DIDEROT



JUNE 2022

Editor's Note

The name Diderot™ is inspired by 18th century French philosopher Denis Diderot whose creation of the encyclopedia had him mixed up in some wild circumstances!

Oh hey family!
My name is Bri and I am elated that you've decided to peruse our work.

Get ready to study and interact with unconventional thoughts and ideas. We're boldly sharing our perspectives and welcoming open conversation. As a publication curated and facilitated by visionary millennials, readers will always have access to our content at no cost. We know that knowledge and action within a shared community is powerful. Thus, our aim is not to convince anyone of a certain ideology but rather to share our opinions and experiences on topics that matter to us...all without filter, fear, or judgement.

So this magazine is dedicated to the latest generation of trailblazers and liberators who are ready to restore their gifts in the name of revolution and innovation. This digital, quarterly magazine will honor our voices and contemporary views on work, sexuality, cultural pastimes, relationships, spirituality, gender roles, philanthropy, climate justice, and other current/hot-button issues.

I must also make note that our target audience consists of those in the fight toward a freedom which repels the patriarchy. Our content's goal is to inspire Black men to take hold of their vulnerability and sensitivity, to actively stand against bigotry, sexism, and homophobia. This is also a place where mixed emotions and feelings are acceptable.

Finally, Black women are the backbone and driving forces behind a lot of the good in the world. We will be uplifted accordingly in every issue. Period.

ENJOY!



Briantria Smocks, M.Ed.
Founding Editor

Discover more about the Smocks Media Group network

HAPPY *Father's* DAY

Illustration by Christina Moreland
from the book *Me* in Levi&Toonk's 1st collection



BLACK KING, I SEE YOU!

I see who you are BLACK KING! You've been feared since the day of your birth.
But you were meant to be created; don't let others diminish your worth.

I see who you are BLACK KING! As you stare adversity in the face,
your "opposition" is going to try and stop you; but, continue to take your place.

I see who you are BLACK KING! The way you laugh at the enemies' plan
as it tries to destroy you or your dreams and discount you as a man.

I see who you are BLACK KING! Dealing with unfair disadvantages each day,
you get half the opportunities as your counterparts and still somehow make a way.

I see who you are BLACK KING! All your successes, failures, and fears
I know you've been taught to hurt in silence, but it's ok to show your emotions with tears.

I see who you are BLACK KING! Ignoring possible signs of being depressed
You're so used to your feelings being overlooked; you tell everyone "it's only stress!"

I see who you are BLACK KING! Every flaw, imperfection, and scar
The world is afraid of your very existence because they know who you truly are.

I see who you are BLACK KING! Your crown has been specifically made
to cover the wealth of knowledge you possess under your locs, cornrows, or fade.

I see who you are BLACK KING! Mr. Dark Chocolate, Caramel, or Ebony Hue
It doesn't matter the shade of your skin because your melanin shines through.

I see who you are BLACK KING! Known for your unique style of dress
No matter if you're Bling-ed up or Dripped down, you don't have to try hard to impress.

I see who you are BLACK KING! Your shoe game can't be DENIED!
Whether in an Italian suit or jeans, you wear your "kicks" with pride.

I see who you are BLACK KING! From the boardroom to a court to play ball,
you effortlessly make the transition look easy which is why it's assumed you do it all.

I see who you are BLACK KING! Perfectly made by the hands of God!
The only group that can say Hello & Goodbye with just a simple head nod

I see who you are BLACK KING! You are a Husband, Father, Brother, or Son.
You are predestined for greatness because you are the chosen one.

