence-free, and resilient society. I call 2022 the year of spiritual awakening because that's what it was for me and so many others I've come across while on this enlightenment journey. I always knew that I was different growing up. I didn't think the same way other kids my age did, I didn't find joy in the things kids my age found joy in. The way that I was brought up and the things that I was exposed to early in life were my normal. I thought everyone else was crazy. I'd hear stories about people who come from healthy households and it was a joke to me.

The Crow HEAL Project is bridging and helping others who have experience ACE. I am the first partaker of knowing, how hard it is to let your guard down and say I need help. I know how tough it is to live in a place like NYC where needing help is viewed as being weak and if you speak your truth it's viewed as complaining etc. We have resources here but the people that need them the most, never get them. I had to seek treatment outside of NYC and I was so frustrated at the lack of services New York City doesn't support. I felt compelled to do something about it. None of my or my children's doctors had ever heard of ACEs. My psychiatrist, he's been in practice for over 20 years and never heard of ACEs. I just couldn't sit back and do nothing and so I've leaned on these resources in other states to design the infrastructure of The Crow HEAL Project and put my twist on it to make it realistic for a place like NYC.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What are the most common examples of Adverse Childhood Experiences that you have you witnessed?

BRITTNY ELLINGTON:

Well the ACE study started with well over 200 questions and the most common questions based on the results they saw resulted in the 10 questions that make up the ACE study. So all 10



are fairly common. I've experienced all 10 which is rare apparently. But ACEs are common at least 60% of adults experienced at least one ACE before the age of 18. I would say based on where I'm from, the most common examples of ACEs that I experienced are parental divorce or separation, domestic violence in the household, a parent who suffers from mental illness which includes depression, or a parent who suffers from some form of substance abuse.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

There was a study done that demonstrated the relationships between adverse childhood experiences and many adult health risks. Can you explain a little about how the two go hand and hand? What are some of those health risks an adult can experience?

BRITTNY ELLINGTON:

Yes so there are still studies being conducted today linking ACEs to even more negative health outcomes. In the words of Dr. Robert Block, former president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, "ACEs are the single greatest unaddressed public health threat facing our nation today." When you peel back the layers of ACEs and the various negative health outcomes, you'll see that it is truly a public health crisis, a very silent and deadly public health crisis. ACEs have been linked to more than 5 of the top 10 leading causes of death including cancer, heart disease, diabetes, respiratory diseases, and suicide, the 2nd leading cause of death in youth ages 15-24. ACEs are also linked to Obesity, mental illness, and premature death. The ACE study found that people with 6 or more ACEs died nearly 20 years earlier on average than those with fewer or 0 ACEs. While an ACE score is not a guaranteed indicator of what your future holds, it's a tool researchers developed to determine how much childhood trauma may impact you today. Therefore, ACEs should be held to the same standard that other important vitals such as height and weight are held to. Know your ACE score.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Funding an organization takes a lot of blood, sweat, and tears. Self-financing is the way most entrepreneurs start up their companies. How difficult is the process to continue to generate funding to handle the overhead? How much does your organization depend on outside funding?

BRITTNY ELLINGTON:

Funding is crucial for any organization. We are in the full startup phase and so we are just beginning to make some traction in terms of funding. It has truly been a bootstrapping effort

and it's challenging to get people involved when there's no money involved. Starting a nonprofit in NYC comes with challenges immediately because everything is still done through the mail here and NY has an insane backlog so nonprofits take time to form here. We're now going through the process of getting grants and seeking donors. We're depending on outside funding to launch our programs which will consist of an Arts program for youth in Crown Heights geared towards resiliency and an education program aimed at making our NYC clinicians, schools, parents, politicians, and law enforcement trauma-informed and ACEs aware.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What have been some of the biggest roadblocks you've faced in the process of female entrepreneurship? Did you have moments of doubt? How did you keep yourself encouraged?

