

CIRCLE OF BOSS SISTERS C.O.B.S.

Kings COURT

**ANDRE JULIUS
MCLAUGHLIN**
CEO OF ANDRE JULIUS
CUSTOM SUITS

Queens COURT

JALEESA JACKSON
CEO OF TIN CANDLES

Women WERK

**TIENN
HARRIS**
CEO OF FIRE DESIGNS

Author SPOTLIGHT

**STACY
HOBSON**
AUTHOR OF YIELD,
HEAL, THRIVE

2026, JAN/FEB ISSUE

VOLUME I

Spotlight CORNER

**LA LA
FOUNDATION**
THREESIXTY
MENTORSHIP
PROGRAM

NEW *Author* ALERT

**BEAUTIFUL
AGAIN BY
SHERRIDA
MAXWELL**
CEO OF
MAXWELL MINDSET
PUBLISHING

Women INNOVATORS **NATALYA KING**

CEO OF
BODYLOVE
BY TAL

Markisha Marie

CEO OF M.MARIE - LUXURY FOOTWEAR



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Editor's Note

WHEN STRENGTH IS QUIET

WRITTEN BY:
DR. TREVI-BOOKER PERSHAY

There are moments in life when you realize strength doesn't always look the way we were taught it would.

Sometimes strength looks like holding your composure when your heart is breaking.

Sometimes it looks like smiling through disappointment because you understand timing matters.

And sometimes strength looks like choosing dignity when others choose avoidance.

Recently, I experienced something many professionals know all too well: giving your heart, your excellence, and your leadership to a workplace only to realize it was not fully seen, honored, or protected. What hurt most wasn't the decision itself, but the way it was handled. Promises were broken. Conversations were indirect. Recognition was delayed or denied. And yet, I stayed professional.

Not because I was unaffected but because I was anchored.

As leaders, pastors, and high-achieving professionals, we often carry the weight quietly. We are expected to be strong for everyone else, to make the environment feel like family, to create unity, and to keep things moving forward. But what happens when the very place you helped build no longer pours back into you?

Here's what I learned and what I want you to know:

Disappointment does not mean failure.

Being overlooked does not mean you lack value.

And choosing peace does not mean you are weak.

Sometimes, the greatest act of leadership is discernment: recognizing when you have given gold to



a space that only knows how to handle silver. That realization doesn't come to shame you. It comes to free you.

I've learned that not every environment is meant to steward your gifts long-term. Some are classrooms. Some are training grounds. Some are places you outgrow. And that's okay.

There is a difference between endurance and alignment. One drains you. The other restores you.

If you are reading this and you've been holding back tears in conference rooms, swallowing disappointment after meetings, or questioning yourself because your excellence wasn't acknowledged, pause. Take a breath. Your worth is not defined by broken systems or insecure leadership.

Your integrity matters.

Your gifts matter.

And your next chapter should feel lighter.

Sometimes God allows discomfort not to punish us, but to reposition us. To remind us that peace is part of the promise, too.

If this season has been heavy, I want to encourage you: don't rush your healing, don't doubt your discernment, and don't shrink your light to make others comfortable.

What's meant for you will recognize you without explanation.

And when it does, you'll look back and realize this moment wasn't the breaking point.

It was the turning point.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

THE ENDURING IMPORTANCE OF: DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. AND WHAT HIS LEGACY MEANS TODAY

WRITTEN BY:
C.O.B.S EDITORIAL TEAM



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was not only a leader of his time—he was a visionary whose words, actions, and moral courage continue to shape the conscience of the world. His life's work challenged injustice, demanded equality, and called humanity to a higher standard rooted in love, dignity, and nonviolence. Decades after his assassination, Dr. King's legacy remains both a mirror and a mandate: a mirror reflecting how far society has come, and a mandate reminding us how far we still must go.

At the heart of Dr. King's importance was his unwavering belief in the inherent worth of every human being. During a period when segregation, voter suppression, and racial violence were legally sanctioned and socially normalized, he spoke boldly against systems that denied Black Americans basic human rights. His leadership during pivotal moments—such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Birmingham Campaign, and the March on Washington—helped dismantle Jim Crow laws and led to landmark legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These achievements were not abstract victories; they were life-altering changes that opened doors to education, employment, housing, and political participation for millions.

What made Dr. King especially powerful was not only what he fought for, but how he fought. His philosophy of nonviolent resistance, inspired by Christian theology and the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, rejected hatred even in the face of brutality. Dr. King understood that violence might change who sits in power, but it could never transform hearts. Nonviolence, he believed, was not weakness—it was disciplined strength. It required courage to march unarmed into hostility, to respond to injustice without becoming unjust, and to love people who openly despised you. That moral clarity remains one of his greatest gifts to the world.

Today, Dr. King's legacy is deeply relevant. While the legal framework of segregation has been dismantled, inequality persists in new and complex forms. Disparities in healthcare, education, housing, wealth, and the criminal justice system continue to affect Black and marginalized communities disproportionately. Dr. King warned against complacency, reminding us that "justice too long delayed is justice denied." His words challenge modern society to confront systemic inequities not just with outrage, but with sustained action and moral accountability.

Dr. King's legacy also speaks powerfully to leadership in our current moment. He modeled servant leadership, placing people above power and purpose above personal gain. He did not seek comfort or popularity; he sought justice. In an era often defined by polarization, performative activism, and shallow soundbites, Dr. King's example calls for leaders who are principled, compassionate, and willing to make sacrifices for the greater good. His life reminds us that real change requires persistence, integrity, and the courage to stand firm even when the cost is high.

Equally important is Dr. King's emphasis on unity. He envisioned a "Beloved Community" where differences of race, class, and religion did not divide but enriched society. This vision challenges us today to move beyond tolerance toward genuine understanding and solidarity. Dr. King did not ignore differences; he believed they could coexist within a shared commitment to justice and humanity. In a world struggling with division, his dream urges us to build bridges rather than walls.

Perhaps most profoundly, Dr. King's legacy lives in everyday people. It lives in organizers advocating for fair wages, parents fighting for quality education, artists telling the truth through their work, and young people raising their voices for a more just future. His message was never meant to be frozen in history books or confined to one holiday each year. It was meant to be lived. As he famously said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s importance lies not only in what he accomplished but in what he continues to inspire. His legacy challenges each generation to examine its values, confront injustice, and choose courage over comfort. Today, honoring Dr. King means more than remembering his dream; it means carrying it forward with intention, integrity, and love.

Featured Story

FROM THE BRONX TO ITALY: HOW MARKISHA MARIE IS BUILDING HER OWN LUXURY EMPIRE

WRITTEN BY:
C.O.B.S EDITORIAL TEAM

Introduction

Markisha Marie did not come from fashion houses or generational wealth. She came from the Bronx, where grit is inherited, ambition is survival, and dreams are stitched together with faith, hustle, and relentless belief. And now, in 2026, she is doing what many said was impossible: building a self-owned luxury footwear empire manufactured in Italy and worn by some of the most influential women in the world.

This is not a comeback story.
This is a coronation.



Choosing Herself Before Choosing the Spotlight

Two years ago, Markisha decided that few in the fashion world dared to make her step away.

Not because the dream was fading, but because the woman behind it needed protecting. She paused to focus on her health and committed to higher education, a season she now calls the most defining of her leadership journey. It wasn't glamorous. There were no cameras, no announcements, no applause, just discipline.

That season taught her that you cannot scale a brand without strengthening the woman carrying the vision. She wasn't leaving M. Marie behind; she was preparing to bring it farther than ever.

Diamonds Are Forever — Built Under Pressure

Her February 2026 return is marked by her most emotional collection yet: Diamonds Are Forever.

Every heel reflects a chapter of her survival, proof that pressure doesn't destroy diamonds; it creates them. The collection is not simply about beauty; it's about permanence. Remember that no matter what you walk through, your value does not diminish. It is refined.

Markisha didn't design a collection; she revealed her story.



A Facebook Message That Changed Everything

M. Marie didn't arrive in Italy by privilege. It arrived through persistence.

What began as a simple Facebook message evolved into a global manufacturing partnership not because doors were opened, but because Markisha refused to stop knocking. Follow-ups turned into conversations. Conversations turned into contracts. And a Bronx-born vision crossed the Atlantic without ever waiting for permission.

Her journey is now a blueprint for Black women entrepreneurs everywhere: access is not always given; it is built.

Walk With Intention — A Heel That Became a Philosophy

Her signature Tulum heel is more than a design; it is a declaration.

"Walk with intention" is how Markisha moves through life, leadership, and legacy. Every partnership is aligned. Every decision is deliberate. She does not rush her vision for trends or timelines. She moves in obedience to her future, not her fear.

When Queens Wear Your Crown

From Eva Marcille to Angela Simmons and Dearica Hamby, women who command rooms now walk in Markisha's designs. And yet, she remains rooted in the truth that she is still that little girl from the Bronx who believed in something she could not yet see.

Seeing her shoes on women who carry power is surreal, but the more resounding victory is knowing her story now lives on women who move with confidence, purpose, and self-worth.



Hustle Was Her First Language

Before luxury, there was survival.

Markisha once balanced two full-time jobs, a bank teller by day and a sous chef by night, learning discipline in corporate hallways and creativity in the kitchen. That grind sharpened her instincts, refined her leadership style, and taught her that dreams require endurance long before they require applause.

Today, that same hustle is still in her DNA, only now, it's wrapped in Italian craftsmanship.

Redefining What Luxury Looks Like

Luxury once excluded women like Markisha. Today, she defines it.

To her, luxury is not approval; it is ownership. It is creative control. It is built on your own terms. It is Bronx grit meeting global excellence without dilution.

"Luxury looks like M.Marie," she says, and the future agrees.

