

# LEADERSHIP BLEND

*Atlanta*

*Summer 2019*



*The Womens Issue*

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GRAPHICCONTENT.DESIGN

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Credits  
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ART DIRECTION AND DESIGN  
ELAN PAGE

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Phumi Ntombela  
Freddie Hernandez

DESIGN AND CONQUER  
Mia Coleman

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BRINGING LOVE TO THE STREETS  
JUSTICE JOHNSON

CONTRACTS AND CONFIDENCE  
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SHE CRABS IN A BARREL  
ERIKA GLASS  
JUSTICE JOHNSON

Rising from Ashes to Glory  
ERIKA GLASS



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# RED RAMS

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# august 2019

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Everything is Design  
**Everything!**

GRAPHIC  
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**Black Women Lead The Entrepreneurship Scoreboard**

By: Phumelele Ntombela

Statistics reported early 2019 show that Black women are still leading the race in the world of entrepreneurship. According to Forbes, the numbers grew by 58% from 2007 to 2018. Black women are the driving force behind these numbers. A May 2019 report by WSB-TV Atlanta announced that Black women are the fastest growing demographic of entrepreneurs in the United States and Atlanta is in the lead. A few reasons why Black women have taken this leap of independence is being passed over for promotions, and being undervalued at their workplaces. Despite the odds stacked against

them, Black women continue to rise and run thriving businesses. One of the ways for entrepreneurs to raise money is through pitch competitions. They are sponsored by some of the nation’s elite companies, and like the name says, aspiring entrepreneurs pitch their business ideas in hopes of getting funding. For the educational aspect, attending entrepreneurship conferences and other related social gatherings is key to meeting potential mentors and making connections.

**Consecutive USA Victory in Women’s FIFA**

By: Phumelele Ntombela

The USA women’s soccer team brought home the FIFA World Cup for the second time in a row. France was the host for this year’s Women’s FIFA World Cup. The world-renowned soccer tournament saw women’s teams from different parts of the world come together to compete for the World Cup. The final match took place on July 7th 2019 at the Lyon Olympic Stadium in France. The national team played against the Netherlands, and won the match by 2 – 0. Megan Rapinoe, who is co-captain, scored the opening goal. Rose Lavelle, one of the team’s midfielders scored the second winning goal.



Rapinoe won the Golden boot, which is an award presented to the leading goal scorer. Previously, in 2015, the US women’s soccer team won the World Cup defeating the Japan women’s soccer team. A victory parade in honor of the USA women’s soccer team was held in New York on July 10th. It was like a second 4th of July parade as many people waved the nation’s flag with pride and confetti rain with the US colors showered over the crowd. Megan Rapinoe gave a powerful speech in front of thousands gathered in front of the New York city hall in Manhattan. Rapinoe said that it is everybody’s responsibility to make the world a better place. “... We have to be better. We have to love more. Hate less. We got to listen more and talk less.”. Congratulations to the USA Women’s National Soccer Team for reclaiming their title as world champions.

**WHEN THEY SEE US**

By: Justice Johnson

Ava DuVernay is in the business of storytelling in the form of film. Recently DuVernay created a docufilm on the central park 5. This film chronicles the events that take place to the five young men being wrongfully accused of rape.



The film showed the hardships that the young men had to endure from a “Justice system” that is unjust. DuVernay made sure that she captured every pivotal moment leading up to the boys being exonerated. This powerful film not only touched the lives of millions, but it became the most watched docufilm on Netflix. It’s been reported that over 23 million accounts have watched the film. Ava DuVernay saw the value in this story and needed to share it with the world to show the social injustices that happen to the community.



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## Michelle Obama's School Lunch Program Gets Trumped

By: Freddie Hernandez

Former first lady, Michelle Obama, campaigned for change to be made to the school lunch program. This resulted in drastic changes to the national school lunch program, which required schools to serve only whole grain versions of food. The whole grain food approach would help create healthy habits in response to the increasing obesity rates. Initially, the new program was deemed unrealistic because many students are used to eating non whole grain versions of food at home. To make the change at schools easier, U.S. Department of Agriculture, let schools apply to serve dishes such as biscuits, pizza, tortillas and more that did not meet the whole-grain rule. Five years later and the national school lunch program will undergo another change. The Trump administration have rolled back Michelle Obama's program and foods such as bread and pasta will no longer need to be whole grains. Contrary to the changes made by the Trump administration, The American Heart Association, recommends that schools stick to the previous guidelines, which also limited salt and milk usage. However, the rollback could help smaller districts with a smaller access to products, because they would no longer have to use whole grain versions of food and could be more flexible about what type of foods they use.