BRITTNY ELLINGTON:

Some of the biggest roadblocks I've faced thus far as a female entrepreneur is getting the right help and consistency. People don't take you seriously when they don't understand something or resonate with your vision and so you have to make them understand. With ACEs, many people are not privy to what ACEs are so the people I do bring on board have to be properly screened and trained right now, everyone's mental health is rocky so it's a lot of work. I've had moments of self-doubt and some self-identity issues I needed to sort out on this entrepreneurship journey but I'm grateful to be extremely resilient and a warrior. I kept myself encouraged by constantly reminding myself about the end goal and acknowledging all I've done under the circumstances. I've had a chaotic life, I lost my father to the streets and my oldest daughter's father was murdered when she was 4. I've lost so many of the closest ppl to me and I just always kept going. I never let anything destroy me or keep me down for long. I did the 7th grade twice, got my GED at 17 but then went on to get a Bachelor's degree with honors, an MBA, and become a Cloud Engineer for one of the biggest tech companies in the world, with no IT background. I just never fail to amaze myself and I could just hear my father's voice telling me don't stop, God got me and I just keep going. Now I take breaks, I reset, fill my cup up, and I no longer pour from an empty cup. I take breaks but I keep going.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

In your bio, you stated that New York City is far behind in the trauma-informed space what changes would like to see within communities regarding this issue?

BRITTNY ELLINGTON:

New York City needs more mental health centers and greater access to mental health care. Some of the barriers to mental health services in NYC are insane lengthy waiting lists. When you do find someone potentially good they're extremely expensive and don't take your insurance. It is truly frustrating. The stigma attached to anything involving mental health is part of the problem and we need to eliminate all stigma. Making



NYC trauma-informed is a way to do that. I want to see all schools in NYC become trauma-informed. All law enforcement professionals, doctors, mental health professionals, politicians, parents, etc., become trauma-informed. To be trauma-informed means to understand the neurobiological impacts of trauma. Studies have taught us that trauma has a significant impact on a child's developing brain resulting in poorer health outcomes in adulthood. People are being thrown in jail for doing things they've been groomed to do by their parents and/or caregivers. They never even get a chance to know that their normal isn't normal at all. I want to see more done about this. I want to see NYC's initiative to combat gun violence address the culprit, ACEs. No one talks about ACEs, our doctors never heard of it, and parents, teachers, etc are all not privy to ACEs. Parents who have been impacted by ACEs, many of them are stuck in the cycle and don't know a way out or that there is a way out. They're raising children, still using verbal and physical abuse as a form of punishment, unaware of how that will affect a child as they grow. Parents need to be aware that their attachment styles determine their children's attachment styles so it's important to do the work and break the cycle now. Parents are pouring into work, friends, and everything else and not even noticing that they're neglecting their children because they figure as long as they're present and provide for them, it's not neglect but it is just that, emotional neglect. Parents are in denial about their trauma and do a lot of comparing what they did or didn't have to try to measure their success as a parent and it just doesn't work that way. I want to see more done to educate parents on the dangers of doing this as well as the dangers associated with repeatedly exposing their children to dysfunction. I want to see free and affordable programs in underrepresented communities so that we don't have to travel to the suburbs to get swimming lessons for our kids. I want to see us hold ourselves accountable and become each other's responsibility as we work together to strengthen our communities. These are some of the things you'll see The Crow HEAL Project is working towards.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

In addition to running a non-profit you are the owner of multiple businesses. Can you briefly discuss our other business adventures?

BRITTNY ELLINGTON:

In addition to The Crow HEAL Project, I own The Daughter House Project, LLC which is a for-profit single mom initiative I launched during the pandemic. The Daughter House Project is a parent company to multiple sub-companies in travel, real estate investing, and trauma-recovery coaching, and just recently we entered the government contracting consulting space. The Daughter House Project is a growing community for single moms and the people who support us. Single moms are under attack like never before and it's disheartening. During a pandemic, a time when everyone took a hit, parents, especially single parents, the attack against single moms

just surged like crazy. I wish a healthy, stable 2 parent household for every child. However, that's not always the case and because people are being bullied for single parenting, people are less likely to leave an unhealthy situation to keep up with society's and social media's standards. I started this initiative to create a village and support system for single moms because we can't change what is and you know if you're a woman, especially a black woman, there is no room for error. So I launched this initiative to combat that. Support is crucial and at a time when all people from all races and walks of life should be supporting each other, people are tearing others down to deflect from their trauma and single moms have just been a really easy target. The Daughter House Project is still growing and essentially everything I'm doing with this initiative will benefit my single mom community. If the stats on children who come from single-parent households are so bad, why aren't we doing more about it? I come from a 2 parent household and my parent's marriage made me hate the idea of marriage. Everyone preaches 2 parent household but leaves out the part about it needing to be stable.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What continues to be your daily driving force? Where do you see your organizations in the next five years? Can you please share your website for people to further read about your organization and are interested in donating to the cause? Can you please provide your social media platforms? We wish you continuous success.