The Leap That Changes Everything

Balancing school, international production, and personal growth is not easy, but Markisha is anchored by faith and forward motion. She believes that if she shows up for herself, God will handle the rest.

And to the woman reading this who is standing at the edge of her own leap of faith?

Jump

You don't need clarity to move; movement creates clarity.

Your vision exists for a reason.

And just like Markisha Marie, you are not chasing luxury; you are becoming it.



Queens Court

LIGHTING THE WAY BACK TO YOURSELF: THE SCENT-SORY WORLD OF JALEESA JACKSON, CEO OF TIN CANDLES

WRITTEN BY:
C.O.B.S EDITORIAL TEAM

Introduction

For Jaleesa Jackson, fragrance has never been just about making something smell good. It has always been about creating space for healing, reflection, joy, and most importantly, self-love.

Six years ago, Jackson began candle-making with simple intentions: crafting beautiful scents. But after surviving a global pandemic and confronting her own people-pleasing journey, her understanding of fragrance shifted. She realized that people were craving more than luxury; they were yearning for permission to slow down and belong in their own lives.

"I saw people lacking self-love and space to do so," Jackson shares. "My candles needed additional meaning behind them. I wanted people to use our candles to relax and be reminded that they belonged in spaces."

And just like that, Tin Candles Luxury Home Aroma was born, a brand rooted in slow living, intentional environments, and what Jackson now calls a scent-sory experience.



From Project Management to Purpose-Driven Luxury

With a background in project management, Jackson already knew how to organize systems and execute vision. That experience became the bridge between hobby and high-end brand.

"It's simple," she says. "Make a plan, stick to it, and adjust where you need to. I'm comfortable pivoting. When something isn't working, address it."

That mindset helped her navigate the unpredictable waters of entrepreneurship with clarity and confidence, even when the road demanded reinvention.



Wellness at the Heart of Luxury

In an industry where mass production often defines success, Tin Candles takes a slower route. Every candle is made in small batches using coconut wax and minimalistic, clean ingredients.

"When you think of luxury, there's limitation involved," Jackson explains. "I can't batch thousands without compromising the integrity of my work."

But her process is deeper than craftsmanship. As she stirs the wax, she whispers affirmations, infusing every candle with intention.

"I think of your wellness, your joy, your peace, your prosperity," she says. "It's about intention for me."

Names That Speak to the Soul

Tin Candles' most loved fragrances carry names that read like affirmations: BAE, SIS, OCCUPY THE SPACE, and formerly, GOLDEN PEACH.

Golden Peach - Life tends to have moments of bitterness that can make you forget to find joy, but Golden Peach is your reminder that in the midst of darkness & bitterness - you can always find something sweet to hold on to.

"BAE is your reminder to be your own first love," Jackson explains. "It's easy to be someone else's lover, but don't forget to be that for yourself."

SIS, OCCUPY THE SPACE carries saffron, the most expensive herb in the world. "I always encourage women to see themselves that way," she says. "As women of color, we shrink ourselves. That's never been fair. I walk boldly. I don't owe anyone anything."



Community, Connection & Visibility

Being featured in Sistah Shop and PhillySHARED placed Jackson in spaces where women of color uplift one another, something she treasures deeply.

"They get it," she says. "They know the struggle and choose to be the bridge."

Her upcoming appearances at Candle Con and the PhillySHARED Mother's Day event in May 2025 promise something special: in-person scent-sory experiences where customers don't just smell the story, they feel it.

A Scent-Sory Love Letter to Life

"I started Tin Candles because fragrance has always been therapy for me," Jackson reflects. "It's been clear. It's been the reminder I didn't know I needed to breathe to believe to BE."

Her candles are crafted not just to scent rooms, but to shift moods, anchor spirits, and awaken purpose.

"Life is going to LIFE," she says. "But you still get to choose how you live through it."

And that is the heart of Tin Candles' soul work wrapped in luxury, reminding women to return to themselves, one breath, one flame, one moment at a time.

New Author Alert

SHERRIDA MAXWELL AND THE SACRED JOURNEY OF BECOMING BEAUTIFUL AGAIN THE POWER OF BECOMING

WRITTEN BY:

DR. TREVI BOOKER-PERSHAY



There is a quiet beauty in finding yourself not through the eyes of people, opinions, labels, or expectations, but through the truth of who you are when everything else falls silent. Becoming your true self is not about approval; it is about alignment. It is about standing unapologetically in the woman God created you to be, even when it feels unfamiliar, uncomfortable, or costly. Sherrida embodies this journey not only as an author, but as the publisher and founder of Axwell Mindset Publishing—Book Coaching + Publishing Services—where her work is rooted, refined, and released with purpose.

That is why Beautiful Again is such a powerful and necessary work.

This book is not about revisiting the past to relive pain. It is about understanding where things begin so we can move forward with clarity, intention, and grace. Through honesty, faith, psychology, and emotional awareness, Sherrida Maxwell invites readers into a profoundly personal journey, one rooted in surrender, reflection, and redemption.



Becoming: Reclaiming the Story

For Sherrida, becoming meant reclaiming her own narrative.

While writing Beautiful Again, she realized that understanding the past does not require dwelling in it or judging what it should have been. Holding onto pain, she learned, only deepens the wound but transforming that pain gives it purpose. Becoming meant tracing the origin of her story, acknowledging the lessons, owing to her mistakes, and intentionally crafting the life she desired from the pieces she had gathered along the way.

More than anything, becoming required stepping fully into herself is no longer defined by past choices, survival roles, or identities imposed by others. It meant learning to hear and trust who God said she was, rather than bending to people-pleasing or living from a place of brokenness. Instead of trying to “fix” the past, Sherrida embraced how each season, relationship, and experience shaped who she is today allowing pain to become a source of restoration and transformation.

Where God Meets Us in the Mess

One of the most moving elements of Beautiful Again is the way Sherrida speaks about God’s presence in her most vulnerable moments. She shares how God met her in places she once believed were too broken, too messy, or too far gone to heal.

In seasons marked by disappointment, regret, and identities that no longer fit, she came face-to-face with surrender. It was in honest prayers questioning pride, control, and the ways she may have been doing “the right things” the wrong way that God met her with grace, love, and direction.

Writing the book became a prayer in action. It was a sacred space where wounds were tended, forgiveness was learned, and purpose was revealed. Through that process, Sherrida discovered how God restores what was lost and transforms pain into testimony not just for healing, but for encouragement and impact.

From Survival to Authentic Living

Sherrida speaks candidly about the moment she realized she was surviving rather than truly living. Her life had become centered on doing, fixing, achieving, and pleasing chasing fleeting happiness while avoiding more profound questions about purpose and identity.

The shift came through stillness. By pausing, listening to her nervous system, and leaning into God’s voice, she began to understand that authentic living is not about performance or validation. It is about alignment allowing your life to reflect the calling placed inside you.

This awareness led her to name patterns many women silently struggle with anxious attachment, emotional avoidance, and trauma bonding. By giving these experiences language, Sherrida removes shame and replaces it with clarity. Naming these patterns is not about labeling ourselves, it is about gaining power over cycles that once controlled us.

Surrender, Accountability, and Truth

Beautiful Again is not a polished self-help guide it is a lived experience. One of the hardest truths Sherrida confronted while writing was realizing that she had been wrong. Wrong about identities she clung to, wrong about coping mechanisms she normalized, and wrong about ways she had silenced her own voice.

That truth was painful, humbling and necessary.

Healing did not come from being right, it came from accountability. From acknowledging the pain, she caused herself and others, she chose to stop performing and start living honestly. In surrender, she found freedom. In releasing control, she found peace. And in trusting God beyond her own understanding, she moved from survival into purpose.

Healing That Redeems, Not Erases

One of the most powerful messages in Beautiful Again is this: healing does not erase your story, it redeems it. Sherrida no longer views her past with shame, but with gratitude for the wisdom it produced. Each chapter reframes pain as part of a redemptive narrative rather than something to hide or undo.

Through reflection guided by thoughtful questions woven throughout the book readers are invited to slow down, examine themselves, and confront patterns that no longer serve them. Reflection becomes the bridge between awareness and transformation, especially when done in the presence of God.

By intertwining scripture, psychology, and emotional awareness, Sherrida shows that faith and healing are not separate paths. They work together. Faith anchors us in truth; healing allows us to tend to wounds honestly. When combined, transformation becomes sustainable and deeply rooted.

For the Woman Reading This

For the woman who feels emotionally exhausted, unseen, or distant from God, Sherrida hopes Beautiful Again reveals one essential truth: you are not broken beyond repair, forgotten, or too far gone. Your exhaustion is not failure it is evidence that you have been carrying more than you were meant to carry alone.

This book invites women to lay down their burdens, to see themselves with compassion rather than judgment, and to trust that healing is still possible. God has never been distant. He has been patiently present, waiting in the quiet.

When striving ends and surrender begins, transformation follows and we are made beautiful again.

Book details

Beautiful Again out Now: <https://www.amazon.com/author/sherridamaxwell>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/sherridamaxwell...>

Women Werk

THE UNSTOPPABLE RISE OF FIRE RED DESIGNS: THE LEGACY OF TIENN HARRIS, CEO OF FIRE DESIGNS

WRITTEN BY:
C.O.B.S EDITORIAL TEAM



Some brands are built from spreadsheets and boardrooms. Fire Red Designs was born from isolation, faith, and the healing power of creativity.

When Tienn Harris first picked up jewelry-making tools, it wasn't because she envisioned running a brand. It began as a challenge. Her sister once told her she wasn't patient enough to create jewelry, and Harris decided to prove her wrong. What started as playful determination quickly became something more profound. After marrying and relocating to Philadelphia, far from family and friends, she found herself searching for connection and comfort. Jewelry-making became her sanctuary. "It quickly became my happy place," she recalls.

