

Alexandria Noir

One Author & One Book That You Must Know



Shenise Foster ✉ • 1 day ago 💬 0 📖 5 minutes read



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Alexandria, VA – In the Washington DC Metro area, it may be assumed that every historically significant story has been told and every local gem discovered. However, as I was scrolling through Instagram, a post of a newly published book, *111 Places in Black Culture That You Must Not Miss in Washington, DC*, caught my attention. I was so intrigued that I ordered the book immediately and read it from cover to cover. I knew I had to interview the author, Ms. Lauri Williamson, and dive into the Howard alum's passion for

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During this interview, I touch upon Ms. Williamson's entrepreneurship journey and her path to becoming an author. She stated several times throughout our discussion, "I never want to live with regret," and I believe she has conquered that by making an imprint in the travel & tourism industry.

Zebra: What made you decide to open your DC Tours & Events tourism company?

Ms. Williamson: While working at my previous job as a systems analyst, I met a person on the board of directors who owned a travel agency. After talking about the ins and outs of the business with them, I went to travel school at night and assisted with planning conventions with the board member's travel agency.

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This led to a career change. I transitioned from planning conventions to companies hiring me to manage onsite logistics and operations. I took tour guide classes during this time because I knew I wanted to make this a viable business. Once I received my tour guide license, I opened my company in 2018 with a continued focus on events so I could still assist clients with meetings and conventions.

To accompany DC Tours & Events, I also started **Capital Keepsakes**. I have been making gift baskets for years, which I do on the side. From experience as a convention planner, I knew I would need gifts that were not the usual tourist souvenirs you could get anywhere. So, I developed a line of DC, Maryland, and Virginia-related items that would appeal to my clients, and it has been a great success thus far.

Zebra: Your moniker is Chief Experience Officer. What does that entail?

Ms. Williamson: I am a company of one who does it all. I added "experience" to

goal is to have people recognize that it's more than just a name, but a standard that can be expected when working with my company and me.

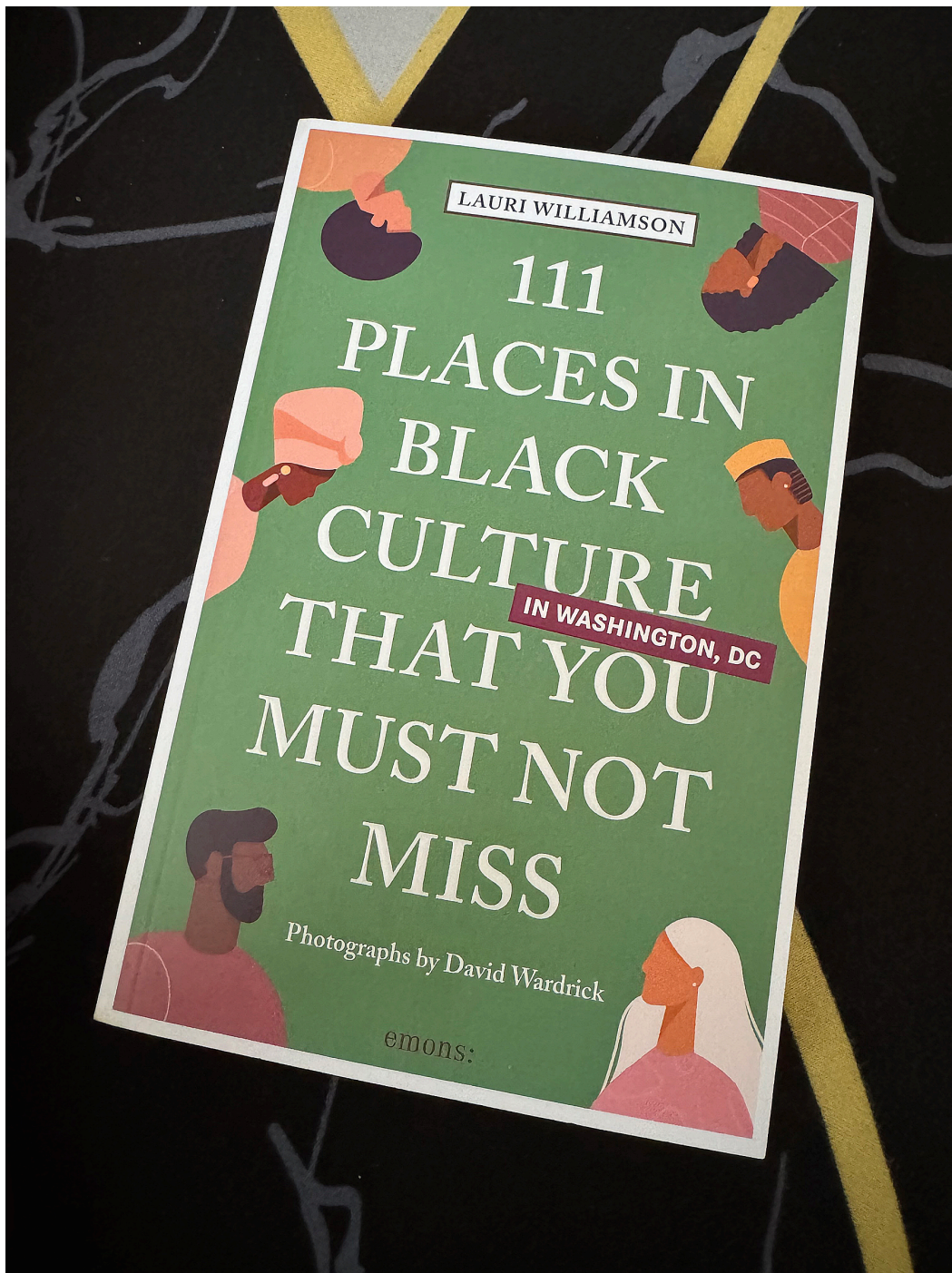
Zebra: You recently published your book, *111 Places in Black Culture That You Must Not Miss in Washington, DC*. Can you tell me more about it?