BRITTNY ELLINGTON:

I would say my daily driving force is my level of awareness. I feel lucky to be one of the self-aware ones. I don't ever feel like a victim, I'm a survivor and I have work to do in my community for my children and the generation they'll grow with. The fact that I get to take back my power and step into my authentic self is what keeps me going. I'm finally getting to know myself and now I have a chance to rewrite my narrative. It doesn't take away my history or where I come from, that will stay with me forever and I know that society will do a great job at reminding me of that and I'm content with that. I've done so much work already and it's made such a difference in my life I'm just getting started so I can't wait to see my vision come to fruition. In the next 5 years, The Crow HEAL Project will be at the forefront of championing a resilient, violent-free, and trauma-informed Society.

Please be sure to visit and subscribe on our website www.thecrowhealproject.org to learn more about us, donate, or purchase our merch. You can find us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and youtube@thecrowhealproject. Follow and connect with me personally @therealmsbolo on Instagram.



SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS

MEET FOUNDER/CEO OF FRIA JEWELRY

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Welcome to C.O.B.S. Women's Werk. We are delighted to be speaking to Sheilisa McNeal-Burgess. Sheilisa's favorite phrase is "Problems just require solutions" and that is what this entrepreneur has done. We are excited to learn how she became the solutions-focused inventor and brainchild behind her brand. Can you give us some history on your background before entrepreneurship?

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

Before undertaking this endeavor with Friá Jewelry, I was neither an engineer, technology professional nor jewelry designer, but I never let that deter me. I've been a professional writer for the majority of my career, over 25 years at this point; and an adjunct instructor at NYU, where I've been teaching writing courses for the past 15 years. What I do now however with Friá, isn't rooted in my professional history except for the ability to communicate with all audiences. That's a skill that transcends any career discipline. Oh, and I've always been a problem-solver. I believe problems just require solutions. So now I refer to myself as a «solutions-focused inventor.» To me, women are natural problem solvers and innovators, we just rarely get recognition for our genius.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Can you please tell us about your company Friá LLC? Where the name derived from and what was your initial vision when you started your company?

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

I woke up one September morning in 2016 with the idea of "cooling jewels." I wasn't sure what it would turn into, but I knew I had to pursue it. The name Friá means cold in Spanish. It has a pretty melodic sound, plus I believed that we deserved a pretty way to beat the heat of those miserable hot flashes, so since necessity is the mother of invention, Friá was born!



C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Can you describe the steps to making one of your bracelets? Can you explain the steps of using the Friá bracelet?

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

Well for us simple still works, which is why I chose to repurpose evaporative cooling for my tech integration. The cooling function in our bracelets is activated using just cold water. Scientifically, anything colder than your body temperature that is placed on a cooling zone, (wrist or neck) will cool the blood as it passes by providing immediate relief from overheating. It's simple to use, will not harm the user or the environment, is cost-effective, and can also work on other challenges caused by overheating that are not menopause related.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Menopausal symptoms can affect a woman's quality of life. Do you feel mindfulness may help improve menopause symptoms?

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

The more we learn about this inevitable, biological life stage, the easier it will be to manage. 1.1 billion women worldwide suffer from the discomfort of hot flashes, and 72% just endure because there are so few remedies and not enough information on how to handle the discomfort. There is no primary go-to remedy that is widely adopted - and medicinal options (i.e., hormone replacement therapy) have dangerous side effects. Our jewelry is beautiful, integrates with the wearer's normal fashion aesthetic, is activated with just cold water, and is completely discreet. No one will know that the wearer's pretty bracelet also has a health benefit. Menopause is not just a physical challenge, but also an emotional/psychological one. We endeavor to address the problem holistically, providing a tangible product, education, and support via the community. Our approach is designed to comprehensively help women make informed decisions and provide another alternative to obtain relief. There is so much that we women and men) don't know, but if we have a safe space to ask questions - that can then be posed to our medical practitioners, this experience can be less dreadful. I believe women should have full agency over their bodies and their biological functions, but we will continue to have difficulty in this area if the narrative around menopause or midlife, in general, remains negative and our knowledge and information remain limited.



C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

The menopause market is estimated to be about \$600 billion in industry. Why do you feel this is a market that continues to grow more frequently than in prior years?

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

One because until now, no one in marketing cared to know how big this opportunity was - we live in an anti-aging society and this demographic hasn't been a priority for most advertisers - until now. Two, because women are no longer willing to suffer in silence and just endure like we've been doing for centuries. We want relief and we want options that speak to how we feel about ourselves and that promote a healthy mindset concerning mid-life. More importantly, women in this life stage are usually financially stable and willing to pay for what they want. All signs point to a demand for options so we can make informed decisions that work best for each experience.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Do you feel that women are silently suffering through the process of menopause? Do you feel that most women do not understand the transition of coming to the end of their reproductive years to start a new chapter?

