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Special Issue 2021

**Innovative Entrepreneurs:** Black Women Changing the Way we Live, Work and Serve Others!

## Robin Wilson

Taking the Personal Home Textile Industry by Storm!



Author **LaBena Fleming** Shares Her Journey as a Caregiver in a Second Book: *Caregiver to Caregiver* (A must read!)

The S.H.I.N.E. Foundation: Emmy Award-Winning News Anchor **Danita Harris'** Dream of Helping Young Girls and Boys Comes True!

Are You Planning to Travel in the New Year? Travel Expert **Kareem George** Shares Tips about How to Do it Safely





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Publisher and Chief Editorial Officer  
**Alexandria Johnson Boone**

Creative Director  
**Jennifer Colley Dial**

Senior Copy Editor  
**Michelle E. Urquhart**

Business Manager  
**Paula T. Newman**

Assistant to the Publisher  
**Bernadette K. Mayfield**

Senior Strategist, Subscriber &  
Community Development  
**Simone E. Swanson**

Database and Information Coordinator  
**Cheretta Moore**

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## Women of Color Foundation

C L Magazine is published digitally on a quarterly basis by the Women of Color Foundation (WOCF), a 501 (c) (3), tax-exempt organization, for the benefit of women and girls of all colors. Our offices are located at 4200 Warrensville Center Road, Medical Building A, Suite 353, Cleveland, Ohio 44128. Toll Free Phone number: 866.962-3411 (866.WOCF.411).

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# LETTER from the Publisher

## 2021: Thanks for the Memories?

Dear Readers,

In a few short days, we will say goodbye to 2021 and hello to 2022.

To be honest, I have mixed emotions about the challenges in 2021 as well as the potential challenges in 2022. 2021, made us stronger, yet weaker. Made us closer, yet more distant. Made us compassionate, yet we lacked empathy. Will 2022 be more of the same?

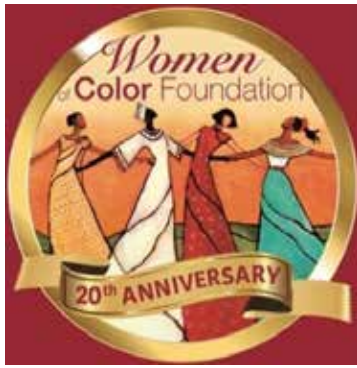
Well, not for me. I have a new attitude and I am looking forward to passing it on. I have experienced pain and pleasure in 2021. Lost loved ones to COVID-19 and made new friends. Expanded my businesses while other searched desperately for new careers and new opportunities to simply earn a living.

I am excited to say that I am ready for whatever life deals me in 2022. I will stay positive and grateful. I will be prayerful and faithful. I will respect and support other human beings on the planet when possible. Whew, that's a lot!

In closing, let's all embrace 2022 with renewed energy, and rededicated focus on our health, our families, our careers, our communities, and most importantly, our humanity!

In the spirit of the greatness in us all,

Alexandria Johnson Boone  
Publisher/Chief Editorial Officer, C L Magazine and  
Chairwoman/Founder Women of Color Foundation



**WOMEN OF COLOR FOUNDATION**

4200 Warrensville Center Road  
Medical Building A | Suite 353  
Cleveland, Ohio 44128  
216.391.4300, ext. 311 phone  
440.815.2389 facsimile  
866.962.3411 toll free

[www.womenofcolorfoundation.com](http://www.womenofcolorfoundation.com)  
[aboone@womenofcolorfoundation.com](mailto:aboone@womenofcolorfoundation.com)

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December 15, 2021

Tracy Bean Oliver  
Director, Media & Local Affairs  
External Affairs  
**Dominion Energy Ohio**  
1201 East 55<sup>th</sup> Street  
Cleveland, Ohio 44103

Dear Tracy,

As I reflect on how long we have known each other and how long we have worked together to make our community a better place to live and work, all I can say is wow!

We have been on this journey for over 20 years, and I still love and respect you as a friend and as a colleague in the struggle. Because of your humble and giving spirit, I don't think you really know that you have been an inspiration and role model for so many women in this community.

Your service to Dominion and Greater Cleveland has been exemplary, and we will be forever in your debt. I know that your retirement is an important milestone in your life, but I have some mixed emotions. Yes, you have earned it and yes, you deserve it. But my greatest fear, is that it will be impossible to fill your shoes and the void that we will all most certainly feel.

The Dominion family with your guidance and support, has been so crucial to the development of the Women of Color Foundation and the work that we have tirelessly done for women and girls of all colors in Northeast Ohio and beyond.

Because of you, Terry Bishop, Ben Kroeck, Heather Clayton Terry, and others joined the movement for racial equity and helped our Foundation make its mark.

It is my sincere hope that you will embrace your retirement and this next chapter in your life, with the same zeal that you have demonstrated throughout your illustrious career.

Please know that I would welcome any opportunity to support you in the future, and "pay it forward" as you have done for so many.

Warmest regards,

Alexandria Johnson Boone  
Chairwoman and Founder  
Women of Color Foundation



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# The Gift of Self-Care

by *Shawn Eigenbrode, MSW, LSW, GC-C*  
Bereavement Coordinator  
Western Reserve Grief Services

The year 2021 brought many challenges. If you experienced the death of a loved in the past year or more – whatever the circumstances or timeline – you may still be healing from that loss. The death of your loved one may have triggered related losses: your roles, routines, purpose or self-identity. Separately, you may have endured other significant losses, such as relationships, employment, opportunities or security.

If you feel depleted, please know that you are not alone. During times of loss and uncertainty, it's especially important to take care of yourself, even as you care for others. Grief and stress take a very real toll on the body, mind and spirit.

Seasonal demands and special occasions often add to that burden. Although you may have little control over the external events and people affecting your bereavement, you do have control over your own daily self-care.