## Controversial Abortion Bill Threatens the Jobs and Film Industry in Georgia

By: Nadia Crawford

"Disney CEO said it would be 'very difficult' to stay in Georgia if anti-abortion law goes into effect" –Rodney Ho  
A couple of years ago, Atlanta started gaining more and more popularity for its booming business opportunities, especially the movie and television industry. The popularity has only increased from then throughout the years. Sadly, just at the peak of its fame, Georgia passed an abortion law that many people do not agree with, especially the film industry. The new bill states "Georgia is effectively banning abortion after six weeks of pregnancy, when doctors can usually start detecting a fetal heartbeat." This controversial bill will basically take away the rights and choices any woman might have. Though many states have their rules and regulations, Georgia is one of the states with a very restricted law. Recently, the chief executive for Walt Disney Company did not completely shy away from the idea of filming in Georgia, but he did say it would be "very difficult," to continue to film in Georgia.

Disney has just recently shot two of their most grossed Marvel movies at a movie studio in Fayetteville, Georgia; "Avengers Endgame" and "Black Panther." Sadly, Disney is not the only major deal that threatened to pull their investment. Netflix, which filmed popular shows like "Ozark" and "Stranger Things," was the first to reconsider their deal with Georgia. Stacey Abrams, who once served as minority leader of the Georgia House of Representatives for six years, tried to persuade Netflix and Disney to stay, due to a huge decline in jobs in the future. Abrams continued to push studios to stay and work in Georgia. She put out a tweet specifying jobs the workers would lose, jobs that many people would not have thought of.





# CONTRACTS AND CONFIDENCE

**Tina Thapar is a young and thriving legal counsel at Mueller Water Company in Atlanta. Nadia Crawford had an in depth discussion with Thapar about her profession, the challenges she faces being a woman and a minority in the legal field, and much more.**

**Q:** Tell us about yourself and what type of law do you practice?

**A:** I am currently practicing as a legal counsel at a manufacturing and technology company, which is headquartered in Atlanta. I am in the commercial contracts and compliance arenas.

**Q:** Did you always want to be a lawyer?

**A:** Truth be told, I haven't always wanted to be a lawyer. I previously played around with the idea of going to medical or pharmacy school. As a freshman in college, I took a Philosophy: Intro to Logic course. It got me curious about logic and how to better formulate arguments. I eventually re-routed my academic career from Medicine towards Economics with a focus on Public Policy. This re-routing allowed me to narrow in on more 'legal' specific courses, which helped me determine that I wanted to pursue law school.

**Q:** Was law school as difficult as the media makes it seem?

**A:** Personally speaking, law school was a very challenging experience. Although it was challenging, it allowed me to grow and test myself. I do not think the media accurately portrays what law school is like because it places much focus on the rare and exciting opportunities, not the hours of work put into earning your degree.



**Q:** What advice would you give yourself as a freshman in college and your first year in law school?

**A:** If I could go back in time, I would tell myself to have patience and to slow down because things work out as they are supposed to be. I knew going into law school I wanted to become a transactional attorney. Through trial and error, no pun intended, I learned that I wanted to practice compliance and commercial contracts law and I was fortunate to have the right opportunity at the right time.

**Q:** Is there anything you would change about the legal system?

**A:** Yes - there are many things, but I will only elaborate on one. One hope I've had is that I wish I could eliminate human bias from the legal system. For example, if we could just read the thoughts, ideas, and/or statements of individuals, one as articulate as the next, we could be in a more just world. This means being able to eliminate the race, sex, religion, and accent from the person that sharing their position I believe that we too often allow external, non-essential factors to impact our thoughts, and I wish to eliminate these to the extent possible.

**Q:** Why did you choose contract law as your expertise?

**A:** Working with commercial contracts for a company allows me to use my legal knowledge to better protect a company as they grow and develop. Using my skill set and knowledge to assist someone or something reach their next goal is something that brings me a lot of personal satisfaction.

**Q:** Is there a fun fact about contract law that people don't know?

**A:** I can't say that there is a fun fact, per se, but there are many nuances in the law that I find interesting to know. I learn something new each time I interact with a different attorney, which I genuinely enjoy!

**Q:** Do you think women struggle to be treated the

same as the men in the legal field?

**A:** I do think that there is an equality movement happening. Yes, there is some difficulty with being a woman in this profession. However, I will acknowledge that there has been a lot of progress made for women in the legal field. I am regularly learning about women taking on new and exciting positions, and I strive for that progress in my career as well.

**Q:** Do you think being a minority in the field of law helps or hurts you?

**A:** I think it depends on how you utilize what you can bring to the table. Yes, being a minority comes with its challenges, but nothing that is impossible to overcome.



# GLAM DUNK

## Tamika Milburn

Tamika Milburn is the owner of Playmakers Basketball Royalties. Under the organizations it houses the Atlanta Monarchs, which is a professional women's basketball team, and the first pro basketball team to bring a national championship title to the city of Atlanta. Also, under the organization is the Philadelphia Reign professional women's basketball team. Philadelphia Reign is the first pro women's team in Philadelphia in over 20 years. Over the past few years, Ms. Milburn has worked with many young athletes and has gotten to know many pro athletes both current and former ones. She found that there is a disconnect between high school, college, pro sports and the real world. The transition from each to the other is difficult and a lot of athletes are not prepared. She realized it's not just the sport that suffers, it's the athlete who, overnight, goes from being a superstar to just a regular person in the real world. Because of this, it motivated her to start her own organization.