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

There's so much we don't know and that's what keeps this experience so difficult. Most women had little or no prior knowledge of what to expect because menopause has a negative connotation - it is associated with being old. When we first started our customer discovery, we talked to hundreds of women those first couple years, and over 95% when asked

what they knew or what their mothers told them about menopause said "nothing, and she didn't go through it." Menopause has over 80 symptoms, but women are generally only aware of hot flashes, night sweats, and brain fog. How can you do anything but suffer if you do not know about your ailment? I say menopause is freedom and it's our goal through Friá to help all women understand the positive aspects of this transition.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What resources does your company offer to women to be able to share their journeys? Do you mind sharing your journey with menopause?

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

We created a show we call *The Pause, Reclaiming Our Time* on YouTube where we discuss all things related to midlife. We call it a safe space to share this experience in a no-judgment zone and will resume taping new shows this year. Readers can just go to the tab on our website to view past episodes. I speak at women's functions and on health panels whenever I get a chance - to help change the narrative and give a new vision of what a woman going through the change looks like. If we stop the notion that menopause means old, more people will be willing to learn and talk about it more openly. For us, knowledge is power. I began my journey 11 years ago. It was miserable and I was clueless. I knew there had to be a better way to experience it, so I decided to create a new blueprint for us to follow that had less misery and more joy.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What were some of the challenges you have faced throughout your entrepreneurial journey? How do you continue to endure those tough moments?

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

As a black woman, I think my most common challenge is being taken seriously, actively



having people close to me with decision-making roles, and honestly supporting my endeavor. The naysayers are real and can break your spirit if you let them. This has honestly been harder than childbirth and raising teenagers, both of which I survived successfully. Through this experience, I've learned so much about what I am capable of despite the obstacles and lack of resources.

I went from waking up with just two words spiritually revealed, to a relationship with the most prestigious crystal jeweler in the world, to being a trailblazer in the creation and innovative use of existing technology, to obtaining a non-provisional patent, to building a startup with no institutional investment dollars and bringing a problem-solving idea to fruition. I went to market with no dedicated team, just lots of people who have pitched in to lend their expertise just relying on my grit and my faith. It's those two things, grit, and faith that has helped me endure on the days I doubted myself - which is something I'm sure every entrepreneur goes through. God doesn't call the equipped he equips the called and I tell myself that every time I feel like I don't have what I need to move to the next level.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What has been your most victorious moment or success story thus so far?

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

My most victorious moment was when I realized I did what I set out to do. I created from nothing, a beautiful solution to an old problem and brought it to market. When people started buying them and saying positive things, I finally allowed myself the luxury of saying "I did it!"

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What are some of the marketing tools that you use to market such a great invention?

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

We didn't bring our product to market until 2021. It took five years to create something good enough to offer. Even now, our marketing is still limited, as we've been validating our product with customers. Right now our most successful marketing tool has been word of mouth. However, as we iterate and make new product options, we will expand our marketing efforts to improve our reach.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

How do you create a healthy work-life-balance between your personal and business lifestyles?

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

I can honestly say I do not have a healthy work-life balance as a startup founder. There's so much to do and we are a small team which means I wear a lot of hats. However, I always make time for family,

worship, and self-care. If I don't take care of myself, I won't be able to drive this company to success. That is my primary goal!

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What is next for Sheilisa McNeal-Burgess in the next three years? Can you share a piece of sound advice that has benefited you throughout your journey? Can you please share your website information and your social media platforms with us to continue to follow your journey? We wish you continuous success.

SHEILISA MCNEAL-BURGESS:

My goal is to take our product and message to the north, south, east, and west across the globe so women and other heat-challenged populations can benefit from our ingenuity. I also have other ideas to manifest, so I may not know where I'll be in three years, but I bet it will be in a good place. A piece of advice that was useful was "be your authentic self, don't try to fit anyone else's mold, and be gentle with yourself. You're learning while you're creating so failures are inevitable but quitting is not an option." This is something I go back to often because it's easy to get caught up in imposter syndrome to fit it. Also, sometimes you have to encourage yourself. It would be wonderful if family and friends were supportive, but often they won't be, because it takes courage to go out on your own and a lot of people are not that brave. Don't let their negative predictions rent space in your head. This assignment is yours, not theirs. So, trust yourself, encourage yourself, and don't stop until you reach your goal.

