

FORMIDABLE

WOMAN MAGAZINE

AUGUST / SEPTEMBER 2019

*Defying the
Odds: Women In
Construction*

THE POWER
AND PLEASURE
OF PATIENCE

Laura
AKITA

**HOLLYWOOD'S
POWERHOUSE
WOMEN YOU
NEED TO KNOW**

UPLIFTING WOMEN'S VOICES
THROUGH CREATIVE
EXPRESSION





30

KAIRA AKITA,
GET TO KNOW
THIS GAME
CHANGER!

directory

VOLUME 1 NUMBER 4 AUG./SEPT. 2019

FEATURES

04 THE POWER AND PLEASURE OF PATIENCE
By Barbara Hemphill

05 UNDER CONSTRUCTION // By Gracia Rich
FRANCILIA WILKINS-RAHIM
PEGGY MARKER
TRELLIS STRICKLAND
SCHILLIVIA BAPTISTE

16 BEAUTY // By Devin Nishea
QUEEN OF WAXING
WALKING BY FAITH WITH ALEXANDRA
"ALEX" BUTLER

20 HOLLYWOOD'S POWERHOUSE WOMEN
YOU NEED TO KNOW // By Jules Lavallee
ANNE DeSANTIS
NATALIJA UGRINA
PENELOPE LAGOS
PAMELA PERRINE

20 HOLLYWOOD'S POWERHOUSE WOMEN
YOU NEED TO KNOW CONT'D
PATRIKA DARBO
JULIE UPTON

30 COVER STORY: KAIRA AKITA
By Gracia Rich

36 FEATURE STORY // By Shekina Moore
NEDRA BUCKMIRE:
A GIFT TO ADMINISTRATIVE
PROFESSIONALS

39 4 WOMEN OWNING THEIR LANES
MEET CARRIE PEELE *By Barbara Hemphill*
MEET TERRA NEWELL *By Gracia Rich*
MEET AISHA TATUM *By Gracia Rich*
MEET TIFFANY WILLIAMS-PARRA *By Gracia Rich*

WWW.FORMIDABLEWOMANMAG.COM

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF SHEKINA FARR MOORE

@fiercetoformidable

FEATURES

GRACIA RICH @beautifullynaturalgeek (COVER)

JULES LAVALLEE @juleslavallee

BEAUTY/FASHION

DEVIN NISHEA @nishea1277

HEALTH

NINA LUCHKA @ninaluchka

LIFESTYLE

BARBARA HEMPHILL barbarahemphill.com

TRAVEL

JORDAN CAMPBELL @globaldebauchery

ADMINISTRATION

BUSINESS DIRECTOR SHEKINA FARR MOORE @shekinafarrmoore

COVER

Covergirl: KAIRA AKITA

Photo Credit: Mike Eaton (Cover)

More Photo Credits:

Sam Harms Photography

Sophie RK

Tara Dowdell Group

Laing+Simmon Double Bay

Oscar Picazo

Georgina Vaughan

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF CREDITS

PHOTOGRAPHY DREA NICOLE PHOTOGRAPHY @dreanicoledphotography

WARDROBE SUDANESE SPENCE @sudistyle

HAIR NIKK ROKKS @nikkrokkshair

MAKEUP RAYA NICHELLE' @raya_nichelle

DIGITAL

J. ALEXANDER @jamcdougald

CREATIVE DESIGN

SHERILYN BENNETT @camdenlanecreativeagency

FWM CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

GRACIA RICH, CHAUNA SUMPTER, BARBARA HEMPHILL, SHANNON MORISON,

DARLENE THORNE, CHRISTA K. JOY, JULES LAVALLEE, JORDAN CAMPBELL,

NAKELA HUMPHRIES, SHEKINA FARR MOORE, LISA W. BECKWITH,

KEEMIA H. SHAW, CORETTA DOCTOR, ASHLEY COBB,

TASHAWNA CHISOLM, & BREANNA TAYLOR

WWW.FORMIDABLEWOMANMAG.COM



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Our aim is to bring you the best, buzziest and most awesome women blazing trails and living healthy lives. In this issue we feature formidable women at the top of their game who are making serious boss moves in the construction arena, an industry traditionally dominated by men, and in front and behind the scenes in the film industry. We are honored to feature a woman who is inspiring a generation of women to pursue their dreams. Actress, Creative, Storyteller—Kaira Akita, is our August/September Cover Girl for the Under Construction Issue!