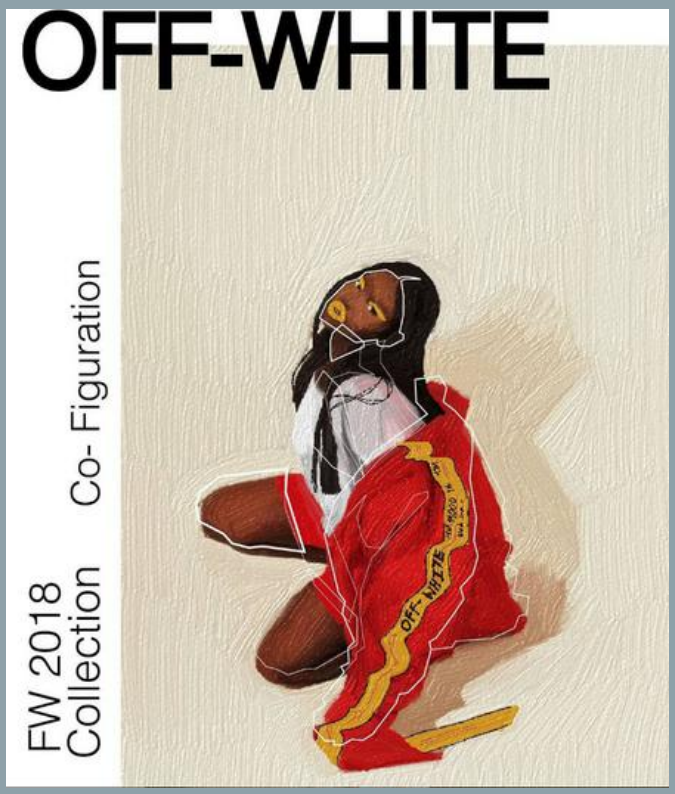
I see who you are BLACK KING! And the whole entire world does, too.
NOW WALK IN YOUR PURPOSE because we all see you.

Written by Kia M.
Published Author, Speaker, & Co-Founder of Levi&Toonk









Featured Cover Artist

Ralphi Burgess

Original Source: @rphrt_ on Instagram

Commission Ralphi: rphrt.com/rphrt

More work by Ralphi Burgess



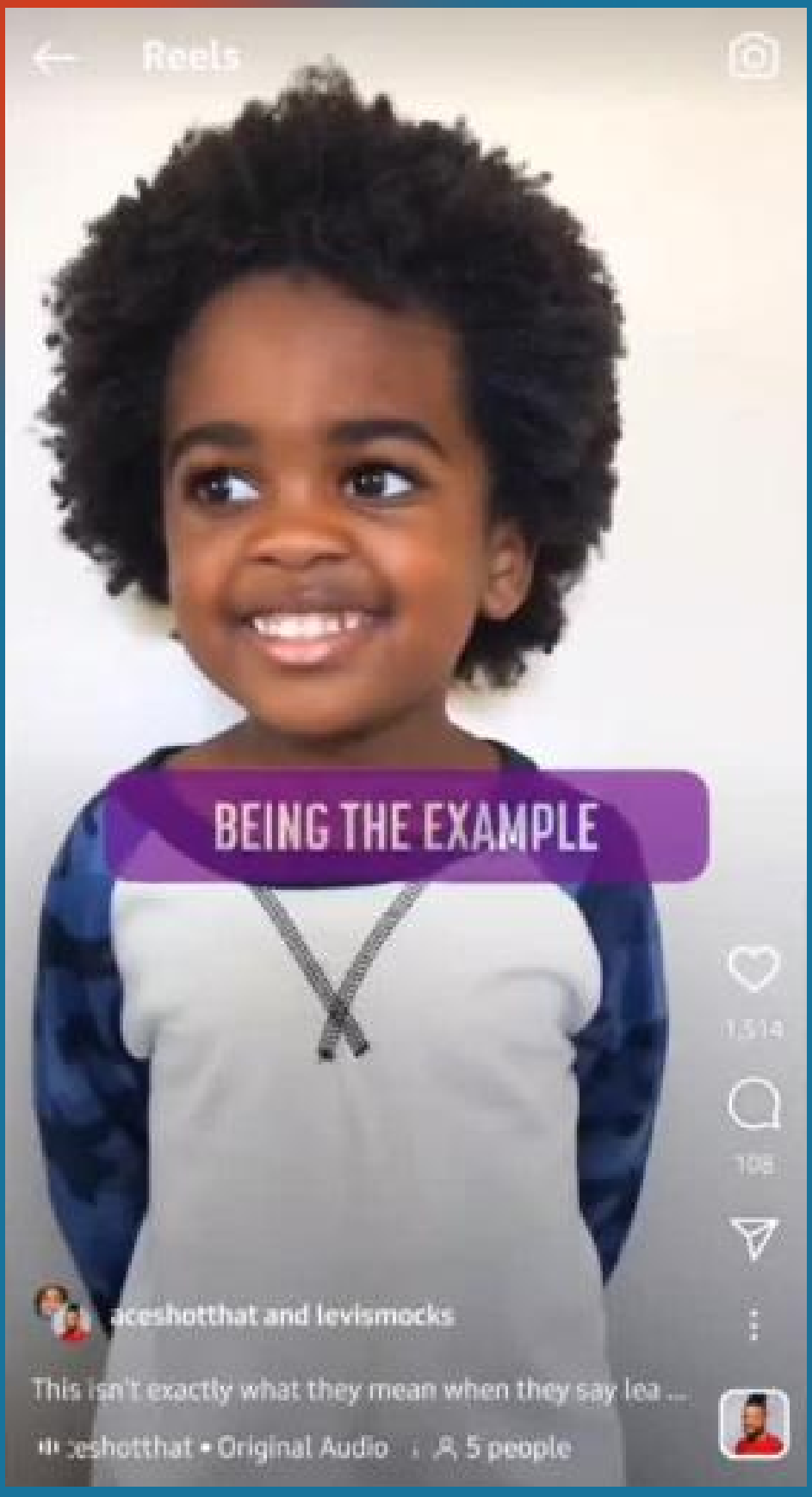
"HER ART TOUCHES THE DEPTHS OF YOUR SOUL. I WAS EMOTIONALLY OVERCOME WHEN I SAW THE COVER."
– ART SMOCKS