Thank you so much for your support and the opportunity to share my journey with your readers. I'd like to offer a **20% discount** if anyone from your audience buys a bracelet. Just enter the code **COBS20** and its good for the entire month of February. It's a great Valentine's Day gift and we're happy to help you or the "hot" women in your life *keep your cool*.



FELICIA PEACE

MEET FOUNDER OF DIFFERENT BY DESIGN

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Welcome to COBS Magazine Fashion Corner. We are delighted to be speaking to born and raised Philadelphia fashion designer Felicia Peace. Felicia Peace is bringing something different, dope, and affordable to the fashion world. Her vision is cultivating something eye-catching for everyone while being trendy and comfortable. We will be discussing her journey to becoming the accomplished designer that she is today. Can you give our readers a backstory about yourself?

FELICIA PEACE:

First I just want to say thank you for this wonderful opportunity. I couldn't be more excited to be a part of this. Ever since I was a little girl I was into fashion. Like most, I'd dress up in my mother and grandmother's clothes for fun. With a touch of make-up from my godmother's vanity, I felt complete. As I had gotten older it no longer became play. I

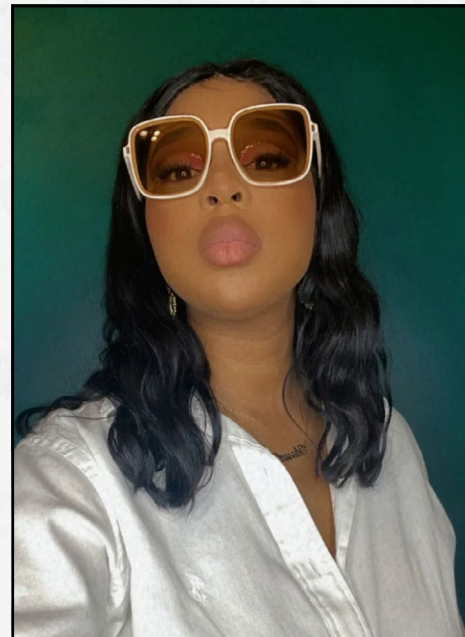
would grab a ton of magazines, flip through them, find styles on the models and design my outfits. Let's not forget the first mannequins I used, my Barbies. They were "fly"! In the sixth grade, I started my sketchbook, coming up with a name and manifesting my dream. I drew clothing that appealed to my eye. It started as me drawing clothes I've seen in magazines and catalogs, to creating my original sketches. I'm a Philly girl. Born and raised. I'm a wife and a mom of two boys, Zaire (9) and Asan (2). I am a 32-year-old creator just trying to live out my dreams and become a major player in the fashion industry.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Can you please tell us about your business Different by Design? What was the inspiration behind your designs? Who is your targeted audience? What is the statement you want your clothes to make to the average consumer? What makes your designs different?

FELICIA PEACE:

Different by Design is an online boutique and brand created by myself. Although I came up with the name in high school well before my website launch, DBD's official website didn't launch until 2015. The website features branded items, hand distressed and embellished denim by myself, as well as trendy unique styles also picked by myself. I am inspired by many things when it comes to my designs. Art, music, movies, glam, and luxury. My target market is mainly women, however, I recently expanded to unisex and children's apparel. As far as the statement, my main message is being true to who you



are. Being different by design. Our two key mottos are "Why be the same when you can be different" and "Not better, just different." In a world where everyone is trying to be and look like someone else, I try to encourage originality and uniqueness. You won't see a bunch of people wearing my stuff, yet! But when people catch on a simple piece can be worn in so many different ways. That's what makes my designs different. No matter how many different people you see wearing the brand the style is versatile.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

How would you describe your approach to your designs? What would you say is your strongest skill and how have you honed



that skill over the years?

FELICIA PEACE:

When I put looks and designs together I either sketch them out or just let the creativity take over and just go. I love sketching however most of the time when I get inspired I just go at it. Lol. I get an idea in my head and just have to see it through. Sometimes it'll take me a while to execute. I have some stuff drawn and stored in my memory that I thought of years ago but just didn't put out yet. When the time is right, I'll know when to put it out. I honestly don't know what my strongest skill is just yet. I am good at a lot of things, so I tend to do a lot all the time. I'm constantly trying to better myself with each thing I touch. Kind of like a one-up on myself. I would say I do like the creative process of it all the most. I would rather just have the concept, draw it out and then snap my fingers and it is done. Wouldn't that be amazing!