**A:** With women's basketball, the most challenging thing is to get people interested in coming to games and getting the support of the community and sponsors who, simply because we are a women's basketball team, do not take the time to consider that there are enormous opportunities for mutually beneficial partnerships and relationships.

**Q:** For years basketball has always been a male dominated sport. Women in basketball have been fighting for different rights from being aired on more networks, to having equal pay, etc. However, it seems like nothing is changing. In your opinion why do you think that is and what are some small steps you believe the NBA could take to achieving equality amongst both the NBA and WNBA?

**A:** In my opinion, speaking specifically on women's basketball, I think there are several major factors contributing to the disparity. First, female basketball players need to realize that the NBA and WNBA are businesses. The NBA is not obligated to take any steps in achieving equality among the organizations. As an organization, the NBA can say they are supportive of and value women's basketball - Blah, Blah, Blah. But, do you honestly think that? Considering the amount of money the NBA makes, if their owners really cared, NBA teams would not be able to create a marketing campaign that could catapult the WNBA into financial success. Secondly, in regards to marketing, from the owner down to the person selling tickets, people involved in women's sports have to be realistic. Just like men are different than women, men's basketball is different from women's basketball – not better, just different.

The two should not be compared when planning a marketing strategy for WBB. Finally, and I think that this is the saddest of all. The WNBA devalues their players by giving away free tickets. There are teams that cannot sell tickets because people are so used to getting them for free. How do you expect to pay players, giving away free tickets? How do you expect people to respect your players as professional athletes if you don't place value on them? Again, you have to create something people want to buy, and you have to place a value on it.

**Q:** You have phenomenal players on your team. I got a chance to see some of the highlights and was wondering do you ever see yourself moving into the league and becoming a WNBA team or do you feel like continuing at the level your team is currently at now?



**A:** I like the personal feel of my teams as they are. This league is fun for the players and that makes for a better experience on the court and in the community. Players are not worried about getting cut or traded right after a game. They have fun when they play, and they like and support each other, again, making a better experience for fans. If I could own a WNBA team and run it the way I run my current teams, I would be all for it. But, I'm not sure that could happen.

**Q:** Being that you have a military background, you've been in situations where you had to push your body, mind, and even spirit to the limit, How do you think that has influenced your expectations of the women who play for you?

**A:** The military was one of my tools, just like basketball is a tool. If used properly, your tools will carve out a path of success. That doesn't mean you won't get stuck. It simply means that you may need to acquire additional tools to get you over the humps. I will say that the military was a tool that help channel my bratty ways into a positive direction and showed me how to carve my path and taught me the power of togetherness.

As a woman, I think that the power of togetherness is very important to impress upon young girls and women in sports and in business. My expectations are that my pro players use their platform and their tools to uplift future generations of female athletes.

**Q:** I have always been one to believe that girls can do just as well as boys when it comes to athletics and sometimes be even better, would you ever consider making the team mixed gendered where both the boys and girls play together?

**A:** ABSOLUTELY NOT! My focus is completely on the development of women's sports so that women's sports can be used as a tool to develop young girls. I want the focus to be on positive, educated, intelligent and extremely talented professional female athletes, team owners, coaches, etc, so that our girls, regardless of whether or not they play a sport, have someone to look up to. If you take away that focus by adding men to the team and start comparing male athletes to female athletes, once again, you are devaluing women's sports and female athletes.