Self-care is simply the practice of promoting one's own health and wellbeing. Any personal choice or action that supports your well-being can be considered self-care. It encompasses your most basic needs as well as your greater enrichment.

If you are a longtime caregiver, a habitual people-pleaser, or a chronic workaholic, you may have greater difficulty prioritizing your own needs. But your well-being matters, and it deserves your attention. Self-care is neither selfish nor self-indulgent; it is self-preservation. Self-care is essential to

healing and adaptation. While it doesn't need to be time-consuming or costly, self-care does require some self-awareness and self-discipline.

Briefly reflect on these four domains of your well-being, and some of the everyday choices you make for yourself within them:

- **Biological** – your nutrition, hydration, sleep, exercise, medical care
  - **Psychological** – your knowledge, thought processes; emotional expression, coping strategies
  - **Social** – the interpersonal company you keep, your support systems
  - **Spiritual** – your sources of higher meaning, purpose and unity
- In which domains are you deprived or struggling? What might provide relief? Which of the choices mentioned here can you control? Where could you make improvements?

Even small changes may yield benefits to your well-being. Sustained changes often lead to bigger changes and greater benefits. Again, you are

deserving of your own attention and effort! The gift of self-care is available to you anytime, anywhere. It takes the form of personalized comfort, nurturing and sustenance. It can help make most burdens, including bereavement, more bearable.

Although no one can predict the challenges ahead, you can better meet the demands of the coming year by fostering your innate resilience. The new year offers a timely opportunity to prioritize self-care, helping you to be a greater asset to yourself and to the important others in your life. Remember, empty lanterns provide no light. Self-care is fuel – allowing your light to shine and endure.

---

*Western Reserve Grief Services is a community-based grief support program provided by Hospice of the Western Reserve. A wide variety of resources are available to help anyone who is grieving the death of a loved one, including virtual grief support groups, healing arts workshops and more. No connection to hospice services is required to utilize the resources. For more information, visit [hospicewr.org/griefandloss](https://hospicewr.org/griefandloss).*



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# Danita

## ***How Her Time to “SHINE” is Helping Women and Children***

*by Cecelia Flagg*

**Smart, inspiring, spirit-led** Danita Harris, WEWS News 5 morning anchor and ordained reverend, is fully transparent about her professional and spiritual journey as she speaks openly about herself. Danita has held a full-time anchor seat, her dream day job, for almost 22 of her 32-year career as a broadcast journalist. This was a childhood dream that she never really believed would happen, but it did. With a strong heart for community service and well-being, she's earned nine Emmy awards for her stirring, compassionate, and in-depth reporting. This year she also became the very proud recipient of a 2021 prestigious Edward R. Murrow award. She reports impactful good news stories from her work desk and good news in her ministry as founder of the S.H.I.N.E. Foundation; a spiritually-based organization inspired through her and created to foster the empowerment of hurting women. Each vocation contributes to her growth into the effective vessel of God that she continually prays to be.

Danita, the lady from TV, speaks out for those needing a helping hand, and she has spoken hard necessary truths to several millions of people over the years. Starting out, she had to first ingest hard truths for herself as she weighed career choices, “I'd always wanted to be in front of the camera, ever since I was a little kid!” says Danita. She had watched and admired smart poised television newscasters as a child but never thought it could be her someday. Her mom encouraged her “You love to write! You love people! You need to be a journalist!” Danita went for it and after college won a job with Black Entertainment Television (BET) as a producer in the late 1980s. Low self-esteem hid her light behind that camera for six years until 1995 when an on-camera job opened on the news show that she was producing. She wanted it.

“I hid behind the scenes because I was terrified of the camera. I didn't think I was attractive enough. I'm not going to speak clearly... all the things that the self-defeating thoughts tell you,” The position stayed open for six months. Low self-esteem still an issue for her, she hesitated in pursuing it, until her father said, “Danita, you're not gonna know until you try! Nothing beats a failure but a try,” She signed up to audition, but the person staffing the job doubted her readiness, she says, “they said I was never gonna get the job! But I had my relationship with God, and I signed my name anyway. I auditioned with zero experience, and I got the job! They came back to me and offered me the job because they said I was a ‘natural’. I always tell sisters I didn't have the résumé, but I did have the relationship, and that was God's timing in my life,” It was always meant that that position was mine. All He (God) asked me to do is step out of fear! Stand on faith and sign your name to your blessing. I don't care if they tell you you're not going to get the job, sign it anyway!”

When business changes at BET led to job loss and upheaval, she found refuge with her parents in their Cleveland home, broke and depressed with her purpose and identity in question, like many women she now often helps in S.H.I.N.E. Danita found employment within one month and



*Danita Harris with her S.H.I.N.E. volunteers (top) and with S.H.I.N.E. Girlz Dyke School of the Arts (middle) and S.H.I.N.E. Girlz Wilbur Wright Elementary School (bottom).*

went through the process to heal and recover from her humbling ordeal. She became very public about her faith in God as a result. She says of that time “I knew that I was almost at death’s door, and literally living back home with my parents removed all my pride.” She turned it around and moved out on her own after one year of career rebuilding and self-work. Now, she credits this experience as one that helps her minister to women of S.H.I.N.E.

Danita lives by scripture in Luke 12:48 “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required,” She maintains faith transparency at work and is fully supported. She reports positive and poignant stories that move and interest her while she also understands her life’s purpose as one to connect people to God. She notes, “I always say I’m blessed! My P’s: Passion, Purpose and Profession all line up.” The morning news anchor position is her main, but not her only job. A believer in the importance of mentorship, she mentors new reporters at the station, especially women, “I wouldn’t be who I am without the mentors in my life.” She enjoys giving broadcast career wisdom to students as part of the high school Shadow Program. Her work on the station’s community initiative “A Better Land” highlighting people and non-profits making Northeast Ohio a better land, nourishes her drive for service. Sometimes, her vocations as journalist and reverend blend as they did in her “A Better Land” segment “A daughter’s last wish and a mother’s promise...” September 2021.