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Do you or have you ever hosted Virtual Fashion Shows?

FELICIA PEACE:

Unfortunately, I've never had a virtual fashion show. A runway show either. It's something that I've always wanted to do. I have a concept, an idea, and everything. I just don't know how to ex-

ecute it the proper way. I've been doing this for years on my own. No team or staff. Just the help of my family here and there along the way but everything has been from the muscle for me. I don't know a lot of people in my industry. That's something I'm working on though. I'm trying to rub my elbows with the right people. It's time. I've waited long enough. So to circle back to your question. No. No shows yet, but they will be coming soon.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

We saw different consumer behaviors during the pandemic. Customers were favoring products like pajamas and leisure wear. Do you think that for the next few seasons as we return to the "new normal" customers will prioritize the easy-to-wear items over more formal and fitted items?

FELICIA PEACE:

Honestly, I think people are ready to throw "it" on again! We've been chilling for so long in our sweats, tees, and pajamas. I think we're ready to get fresh again. I see more and more people dressed up. I say "we" because I am still a consumer too! I love getting dressed. It helps with the mood. It's kind of like we took dressing up for granted. So we're ready to get back to it. Don't get me wrong

though! I love to be comfy!!! Give me a tee and some sweats and I'll make it work. If you have that designer touch in you then you can wear anything.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Why do you think it is so important to combine content and commerce in today's digital world?

FELICIA PEACE:

Almost everything is digital even money. We live in a social media world. You can reach more people, from all over just by creating content. When I look at the schematics of locations where my website has been viewed I have people all over the globe looking at what I have to offer.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

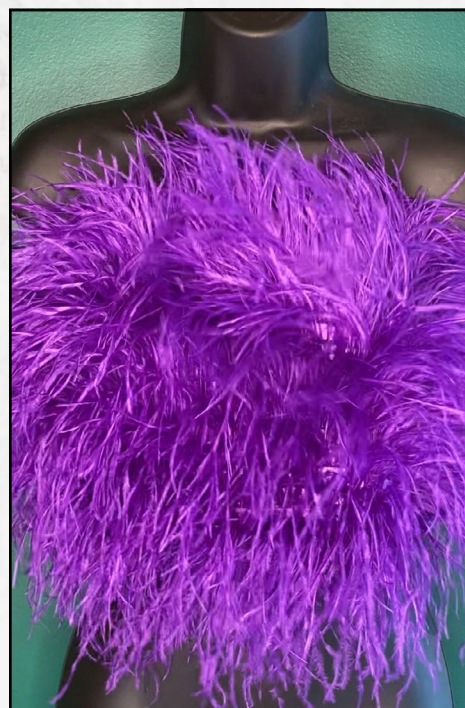
It's been a turmoil two years for a lot of us, especially those in the creative industry. With inflation looming, how do you stay motivated, encouraged, and creative during such difficult times?

FELICIA PEACE:

Honestly I create for me. I can go without sales and still manage to drop something new on the site. It keeps me sane. It's my outlet. I feel proud when I complete a project.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

On your journey what have been your greatest challenges? What



have been your greatest victorious moments? What have you learned from those moments that continuously help you today?

FELICIA PEACE:

Staying motivated and consistent is one of my biggest challenges. Especially when you've been doing something for so long and you feel like not enough people are catching on. So I learn to celebrate the small things. Whether it's a pop-up shop or changing the look of my workspace. I'll pop champagne for a win in a minute! My biggest win so far has been this opportunity honestly. I've been celebrating ever since you guys contacted me. It's like people are starting to see me and I love that for myself.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Out of all your designs which one is your favorite piece and why?

FELICIA PEACE:

Whew... Each design is special to me. At this moment I have two favorites. My *Fashionista Top*, an ostrich trim-filled tube top, and the *Pop Art Trench*, a hand-painted trench coat. Both pieces are available online for

purchase and can be worn in different ways. These pieces make a statement and they were fun to make.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

What should consumers expect from Different by Design in the next couple of years?

FELICIA PEACE:

I'm coming out with more denim and of course a fashion show. I always wanted to have a brick and mortar for people to come in and personally shop. I have a few other things I want to happen but I'm going to hold on to that for now.

C.O.B.S. MAGAZINE:

Do you have any words of encouragement or advice for people who are wanting to start a brand or work in the fashion industry? Lastly, can you please share your clothing website and all your social media platforms for our readers to connect with you? We wish you continued success in your future endeavors.