Written By:Justice Johnson



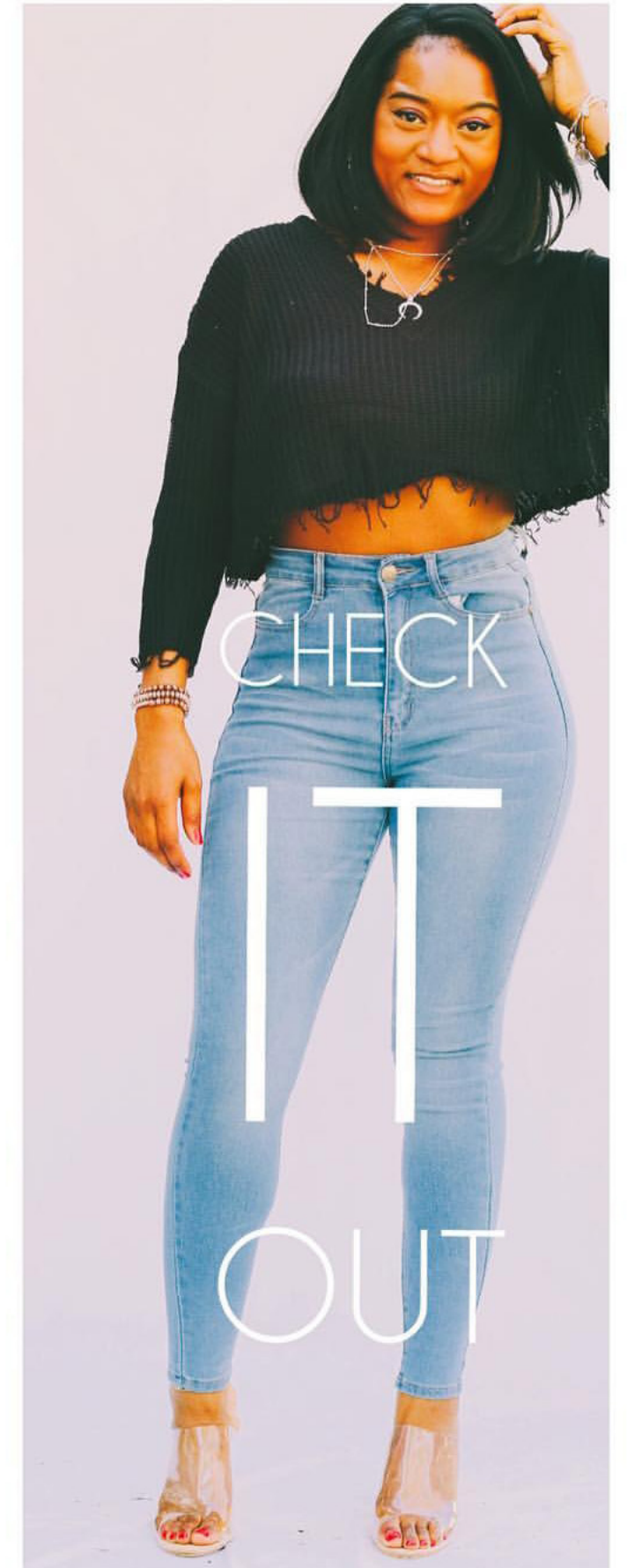
# Bringing L♥VE To The Streets

By: Justice Johnson

*One night in 2014 she had a woken up in the middle of the night and began writing. She began to write down what was on her heart.*



**E**rica Wright has a genuine passion for people. She like many others has been through so much in her life, however what sets her apart from most is her passion to help others in the mist of her struggles. Erica had fallen on hard times and ended up living at her place of work for a short period of time. On top of all the hardships, Erica was amid it all when she was diagnosed with anxiety and OCD. Erica had to endure many things, but in the end she persevered. During her path of healing and reaching stability, Erica still had a longing in her heart to serve. One night in 2014 she had a woken up in the middle of the night and began writing. She began to write down what was on her heart. This night was the birth of her nonprofit organization U First. U First is non-profit organization that provides the basic necessities for those who are less fortunate. Erica has been able to provide for so many and has changed lives. She went from being homeless herself and wondering what she was going to do next, to becoming a beacon in the lives of so many.







Q: There is common misconception about homelessness. People often assume that those who are homeless have either chosen drugs over a career or are just lazy. However, I know as well as you that this isn't the case for everyone. So, can you discuss in your opinion as to why you believe homelessness is perceived this way.

A: A couple of years ago when I first began doing this type of work, I was very defensive about my own journey, as well as things that I had witnessed in the homeless community. I was once one who use to judge, but I realized not just from my own brokenness but also through the stories of those I have spoken to along the way, I understood that everyone has their own story. I learned that some people fall into certain predicaments that is no fault of their own, and with others it was simply just life circumstances. I've met men and women who have come out of abusive relationships, kids who were kicked out of their homes for being apart of the LGBT community, and many other cases. I spoke with people who had only been homeless for 24 hours and I could see the toll that it took on those individuals mental state. There are so many different variables to homelessness and how people fall into it. As individuals we have to stop judging one another and get back to the days where we actually cared for each other.

Q: Your nonprofit organization U First focuses on trying to provide the basic necessities to those who are less fortunate, what lead you into wanting to start your own nonprofit organization and what jumpstarted it?

A: I'll start with with what led me into doing it. So, I got out of a bad relationship when I was in my 40's. I had been a barber for a little over 20 years and that's how I made my living.

Then I was diagnosed with bipolar anxiety and OCD, when I heard that I was shocked. I stood in front of my therapist and wonder who it was she was speaking about. Then I took a step back and realized that maybe I was combative, and I did have a hard time letting things go.

I realized I didn't really know who I was. So, one night in August of 2014 I woke up at 3:30 A.M and had started writing like Paul did in the bible. I had never written like that before. I wrote the name U First and then I saw little bits in pieces of me in vans traveling across the country stopping at highways, byways, allies, and streets helping people. It was basically a vision from God, and I knew I had to obey him. The following Sunday a few days after I had the vision, we had bible study and the topic that day was living your purpose.