More than a decade later, Fire Red Designs stands as a living testimony to what happens when healing becomes purpose.



Designing With Intention

Harris doesn't just design jewelry; she curates experiences. Today, every piece she creates is deeply intentional. "I consider my clients' overall needs to coincide with their personalities," she explains. Instead of simply taking orders, Harris engages her clients in meaningful conversations. Through thoughtful Q&A sessions, she learns who they are, what they value, and how they want to express themselves.

This connection allows her to turn emotions into visuals, often taking bold risks with color and texture. The result is jewelry that feels personal, empowering, and unmistakably Fire Red.



Inspired by a Fashionista Before Her Time

The heart of Harris's artistry traces back to her grandmother, affectionately known as her "Nanny." Long before "fashion influencer" was a term, Nanny was styling herself with fearless flair. A seamstress with unmatched creativity, she believed in making beauty happen with whatever was available.

"If she didn't have the right accessories, she would spray-paint shoes or cover purses with leftover fabric," Harris shares with laughter. As a child, she watched in awe as her grandmother transformed ordinary items into bold statements. That fearless approach to style still lives in every Fire Red Designs piece today.

Organized Dysfunction, Perfectly Executed

Harris describes her creative process as "organized dysfunction." Sometimes she begins with a single gemstone, pulling the tiniest hues from within it and building outward. Her imagination leads the way, and no two designs are ever the same.

What ensures each piece feels one-of-a-kind is her dedication to knowing her clients. "It allows me to deliver exceptional craftsmanship that empowers them to express themselves," she says. Fire Red Designs is not just jewelry; it's storytelling in color, beads, and gemstones.



Jewelry That Makes Women Feel Seen

Ask Harris what she wants her customers to feel, and her answer comes without hesitation: "Beautifully bold, embracing their individuality, exuding confidence, seen, and FIERCE!"

Fire Red Designs isn't about fitting in; it's about standing out unapologetically.

The Reality Behind the Rise

Behind the beauty is a one-woman operation balancing creativity with business realities. Harris admits the business side is still a work in progress. Marketing, website management, and visibility remain constant challenges. "My passion for creating sometimes gets in the way of keeping up with the business side," she says honestly.

Still, she presses forward. "It can be discouraging, but I keep on keeping on because I love what I do."

Claiming Ownership of Her Dream

Her proudest moment came when she trademarked Fire Red Designs. "It's mine. I own it!" she says with pride, a declaration of independence and proof that her healing has become a legacy.

Advice From a Woman Who Built Her Own Fire

For women dreaming of turning passion into profit, Harris offers wisdom forged by experience: research your market, take business courses, surround yourself with like-minded people, price wisely, stay compliant, seek grants, keep strong records—and above all, show up for yourself.

Tienn Harris didn't just make jewelry. She turned loneliness into a legacy, and Fire Red Designs is only just getting started.

Kings Court

**THREADS OF POWER:
THE DESIGNER DRESSING A NEW
GENERATION OF KINGS AND QUEENS**
ANDRE JULIUS MCLASGHLIN
CEO ANDRE JULIUS

WRITTEN BY:
DR. TREVI BOOKER-PERSHAY



I'll never forget the afternoon I was casually scrolling through Instagram searching for my next C.O.B.S. Magazine feature when one page kept showing up, Andre' Julius Official. Something about it refused to let me scroll past. It wasn't just the photos or the perfectly styled reels; it was the energy behind the garments. Black men standing tall in suits that didn't just fit, they commanded attention.

I watched every video. I studied every stitch. I sat there in awe, and yes, I cried. Because what I saw wasn't just fashion; it was affirmation. It was Black men being honored, elevated, and celebrated. The way Andre' Julius tailors a suit makes it feel like a second skin, as if every garment was designed not only to fit the body but to strengthen the spirit. And that does something to you when you witness it.

It immediately took me back to my Uncle Lawrence, Booker, as we all called him. Uncle Booker wore suits like he had somewhere important to be, even when he didn't. He knew how to walk into a room and shift the atmosphere without saying a word. He understood the power of presentation and the dignity of looking sharp, no matter the circumstance. Andre' Julius captures that same legacy, the quiet confidence, the unapologetic pride, the authority that only comes when a Black man knows he belongs in every space he enters.



Where Craftsmanship Meets Calling

Andre' Julius isn't just a brand; it is the physical expression of its founder, Andre' J. McLaughlin, whose mission is simple yet revolutionary: to create garments that finally do justice to the people who wear them. Frustrated by ill-fitting off-the-rack suits that were too tight in the chest, sloppy at the waist, and nearly impossible to tailor correctly, Andre reimagined what custom fashion should be.

Every Andre' Julius suit begins with more than 30 individual measurements, ensuring that each piece is built from the body outward, not the other way around. This isn't mass production. It is intentional design, handcrafted with the world's finest fabrics and finished by master clothiers who treat tailoring as a sacred art.

Andre' believes that custom clothing isn't a luxury, it's a declaration. A declaration that your presence matters. That your body deserves respect, that excellence should never be compromised for convenience.

Celebrities Who Wear Andre' Julius

Andre' Julius's growing influence is evident in his bespoke designs, which have dressed some of the most recognizable names in sports and media, amplifying his impact across industries.

Here are just a few of the notable figures who have trusted him with their looks:

- Ryan Clark — NFL Super Bowl Champion, ESPN Analyst, Host of Inside the NFL and Pivot Podcast
- Nate Burleson — NFL Veteran, CBS Mornings Co-Host, Emmy Award Winner
- Anthony "Booger" McFarland — NFL Veteran, ESPN Analyst

These names aren't just clients, they're ambassadors of a new standard in fashion, showing the world how power, grace, and precision come together when a suit is made to elevate one's presence.

Dressing the Influential — Empowering Everyone

Andre' Julius has become the trusted designer for athletes, media personalities, and everyday trailblazers alike. While celebrities help amplify his brand, his reach extends far beyond the spotlight. His designs are for anyone who wants to step into their calling with confidence, whether walking onto a stage, into a boardroom, down the aisle, or into the next chapter of life.

The Andre' Julius Experience

A fitting at Andre' Julius is not transactional; it's transformational.

Clients are guided through selecting premium fabrics, personalized linings, buttons, lapels, and cuts that reflect not only their style but their story. Each garment is sculpted to move with the body, honoring curves, posture, and individuality. And once the masterpiece is complete, clients are gifted with something rare in fashion professional photoshoots: a moment that captures them fully realized.

It's not about vanity. It's about visibility.

Redefining Beauty Beyond the Binary

Andre' Julius isn't limited to menswear. Through his women's line, Juliet by Andre' Julius, he extends the same respect, craftsmanship, and attention to detail to women seeking power suits and couture that match their authority. Because royalty has no gender and confidence has no boundaries.

Why This Matters

Watching Andre' Julius's work stirred something in me that I hadn't felt in a long time. It wasn't admiration, it was recognition. Recognition of my uncle in every perfectly pressed crease. Recognition of generations of Black men who were told to shrink but instead chose to stand tall. Recognition of kings and queens rising, stitched together by pride, culture, and resilience.

Andre' Julius doesn't just tailor garments, he tailors legacy.

And in every thread, every fitting, every finished suit, he reminds us that when you wear your worth, the world has no choice but to acknowledge it.

If you'd like photo captions, sidebars, or pull quotes to turn this into a complete print layout, I can help with that too!



Women Innovators

FROM KITCHEN CREATIONS TO COLLECTIVE HEALING: THE BEAUTY OF BODYLOVE BY TAL & HOLY FIRE

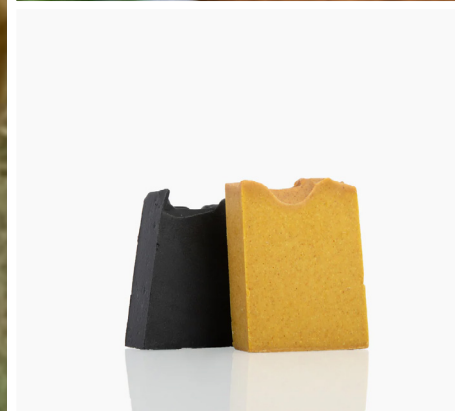
WRITTEN BY:
C.O.B.S. EDITORIAL STAFF



Innovation often begins with truth, and that was exactly what stood out to me when I discovered Natalya King, CEO of BodyLove by Tal, while scrolling through Instagram. What immediately captured my attention wasn't just the beauty of her brand, but her authenticity. Natalya was open and transparent about both the wins and the losses that come with entrepreneurship, sharing her journey in a way that felt honest, relatable, and deeply human. As a woman leading a growing wellness brand, she didn't present perfection; she presented purpose.

Curiosity led me from her Instagram page to her website and blog, and what I found was far more than a business. BodyLove by Tal is a space rooted in holistic healing, education, and intentional living. Through her blog, Natalya shares herbal knowledge, wellness practices, and natural remedies that empower individuals to reconnect with their bodies and take ownership of their health. Every post reflects care, patience, and a sincere desire to educate and uplift.

What moved me most was watching Natalya create. Seeing her hands pour, mix, and craft her products reveals something deeper. You can feel the love and healing she pours into every step of the process. This is not just manufacturing; it is ministry through wellness. Her work is done from the heart, and that intention is unmistakable.



Natalya has been open about the challenges she has faced along the way. She shared moments of loss, seasons when machines broke down, and times when the journey felt uncertain. Yet through every obstacle, her faith remained unwavering. She trusted God in every step of the process, allowing faith—not fear—to guide her forward. That level of transparency is rare, especially from a CEO, and it is what makes her story so impactful and relatable.