Original Source: @rphrt_ on Instagram

Commission Ralphi: rphrt.com/rphrt

Going Viral!



With a wealth of skits on social media, more users are gravitating toward authenticity. Here is one of our favorites!

Ace Anderson and Levi Smocks teamed up to make some REEL magic!

Follow more of their shenanigans on Instagram @aceshotthat @levismocks

*Highlighting independent artists within the SMG network

NEW MUSIC:

JUNETEENTH RELEASES



THEO BLUE

For when you're Black in America and you have run out of patience

Singles: "Done Had It" and "I Want It Now"



GABRIELLE REYES & ACE ANDERSON

For when you're searching for higher vibrations and afrobeats

Debut Album: *Blessed by Grace*

AVAILABLE ON ALL PLATFORMS

Notes from a Grieving Father

*EXPLICIT CONTENT

Real and raw entries from the private journal of Arthur Smocks Jr.

Letters for Arri

You're supposed to be born in September, making you a Libra. So, you are supposed to bring balance, but you have your mother on the opposite vibe. She just, on March 5, 2021, got so upset with me not putting your brother Levi down for a nap at a certain time, that she had to go "take a walk".

So as of now I'm thinking you may not be a Libra.

The last 7 months (in reality only 5 months) have been HELL! I've never disliked the woman I love so much it would make my heart ache... or it could be high cholesterol, who knows. I cannot wait to meet you. I can't go through this without venting to someone.

So here yah go. XOXO

P.S- And your brother woke up at 1:11pm, plenty of time for us to get his helmet. So why is she still mad? On top of that we had to WAIT for her to get back from her "WALK". If anything, I need a damn walk.
Mind you even though everything worked out, your mother still found a way for me to be inconsiderate. The house wasn't spotless, there were 3 dishes in the sink, and she wanted me to put on a new pillowcase...WTF!? She high key sounds like a controlled mentalist from the 70s.

What are you doing to the woman I love? You better be worth all this. Who am I kidding, of course you will be...but no more kids after you Arri.

Notes from a Grieving Father

*EXPLICIT CONTENT

Real and raw entries from the private journal of Arthur Smocks Jr.

Letters for Arri (cont.)

5/13/21

YOU'RE A FUCKING BOY!!!! WOW! You are doing the utmost. Please have several seats before you get smacked out cha mama.



10/26/21

I think you will be born on the first of November. I'm elated to meet you. Levi is beyond excited. Everything is ready for your arrival.

12/6/21

You didn't make it Arri. There were complications and we didn't get a change to hear you cry, see you smile or enjoy the gift of your life. I miss you son. I look forward to seeing you some day.

2/21/22

We've started a foundation in honor of you. Your mama will make you so proud, but you already see that, I'm sure.