I figured besides being a barber, I knew I had a calling to help those in need. One day I was driving and saw a woman under the bridge washing her hair with a bottle of water and I wondered, how do people who are less fortunate get the basic necessities. I mentioned it at church the following week and me along with a few other members donated big crates of supplies. However, I noticed the supplies hadn't moved since we had donated it. I am someone who is about action, so I took what was in the crates broke everything down and put them into smaller boxes. I took the boxes and began handing out to people who were in need and while doing so I was also talking with them too.



I learned their stories and took the time to understand who they were. So, here we are now 4 years later. I started out with no money, no credit, and no blueprint. We have not received any government assistance in any form. We just use social media and ask people to help donate supplies.

Q: What is a key tool to utilize when owning a nonprofit organization?

A: Social media is our biggest tool that we use. We like to show people how their resources are positively impacting the lives of those we are helping. We also use it to help raise money for the supplies needed to create the care packages that we make.

Q: There are so many people that are in need throughout the entire state and unfortunately you can't be in two places at once, so how do you go about picking the locations to hold your events?

A: Most of the homeless population is in or by local cities. What we started to do was go out and be of service to those who are on the streets. We used to call it "taking love to the streets of Atlanta", and we would serve the people. We set up tables with supplies, water, and things of that nature.

We were in the largest city here by one of the biggest homeless shelters giving out supplies and speaking with

people. However, they ended up shutting us down because we didn't have a permit. I didn't have the money for that, but I didn't start U First for just one or two days of handing things out, I always had longevity in mind. Now we do a number of things for those who are in the cities, surrounding areas, and even help those across the country. We try to do the best we can for everyone.

Q: Doing humanitarian work can often be challenging because although the ultimate goal is to help everyone in need it's impossible to do that because of the amount of people who are struggling, how do you want your work to influence others to get involved with helping those who are less fortunate?

A: I always invite people out to come and get involved with what we do. Whether it's giving out supplies or just speaking with people and encouraging them. At the end of the day I use to think it was just the people we were serving but it's the volunteers as well. This why we all go and speak to communities as well, because we know that it encourages someone to do something. Even if what they are inspired to do does not involve homelessness, they could inspire to mentor kids, or even teach. Those components are what makes a community thrive.







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# SHE CRABS In a BARREL

*Women in Business*

Dr. Debra Henson and Dr. Nadine Wheat are two extraordinary women in the business world. They both share many accolades between one another. Dr. Debra Henson has her EdD, PMP, and her MBBSS degrees. She is currently working as the Sr. Vice President of Operations in Business at the Jones Worley Firm. Dr. Nadine Wheat has her Ph.D. and her MBA degrees. Dr. Wheat currently works as the Director of Master Sciences of Organizational Leadership, and as the Director of the Undergraduate Business Programs at Union Institute and University. This dynamic duo met while Dr. Henson was working on her doctorate's degree under the same college program where Dr. Wheat was the active dean.

When Dr. Henson was nearing the end of the program, she and a group of colleagues were having a casual conversation while writing their dissertations when one of the women made a comment saying, "I can't believe we all get along" to which Dr. Henson replied, "I know, we are like crabs in a barrel, right?" A few years down the line, Dr. Henson brought up the idea of writing a book to Dr. Wheat. Dr. Henson was apprehensive about some of the challenges that would come along with writing the book. However, Dr. Wheat gave Dr. Henson some encouraging words and even offered to help co-write the book. Both women shared similar experiences dealing with catty and jealous behavior from women in the workplace, so they decided to write about those experiences. The two eventually wrote the book and had it published in 2018. That "small talk" they had years ago with their colleagues, gave birth to their inspirational five star rated book, titled "She Crabs in a Barrel."

The title originated from the actual animal (she-crabs). When crabs are frightened or thrown into an enclosed space, they typically run over one another or pull each other down to pull themselves up. The book "She Crabs in a Barrel" opens with a story about how a group of crabs get lured in by fisherman and get captured. One of the crabs tries to get out by climbing up towards the top of the barrel, with the intention of helping the other crabs climb out as soon as she reaches the top. However, the she-crab gets pulled back down by another because, the other crab thinks she's trying to get away and leave the rest of them behind. This short story is a metaphor for the overall premise of the book about how some women tend to behave in the workplace.

The book discusses the micro-aggressive workplace behavior that women show towards one another. The book also discusses how men can play a role in the women's behaviors. Both Dr. Wheat and Dr. Henson share their own personal stories dealing with the matter of having to work with women who were intimidated by their success. There is a definite call for action in this book for women to break the cycle of jealousy and insecurity in the workplace. As women, we all have room to experience personal, financial, and company growth. There is room for all women to shine.

"Mean girls start on the playground," stated Dr. Wheat as she referenced that often times, the reason why women forget to reach back is that they lack the desire to embrace, foster and engage one another. This "crabs in the barrel" mentality is often developed young and carried out even through the workplace as an adult. There are three main things you can take from "She Crabs in a Barrel," which will guide you to master the chain of women in the workplace or any level of life that one may find themselves on. Dr. Henson explained that the mean girl mentality or "crabs in the barrel mentality" starts in urban neighborhoods and spreads throughout.