BodyLove by Tal began in Natalya's kitchen, inspired by her upbringing and a holistic approach to healing passed down through her family. What started as small, handmade creations for personal use grew into a thriving brand offering a wide range of organic herbs and handcrafted skincare products. Her philosophy is simple yet powerful: what we put on our skin matters as much as what we put into our bodies. Clean ingredients, intention, and education are at the core of everything she creates.

Beyond the products, Natalya is building a community. She doesn't just sell wellness; she shares knowledge, tools, and encouragement so others can learn, create, and heal for themselves. Her work reminds us that innovation isn't always loud or flashy; sometimes it looks like consistency, faith, and resilience practiced daily.

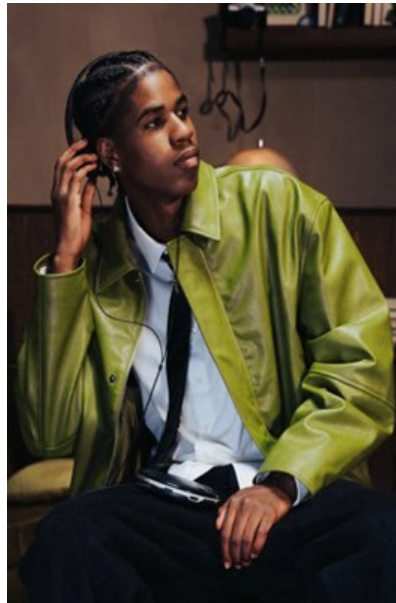
It is a true honor to spotlight a woman who exemplifies what hustle, faith, and perseverance look like in action. Natalya King's journey is a testament to what happens when passion meets purpose and when trust in God anchors every step. Through BodyLove by Tal, she is not only building a brand but also cultivating collective healing, one intentional creation at a time.

Support her business:
Apothecary & Whole Body Wellness | BodyLove by Tal
<https://www.instagram.com/bodylove-bytal/#>

New Artist Alert

JD: FROM CHILD PRODIGY TO R&B ROYALTY IN THE MAKING

WRITTEN BY:
C.O.B.S. EDITORIAL STAFF



At just 18 years old, JD, born JD McCrary, is proving that longevity in entertainment doesn't come from staying comfortable with yesterday's success, but from having the courage to evolve. Once introduced to the world as JD McCrary, the singer, dancer, and actor is now stepping into a bold new era as a recording artist signed to Mega, the newly launched label founded by Usher and L.A. Reid in partnership with Gamma. It is a move that signals not just a career transition, but the arrival of a young man finally owning his voice, his sound, and his story.

JD's journey began early. At the age of eight, he made his acting debut on Disney Channel's K.C. Undercover, a small role that would open the door to one of the most impressive child-star trajectories of the last decade. While most kids his age were still figuring out multiplication tables, JD was already captivating millions with his voice, first gaining viral attention after singing The Jackson 5's "I Want You Back" on Little Big Shots. That performance wasn't just cute. It was commanding. It carried a depth rarely seen in artists so young, a tone that suggested this wasn't borrowed talent, it was inherited purpose.

Soon after, audiences saw him perform "Who's Lovin' You" on The Ellen Show and later joined Childish Gambino at the 60th Annual Grammy Awards, supporting the haunting single "Terrified." By December 2017, his star was undeniable when he was invited to sing the national anthem at a Los Angeles Clippers game following a viral singing moment that swept social media.

Then came 2019, the year JD officially entered pop culture history. He provided the voice of young Simba in Disney's live-action remake of The Lion King, a role that required him to match the emotional weight and musicality of Donald Glover, who voiced adult Simba. JD once reflected that he had to think carefully about Simba's journey, knowing the character would grow into something bigger. That level of awareness at such a young age showed maturity far beyond his years.

That same year, he co-starred in Universal's comedy Little and portrayed a young Michael Jackson in BET's American Soul. While many child stars struggle to balance acting and music, JD moved seamlessly between the two worlds, never losing his rhythm.

Musically, 2019 also marked a milestone with the release of his debut EP Shine, which included production from industry icons Jermaine Dupri and Bryan-Michael Cox. The project was youthful yet polished, proving that his artistry was not a side project; it was a foundation.

Fast-forward to now, and JD is no longer the child prodigy the world first met. Reintroducing himself simply as JD, he has stepped into his grown-man sound, introspective, soulful, and fearless. In March 2025, he signed with Mega, the new label created by Usher and L.A. Reid, placing him in the lineage of R&B greatness. His first release under the label, "I'll Be Good," showcases a reflective vulnerability that feels like a personal conversation between the artist and the listener. Built on a smooth mid-tempo groove with Spanish-guitar accents, the track is a confession of growth, a young man owning his mistakes, honoring his past, and promising better for the future.

What makes this chapter so compelling is not just the music but the mentorship. With Usher guiding his evolution, JD isn't chasing overnight success. He is being molded into a long-term artist, one whose story is meant to unfold album by album, not trend by trend.

His upcoming debut project, Me, My Songs and I, promises to be the most personal work of his career, a soundtrack to becoming. And for fans who have watched him grow from an eight-year-old on Disney to the voice of Simba, the moment feels almost full-circle.

JD is more than a former child star. He is a testament to what happens when talent is nurtured, purpose is protected, and passion is allowed to mature. His story is still being written, but one thing is already sure: this is not the end of his childhood fame. It is the beginning of his legacy.

Author's Spotlight

YIELDED, HEALED, AND THRIVING: A STORY OF FAITH, SURVIVAL, AND PURPOSE *MEET STACY HOBSON*

WRITTEN BY:
C.O.B.S. EDITORIAL TEAM



For more than eight years, she lived with Stage 5 kidney disease, fully aware that her diagnosis was not something she could outrun or ignore. End-stage renal disease was a daily companion, shaping her mornings, her work, and her prayers. Rather than surrendering to despair, she chose discipline and devotion. Each day began, moved, and ended with prayer. Scripture became her anchor, guarding her mental health against depression and sustaining her physical strength so she could continue traveling, selling homes, and living independently. She understood early that healing is not only physical but also deeply mental and spiritual.

In August 2025, everything changed.

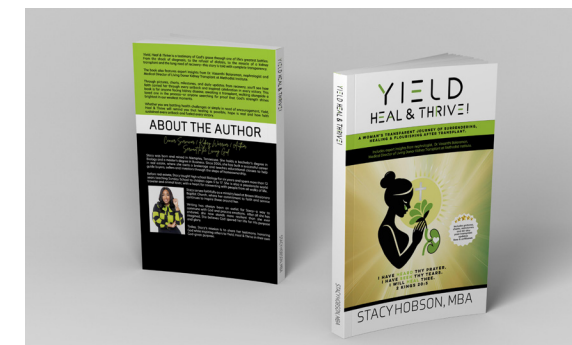
Just months earlier, she had traveled to Greece and Turkey on a cruise that would unknowingly mark a turning point in her life. While visiting the House of Mary in Turkey, she left a prayer on a wall filled with thousands of requests: that her desires would align with God's will. In that moment, she felt an unexplainable peace and accepted the consequences of continuing life without dialysis. When she returned home, refreshed and ready to work, she had no idea her prayer was already being answered.

Weeks later, after closing on a home for a young couple, she received a life-altering call: an anonymous altruistic donor had been found. A stranger, motivated by obedience to God, chose to give the gift of life. Even more remarkable, the donor had begun compatibility testing during the very time she was praying in Greece. Tears flowed freely as she realized God had seen her, heard her cries, and moved on her behalf in ways only He could orchestrate.

Her journey did not begin or end with kidney disease. As a survivor of chronic myeloid leukemia and a kidney transplant recipient, she describes herself as fearless and resilient. These battles refined her faith, realigned her priorities, and clarified her purpose. She learned to seek the Kingdom first and trust God not just for healing, but for direction.

That clarity gave birth to Yield, Heal & Thrive. What began as private journaling—letters to God and documentation of bodily changes became a calling. On the transplant table, she understood that her survival was not meant to be silent. Convicted by the Holy Spirit, she committed to sharing her testimony so God could receive the Glory, and others could be empowered to take responsibility for their health and faith.

Even while fighting for her life, she continued to build her real estate business, founding J Hunter Realty with excellence and integrity. She never led with sympathy, only skill—determined that her work would glorify God. She also launched a real estate ministry at her church, refusing to let illness steal her purpose.



Now, through her nonprofit work, advocacy, and upcoming memoir, she is determined to raise awareness about kidney disease—especially within African American and Hispanic communities, who are disproportionately affected. Her heart is drawn most deeply to helping with hardship, believing that meeting tangible needs opens the door to healing, dignity, and hope.

Looking back, she sees clearly how God transformed her wounds into ministry. Relationships shifted. Priorities have changed. Faith deepened. What remained was peace, protection, and purpose. Having walked through fire without being burned, she now dedicates the rest of her life to her Father's business, yielding, healing, and truly thriving.

Did You Know?

DISNEY HONORS BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH “CELEBRATE SOULFULLY,” STORYTELLING, ART, AND EMPOWERMENT

WRITTEN BY: C.O.B.S. EDITORIAL TEAM

As Black History Month ushers in another February, The Walt Disney Company is expanding its tradition of celebrating Black heritage, culture, and achievement in meaningful and high-visibility ways. Through a company-wide initiative titled “Celebrate Soulfully,” Disney is spotlighting Black creatives, performers, and storytellers while inviting audiences of all ages to engage with rich artistic expressions that elevate the culture and legacy of the Black community (Walt Disney, 2024).

At the heart of Disney’s initiative is a commitment to inclusivity and storytelling that honors Black voices, both past and present. According to Disney’s official announcement, the company is shining a light on Black stories and voices not just during February, but throughout the year, recognizing the resilience, creativity, and influence of Black creators and “magic makers” in entertainment, parks and experiences, media, and corporate leadership.