Kaira Akita is a multi-gifted creative spirit on assignment to use her work in design, storytelling, and self-discovery to transform how women and creators show up for themselves, each other, and the world. Best known for her early career performances in *WHY DID I GET MARRIED*, *THE FAMILY THAT PREYS*, and the Sundance film turned BET's first scripted television series *SOMEBODIES*, Kaira has spent over a decade on camera, behind the camera, and beyond. Now entering a season of personal and professional re-imagination, she is poised to bring a new voice to the creative world as a delightfully daring designer, storyteller, and creative thought leader.

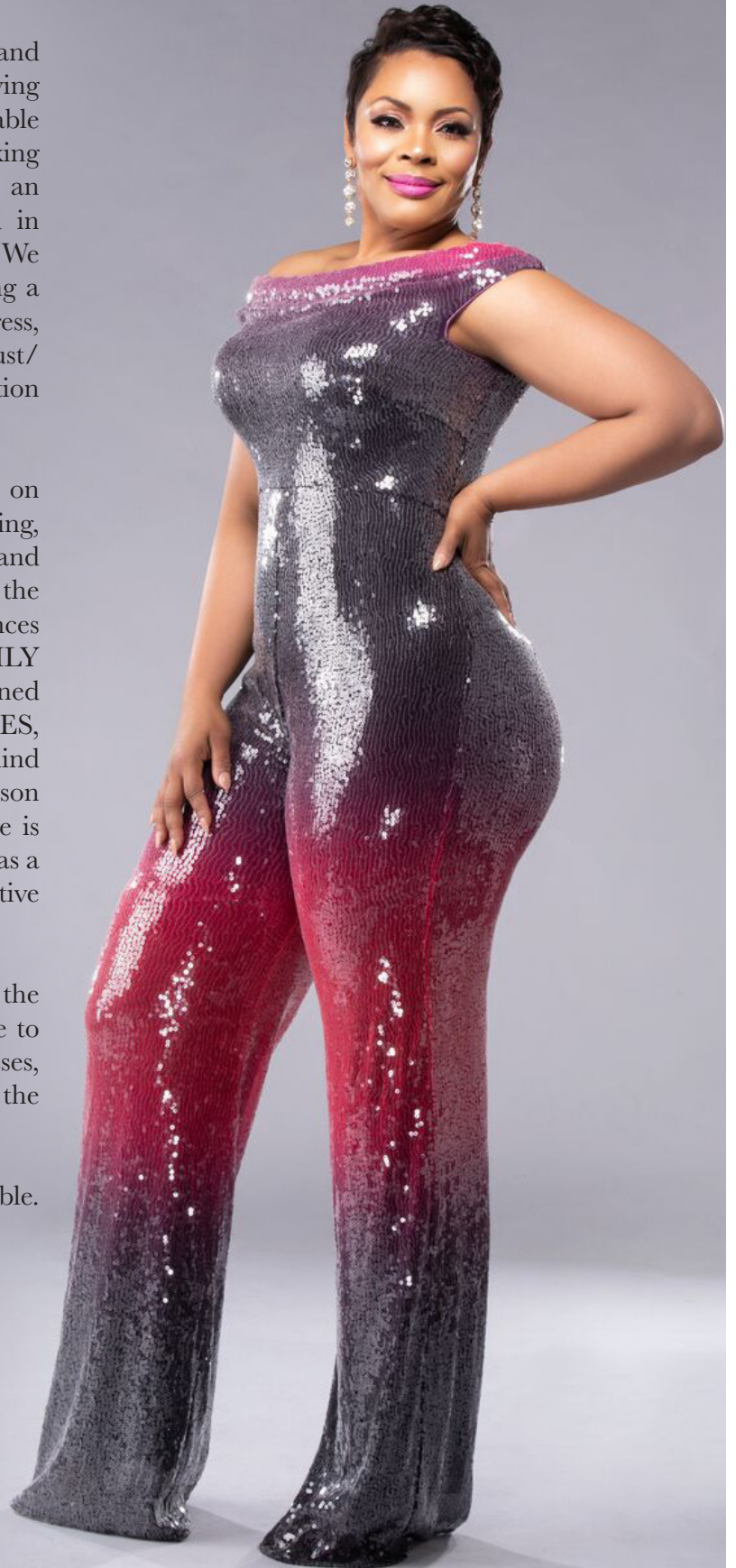
FWM is proud to bring to your living rooms the stories and plights of these outliers, to introduce to you some of the nation's most badass lady bosses, and to give you a preview of the lives of some of the most formidable women on the planet!