Ms. Williamson: It wasn't one thing that made me decide to write this book. Several experiences came into developing this project. The first spark of inspiration started when I was attending Howard University, when I realized so many stories highlighted African Americans who were not a part of the mainstream. Fast forward to my becoming a tour guide, I started connecting and sharing experiences with other tour guides about what history was not being told. African American history was the recurring topic.

It clicked one day when I was talking to my good friend and fellow tour guide, Andrea Seiger, who wrote the book *111 Places in Washington DC That You Must Not Miss*, that I would write a companion book focusing on the must-see African American establishments and historical sites. She graciously got me in contact with the publisher of *111 Places*. After receiving the go-ahead, I began the proposal and research process. I had to write four chapters and provide all the featured 111 establishments. After many edits and revisions, the book was released on Juneteenth this year.

Zebra: What was one of the most surprising things you learned when writing your book?

Ms. Williamson: I was surprised by the many stories and businesses in this area. One in particular was the story of the Pearl. I had no idea that this was the site of the single largest escape from enslavement that had ever occurred in the country, and it happened at the Wharf right here in Washington, DC. That just blew my mind. I could not find the marker anywhere along the boardwalk. I had to come back on a separate occasion to locate the plaque at the intersection of Wharf Street Southwest and 7th Street Southwest.



111 Places in Black Culture That You Must Not Miss in Washington DC (Photo: Shenise Foster)

Zebra: How do you hope your work will impact your readers?

Ms. Williamson: I am proud that native Washingtonians have read the book and discovered new businesses and cultural experiences they didn't know about. The great thing about the *111 Places* brand is that the focus is to appeal to locals and entice them to explore other parts of their city. These days, I think people are more willing to explore in their own backyards. I'm happy I have

Zebra: What are some of your favorite Alexandria establishments and why?

Ms. Williamson: I tend to like places where history happened. [George Washington's Mount Vernon](#) is a great place to visit because it has a rich history that tells the whole story of the people who lived there. There is a tour highlighting the enslaved community and their contributions to sustaining the massiveness that is Mount Vernon. There's so much to learn and see there, and I always recommend that everyone visit at least once when they visit the area.

Another place that surprised me was the [Unique and Special Kids Spa](#). From the outside, the building looks like an office complex, but when you enter, you see this an adorable space with lab coats and outfits for the kids to put on, and themed rooms, and a runway for kids to showcase their new looks.

Zebra: What's next?

Ms. Williamson: I'm working on tours to go with the book. The first in this lineup is a collaboration with [Politics & Prose Bookstore](#). It will focus on Black Broadway and the Shaw neighborhood in DC. In September, I will participate in [Walking Town DC](#) by Events DC, a week of free tours given by local tour guides.

Then, I plan to begin developing a tour of Arlington National Cemetery. Honestly, this is one of my favorite places to visit, and all other Washington, DC sites are number two. That's because it represents American History. A military cemetery is a place where everybody has sacrificed in some way so that everyone can enjoy what we have today. My tour will focus on African Americans buried at the cemetery, such as the United States Color Troops, the Tuskegee Airmen, and Medgar Evers.

This fall, I'll speak about the book at the [Literary Hill Bookfest](#) in October and, in December, at the [Black Author Expo](#) in Suitland, MD.

Zebra readers can keep up to date with Lauri Williamson on the DC Tours & Events website (dctoursandevents.com/) or by following her on the following social media platforms: Instagram ([instagram.com/dctoursandevents](https://www.instagram.com/dctoursandevents)) and Facebook ([facebook.com/domorethantour/](https://www.facebook.com/domorethantour/)).

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**#111 Places in Black Culture That You Must Not Miss in
Washington DC**

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#The Pearl

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