A Multi-Platform Celebration Across Disney’s Entertainment Universe

Disney has built its Black History Month programming across multiple platforms — from streaming and broadcast to theme parks and community-focused events.

On Disney+, Hulu, and ABC, viewers can access a slate of culturally resonant programming. Highlights include streaming premieres and encore airings such as Genius: MLK/X, a two-episode exploration of the formative years of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, and documentaries like X/onerated: The Murder of Malcolm X and 55 Years to Justice. These titles spotlight pivotal figures and lesser-told narratives that have shaped American history.



The Disney+ Black Stories collection, another key component of the celebration, gathers beloved films and series that elevate Black talent and narratives. Titles range from classics like Black-ish and Soul Food to newer animated offerings. Disney also features the animated series Iwájú, a collaborative project rooted in Pan-African storytelling that further diversifies Disney’s creative landscape.

Beyond entertainment content, Disney has partnered with organizations such as the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), National Geographic, and FX to expand scholarship and storytelling initiatives, including the Disney UNCF Enhanced Corporate Scholars Program and other media leadership pathways designed to support the next generation of Black storytellers and media professionals.

Disney Parks: Where Culture Comes to Life

Disney’s celebration also brings Black history and culture into its theme parks through “Celebrate Soulfully,” a year-long tribute that reaches its peak during Black History Month with special offerings at both Disneyland and Walt Disney World Resorts. At parks across the country, guests can experience cultural showcases that blend music, food, art, fashion, and heritage.

For example, Disneyland Resort invites guests to experience Celebrate Gospel, a series of live performances featuring gospel music legends throughout February, while characters like Princess Tiana and Moon Girl make appearances throughout parks to bring beloved stories to life. Art installations and exhibits honoring historical figures such as Frederick Douglass and Floyd Norman, as well as contemporary artists, provide guests with opportunities to engage with Black heritage at multiple touch-points across the resort.

At Walt Disney World, special pre-parade appearances and artistic showcases highlight not only entertainment but also culinary art and expression. Disney Springs has become a hub for cultural engagement, where visitors can enjoy new works by Black visual artists along the Disney Springs Art Walk, featuring artists like Ernest Shaw, Nneka Jones, and Nardstar. At the same time, limited-edition merchandise and themed food items offer a celebratory taste of Black culture.

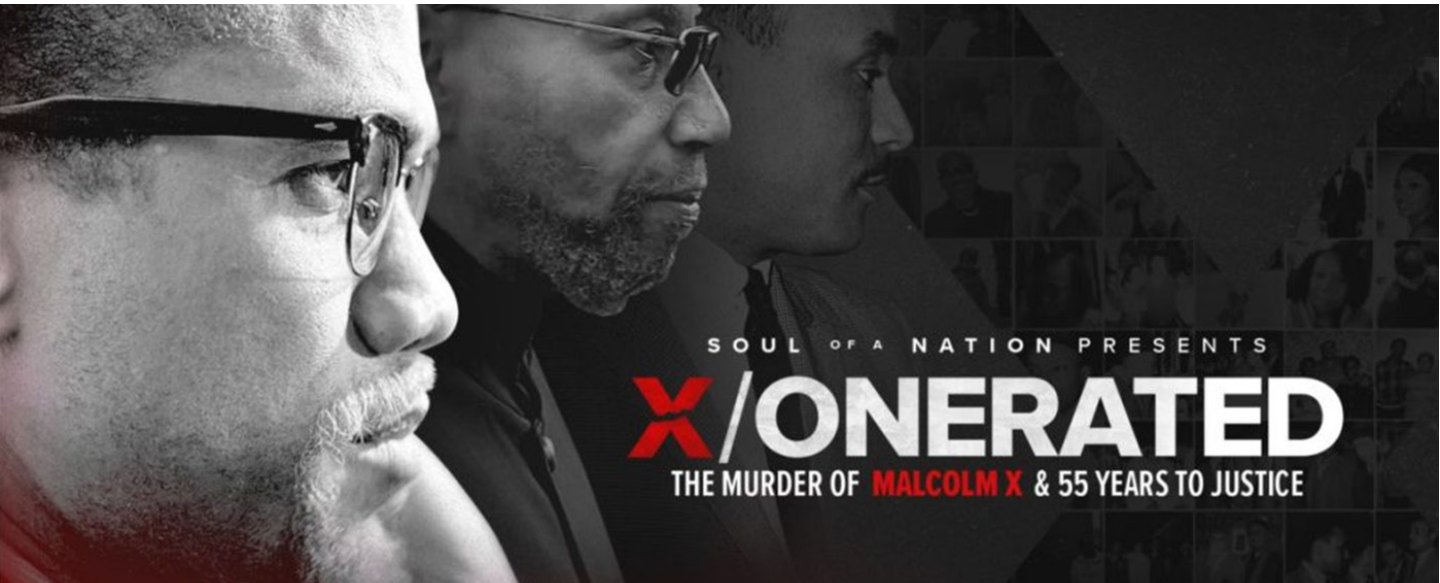
Whether through meeting popular characters, savoring culturally inspired cuisine, or discovering artwork rooted in heritage and lived experience, Disney’s parks are places where culture and entertainment converge in joyful celebrations.

Storytelling That Resonates Beyond Celebration

Disney’s multi-layered Black History Month observance underscores a broader commitment to representation and equity in storytelling. By elevating stories across its platforms from streamed documentaries to stage performances, scholarship programs, and themed park experiences, the company aims to encourage reflection, learning, and celebration.

More than just special programming for a calendar month, the “Celebrate Soulfully” initiative is described by Disney as a year-round ode to Black heritage that incorporates artistry, food, music, and talent, inviting participation from global audiences. In doing so, Disney is not only recognizing historical contributions but also empowering new voices and expanding the narrative landscape of one of the world’s most influential entertainment brands.

This Black History Month, Disney’s expansive offerings provide fans and families an opportunity to reflect on cultural impact, honor artistic brilliance, and engage with stories that educate and inspire, making the magic of celebration more inclusive and heartfelt than ever.



Black Women and History

BLACK WOMEN: THE ARCHITECTS OF HISTORY, HOPE, AND THE FUTURE

WRITTEN BY:
C.O.B.S. EDITORIAL TEAM

Introduction

As a Black woman, I do not walk this world alone. I stand firmly on the shoulders of the women who came before me, women whose names are etched into history and women whose names were never written down, yet whose sacrifices shaped my very existence. I am who I am because of their sweat, their tears, their prayers, and their relentless fight to be seen, heard, and valued in a world that often tried to deny their humanity.

Their courage cleared paths I now walk with purpose. Their resilience permitted me to dream beyond survival and step boldly into my calling. Every opportunity I touch is connected to a woman who endured oppression so that I could inherit possibility. They carried burdens so I could carry vision. They fought battles so I could choose joy, leadership, creativity, and freedom.

I honor them not only by remembering their stories, but by living mine fully without apology, without shrinking, and without forgetting where my strength comes from. I am their legacy in motion. And every step I take forward is a thank-you, a tribute, and a continuation of the fight they began.

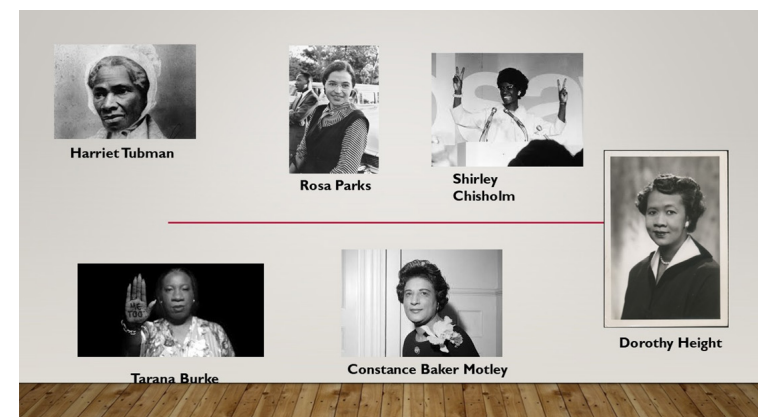
Black women have never waited for permission to change the world. Even when history tried to silence them, erase them, or relegate their brilliance to footnotes, they showed up anyway, leading, creating, healing, and transforming generations. Their impact spans activism, politics, science, literature, sports, medicine, and culture, shaping not only Black history but global history as well.

From freedom fighters to firsts, visionaries to truth-tellers, Black women have consistently carried the weight of progress while planting seeds for a future they may never fully see but one they believe in deeply.

Activism & Politics: Courage in Motion

When freedom seemed impossible, Harriet Tubman moved with fearless resolve, guiding enslaved people to liberation through the Underground Railroad. Her bravery reminds us that leadership often looks like risk, sacrifice, and faith in action.

Decades later, Rosa Parks made a quiet yet earth-shaking decision that ignited the Montgomery Bus Boycott, proving that resistance does not always roar; sometimes it simply refuses to move.



Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to Congress and the first to run for president, redefined political possibility with her declaration: “Unbought and Unbossed.” Her legacy still challenges us to claim space boldly and unapologetically.

Leaders like Dorothy Height strengthened movements behind the scenes, while Tarana Burke reshaped global conversations around justice and healing with the #MeToo movement. And trailblazers such as Constance Baker Motley shattered legal barriers, opening doors many were told would never unlock.