Both Dr. Henson and Dr. Wheat focused on this mentality because although it can be mostly found in women, there are also men that possess this mentality. There are many examples highlighted in the book, like being the smart girl in the neighborhood but being held back by your peers. Both Dr. Henson and Dr. Wheat speak on feelings, thoughts and emotions of unworthiness, feeling victimized, envied and fearful. The book highlights warning signs to look out for, posed especially to the ambitious, beautiful and talented women.





### **Don't fall victim**

“Men are overt, and women are covert,” says Dr. Henson. She explains that men have no problem in being direct. When they say they want your job, they're coming after it. If you relate back to sports, men have no problem with facing their competitor for a win. However, women don't tell you they're coming after your job. As very cunning as this may be, a lot of women fall victim to backstabbing in the workplace. Many women become entangled in the web of trying to retaliate, while the men easily walk through and get the job. While women fight over entitlement, men often time grab the very thing they want. Both women say it happens all the time.

### **Feeling threatened**

There are many perceptions of a person feeling threatened. When asked if there is a specific reason why most women can't take accountability for their actions, Dr. Wheat answered, “People are threatened by you. You know, afraid that you might replace them.

For example, if I tell you how I got where I am you might come up and take my position, not realizing that it's okay to lend someone else a hand. It's okay to pull somebody else up because someone may pull you up, that's how you pay it forward. When somebody else pulls you up then you help pull them up.” Both women emphasize the point that they want all women who read this book to help pull one another up, as all relationships should be reciprocal.

### **Being open to a way out**

Dr. Henson and Dr. Wheat both want women to know that looking in the mirror and doing self-reflection is always the way out. Many women think it's always the other woman but never them. Dr. Henson stated, “There's a way out of feeling threatened, there's a way out of the backstabbing, because there is a lot of that. I want women to know that it starts with you and you must figure out who you are. Shut the door and go within to just think about you. What it is that you want, how to get to it, then going to get it.” Both women want others to know that there is a lesson to be learned from every experience.

Dr. Henson and Dr. Wheat wrote this book not to bash women, but to make them become more aware of this syndrome that is plaguing women in business today. The two women equally reflect on their personal experiences and shed light on the issues that many women are susceptible to in the workplace. All women can learn from this book, and perhaps shed light on it to other women. The book can be found on Amazon. Dr. Henson and Dr. Wheat hope that the ambitious woman in you helps end the cycle and spread the word.

*By:Erika Glass*



# DESIGN AND CONQUER

Pursuing a creative career is unlike any other.



*Moksha Roa began her career studying graphic design, a term that because of the impromptu progression of technology has been replaced with user interface user experience (UI/UX) design. The complex aesthetic of design will be unveiled as we gaze beyond the blueprints and computers to pick the brain of UI/UX designer, Moksha Roa, and explore the concept of design through her passion projects.*



For many entrepreneurs and small business owners, the different types of designers—UI, UX, product, interaction, interior, motion, print, fashion, etc.—can be quite tedious to decipher, but these talented creatives are necessary to society as they combine art and technology to communicate messages. The complex aesthetic of design will be unveiled as we gaze beyond the blueprints and computers to pick the brain of UI/UX designer, Moksha Roa, and explore the concept of design through her passion projects. Pursuing a creative career is unlike any other. For some, the decision is as swift as a light switch while, for others, the decision is much more organic. In the case of Roa, embarking on a career in design was a virtually natural decision. “Born and bred to two graphic designers, I was exposed to the art of design at an early age.” Captivated by her parents’ ability to run a successful agency in India during a time when graphic designers were not as apparent, Roa knew this was the career for her.

While completing her bachelor’s degree at a regional university, Roa decided she was not done learning and had a longing for more. With the support of her parents, Roa traveled halfway across the world to attend Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) in Atlanta, GA. At SCAD, Roa found her niche and established herself in the design community as a graphic artist.

While studying at SCAD, Roa really took to one of her professors as her teaching style kept her engaged and motivated. Little did she know, Roa would soon fill the bedazzled shoes of her beloved mentor and inspire others as an effective graphic designer with novelty and divergent thinking.

During a time when Roa was experiencing unimaginable grief, she received closure by channeling her energy into designing an app, Looking Up. Created in memory of her late father, Looking Up is considered a significant contribution to healthcare, patient care, and mental health.

“To ensure this app was intuitive as possible—offering positive affirmations, remembering schedules, creating games and crosswords, generating music playlist lists—I spent countless hours preparing research, conducting interviews, creating surveys, visiting rehabilitation centers, and participating in therapy workshops.” Using her experience as insight, Roa understood the difficulty of communicating with a loved one in the hospital undergoing intensive care; therefore, designing this prototype app allowing patients to efficiently interact with their family and caregiver was so vital and therapeutic. Looking Up is only one of many Moksha Roa analytical designs.