Learn more about our developing work

ARRI KENZO FOUNDATION


GAVANNE DAVIS
Photo credit to original photographer

GIVING BLACK WOMEN THEIR FLOWERS

Gavanne Davis

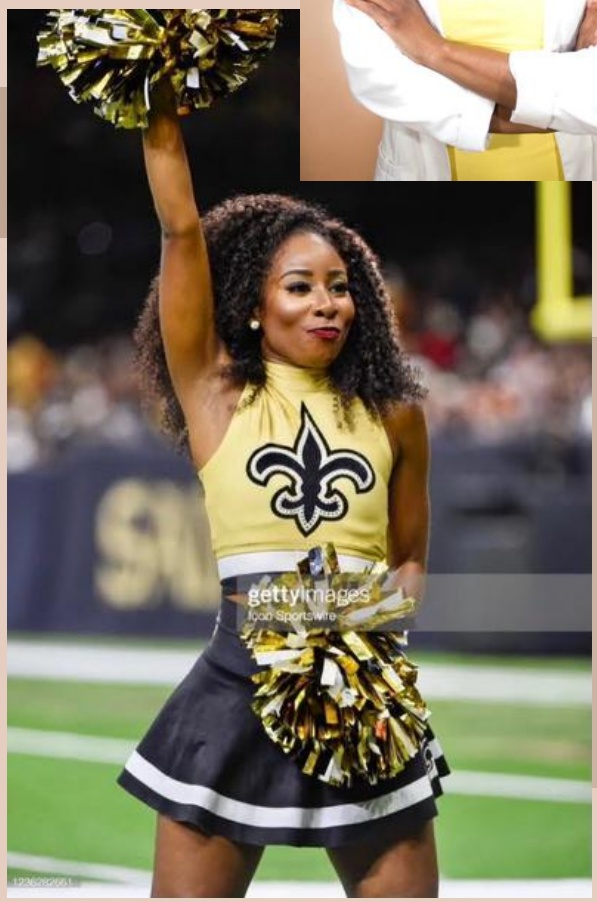
Each quarter, this ongoing series will spotlight a woman who is part of the Smocks Media Group and/or Arri Kenzo Foundation networks.

Our June 2022 Honoree is Gavanne Davis, a New Orleans native and all around boss! As a cosmetic chemist and the CEO of her own company, Vann Cosmetics, Davis makes juggling her passions and pursuits look easy. When she is not on the field as a cheerleader for the NFL, you may catch her teaching students as an Adjunct Professor or volunteering in the community.

Given her responsibilities and accomplishments, she is fully aware of the physical and emotional maintenance required to achieve balance. Our Editor in Chief sat down with Davis to discuss how her humble spirit and affirmed childhood have prepared her for an even brighter future. Watch the 15-minute video interview discussing her outlook on love, life, and leadership.

Gavanne Davis is a Black woman worthy of acknowledgement.
We give her all her flowers.





GIVING BLACK WOMEN THEIR FLOWERS: THE 15- MINUTE INTERVIEW

PRESS PLAY



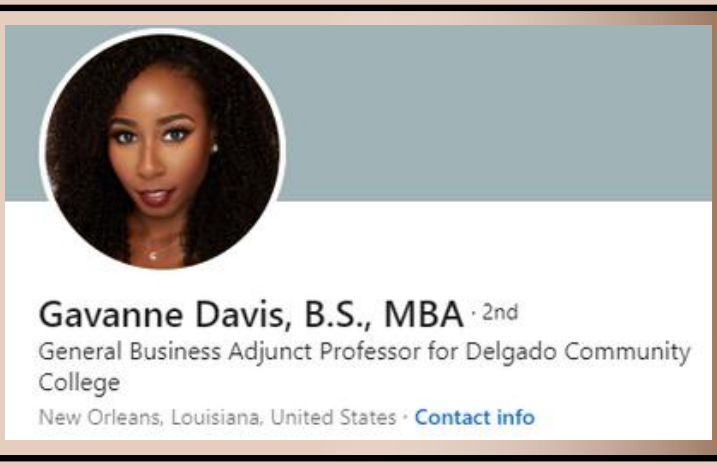
Interview Recorded: June 4, 2022
Interviewer: Briantria Smocks
Interviewee: Gavanne Davis
Platform Used: Zoom Video Communications

Connect with Gavanne

Click below to try her product line or start your own!

VANN COSMETICS

To make a professional connection, click her LinkedIn profile.



Bri's Community Spotlight:

A look at the lives of my high school and college classmates

Chris Edwards

Communicator and Student Success Coach









Chris' Proud Career Moments

- Giving Tedx Talk
- Starting own speaking business
- Pastoring for 5 years
- Performing his music live

I started speaking at 12 years old at my childhood church. I never stopped. I love to impact people for the better and I happen to be gifted to do that with words. I use the term "Communicator" because it's not just speaking or keynoting, but through singing, rapping, spoken word, writing...it's all about using my words to impact people for the good. That's what I feel called to do.