The story is about Ms. Alicia Jones whose ten-year-old delightful, constantly singing and dancing Courtney was suddenly stricken with cancer. Danita recalls, “It was all I could do to hold back the tears in this interview. Courtney is in the hospital getting her treatment, she notices that there are other



children whose moms can't be there all the time, who didn't have all the resources they had, she said. Mommy, we've got to do something to help these kids who don't have as much," After Courtney's death, mom Alicia honored her in forming The Alicia Jones Care and Cure Foundation that collects items like suitcases, games, art supplies for care bags to give to less fortunate kids in cancer treatment and gifts to their families.

November 2021 marked the fifth anniversary of Danita's S.H.I.N.E. Foundation. At heart it is a women's organization that provides ministry and support along with practical tools to build women up in their lives and careers – A sister circle. The S.H.I.N.E. acronym, illustrates that women are **S**pecial to God, **H**andpicked by God, that they **I**nfluence others to God by their lifestyle, are **N**eeded in God's kingdom, and they will **E**xcel in Excellence through God. It is built on the Pillars of Practical Life Application, Empowerment and Philanthropy. Danita was inspired to form S.H.I.N.E. on August 12, 2016, as an answer to her prayers for guidance and strength as the very difficult ending of her ten-year marriage. One night, alone in a hotel room for peace, she prayed and played praise music, and journaled the wisdom her spirit received, she reflected, "At that time in my life, I was reporting breaking news, but I was the one who was breaking on the inside; reporting breaking news while I was broken! God gave me the strength to do that," The full vision for the formation of S.H.I.N.E. was spelled out clearly to her in her heart and her journal. She still has the journal and shares the initial vision with S.H.I.N.E. women.

Rather than a direct answer to her prayer, she was led to redirect her pain to help other women through pain. Meetings of the sisters, called "It's Your Time to S.H.I.N.E." began in November 2016, with about 100 women at a hotel monthly on Saturdays. Attendance grew via word of mouth to 200 then to over 400 women before the pandemic shutdown. Danita says, "I preach the word of God, we praise and worship, we pray with people. It's not church, but it can be their connection with God, she teaches that her goal is not to make S.H.I.N.E. into a church. She seeks to help them build their own relationship with God and let Him direct their spiritual path. Holding It's your time to Shine in hotels has served to create a safe space for women to share and receive because there are women with anxieties about church. She invites experts to speak on matters such as Financial Awareness,

Danita Harris presents

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“One of the things that I had to incorporate into S.H.I.N.E. was the philanthropy to give back and to sow into non-profits who are helping hurting women and children” Danita says. This network of 400 plus members collects goods and funds at each meeting to donate. Some S.H.I.N.E. members volunteer hours to a charity. she notes, “When I was unemployed, giving back and volunteering saved me. You can think you don’t have anything to give, and you can get so down on yourself. I gave of my time at a senior center,” Organizations S.H.I.N.E. has blessed include The Alicia Jones Care and Cure Foundation, Bessie’s Angels and Women of Hope. Last month they adopted the family of a young single mom of two and showered them with gifts and sisterhood. The “Medicrational moment” is the fun part of S.H.I.N.E. as Reverend Harris holds drawings for gift giveaways to the sisters as they laugh and dance to R&B hits. This does not happen at church.

After the first year of pouring her gifts into S.H.I.N.E., Danita realizing that she was living her purpose, knew that her hotel room prayer had indeed been answered. The organization has blossomed and expanded in reach over the years. In 2018 Danita started S.H.I.N.E. Girlz for 4th through 8th grade girls.

S.H.I.N.E. Girlz was her son Chase’s inspiration. In one school per year, they meet weekly with the students throughout the school term. They discuss self-esteem, body shaming and other teen stress issues. Danita says, “Some days we just do circle talk. What happens in the circle stays in the circle.” In 2022, S.H.I.N.E. Boys will launch as well. Danita, content with her growth says, “I want to be an effective vessel for God. That means I’m trying to see transformation. I’m trying to see change, you know, in what Shine is doing. And those are the highs when I get those moments where I see young girls changing or women change. That’s my high.”

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# A daughter's last wish and a mother's promise bring support to children affected by pediatric cancer

by Danita Harris



Alisha Jones

**[ Click this page to read the full story and watch the video at [news5cleveland.com](http://news5cleveland.com) ]**

*This story appears in C L Magazine courtesy of news5cleveland.com*

A Cleveland foundation is working to help children and families affected by pediatric cancer, and it all started with the wish of a young girl who believed she could make a difference in the lives of children who are also fighting the same battle.

Alisha Jones speaks of her daughter Courtney as only a mother can.

“Courtney is my angel. She was my daughter. A vibrant, loving, amazing girl,” said Jones.

Courtney was a bright light, and she loved to dance until cancer changed the choreography of their life.

“We took her to the doctor. Initially, we thought that she had some type of sinus infection. But then a bulge occurred on her neck,” her mother said.

At just 10 years old, Courtney was diagnosed with leukemia-lymphoma cancer. The cancer may have changed the music and altered her routine, but it never changed her attitude.

“She strangely took it like a champ. She took it like a challenge,” Jones said.

As she endured painful chemotherapy and brain radiation, she had the support of her family and friends but noticed other children in the hospital did not.

“Mom I want to help these other kids,” she said. “I really want to do something for them. Can we start a program?”