With her eyes open and ears to the ground, Roa continuously seeks to innovatively improve everyday life.

Another brainchild created by the intuitive designer is an app called Mountain Good. The idea for this app emerged on one of her treks through the Himalayas as she noticed the ongoing issue of navigation. After realizing this difficulty was not only problematic for her but for many other hikers—newcomers and natives—, Roa was determined to find an artistic solution. “The intelligence of Mountain Good is the ability to hire and rate a Sherpa, or guide, before your arrival, which is currently impossible.” The proficiency of booking a Sherpa pre-hike is the benefit of receiving information about the hike before trekking, along with, the ability to avoid the language-barrier that could hinder you and your guide.

In amazing essence, Mountain Good was designed to provide hikers with Sherpa support and bridge the gap of communication between the hiker and the Sherpa.

The philanthropic efforts of Roa continue by combining two of her passions—designing and marathons. “As a project for one of my SCAD classes, I designed and coded a website, Run For A Cause, which allows runners to create individual profiles and run for causes they support.” Unfortunately for those interested in this benevolence, the website only exists as a mockup. Nevertheless, the humanitarianism of Roa reaches a remarkable pinnacle on March 2, 2019 when she laced up her sneakers and took flight in the Publix Atlanta Marathon. Through her run, she raised \$1,310 for cancer research.

Utilizing her genius to address various ideologies of activism, Roa firmly believes each project must embody interest and influence. A few causes she holds near and dear to her heart are mental health, women empowerment, animal cruelty, and community service.

She adds to the ongoing conversation of those principles by using her talent and platform to illustrate and emphasize the importance of supporting those philosophies, making her mark on the world one design at a time.

Encompassing the noble characteristics of an effective leader—positivity, passion, knowledge, innovation and strong communication—Roa aspires to inspire other creatives. “My advice to all up-and-coming artists and storytellers is to be confident in your discipline and to not let anything deter you from your goals.” In her final remarks, Moksha Roa states the importance of maintaining awareness and remaining informed on the happenings of the world as it effects our life, craft, and future.

*By* Mia Coleman



Rising from Ashes to Glory

# Latarsha Holden

*By: Erika Glass*







“God, if you bring me out of homelessness and hopelessness, I’ll go back and fight for others,” Atlanta Native, Latarsha Holden stated as she sat down with the Leadership Blend to discuss her journey of being a motivational speaker, workshop facilitator, personal development coach, running for District 11, publishing twelve books (one of which is her life story), her business 3 Elements Inc., leadership, and being a true humanitarian at heart.

Holden’s life has not always been easy. The mother of six went from dropping out of school in the 10th grade, being homeless and suicidal to earning a GED turned Ph.D. Holden has been featured in 8 magazines and countless radio interviews around the world. Her life story and journey are true definitions of not letting what you’re faced with to determine the height of your future.

Getting her Ph.D. in Leadership is something Holden is proud of but believes it’s what God has called her to be, which is a leader. With all her training being community training(s) and giving back, she’s connected her life to the purpose of serving others. Holden expressed, “Leadership - to me - means standing by your principles and morals, influencing people in a positive way but also being able to stand alone if you have to.” Those keys are what led Holden to invest her last 1500 dollars and run for District 11 in 2017. However, Holden lost by a landslide of 400 votes.

Holden recalled, “They liked the transparency, and they knew I wasn’t politicking. I was down to fight for them.” While she didn’t have a campaign manager or endorsements, she recalls all she had to offer was her transparency. Holden said, “I think people are tired and are looking for leaders that know their struggle.” After being homeless for three years, Holden was determined not to let the streets raise her kids. Hence, she wanted to go back and fight for others. With her “why” being big for others, it outweighed her fear of running for the election. After running for office, being the true humanitarian at heart, Holden was honored for being the ambassador for the International Humanitarianism Organization(s). It propelled her to continue to give back. Holden opened her first company, “3 Elements Inc.,” a personal development company. Holden expressed, “That’s why I go out and try to show people the importance of self-improvement when I do workshops and motivational speaking. You only go as far as your personal development, and for the past ten years, it’s like I’ve been in personal development training for myself. I’m just trying to help as many people as I can to emerge from the fire, whether it’s through my workshops about motivational speaking, or through personal development coaching. I just gave it my all, and I named it 3 Elements Inc. after myself because I didn’t come from corporate America. I don’t have the usual job-related experience, so I asked God how I could use my gifts and talents and have a business while making an impact and an income. I heard a still voice say, “it has always been three things present about you ever since a little girl: love, compassion, and service.” So, 3 elements Inc. is who I am at the core.” Among other accolades, Holden started Project Village, which is a community closet that donated toiletry items to schools once a month in her community for kids whose families are less fortunate. Although Holden no longer does Project Village anymore, she still plans on doing more things that will help impact her community.