Along with my wife, I hope to change individuals, families, and beyond in a way that causes people to draw closer to God in their gifts, cultural contexts, relationships, everyday life, and in real freedom.

Rachel Scruggs

Owner & Lead Event Planner for Radiance Events

About Radiance Events (Dallas, TX)

- Ballloon garland & bouquet classes
- Plan your next party/occasion
- Inspiration for DIY, crafty projects
- Prop rentals...and more!

As a young girl, I've always been a planner. My mom says I was always a natural born leader and social butterfly. I've always loved bringing people together for events and planning parties for my friends. My sister and I used to plan our birthdays at night when we were little, so event planning has always been my destiny.







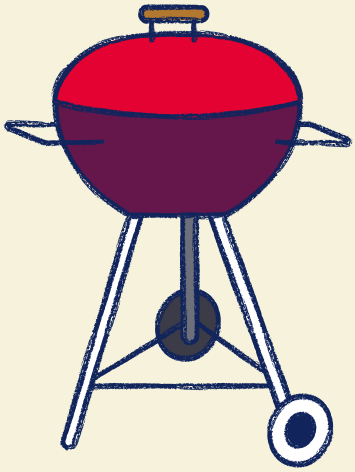


Recently, I launched a program in which I give free event décor to young, unmarried moms. As a new mother, it's so important to let young girls know that their life isn't over when they become pregnant. Having a baby is such a blessing. I've always had a passion to help young women, so being able to tie that with my love for event planning is the best way to serve my community and honor God with my gift.

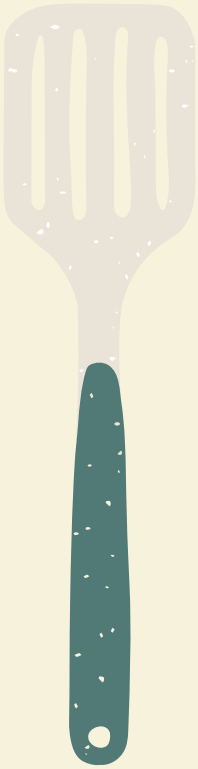
A Chef's Internal Struggle with Grillin'

An account from Krysta Evans-Hughey, Private Chef & Caterer

I always knew that I was decent at cooking, but actually getting better and developing my hidden talent was what began to blow my mind. I have always loved cooking in the kitchen, but one day I challenged myself to go *out*side…to the GRILL!



Omg! Growing up, that was a "man's domain"; sort of like his escape from the "girly" kitchen in a sense. But that didn't matter to me (so I thought). I wanted to be a great cook in both places. So although bugs and insects intimidate me, the grill did not!



I remember my first dinner on the grill: chicken, links, and burgers. Simple, right?

Ugh…not at all! It was so challenging for me to be a newcomer in a male-dominated area. So of course the chicken was done on the outside before the middle was cooked. The links were burnt (but my family still mustard up the strength to eat those). The burgers…omg…we just had to toss them. After this disaster, it gave me a push to really focus and get it right. So I became a guru of all things GRILLED!

I watched videos, movies, and shows. I read books on how to become a GRILL MASTER. That definitely gave me the push and confidence I needed. And by the way, grilling is not just throwing wood or charcoal in a pit and lighting up. Noooooo!!! That's by far, not it. You really have to get mentally prepared for fires. Sometimes the wind is too high or maybe not high enough, and so on and so on.

Fast forward to me getting married. By now I'm doing my thing in both arenas: taking over the kitchen AND the GRILL! Oh yeah, I'm really feeling myself at this point. I'm doing everything on the grill from chicken, to brisket, to ribs, to pork chops, pork loin, steaks, fish…I mean, you name it, I grill it!







So my husband was like, "you do the sides and I'll do the grill." My mind started thinking back to how male-dominated the grilling world is. I gave up my grill hat for him. Now why did I do that? I mean, all men can't grill. My husband definitely couldn't at the beginning of our relationship. So I think I did it more so because of his pride. I didn't want him to feel hurt or crushed because his grilled food didn't come out like mine. So I did rub it in his face a tad; however, we joined forces and started watching the same videos together. That literally put a fire under him! I mean, he started buying all things pertaining to the grill which made me even more proud of our growth.

I still stand on: GIRLS CAN GRILL! But now I don't mind giving my husband his kudos on becoming a grill master as well. I'll put him up against ANYONE!! He is now responsible for all grilled foods for our catering company and is the highly requested favorite at all family gatherings. It feels good to know that I am a major factor in his development and success.