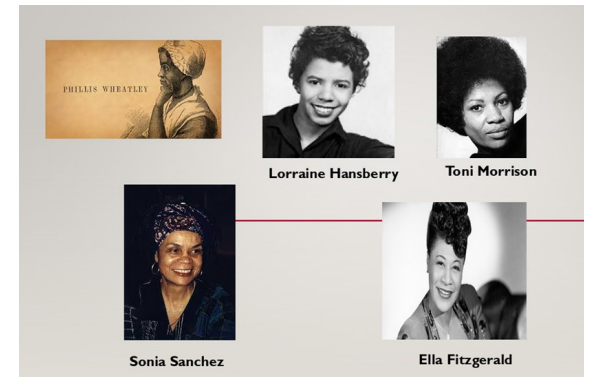


Arts & Literature: Telling Our Truths

Black women have always been storytellers holding memory, pain, joy, and truth in their words. Phillis Wheatley, the first published African American female poet, proved early on that Black intellect and artistry could not be contained.

Lorraine Hansberry brought Black family life and deferred dreams to center stage with *A Raisin in the Sun*. At the same time, Toni Morrison wrote with such depth and honesty that the world could no longer look away, earning a Nobel Prize and redefining American literature.

In music and poetry, voices like Ella Fitzgerald and Sonia Sanchez gave sound to our resilience, joy, and revolutionary spirit.



Science, Technology & Medicine: Brilliance Without Apology

Behind some of the world's greatest scientific achievements are Black women whose brilliance refused to be hidden. Katherine Johnson calculated trajectories that helped send astronauts into space, while Mae Jemison became the first African American woman to leave Earth's atmosphere—turning dreams into destinations.

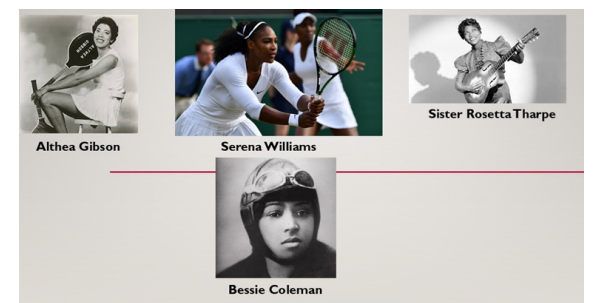
Innovators like Patricia Bath revolutionized eye care and restored sight to thousands, and Lisa Gelobter helped shape the digital experiences we use every day. Their stories remind us that Black women don't just participate in innovation; we lead it.

Sports & Entertainment:

Breaking Barriers, Building Legacies

In sports and performance, Black women have consistently redefined excellence. Althea Gibson broke racial barriers in tennis long before it was popular or profitable to do so, paving the way for icons like Serena Williams, whose dominance reshaped the sport itself.

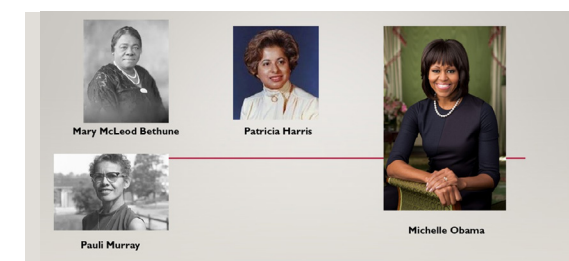
Cultural pioneers such as Sister Rosetta Tharpe influenced rock and roll before the genre had a name, while Bessie Coleman took to the skies as the first Black woman pilot, proving that even the sky was not the limit.



Legacy & Leadership Across All Fields

Educators and visionaries like Mary McLeod Bethune understood that education was a form of liberation. Leaders such as Patricia Harris and Pauli Murray reshaped policy, faith, and civil rights, often before the world was ready to listen.

And in modern times, figures like Michelle Obama continue to model grace, intelligence, and purpose, showing that power and compassion can coexist beautifully.



A Living Legacy

These women represent only a fraction of Black women's contributions, but their stories echo a single truth: Black women are builders of nations, carriers of culture, and guardians of hope. Their resilience is not accidental; it is inherited, intentional, and transformative.

To honor Black women is to honor history itself. And to tell their stories is not just remembrance, it is resistance, affirmation, and a declaration that their legacy is still unfolding, through us.

Fitness Corner

NEW MIND, BETTER HEALTH? HOW A HEALTHY MINDSET GUIDES SUSTAINABLE WEIGHT LOSS

WRITTEN BY:
ARIELLE PERSHAY

Introduction

When it comes to working out, losing weight, and building strength, most people focus on plans, programs, and numbers. Calories in. Calories out. Reps. Sets. Steps. While those things matter, they are not where real change begins.

Lasting health starts in the mind.

A healthy mindset is the foundation that helps you move your body with intention, fuel it with respect, and stay consistent long enough to see results. Without it, workouts feel like punishment, food becomes the enemy, and maintaining progress feels impossible.

The good news? Shifting your mindset doesn't require perfection or extreme discipline. It requires awareness, patience, and a few simple daily practices.

Shift #2: Move Your Body with Purpose, Not Punishment

Exercise should not feel like a consequence for eating or a requirement to “earn” food.

When workouts are driven by guilt, they rarely last.

A healthy mindset asks:

- What movement supports my body today?
- What helps me feel stronger, not depleted?

Easy workout tips for sustainable weight loss:

- Strength train 2–4 times per week to build muscle and boost metabolism
- Add low-impact movement like walking, stretching, or yoga on rest days
- Focus on form and control, not speed

Strong muscles help shape your body, protect your joints, and increase fat burn even at rest.

Why Mindset Matters More than Motivation?

Motivation is temporary. Mindset is what carries you when motivation fades.

A healthy mindset reframes fitness from something you have to do into something you get to do. It helps you stop chasing quick fixes and start building habits that support your body in the long term.

When your mindset is aligned:

- You choose workouts that support your body instead of punishing it
- You listen to hunger cues instead of ignoring or fighting them
- You recover without guilt
- You stay consistent without burning out

Weight loss and muscle growth become side effects of healthy behaviors—not the only goal.



Shift #1: Stop Thinking “All or Nothing”

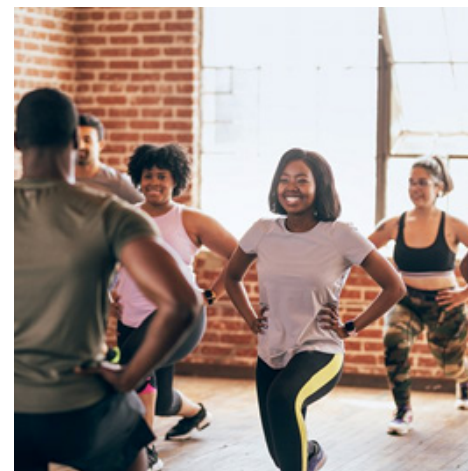
One of the biggest mindset blocks to healthy weight loss is all-or-nothing thinking. You will miss a workout, you quit the week, and you eat one indulgent meal. If you don't see fast results fast enough, you give up.

This mindset creates cycles of extreme burnout.

Try this instead:

- Progress over perfection
- Consistency over intensity
- Small wins over dramatic change.

Easy tip: If you can't do your full workout, do 10 minutes. If you can't eat perfectly, eat mindfully. Something is always better than nothing.



Shift #3: Fuel, Don't Restrict

Extreme restriction slows progress and damages your relationship with food.

A healthy mindset views food as fuel, not a reward or a mistake.

Simple nutrition mindset shifts:

- Eat to support energy, recovery, and strength
- Prioritize protein to build and protect muscle
- Include carbs to fuel workouts and brain function
- Don't fear healthy fats; they support hormones and satiety

Easy tip: Build meals around balance: protein + fiber + healthy fat. This keeps blood sugar stable and cravings in check.



Shift #4: Focus on Strength, Not Just the Scale

The scale does not tell the full story.

Muscles weigh more than fat, and as you build strength, your body composition can change even if the number doesn't move quickly.

A healthy mindset tracks progress in multiple ways:

- Increased strength
- Better endurance
- Improved mood and energy
- Clothes fit differently
- Better sleep

Easy tip: Take monthly progress photos or measurements instead of weighing yourself daily.

Shift #5: Rest Is Part of the Plan

Overtraining is not a badge of honor.

Muscles grow, and fat loss happens during recovery—not during exhaustion.

A healthy mindset respects rest as productive.

Easy recovery tips:

- Schedule at least one full rest day per week
- Prioritize sleep (7–9 hours when possible)
- Stretch or foam roll after workouts

Rest prevents injury, supports hormones, and keeps motivation high.



Shift #6: Talk to Yourself Like Someone You Care About

Your inner dialogue matters more than any workout plan.

If your thoughts are harsh, critical, or shameful, progress will always feel heavy.

Replace:

- “I'm lazy.” → “I'm learning consistency.”
- “I failed.” → “I'm adjusting.”
- “I'll never get there.” → “I'm building this step by step.”

A healthy mindset builds resilience, not resentment.

Final Thoughts: Health Is a Relationship, not a Deadline

Weight loss and muscle building are not races. They are results of habits practiced with patience and care.

A new mind creates better health by changing how you show up daily, imperfectly, and consistently.

When you lead with intention instead of pressure, your body responds.

Not because you forced it, but because you finally worked with it.

New mind. Better health. Stronger body.

Travel & Leisure Corner

A VALENTINE'S DAY INTRODUCTION: LOVE, COUPLES & THE ART OF GETTING AWAY

WRITTEN BY:
C.O.B.S. EDITORIAL TEAM

Introduction

Valentine's Day isn't just a date on the calendar; it's a pause button. A moment where couples step away from deadlines, notifications, and responsibilities to remember why they chose each other in the first place. A Valentine's getaway is less about where you go and more about who you become when the world slows down, and it's just the two of you.



Love thrives in shared experiences. It's in the laughter over missed flights, the quiet conversations during long walks, the way a new city or a secluded beach invites couples to reconnect without distraction. Traveling together allows love to stretch, deepen, and breathe. Whether you're newly in love or decades into a partnership, a getaway creates space for intimacy, reflection, and renewal.