When asked how homelessness affected Holden, she expressed, “You know, dropping out in 10th grade and having four kids by age 22, it was obvious that I wasn’t a very organized person. I wasn’t a disciplined person, and being homeless made me learn. It’s like I was forced into personal development, and that’s why personal development now is my specialty.

I had no choice but to grow as a person.” Being in a fight or flight state of mind, the homeless experience taught Holden to be disciplined, organized, and strengthen her time management. Holden expressed, “My undergrad professor told me that the world belongs to those who are disciplined, and so being homeless taught me how to be disciplined and how to stick to my goals. I had to become a disciplined woman, and it was the hardest thing I’ve had to do. Having a poverty mindset, you feel like your life is over.” Being homeless taught Holden how to stand, how to continue even when your back is against the wall, and to keep going with the odds against you.

Flipping her failure into a success, Holden published her 12th book, which is her memoir “No Longer Lost.” It talks about the life lessons she learned through her many experiences of being a walking statistic, abuse, and the predictable outcome of poverty. When Holden wrote her memoir, she explained she was in a boarded-up home as a squatter. Holden gives her audience a personal dose of her life’s story in depth. It wasn’t until Dan Moore Sr., founder of the Apex Museum in Atlanta, contacted Holden on sharing her life story on film. Holden expressed, “When you come from what I come from, you’d never imagine that you’d be a subject of a documentary. Hopefully, one day, that would be turned into a Lifetime movie. That was a big gesture for me and my family. Just to relive that moment to see how far God has brought us.” The film focuses on homelessness and mental health awareness. Holden recalls, “The journey got so hard I did think of committing suicide. It’s one thing when you go through something for a week, two weeks, or months, but you’re talking about two in half to three years homeless. You’ve got to keep six children plus yourself to care for. I remember one time walking into a hospital, and I told the lady at the front desk that I didn’t want to live anymore. She asked, “Are you saying you want to commit suicide?” I said yes, ma’am, and they kept me for a week for observation. I remember going into their padded room every day and dropping to my knees and crying out to God to please help me. Before I knew it, when I came out of hospital after a week, I just saw myself going past the stage A.A, B.A, MBA, and being accepted into the Ph.D. program in leadership.

Only God could have done that.” Being homeless, Holden understood the mental aspect, and that is why today she pushed her personal development in the awareness of mental health advocacy. Among “No Longer Lost,” Holden also has published children’s books. “I have a four-part youth series that deals with sex trafficking, teen dating violence, bullying, love, and forgiveness. I have a training manual on personal development that I’m trying to use for different organizations. The training manual shows the seven pillars that are put in place to go from point A to Point B. I also have a book of poetry.” Despite her lengthy book list, Holden put herself on hold for promoting her life story and published children’s books once she finished school in 2016 and later ran for office in 2017, which she plans to pick back up on soon. Today, Holden is looking forward to starting a personal-use scholarship called “Hope Alive,” in which she will be offering a 250-dollar scholarship twice a year for any homeless woman in undergrad school that is living in a shelter and has proof. While Holden is still getting the details together, she added, “They can do whatever they want with the scholarship, buy books, buy a couple of outfits, or use it for gas in their car. It is my way of saying I know the struggle, here’s something for you for trying.” Holden plans to turn it into a non-profit in the future.

Although Holden has overcome a lot on her journey, her biggest accomplishment is her children. “Being a mother of six children, that’s probably who I am at heart, and I love to love.







At first, I used to hate being that person. I have a double dose of empathy,” said Holden.

The three things that Holden highlighted for someone who’s been in her shoes are:

1. You deserve the right to be here just like the next person, but you must fight for it.
2. Nobody is going to save you. You will probably get rejected; that’s the thing about fighting for yourself. You’ll lose people along the way.
3. Live in who you are and be true to yourself, and you will win. You can never go wrong with being true to yourself.

Holden said, “You’re going to want to throw in the towel. Sometimes you’re going to ask why this is happening to you, just keep going. If God would have told me 12 years ago that I would be homeless for three years and that nobody would help me.

That I would be going to a mental hospital for a week for having a mental breakdown, but in 12 years if I kept going, there would be light at the end of the tunnel, I wouldn’t have believed him.” That wisdom is what keeps Holden going today.

Latarsha Holden is a person who does small things with great love. She wants others to know that you don’t have to wait until you have a lot of money to be a blessing, and that you can start now with what you have. Holden is now looking forward to traveling the world, doing motivational speaking and getting into school(s). Holden thinks of herself as, one day, becoming the next Lisa Nichols. She’s now looking to continue to partner with small businesses on the importance of personal development. She is also interested in getting into the tiny homes’ project. When it comes to politics, Holden expressed that she is now signed up with Primerica because she believes in the importance of leaving a legacy for our children and family. She is content as far as politics go with new Atlanta Mayor Keisha Bottoms, although she would love to see more done for the homeless in Atlanta. Being a homeless advocate herself, Holden has more to come when it pertains to keeping hope alive.