# *Robin Wilson:*

## Designing Her Life

*by Jennifer Coiley Dial*



*Photo by Evan Rummel*



*Pulling threads through time, Robin Wilson, a masterful storyteller, shares how she became the Founder/CEO/Chairman of the New York-based, a privately held (and crowdfunded) company, A Blue Egg Corporation – with three divisions for design, licensing and real estate.*

**Raised in Austin, Texas** in the 1970s, Robin suffered from asthma and allergies. She was even allergic to milk, and her parents struggled until they found an ahead-of-his-time pediatrician who told them, “You can raise a strong child, or a child on strong medicine.” They opted for the former, and Robin’s mom, Jo Ann, kicked into gear by focusing on the interior environment. She removed all of the shag carpet from the house — popular at the time! — and kept hardwood floors and tile. Robin’s diet improved; she consumed little meat, and ate mostly fruits, vegetables and grains. Her parents volunteered at the Wheatsville Coop (Whole Foods was founded in Austin in 1980) in exchange for discounted fresh organic food, long before anyone was talking about organic. Her father, Rubin, was a motorcoach driver, and they would leisurely go to the Hill Country farms and orchards to buy fresh watermelon, peaches and cantaloupe and other vegetables. While her brother and nearly every other child in America was drinking Tang and Hawaiian Punch, she was not allowed to have artificially sweetened drinks, and had to have water or other healthier options.

A self-proclaimed “bubble child,” Robin’s mother did not allow animals or smoking in the house, and kept the home dust bunny-free. Her classmates went to more traditional pediatricians, taking steroid meds instead of a holistic approach to environment and diet, and by high school, many were more sedentary – while Robin ran track, played tennis, and learned to swim. Despite her asthma and allergies, she was a very active child, which was the original goal of her pediatrician.

Robin is a believer in Malcolm Gladwell’s *Tipping Point* premise that you need 10,000 hours of practice in any area to become an expert. With her hours of allergic and asthmatic moments, it is clear that Robin is an expert in creating an eco-friendly home.

### **Entrepreneurial Roots**

Her maternal grandfather ran a general store in Angleton, Texas—a small town outside of Houston. As a small child, Robin remembers dusting the tops of cans, turning labels to the front, and getting — as payment — a piece of bubble gum or some other treat from the store, which instilled a strong work ethic from an early age. Her grandfather also owned real estate – primarily for field workers in Brazoria County, small cabins called a “shotgun shack” — basically a studio apartment with a driveway. When Robin was six or seven years old, her grandfather asked her what colors they should be painted and Robin selected Easter egg pastels. (Because of their location,



saltwater seawater deteriorated the paint on the houses, so they pretty much had to paint them yearly.) This became her three-dimensional coloring book for an entire street of cabins.

“Generational wealth was not created by most Black families because they didn’t have land and didn’t have property,” she says. Her family has changed that trend within three generations. Robin’s father, the youngest of 10, was born to a sharecropper, who also worked on a railroad. Her father at seven years old, had to pick a 20-pound bag of cotton each day, until his father bought out the shares (with the help of his sons who were in the military) allowing them the funds to buy a house in Austin.



Full circle: Today, Robin reflects that her luxury goods are 100% cotton — even as her paternal grandfather was a sharecropper in the Texas cotton fields. It is a true irony to see that her family has come full circle.

Robin’s maternal great grandfather was 99 when he died, when Robin was 10 years old. He listened to jazz records on his Victrola, and would tell Robin stories about the “olden days.” Because of his fair skin, he was able to “pass” for white, so he would go into Houston sometimes dressed as a worker, driving a beat-up pickup, but he actually owned parking lots and would collect from honor boxes of quarters and nickels from those parking all day. He would go back to the country, put on a suit, and put that money into the bank to return wealth to his community. Sometimes Robin rode with him, and learned early on how her family survived as entrepreneurs, and to own property and land.



“My paternal grandmother used to say, ‘Your life is going to be different. I’m going to give you the tools you need, but you have to listen and do it a different way.’” Her grandmother was a seamstress and taught her how to fold a fitted sheet, how to quilt, and Robin watched her make couture dresses with silk linings.

### **Designing Her Life**

While a student at the University of Texas at Austin, Robin had an assignment from a philosophy professor to write her “bucket list” which was 100 things she wanted to do before she died. She decided that hers was going to be outlandish, and included among them travel to the Great Barrier Reef; kayak in the sea; ride a gondola across the Grand Canal in Venice; get on a private helicopter, jet, and yacht and to be an entrepreneur by 30.

*Robin with her parents, 1970; Great grandfather Robert Scott holding Robin's brother, Russel; Grandmothers Pauline Wilson and Willie Mae Scott.*

She checks the list annually, and notes that she has done almost all of the things on it. “It’s like manifesting your future,” she says. “There are two things on the list I don’t care to do: no bungee jumping, no skydiving!”

In the late 1990s, Robin worked for Heidrick & Struggles in New York City as an executive recruiter, and that position changed the trajectory of her life. In 1999, when the company went public, Robin received a windfall of shares, the most money she had seen to that point in her life. As a young adult, she could have blown it with trips and fancy cars, but instead went another route. With guidance from her mentor, an executive she recruited, he asked her questions that would be pivotal for the rest of her life. “What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?” And his second question: “What is your passion?” And finally: “What section do you go to first in the New York Times?” Real estate, she said, and told him about her grandfather and his ventures in real estate. Her mentor explained that she would need to understand what she would inherit and how she could turn that into a development opportunity or a multifamily housing opportunity. He said she needed to have that knowledge to guide her family to make wealth, not just money. While selecting a university for her masters degree, she opted to attend New York University. (Part of her thesis at NYU would be to find a building and construct her paper about buying it.) Her mentor was a sponsor, not the type of mentor you might find at a networking party; he actually guided her and opened doors for her. A mentor can open the door, but a sponsor teaches one to be ready for the opened door. [The sponsor] can see around the corner, which can improve our chance for success,” she says.