FELICIA PEACE:

My best word of advice is to just do it! How can you progress if you never start? Don't look at what



others are doing. They aren't you! I'm still an underdog. I have a long way to go but you have to start somewhere and when you start you can't stop. No matter how hard it gets if it's yours it won't miss you. All clothing can be purchased online at www.difbydesign.net Get social with us on Instagram: @different.by.design and take a tiny look into my @everything.mariee. Once again thank you so much for this wonderful opportunity. Thank you for having me.



ARIELLE PERSHAY

TIPS & TRICKS TO STAY FIT

Hello Beautiful people! Guess who's back with some tips & tricks to stay fit. In this article, I want to talk about love since we are in the month of February, and I know some of you are waiting for your significant other to take you out for valentine's day and do something special for you. However, the love I am talking about is self-love.

The healthiest thing to do is to self-care, and love yourself, tell yourself in the mirror how awesome you are, that you have a purpose, and that you are beautiful.

BELOW ARE 5 TIPS FOR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL SELF-CARE. ARE YOU READY? LET'S GO!

LET'S GET PHYSICAL!

PHYSICAL SELF-CARE LIST:

- Take a walk. Walking can be therapeutic, and you can burn calories, strengthen your bones, and manage various conditions such as heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure.
- Pilates. Pilates promotes mindfulness and body awareness. Let's not forget it tones your body.
- Yoga. Yoga improves strength, stress relief, and weight loss.
- Ab workouts
- Jogging. The same benefit as walking.
- Body stretches. Stretches improve physical activity performance and increase muscle blood flow.
- Eat healthy regularly and most importantly stay hydrated.
- Relax your mind and let your conscience be free!



MENTAL CARE CHECKLIST:

- Rest. Resting is a great way to reduce stress and anxiety.
- Read a book.
- Play music. (I always suggest music that is inspiring, happy, and uplifting).
- Write in a journal. (Express your feelings by writing them down).
- Create a vision board. Vision boards are always fun to do, and set your goals in place.
- Hang out with friends that will uplift you, encourage you, and be an ear when you need to vent. Or just to let your hair down.
- Take deep breaths
- Organize or clean your space.
- Skincare routine.
- Go on vacation
- Therapy. Therapy is life-changing, it does not mean that you are crazy, it means you care about yourself (keep that in mind)



I hope this article was helpful, loving yourself is the healthiest thing to do. There is nobody in the world that can love you better than you, other than God. You are blessed, you are incredible, you are beautiful, your worth is amazing, and lastly, You Matter!

MAKAYLA HAYES

MEET CEO AND FOUNDER OF KAYS KITCHEN

C.O.B.S MAGAZINE:

Welcome to COBS Chef's Corner. We are delighted to be chopping it up with Chef Makayla Hayes. We will discuss Makayla's journey from turning her weekly hobby into a business. Can you give a little background on your upbringing?

MAKAYLA HAYES:

Growing up I was the only girl out of six boys. I have two younger brothers and me being the oldest, I also have three boys and cousins. I'm from Scottsdale Georgia, a city about 15 minutes from the city of Atlanta Georgia. I was raised by a village of phenomenal men and women that still guide me to this day even if some have passed on to a better place. I'm extremely loving, caring, and selfless, and always make it a priority to spend each day with laughter. These characteristics are what have and will continue to shape me into an amazing Chef.

C.O.B.S MAGAZINE:

How did you fall in love with food? What is your earliest food memory? Do you have any formal training or are you a self-taught chef?

MAKAYLA HAYES:

I've always been used to having no other choice except being my great-grandmother, and grandmother's sous chef. My favorite meal growing up was and still is three good southern meals that my grandma, and mom made for us often. My dad had two things that he knew my brothers and I would never decline, spaghetti and French fries. My brothers

and I always loved to eat whatever they made but collard greens, cornbread, creamed potatoes, and fried chicken are something that has always held a special place in our stomachs from my great grandma. My mom always used to spice up our meals with veggies which brought brightness to our dishes. She knew that we weren't picky so she knew we loved our green beans, she paired it with macaroni and cheese, and smoked sausage paired with sautéed onions and bell peppers. Grandma always made the absolute best breakfast we always had our grits, eggs, hot links, bacon, and cheese toast. If we needed a dinner that needed to last a couple of days grandma always came with her special lasagna. All of these have fueled me to constantly create new techniques and recipes being a self-taught chef.

C.O.B.S MAGAZINE:

Can you tell us about your business Kays Kitchen? What was the vision behind your business? Can you share with us what drives you to operate in excellence?