For couples, Valentine's travel is an opportunity to be intentional. To choose presence over pressure. Romance over routine. It's about waking up without an agenda, holding hands in unfamiliar places, sharing meals that turn into memories, and discovering new sides of one another, sometimes in the most unexpected moments.

A Valentine's getaway doesn't have to be extravagant to be meaningful. It can be a luxury escape, a cozy cabin, a bustling city, or a quiet retreat by the water. What matters is the shared intention to reconnect, celebrate love, and honor the journey you're on together.

As your travel guide, my role is to help you choose destinations that speak your love language, whether that's adventure, serenity, culture, or indulgence. Wherever you go, let the destination be the backdrop, not the focus. The real magic will always be the love you carry with you.

Now... let's find the perfect place for your hearts to wander next

Paris, France — The Eternal City of Love

Paris doesn't try to be romantic — it simply is. From moonlit walks along the Seine to candlelit cafés tucked away in Montmartre, every moment feels cinematic.

Romantic highlights

- Evening Seine River dinner cruise
- Sunset at Montmartre's Sacré-Cœur
- Chocolate tastings and wine bars
- Boutique hotels with Eiffel Tower views

Perfect for couples who love timeless romance and elegance.



Maldives —

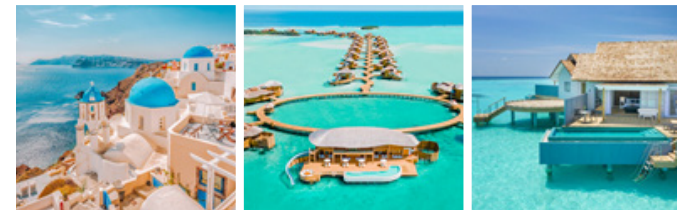
Private Paradise, Just the Two of You

If unplugging from the world is your love language, the Maldives delivers pure romance—overwater bungalows, crystal-clear waters, and quiet moments that feel sacred.

Romantic highlights

- Overwater villas with private decks
- Floating breakfast experiences
- Sunset beach dinners for two
- Spa treatments over the lagoon

Best for couples who want luxury, privacy, and total escape.



Santorini, Greece —

Sunsets That Speak the Language of Love

Santorini feels like a shared secret between the sea and the sky—whitewashed villages, blue domes, and sunsets that stop conversations mid-sentence.

Romantic highlights

- Private infinite-pool villas
- Sunset dinners in Oia
- Sailing the caldera at golden hour
- Wine tastings with ocean views

Ideal for couples craving intimacy, beauty, and serenity.



New York City —

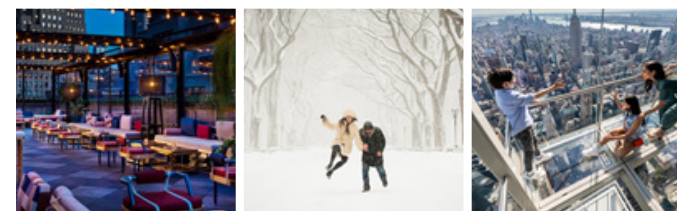
Where Love Meets the Energy of the World

Romance in NYC is bold, exciting, and unforgettable. From Broadway lights to quiet moments in Central Park, love thrives in the city that never sleeps.

Romantic highlights

- Rooftop dining with skyline views
- Broadway or jazz club dates
- Horse-drawn carriage rides in Central Park
- Late-night walks across the Brooklyn Bridge

Perfect for couples who love vibrancy, culture, and spontaneity.



Aspen, Colorado —

Cozy Luxury & Fireside Romance

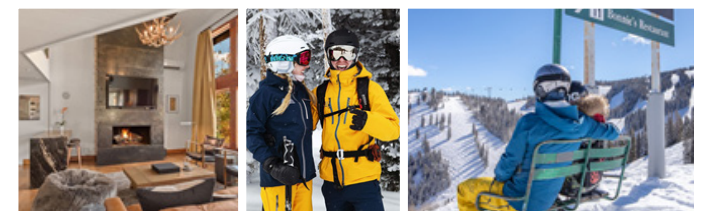
Aspen blends mountain beauty with upscale charm. Snowy landscapes, crackling fireplaces, and intimate lodge vibes make it effortlessly romantic.

Romantic highlights

- Fireside wine nights
- Couples' spa retreats
- Skiing or scenic gondola rides
- Luxury mountain lodges

Best for couples who love cozy moments with a touch of indulgence.

Take a couple of trips, and you will thank us later.



The Crown Effect

IS THE SILK PRESS THE MODERN-DAY HOT COMB? BLACK HAIR, TIMELESS TECHNIQUES, AND THE EVOLUTION OF CARE

WRITTEN BY:
DR. TREVI-BOOKER PERSHAY

Introduction

I grew up in an era where Dax pressing oil and a hot straightening comb sitting directly on the stove were household staples. Straight hair days weren't casual; they were an event. When it came time to press my hair, especially my edges, my mother would give a firm warning before she even touched my hairline: "Hold your ear." That was the signal. Holding my ear tight meant she could get my edges silky straight without hesitation. Stillness was not optional. You were warned not to move too much, or you would get burned. And truthfully, there were many times the small burn marks along my ear or forehead told the story that I couldn't keep still. Back then, beauty required patience, trust, and sometimes a little pain, but it was also wrapped in care, tradition, and the quiet bonding moments between mother and daughter.

Those early experiences shaped how many Black women understand straight hair today and laid the foundation for what we now call the silk press, a modern technique rooted in the same desire for smooth, flowing hair, but refined with healthier tools, better education, and a deeper respect for our natural texture.

The Hot Comb Era: Where It All Began

Before flat irons, blow dryers, and temperature gauges, there was the hot comb. Heated on the stove or plugged in and coated with pressing oil, the hot comb was the go-to tool for achieving straight hair in Black households and beauty salons. It required skill, patience, and precision. One wrong move could result in a burn, and many of us wore those marks like unspoken proof of the process.

Despite the risks, the hot comb press was powerful. It gave Black women versatility at a time when hair options were limited and social expectations were strict. Straight hair often meant looking "put together," professional, or ready for church, school, or special occasions. The technique wasn't about rejecting natural hair; it was about working with the tools and knowledge available at the time.



Enter the Silk Press: Same Goal, New Game

The silk press is the modern evolution of the hot comb press. The goal remains the same: smooth, straight hair with body and shine, but the approach has changed dramatically. Today's silk press prioritizes hair health over appearance.

Unlike the traditional hot comb method, a silk press involves:

- Thorough cleansing and clarifying
- Deep conditioning to restore moisture
- Blow-drying with tension and airflow
- Flat ironing with controlled heat
- Lightweight serums or oils for shine, not heaviness



Modern tools allow stylists to adjust heat based on hair texture and condition, reducing the risk of heat damage. Heat protectants are now non-negotiable, and trimming damaged ends is often part of the process. The result is hair that looks sleek but can still revert to curls once washed—something many of our mothers and grandmothers didn't always have the luxury of preserving.

What's Really Changed—and Why It Matters

The biggest difference between then and now isn't just technology, it's awareness. Black women today are far more informed about their hair. We understand porosity, curl patterns, moisture balance, and heat tolerance. Straight hair is no longer the standard; it's simply an option.

Key shifts include:

- A focus on reversion as a sign of healthy hair
- Fewer heat passes and lower temperatures
- Stylists trained specifically in natural hair care
- A move away from heavy pressing oils
- Greater respect for individual texture

The silk press allows Black women to enjoy straight styles without feeling like they're compromising their natural hair journey.

Trends Shaping Black Haircare Today

Today's hair trends reflect a balance of tradition and innovation. Many women still love the look of a fresh silk press, but they're pairing it with smarter care practices, such as:

- Limiting silk presses to seasonal wear
- Choosing humidity-resistant techniques
- Using silk or satin wraps at night
- Alternating between straight and natural styles
- Embracing texture-inclusive salons

Social media has also transformed hair culture. Techniques once passed down in kitchens are now shared globally through tutorials, stylist reels, and community conversations, giving Black women access to knowledge that empowers choice.

Full Circle—But Healthier

So, is the silk press the same as the hot comb press?

Not exactly. It's the evolution of a legacy technique born of the same desire for versatility, refined through education, innovation, and self-acceptance. What once required holding your ear and bracing for heat now comes with safeguards, intention, and care.

Black hair has always adapted, survived, and thrived. The silk press honors where we came from while protecting where we're going, and that balance is the true beauty of Black hair today.

Spotlight Corner

FROM BARS TO BREAKTHROUGHS: HOW LA LA ANTHONY'S THREE SIXTY PROGRAM IS REWRITING THE FUTURE FOR INCARCERATED BLACK MEN AT RIKERS ISLAND

WRITTEN BY: DR. TREVI-BOOKER PERSHAY



One late night, I was scrolling through Instagram when a short film stopped me in my tracks. It was a story about La La Anthony, an actress, entrepreneur, and philanthropist, and about a program she is spearheading right here in New York City called the Three Sixty Program. I had never heard of it before, and yet within minutes I knew I had to write this article. Because this beautiful sister is not just giving back, she is making a direct, life-changing impact on the lives of our brothers who are incarcerated.

The Three Sixty Program was launched through La La Anthony's nonprofit, the La La Land Foundation, and serves young men ages 18 to 21 housed in the Robert N. Davoren Complex at Rikers Island. This is not a typical jail program. It is a carefully structured, trauma-informed, future-focused initiative designed to reach young men at one of the most critical moments of their lives when the system is telling them who they are. However, they are still deciding who they will become.