With her windfall, Robin was able not only to attend NYU at night, but to launch Robin Wilson Home during the day. While she was a student working towards her Masters of Science in Real Estate Finance, her company slogan was “the busy homeowner’s best friend.” She had roughly a dozen clients at any one time, from The Hamptons to Aspen, with profit the first year of \$1.2M. She worked on Bill Clinton’s office in Harlem; did work for the Kennedys (and wrote about that experience in a book); and she was the project manager on various renovation projects. She had an opportunity to buy an apartment building in Harlem from a woman who wanted to sell to her, but Robin was unable to secure a million dollar loan at the time, while her male peers, often



*Robin, after a ride in a Ferrari, Chichester track, London; modeling days in Austin, age 18.*



**Inc.**

**Female Founders 100**

**The Top 100 Women Entrepreneurs of 2020**

INC MAGAZINE, November 2020 issue

from other races, could walk into the bank with zero experience and get a loan. (Today, each apartment in that building is selling between \$500,000 and \$800,000.)

That was a reality check. Opportunities would come along, but she needed the community or her bank to back her and it wasn't there, even two decades later. As she reflects on this, she realizes that it is easy to say it just wasn't her time, but with a revenue generating business, and a solid track record, it still begs the question: when is the time for private equity/venture capital/bank financing to recognize the Black woman entrepreneur?

### **Expanding the Business: Oprah and a Licensing Deal**

Oprah Winfrey featured Robin in *O, The Oprah Magazine*. Then in 2008, Robin got a licensing deal for kitchen cabinets. "Most people do it the other way — they do textiles and then durable goods," she says. "I got a kitchen cabinet deal which sold over \$82M wholesale at 400 independent dealers nationwide. From there, I got a textile deal. We got into Bed Bath Beyond, Kohls, and JC Penney under the Robin Wilson Home brand."

Robin had a whirlwind romance, got married and then had a daughter in her early 40s, but the matrimonial bond ended 33 months after it started due to domestic violence. She survived, but her business almost did not — and as she fled, her business took a huge hit. She came up with a plan. While nursing her daughter, she wrote the Amazon bestseller, *Clean Design: Wellness for your Lifestyle* (Greenleaf, 2015). It was published six months after she fled, and it became a #1 best-seller while she was on a nationwide book tour.

Robin continued educating people about allergens and eco-friendly/eco-conscious home design, and got a few spokesperson deals. She got four jobs to survive and pay off divorce legal debt: a mother first, an adjunct professor, ran her firm and she obtained a real estate license. She knew she needed to continue to survive and find a way to make the brand platform thrive by speaking and licens-

ing the brand. Exhausted by early 2020, she was ready to quit as things were not looking good for her at the time with health issues, due to the stress of working so hard! Then the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis gripped the world.

Shortly after that senseless tragedy, Robin begins to see an uptick in online and book sales as people start to strongly support Black brands and businesses. New York magazine added her company to a list of Black brands to support, and things really took off.

“All of a sudden, I make this list of the Top 10 businesses to support in June. I’m sitting in my house one day, and all of a sudden, every time an order came through on Shopify, my phone would blink. It would ping like a text message. Two minutes later, it blows up... bling, bling, bling, bling, bling, bling, bling, bling. My business went up 3000% day over day. In three weeks, we sold \$80,000 worth of merchandise. I had to figure out where to get it from,” she says.

Then in July, Robin gets a call from a hotel in California, and they want her to procure the textiles for their entire hotel. In fifty years, they had never hired a Black vendor for design or textiles. The first order was \$80,000. The second order came in August, this time \$50,000. As of December, 2021, they have rolled out their ninth hospitality.

Robin discovered that it would



*On the red carpet with her daughter at a book signing, NYC. Photo Getty Images*

have cost her \$10,000 to trademark Clean Design Home using an attorney. Instead, she spent a week while her daughter was on visitation with her former spouse and learned how to file to obtain a trademark. By September 2020, she is contacted by a global firm and licenses the brand – just as there is international interest, and Robin was fortunate that she had trademarked her brand, otherwise someone may have snapped it up.

### **The 20-Year Overnight Success**

“It’s like the old saying, you take one more day, you walk one more day, you believe in yourself one more day, you don’t give up one more day... and here we are, seven years later [after my divorce and his lifetime final restraining order] and my new brand is sold nationwide! There’s always a way to bounce back. In seven years, all your skin cells are different, your hair is different... you’re a new person. And here we are — we’re crowdfunding to the public.”

As founder, chief executive officer, and chairman of A Blue Egg Corporation, Robin has spent twenty years building an empire. The company is made up of three parts: Robin Wilson Home (interior design), Grenier Holdings (real estate development), and Clean Design Home (lifestyle brand).

In October 2020, *Inc.* magazine named Robin Wilson to their “Top 100 Female Founders global list. In December 2020, the brand - Clean Design Home was launched on The Ellen Degeneres’ TV show. And after several months of development, in January 2022, Macy’s launched the Clean Design Home™ x Martex collection of 100% cotton products — comforters, sheets, towels, protectors, robes and pillows in 165 stores nationwide including Hawaii, Guam, and Puerto Rico. They just learned that there is interest in Japan and the United Kingdom, which means that Clean Design Home will be the first Black-owned, licensed, international brand in





hypoallergenic textiles!

After the Macy's launch, West-Point Home, plans to distribute the line on its website, and some other department and specialty stores. Chief Marketing and Merchandising Officer Regan Iglesia of WestPoint Home said of Robin in a statement: "Robin Wilson brings a new level of expertise in the world of clean design and anti-allergen products that we have not explored up to now. We studied the market and believe that there is a need and desire for 'better' products in this category." [WestPoint Home](#) is owned by billionaire Carl Icahn.

Robin believes the most important skills to become an entrepreneur are perseverance, resilience, and focus. "Think about the irony: my grandfather was a sharecropper who picked cotton in Texas. Now, my line of luxury cotton items will be sold nationwide. It is a legacy in three generations," she says. "Plus, my development arm will be creating a subdivision outside of Austin on 80+ acres of land owned by my family for generations." For people who are thinking about taking the entrepreneurial plunge, she advises: "You may chase your dream, but if you put the building blocks in place, the money will come. The challenges are there to test your resolve to follow-through and to tune out the noise and to focus you if you want your dream to come true."