MAKAYLA HAYES:

Kays Kitchen & Vending is an inclusive business that focuses on cooking and vending machine services. I focus on all things food and the kitchen. Including catering, small and large gatherings, events, and chef services. I'm pushing my business now in the direction of products including cookbooks, e-books, and cooking utensils. Releasing my first e-book in December of 2022 has helped me to begin navigating sales and customer service. Vending is the other half of the business which I'm also passionate about. Owning and operating vending machines was an idea that I envisioned at a young age. My schools growing up



were all equipped with machines that had the best snacks paired with my homemade lunch. When I was younger, I was always told that I was a leader. I knew at a young age that I would own a company that I would operate with my family. My goal is and has always been to take care of my family, I want us to be able to live freely enjoying each moment while still sticking to the values of creating generational wealth for our future children and grandchildren. Knowing that every step I'm taking is leading me in the direction of growing my business tremendously.

C.O.B.S MAGAZINE:

What do you think are the biggest challenges facing female chefs today?

MAKAYLA HAYES:

I believe that now in today's generation, it's harder for women to be taken seriously in their craft. We must work harder and be strategic about our business. Ensuring that each encounter with men and women is strictly professional is always my priority. I find that not being viewed as just a "pretty face" and being taken seriously strictly for business can be challenging for women bosses.

C.O.B.S MAGAZINE:

You have also written a cooking book. Can you share the name of your book? How did you first come up with the concept for your book? Where is your book available for purchase?

MAKAYLA HAYES:

In December 2022 I released my first e-book cookbook. The book includes 10 recipes and 5 step-by-step videos. While writing this cookbook I chose ten recipes that would showcase texture, taste, and flavors that combine exceptionally. When cooking I've never used measuring tools, I feel as though cooking is a feeling, not a job. When I'm creating a meal I always say "if you aren't sneezing it isn't seasoned". There is no limit to cooking, just be sure to not use too much salt. The book is available on my website along with a few other recipes.

C.O.B.S MAGAZINE:

Who has been influential in your journey to becoming a chef?

MAKAYLA HAYES:

My family and God are my ultimate support system. They push me and encourage me even when I feel completely defeated. From words of encouragement, quality time, food inspiration, and always honest food critics. They genuinely make me feel as though I'm the greatest Chef there is.

C.O.B.S MAGAZINE:

Was it challenging for you to cre-

ate work during the pandemic? How is your business going currently with social and economic issues afflicting most Americans?

MAKAYLA HAYES:

During the pandemic is when I tapped into my love for the kitchen. Not being able to go try different restaurants and food helped me to get in the zone of creating my meals. Currently, Kays Kitchen & Vending is still in the building stages. I'm working daily with hardly any breaks to ensure my business grows and flows with constant support.

C.O.B.S MAGAZINE:

What is one of the most requested signature dishes that you have created?

MAKAYLA HAYES:

Southern comfort food is my strong area so anytime I'm able to cook within that family excites me. One of my most requested meals is parmesan-crusted chicken, macaroni & cheese, paired with lemon garlic green beans. Every time I cook this meal it leaves a permanent burst of greatness on the taste buds.

C.O.B.S MAGAZINE:

What is your go-to meal at the end of a working day?

MAKAYLA HAYES:

With me cooking between 4-5 times a week, I try my best to give a variety of different options to my family. My go-to meal is pasta. You can never go wrong with

pasta, they are extremely versatile with almost any ingredients.

C.O.B.S MAGAZINE:

Do you have any plans or projects coming up that you like to share? What advice do you to anyone starting in the food industry?

MAKAYLA HAYES:

In this upcoming year I am planning and preparing to release Kays Kitchen cooking utensils, and a hardcover cookbook featuring 50+ recipes. I'm also working on purchasing and placing a fleet of vending machines. Through constant prayer and manifestation, I know my business will overflow with success. I would say to anyone starting in this industry be consistent and don't allow outside options to affect how you operate your business. Be different, think outside the box, and don't conform to anyone else's thoughts, ideas, or opinions.

C.O.B.S MAGAZINE:

Can you please share all your social platforms for us to continue to follow your journey? COBS wishes you all the best in your future endeavors.

MAKAYLA HAYES:

For all business content please follow my social networks. IG: @kayzkitchenz and TikTok kayzkitchenz. Thank you so much for this opportunity!



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BOSS SISTERS

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FOUNDER AND CHIEF READING INSPIRER FOR BARBERSHOP BOOKS