*Krysta and her husband, Tracee

K's Katering currently serves the Dallas/Ft.Worth metroplex

Contact: 214-714-8369

A LOOK AT GENDER IDENTITY

Op-Ed by Donovan Jones

What is a woman... what is a man?

As times go on, I'm seeing more and more resistance with the volatility behind these ideas. I'd like to open this up for discussion.

A lot of people get caught up on: "oh I'll never call a trans woman by their pronouns "she/her" as HE is not a real woman". Those people will usually argue that on a scientific level, every cell in your body makes you a man. And when you die and scientists are studying your bones 1,000 years from now, they will conclude that you are a man.

While this is true. **The other can be true at the same time. One being true doesn't cancel the other out.** Let's talk about the other now.

What is a woman culturally? What is a man? Some of you might boil it down to simple ideals such as: men go to work, get the money, provide for the house; and women take care of the family, take care of the house, prepares the dinner. And sure we can add 1,000 more items to this bullet point, but does it really answer the question of what makes a man a man?

Because in today's society, a woman can do all the things a man can do. Vice versa for men. So what we are seeing is a blending of the lines. Both sides crossing over.

So if a man takes up all the social constructs of a woman (talk, walk, dress, societal beliefs), they are indeed a woman if they want to identify as one. Telling a man that they can't do this is the same as telling Black people they can't "talk white". It makes no sense. Let's look deeper.

Back in the day, if a Black person spoke with proper grammar, they would be told they don't sound Black. They sound white. But how can this be? Is whiteness its own sound? I don't think so. Today we have white kids who "sound Black" and Black kids who "sound white," but none of this makes sense because at the end of the day, there is only English being spoken.

It's not white English. It's not Black English. It's just English.

And this same concept applies now to a greater culture of sexual identity. **You can view it as an attack if you are fragile and weak-minded or you can mind your own business.**

I do understand the impact and importance of knowing information for medical reasons. But beyond that, none of it matters.

I think as a species, we're evolving beyond our standard ways of categorizing people. **Humans are human and love is love. We don't need to keep it to such a binary system anymore. We've made it all up and we can change it all up.**



The BOSS Network x Sage: Honoring Invest in Progress Grant Recipients

Written by Briantria Smocks, M.Ed.

As a result of the pandemic, more companies and business organizations than ever are standing behind the ideas and innovations of Black entrepreneurs. We are now in a time when grants, mentorships, coaching, and other critical resources are specifically targeting those who have historically received little to no support in entrepreneurial advancement.

Black women have set the standard for culture since the beginning of time, yet we can attest the most to the many barriers and disparity gaps which have long plagued our creativity and pursuits. Women's leadership is even more crucial in our current climate, and many are answering the call to walk into their purpose. Thankfully, there are now several initiatives and movements to assist in every aspect of our success.

One such person giving back to Black women is Dr. Cameka Smith, PhD, founder of The BOSS Network. She teamed up with Sage Accounting to award 35 Black women with a $10,000 grant, training courses, and professional business solutions. As the co-founder of Levi&Toonk, I am grateful that our company was selected as one of the recipients. It has been such an affirming gift for our professional future.

On the next few pages, we acknowledge just a few of the other women-owned businesses who were selected for this honor. May opportunities like this continue to remind us all of our resourcefulness and ingenuity. Before *anyone else* believes it, *we* must first know that our projects are valuable. We must then understand that we are worthy of investment and elevation. It is our time.

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Invest in Progress Grant Recipients



Levi&Toonk: Bri Smocks and Kia M.

We sell one-of-a-kind books and offer tailored experiences targeting gifted children of color. We encourage enrichment and bonding for the entire family.

Instagram: @leviandtoonk
Facebook: @leviandtoonk



CITSAP Consulting LLC : Tosin Ojo

We lower the barrier for gaining accessibility to quality Cybersecurity experts, streamlined processes, and technologies for effective Cybersecurity risk management, regulatory compliance and IT audits.

Facebook: @citsapinc
Twitter: @citsap_info



Labor and Love: Shanika Valcour-LeDuff

We provide comprehensive Maternal-Child health, education, and birth support services.

Instagram: @labor_and_love

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Invest in Progress Grant Recipients



Brown Rose Essentials: Brianna Ross

Handcrafted skin & body care products that address the minor skin concerns of Black & Brown women. We craft soaps, scrubs, butters, oils, etc.