<https://www.ablueegg.com>



## Project Lilac and the Joe Torre Safe At Home Foundation

**Project Lilac** is a program implemented by A Blue Egg Corporation to help support domestic violence survivors, victims of domestic violence and the survivor community. Similar to BOMBAS socks where colorful socks are sold, but black socks are given to homeless – in an ongoing effort, Robin will donate sheet sets from her legacy brand through the Safe at Home Foundation – to survivors across the nation.

"It's very difficult and expensive for women to leave. Often, they leave with nothing but the clothes on their backs. We liken this to a butterfly chrysalis and how they transform— there's an analogy of having a survivor wrapped in these beautiful new sheets almost like her cocoon; they're fresh and new, something she owns," says Lori Thomas, leader and director of the marketing effort for the project. "As she awakens each day she's alive as this butterfly to go and live her new life," she says.

For every product purchase, Robin will donate textile items in lilac, which is the signature color for domestic violence survivors. By choosing CLEAN DESIGN HOME™ x Martex products, consumers will help women all across the nation. The textile product received in the safe houses will come from her legacy brand and are high quality and durable - giving the survivor their own set of sheets they can take with them!

In order to help facilitate the delivery of these donations, they have partnered with Joe Torre of the Safe at Home Foundation. (Torre is well known for his stint as manager of the New York Yankees.) As someone who grew up in an abusive home, Torre has been running this foundation since 2002 with his partner, wife Alice ("Ali"). They have relationships in schools and places for teenagers all across the nation, as that is an age when aggressive behaviors typically start. Safe At Home provides healing services to youth who have been traumatized by exposure to violence including domestic violence, child abuse, teen dating abuse, and sexual assault in order to empower them to live healthy lives free of violence.

This initiative means a lot to Robin as an advocate for victims of domestic violence and abuse. "Robin's heart is so big, she does not lose sight of the greater good for the world, and I'm really proud to work with her," says Thomas.

For more information about Project Lilac, visit <https://cleandesignhome.com/project-lilac>. Learn more about the Safe at Home Foundation by visiting <https://joetorre.org>.



## 2022 Calendar of Events

Cleveland, Ohio (Live Event)

**Women of Color Foundation  
Board Retreat (Invitation Only)**

**Sunday - Tuesday, April 3-5, 2022**

Walden Inn & Spa, 1119 Aurora-Hudson Road, Aurora 44202

HOSTED BY: **Women of Color Foundation**

Cleveland, Ohio (Virtual Event)

**19th Annual Personal and Professional Development Retreat  
“Connections, Community and Career 2022”**

**Thursday, July 21, 2022**

9:00 am - 12:00 pm

HOSTED BY: **Women of Color Foundation**

Cleveland, Ohio (Live Event)

**20th Anniversary Celebration &  
National Executive Women’s Leadership Summit**

**Sunday-Wednesday, October 23-26, 2022**

The GRAND Resort

9519 East Market Street, Warren, Ohio 44484

HOSTED BY: **Women of Color Foundation**

**LEARN MORE AT:**

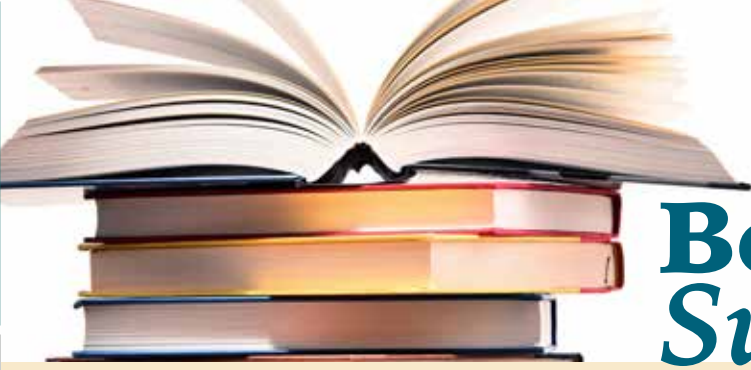
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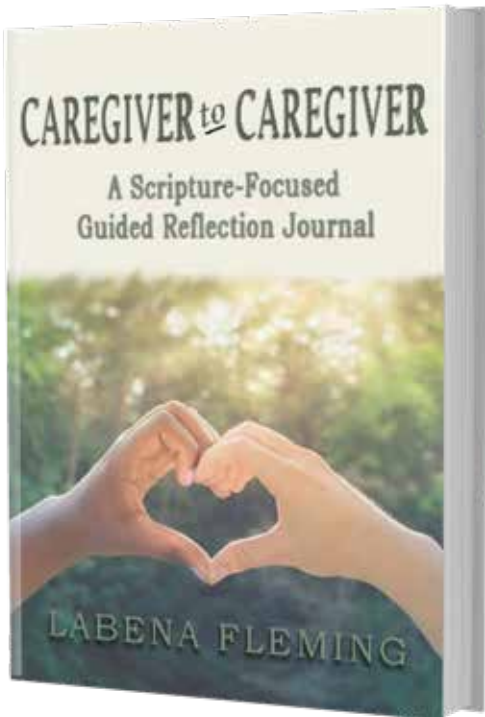
or 866-962.3411 (toll free)

*Women*  
of Color Foundation

4200 Warrensville Center Road  
Medical Office Building A, Suite 353  
Cleveland, Ohio 44128



# Book Suggestion



When God gives you an assignment, if you're smart, you do it. *Writing Caregiver to Caregiver, A Scripture Focused-Guided Reflection Journal* was a "God Assignment," and I've learned not to play tug of war with God.

While caring for my mother, who had Alzheimer's and vascular dementia, God led me to journal. Although I initially resisted, not wanting to relive the events of the day, I soon relented. Instead of being a chore, journaling became both my relief and my release. Corrie ten Boom said: "In order to realize the worth of the anchor, we need to feel the storm." I felt the storm, as a caregiver, and God was my anchor. Journaling was the lifeline that connected me to my anchor. There were many valuable lessons, personal and practical, that I learned, and God showed me that what I'd learned was not mine to keep. It had to be shared.