What sets Three Sixty apart is its holistic approach. The name itself speaks volumes: a full-circle model that addresses the whole person's mind, body, purpose, and potential. Participants meet weekly for interactive sessions that include mentorship, leadership training, restorative dialogue, legal education, and emotional wellness. The program also incorporates basketball as a bridge for discipline, teamwork, and brotherhood, reminding these young men that their bodies are not just confined; they are still capable of strength, movement, and joy.

But the work doesn't stop at motivation. Three Sixty is deeply committed to re-entry success. The program supports members with résumé building, job readiness, interview coaching, housing referrals, and continued mentorship after release. For many participants, this is the first time anyone has spoken to them about life beyond incarceration, not as a dream, but as a real plan.

I often say that systems do not fail people; they abandon them. Too many of our young Black men enter the criminal justice system with no roadmap, no voice, and no one asking them what they want their lives to look like five years from now. La La Anthony is changing that narrative. Through Three Sixty, she is teaching these young men how to reframe their identity from inmate to leader, from statistic to strategist, from lost to intentional.

And it is working.

According to the foundation, participants report improved confidence, communication skills, emotional awareness, and a stronger belief in their own futures. Many leave the program with real employment opportunities, stronger family relationships, and the tools to avoid recidivism. That is not charity, that is legacy work.

What moves me most is that La La did not choose the easy path. She chose Rikers Island, a place most people only talk about when something tragic happens. Instead of waiting for headlines, she walked into the reality of incarceration, bringing light with her. She did not send a check; she sent it to herself.

This is what Black excellence looks like.

In a culture that often celebrates celebrity without responsibility, La La Anthony has shown us what it means to use influence with intention. The Three Sixty Program is not about saviorism; it is about partnership. It honors the fact that these young men already have greatness inside of them; they need access, advocacy, and accountability to unlock it.

Every brother who walks through this program is allowed to rewrite his story. Do not erase the past but redeem it. Not hiding his scars but turning them into a strategy.

As I watched that short film on my phone, sitting in my quiet home while these young men were seated behind steel doors, I couldn't help but think about how close we all are to different realities. One bad decision. One broken support system. One moment without guidance. The difference between freedom and confinement is often thinner than we want to admit.

But programs like Three Sixty remind us that hope does not have to wait for release papers. It can be planted right where you are.

La La Anthony's Three Sixty Program is more than a mentorship initiative. It is a movement. It is a declaration that our young Black men are not disposable. That their lives are worth investment. That their futures matter not later, but now.

And in a world that so often tells them what they will never be, Three Sixty boldly tells them who they already are:

Kings in the making.

THREESIXTY
THREESIXTY PROGRAM AT RIKERS ISLAND

Queen Let's Talk

MENTAL CLEAN-UP: MY 2026 IS OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW?

FROM THE AUTHOR OF QUEEN, LET'S TALK



Let's be honest, every new year sounds the same until it doesn't. New goals. New routines. New intentions. New "this is my year" energy. But 2026 didn't knock politely. It required something from me. It demanded a mental clean-up.

Because you can't step into a new season with an old mindset and expect new results, you can't keep inviting abundance while holding on to expired beliefs, broken habits, emotional clutter, and versions of yourself that no longer fit. Queens, at some point, we have to stop redecorating the same messy room and take the trash out. And that's exactly what 2026 is about for me: out with the old, in with the new, starting in my mind.

Out With Old Narratives

The first thing to go? The stories I kept telling myself.

- The "I'll do it later."
- The "this is just how I am."
- The "maybe next time".
- The "I'm behind." The "I need permission."

No. Those narratives were comfortable, but comfort can be a cage. And I realized something powerful: just because a thought is familiar doesn't mean it's true. Mental clean-up means challenging the inner voice that keeps you small. It means asking yourself, Who taught me this? Why do I still believe it? Does this thought serve the woman I'm becoming? If the answer is no, it doesn't get to move into 2026 with me.

Releasing Emotional Clutter

We talk a lot about decluttering our homes, but what about our emotions? What about the resentment, the guilt, the self-doubt, the old disappointments we keep replaying like a favorite sad song?

Carrying emotional clutter is exhausting. It weighs down your decisions, clouds your vision, and keeps you emotionally stuck in seasons that have already ended. Some of us are still reacting to things that happened years ago, relationships that expired, opportunities that passed, versions of ourselves that we didn't know better yet.

2026 is teaching me that healing isn't about pretending it didn't hurt, it's about refusing to let it control you anymore. Let it go. Not for them. For you.

In With New Standards

A mental clean-up isn't just about what you remove; it's about what you replace it with.

In 2026, I'm upgrading my standards:

- How I speak to myself
- What I tolerate
- Who gets access to my energy
- What I allow to live rent-free in my mind

Peace is no longer optional. Clarity is non-negotiable. Alignment matters more than approval.

I'm choosing thoughts that build me up rather than break me down. I'm choosing discipline over excuses. I'm choosing growth over familiarity. I'm choosing to respond rather than react. And most importantly, I'm choosing myself without apology.

Mental Clean-Up Is a Daily Practice

Let's be clear, this isn't a one-time event. Mental clean-up is a daily decision. Some days you'll catch yourself slipping back into old thinking. That doesn't mean you failed. It means you're human.

What matters is that you notice. You pause. You choose differently.

You ask yourself:

- Is this thought helping or harming me?
- Is this fear real or just familiar?
- Am I acting from alignment or from habit?

Queens don't strive for perfection; we strive for awareness.

Making Room for the New

When you clean up your mind, you create space. Space for confidence. Space for creativity. Space for joy. Space for opportunities you couldn't see before because your mental room was too crowded.

This is how elevation happens, not overnight, but intentionally.

My 2026 is not about becoming someone else. It's about returning to who I was always meant to be, unburdened, focused, healed, and bold.

So, if you're stepping into this year feeling the pull to let things go, listen to it. That's not fear, it's growth knocking. Clean up your mind, Queen. The next version of you needs the space.

Career Corner

TO LIVE GREATLY WITH AI OR NOT: IS TOO MUCH AI A BAD THING—OR A HELPFUL ONE?

WRITTEN BY:
ARIELLE PERSHAY

Introduction

We are living in one of the most transformative moments in human history. Artificial Intelligence is no longer something reserved for science fiction movies or Silicon Valley labs—it is embedded in our daily lives. From the way we work and communicate to how we shop, create, learn, and even think, AI is quietly shaping modern society.

This raises an important and necessary question: “Is living in a time dominated by AI helping us live more greatly, or is it slowly taking something away from us?” The answer, like most things in life, is not black and white.

The Benefits of Living in the Age of AI

At its best, AI is a powerful tool for efficiency, accessibility, and innovation. One of the most obvious benefits is productivity. Tasks that once took hours, such as data analysis, scheduling, research, and content drafting, can now be completed in minutes. For professionals, this means more time to focus on strategy, creativity, and human connection rather than repetitive work. For businesses, AI can improve decision-making by identifying patterns and insights that humans might overlook.

AI has also been transformative in healthcare. Algorithms can help detect diseases earlier, analyze medical images with high accuracy, and support doctors in creating personalized treatment plans. In many cases, AI is not replacing medical professionals but enhancing their ability to save lives.



Education is another area where AI has shown promise. Personalized learning tools can adapt to different learning styles, speeds, and needs. Students who struggle in traditional classrooms can receive additional support, while advanced learners can move faster without being held back. For people with disabilities, AI-powered tools such as speech-to-text, screen readers, and real-time translation have enabled new levels of independence and inclusion.

On a personal level, AI can simplify everyday life. Smart assistants help manage schedules, navigation apps reduce travel stress, and recommendation systems help us discover music, books, or content we might never have found otherwise. When used intentionally, AI can free mental space and reduce overwhelm—allowing people to live with more balance and clarity.



The Non-Benefits: What We Risk Losing

However, the question is not just what AI gives us, but what it may take away if we are not careful.

One major concern is overreliance. When AI handles thinking, writing, remembering, and deciding for us, we risk weakening our own cognitive muscles. Creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving are skills that require practice. If we outsource too

much of our thinking to machines, we may become less confident in our own judgment and abilities.

There is also the erosion of human connection. Automation has made communication faster, but not always deeper. AI-generated messages, auto-responses, and virtual interactions can sometimes feel hollow or transactional. Human relationships thrive on empathy, nuance, and emotional presence, qualities AI can imitate but not truly experience. When convenience replaces connection, loneliness can quietly grow.

Job displacement is another real concern. While AI creates new roles, it also eliminates others, particularly in administrative, customer service, and routine-based jobs. Without thoughtful retraining and ethical implementation, AI can widen economic gaps and create fear rather than opportunity. The issue is not AI itself, but how organizations and governments choose to deploy it.

There is also the danger of losing authenticity. When AI writes, designs, edits, and creates at scale, it becomes harder to distinguish what is genuinely human. Original thought can blur into algorithm-generated sameness. If everything becomes optimized, polished, and predicted, we may lose the beauty of imperfection, the rawness that makes art, conversation, and storytelling meaningful.



Living Greatly With AI: A Balanced Approach

The real question may not be whether AI is good or bad, but whether we are using it consciously or passively. AI is a tool, not a replacement for human purpose, wisdom, or values. Used wisely, it can amplify human potential. Used carelessly, it can diminish it.

Living well with AI means using it to support—not substitute for—our humanity. It means allowing AI to handle tasks that drain us, while we focus on what energizes us: creativity, leadership, empathy, and meaningful work. It means teaching critical thinking alongside technological skills, and prioritizing ethics just as much as efficiency.

Most importantly, it means remembering that progress should serve people—not the other way around.

Final thought

AI is here to stay. The challenge before us is not to reject it or unquestioningly embrace it, but to shape a future where technology enhances human life rather than replacing what makes it valuable. When we lead with intention, curiosity, and responsibility, AI can help us live not just faster, but better.

And perhaps that is the greatest opportunity of all.



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