Instagram: @BrownRoseEssentials
Facebook: @BrownRoseEssentialsLLC
Twitter: @BrownRoseShop



Quality Counseling: Kevnesha Boyd

We provide culturally responsive trauma therapy to Connecticut Black communities. We help our clients heal emotional wounds and find balance without the burden of trauma.

Email: Kboyd@QualityCounselingCT.com



Soul Stretch Yoga & Wellness: Mashell Lawson

I provide group and private yoga classes. I also sell a yoga and meditation journal, and meditation candles.

Email: SoulStretch.YogaWellness@gmail.com

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Invest in Progress Grant Recipients



Jabber Talk Speech and Consulting: Janita Gilliam

I provide speech and feeding therapy services to pediatric children birth-21. We also provide educational training consultation and professional development services.

Instagram:@jabber_talk
Twitter: @jabber_talk
Facebook: Jabber Talk Speech and Consulting



Afredanz Dance Center: Nijalon Jackson-Causey

We offer dance classes for children and adults.

Facebook: Afredanz Dance Center
Instagram: @afredanzdc



Sconnet, LLC: Ja'Nique Blocker

Sconnet, LLC is an innovative hair accessory company established to provide solutions to common haircare issues. Our staple product is our design patented Sconnet, which is a combined hair scarf and bonnet.

Instagram: @sconnetscarves
Facebook: @sconnetscarves

WOMEN IN BUSINESS

Invest in Progress Grant Recipients



Akili Well: Josie Santiago

Akili Well is a wellness coaching service designed to support leaders, individuals, and groups in finding sustainable well-being practices. Akili Well currently offers Yoga, 1:1 and Group Coaching, and Healing Circles.

Instagram: @akiliwell
Facebook: @akiliwell



Gut Theory Total Digestive Care: Dr. Janese Laster

We are a niche gastroenterology practice that specializes in weight management through nutrition education, specialized dietary planning, anti-obesity pharmacology, and innovative bariatric endoscopic procedures.

Instagram: Dr_janeseLaster
TikTok: @janeselastermd

Visit a few of the following articles to learn more about the grant and all recipients.

Full list of grant recipients
BOSS Impact Fund
Grant announcement in ESSENCE

Art's Anime&Manga Anteroom

Here we highlight some interesting, understated, amazing, and new anime. The selections have been reviewed in original format to avoid loss of emotional context and overall focus. These are not listed in certain orders and are not ranked above or below one another. This is meant to highlight the art and beauty expressed through the lens of the mangaka and reader.



IMAGE PROPERTY OF *KOTARO LIVES ALONE* ON NETFLIX



Watch List

- God Of Highschool
- Kabaneri
- Kingdom

Kotaro Lives Alone **by Mami Tsumura (Original title: *Kotaro wa Hitori Gurashi*). This beautiful, quirky, homey anime is a great way to see the more intimate side of the art form. This 10-episode series focuses on the development of Kotaro as he navigates life without the guidance of his parents. His adventures leave you craving for more while on the edge of every encounter and is a MUST-WATCH. With a second season in talks for 2023, I am excited for its release.**

Written by ArtSmox

Art's Anime&Manga Anteroom

Here we highlight some interesting, understated, amazing, and new manga. The selections have been reviewed in original format to avoid loss of emotional context and overall focus. These are not listed in certain orders and are not ranked above or below one another. This is meant to highlight the art and beauty expressed through the lens of the mangaka and reader.



BOOKSHELF

- Shuumatsu No Valkyrie
- Blue Lock
- The Knights of the Apocalypse: Seven Deadly Sins/ Mokushiroku No Yonkishi

***Kengen Omega* by Sandrovich Yabako**

This brutal, merciless, fight till you fall, get back up and fight again, hand to hand combat manga is AMAZING!!!!! Even without possessing superpowers or alien forces, you still get full-fleshed, seemingly unending action. This manga serves up a healthy slice of Martial Arts at the peak of human strength and dedication. This manga is currently active and is on Chapter 163. The fight scenes leave nothing to be desired and the storyline is simple yet complex and full of depth. In this manga, focusing on the main character is not advised. Instead, enjoy the surrounding characters in detail and you will notice great gems.

Written by ArtSmox



Editor in Chief : Briantria Smocks, M. Ed.

Consultant & Curator: Arthur Smocks, Jr.

June 2022 Cover Artist: Ralphi Burgess



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