That was the impetus for *Caregiver to Caregiver*. Lessons in advanced care planning, choosing care facilities, self-care, and more all came about as the result of my caregiving and hospice experiences as well as the countless conversations with the hundreds of caregivers over the years. My prayer is that others will experience the peace I found through journaling and that their caregiving journeys will be made a little less stressful through the information I share.

LaBena Fleming has a heart for caregivers. A retired hospice professional, and community and classroom educator, LaBena served as one of the primary caregivers for her mother, who had Alzheimer's and vascular dementia. Those experiences served as the impetus for her first book, 2021 Caregiver Friendly Award Winner and #1 Amazon Bestseller, *I Love You Always, One Family's Alzheimer's/Dementia Journey* and the Lessons Learned Along the Way, as well as her recent book, #1 Amazon Bestseller *Caregiver to Caregiver, A Scripture Focused, Guided Reflection Journal*.

A fierce caregiver advocate and speaker, LaBena has been a guest on several radio shows, including *Alzheimer's Speaks with Lori La Bey*, and a featured author with *AlzAuthors*. She has facilitated numerous caregiver workshops and support groups and feels at her best when she is able to share knowledge and learn from other caregivers. – LaBena Fleming, M.Ed., M.Ed. Adm., CDP





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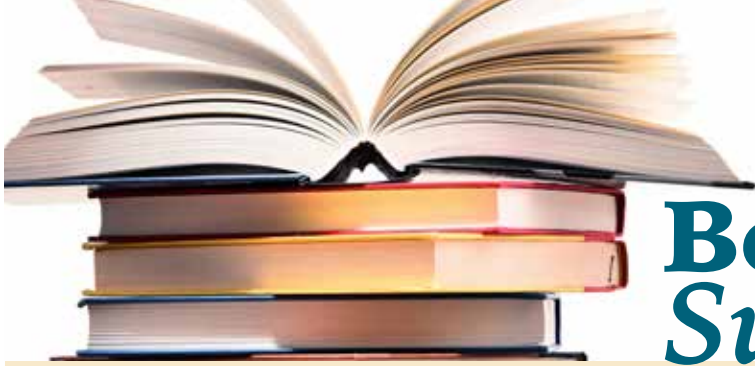
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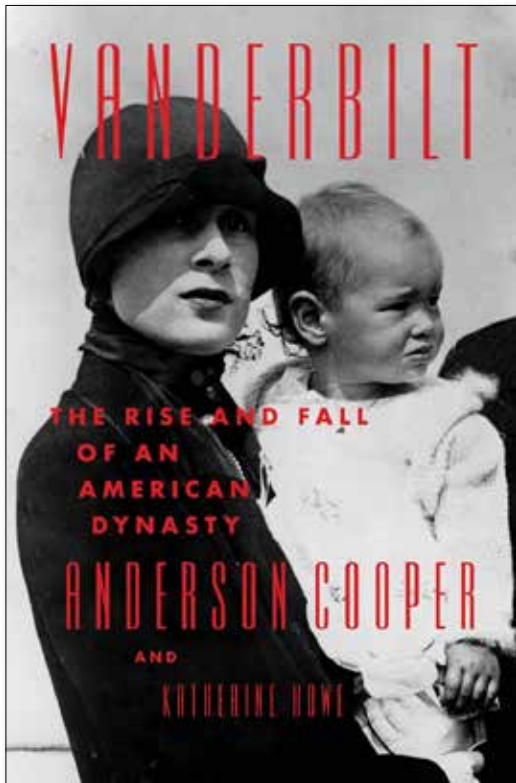
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# Book Suggestion



New York Times bestselling author and journalist Anderson Cooper teams with New York Times bestselling historian and novelist Katherine Howe to chronicle the rise and fall of a legendary American dynasty—his mother’s family, the Vanderbilts.

When eleven-year-old Cornelius Vanderbilt began to work on his father’s small boat ferrying supplies in New York Harbor at the beginning of the nineteenth century, no one could have imagined that one day he would, through ruthlessness, cunning, and a pathological desire for money, build two empires—one in shipping and another in railroads—that would make him the richest man in America. His staggering fortune was fought over by his heirs after his death in 1877, sowing familial discord that would never fully heal. Though his son Billy doubled the money left by “the Commodore,” subsequent generations competed to find new and ever more extraordinary ways of spending it. By 2018, when the last Vanderbilt was forced out of The Breakers—the seventy-room summer estate in Newport, Rhode Island, that Cornelius’s grandson and namesake had built—the family would have been unrecognizable to the tycoon who started it all.

Now, the Commodore’s great-great-great-grandson Anderson Cooper, joins with historian Katherine Howe to explore the story of his legendary family and their outsized influence. Cooper and Howe breathe life into the ancestors who built the family’s empire, basked in the Commodore’s wealth, hosted lavish galas, and became synonymous with unfettered American capitalism and high society. Moving from the hardscrabble wharves of old Manhattan to the lavish drawing rooms of Gilded Age Fifth Avenue, from the ornate summer palaces of Newport to the courts of Europe, and all the way to modern-day New York, Cooper and Howe wryly recount the triumphs and tragedies of an American dynasty unlike any other.

Written with a unique insider’s viewpoint, this is a rollicking, quintessentially American history as remarkable as the family it so vividly captures.

*Description courtesy Amazon.com*



TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF MEN

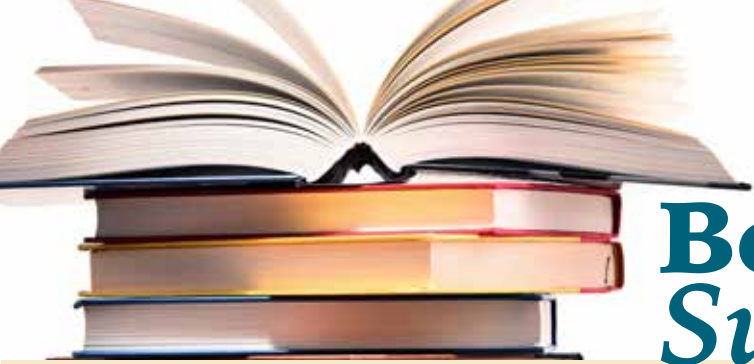
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# Book Suggestion



A dramatic expansion of a groundbreaking work of journalism, *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* offers a profoundly revealing vision of the American past and present.

In late August 1619, a ship arrived in the British colony of Virginia bearing a cargo of twenty to thirty enslaved people from Africa. Their arrival led to the barbaric and unprecedented system of American chattel slavery that would last for the next 250 years. This is sometimes referred to as the country's original sin, but it is more than that: It is the source of so much that still defines the United States.

The New York Times Magazine's award-winning "1619 Project" issue reframed our understanding of American history by placing slavery and its continuing legacy at the center of our national narrative. This new book substantially expands on that work, weaving together eighteen essays that explore the legacy of slavery in present-day America with thirty-six poems and works of fiction that illuminate key moments of oppression, struggle, and resistance. The essays show how the inheritance of 1619 reaches into every part of contemporary American society, from politics, music, diet, traffic, and citizenship to capitalism, religion, and our democracy itself.

This is a book that speaks directly to our current moment, contextualizing the systems of race and caste within which we operate today. It reveals long-glossed-over truths around our nation's founding and construction—and the way that the legacy of slavery did not end with emancipation, but continues to shape contemporary American life.

Featuring contributions from: Leslie Alexander • Michelle Alexander • Carol Anderson • Matthew Desmond • Rita Dove • Camille T. Dungy • Cornelius Eady • Yaa Gyasi • Forrest Hamer • Terrance Hayes • Kimberly Annece Henderson • Barry Jenkins • Tyehimba Jess • Martha S. Jones • Robert Jones, Jr. • Ibram X. Kendi • Eddie Kendricks • Yusef Komunyakaa • Kiese Laymon • Trymaine Lee • Terry McMillan • Khalil Gibran Muhammad • Lynn Nottage • Claudia Rankine • Jason Reynolds • Dorothy Roberts • Sonia Sanchez • Tim Seibles • Evie Shockley • Clint Smith • Bryan Stevenson • Nafissa Thompson-Spires • Linda Villarosa • Jesmyn Ward and more. *Description courtesy Amazon.com*

# Traveling in the New Year 2022

by Kareem George  
[culturetraveler.com](http://culturetraveler.com)



*Images of Cape Town, South Africa (above) and Alexandria, Egypt (opposite page)*

2021 has been an abbreviated travel year, but highlighted by many countries reopening borders and the introduction of a variety of entry protocols. In short, most destinations require proof of vaccination and/or proof of a negative COVID test. And to re-enter the United States, proof of a negative PCR or antigen test is mandatory. Those who have ventured abroad have enjoyed more personalized service and an experience of greater calm in destinations that are typically stressed by extremely high numbers of tourists.

I am fortunate to have traveled within three continents (Africa, Europe, North America) already this year and look forward to an extensive visit to South America in December. In all instances I have been warmly welcomed, have felt safe due to thoughtful and thorough COVID protocols, but what will 2022 hold? What will it be like and feel like to travel in the New Year?

There is no definitive answer to the preceding question, of course, however I anticipate the majority of the world having 'reopened,' travel demand reaching new heights, and availability for flights, vehicles and accommodations becoming more challenging than ever. Our travelers are advised to book now (if they have not already) for 2022 and to begin their planning for 2023.

If you are seeking travel inspiration, here are some ideas...



## ***The Favorites***

Q1 and Q2 are perfect opportunities to visit some of the most popular international destinations before the crowds return. Yes, this will likely be off season, and yes, the weather may not be ideal, however you will be rewarded by the quality of the experience - higher levels of service and greater comfort in navigation. So, think about Barcelona, Berlin, Florence, London, Madrid, Munich, Nice, Paris, Rome, Venice. Or perhaps turn your sights to the southern hemisphere for what would be their summer and fall: iconic destinations such as Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Patagonia and southern Africa.

## ***Cruising***

Incredible values and itineraries continue to abound in the world of cruising. Most cruise lines have relaunched successfully due to the extensive health and safety protocols that have been implemented. One of my travel highlights this year has been a small yacht cruise along the Adriatic coast of Croatia. And I look forward to setting sail on the new Virgin Voyages' Scarlet Lady in November as well as a December/January holiday sailing from Peru to Buenos Aires on Oceania Cruises' Marina.

If you have never cruised before, 2022 may offer the perfect opportunity to explore this very efficient (unpack only once) and inclusive (meals, drinks and activities are often included) mode of travel. And let's not forget the intimate, immersive experience of river cruising. These sleek vessels average only 150 - 200 guests and are often referred to as floating boutique hotels. Itineraries range from castles on the Rhine (Germany, Holland, Switzerland) and the beautiful blue Danube (Austria, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia) to the more exotic Amazon (Brazil, Colombia, Peru) and Zambezi (Zambia, Zimbabwe) rivers.

## ***Bucket List***

The New Year could be the time to finally make progress on your bucket list. Why not? We have all certainly learned that travel is a true privilege and not to be taken for granted. Despite many challenges, our world remains a beautiful place with no shortage of awe-inspiring destinations and experiences: Egypt, the Nile River and the Great Pyramids, an African Safari, visiting the Holy Lands, World Expo Dubai (through March 31, 2022), exploring the lands down under of Australia and New Zealand, indulging in a world cruise or private jet journey around the world. I am already counting down the days until my bucket list trip of 2022 ... an expedition to Antarctica in February!



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