Remember, we never apologize for being formidable.
XOXO,

Dr. Shekina Farr Moore
Editor-In-Chief

Dr. Shekina
FARR MOORE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



THE POWER AND PLEASURE OF PATIENCE



By Barbara Hemphill

On a flight from Dallas to Los Angeles, I sat next to an unaccompanied 6-year-old boy. We played games, talked about where he had been and where he was going. Periodically he would ask, "How much longer will it be?" I would look at my watch and give him an answer. After what seemed like the "umpteenth" time he asked, I replied, "We'll be landing soon. It just takes patience." With big brown innocent eyes, he looked up at me and asked, "How long is patience?" I smiled to myself for the rest of the trip, for surely that is a question we would all like answered!

Do you ever feel impatient about your business or your career? When I reached the 37th anniversary of my business, my patience was growing thin. My friends often asked, "Why don't you retire?" I was beginning to ask myself the same question! Although my business had been quite successful in many ways, it hadn't reached the vision I dreamed of decades earlier.

As I pondered my future in business, God reminded me that the Israelites wandered in the desert for 40 years! So I continued with invigorated enthusiasm and energy. In what seemed like a flash, I reached the 40-year mark – still far from where I hoped to be. Even more disappointing, my physical and emotional health began to suffer from what my functional medicine doctor determined was lack of sleep.

In America, we highly value speed, efficiency, action, and results. When was the last time you heard someone brag, "I got eight hours of sleep last night!" Many companies expect their employees to put in 50 hours per week, and

you only begin to impress the boss after 60! The French have initiated a law banning work email after hours, which honors a truth long recognized by economists: working longer hours doesn't necessarily result in increased productivity. Mexico—the least productive of the 38 countries listed in 2015 data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)—has the world's longest average workweek at 41.2 hours. At the other end of the spectrum, Luxembourg, the most productive country, has an average workweek of just 29 hours. Most interesting, the United States ranks fifth, according to the OECD, countering claims that Americans are the most productive workers in the world. America put in more hours—33.6 per week on average—than all four of the European countries with higher productivity rankings. To put it another way, less is more!

I overheard a 30-something say, "This is the prime of my life!" The comment made me think. "Really?" I asked myself. "If so," I pondered, "what does that say about my 70+ years?" I am a believer that Biblical principles are the basis for the best and most productive business and life principles. Did God assign a "prime" to my life?

In Genesis 12, I read: *"Now the Lord said to Abram. 'Go from your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing... So Abram went, as the Lord had told him... Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed...'"*

There are several examples of women in the Bible who did great things for God after what we often hear called "the prime of life." Think of Sarah, Ruth, Naomi, and Anna.

I often remind friends who are feeling discouraged, "It will all turn out in the end. If it doesn't, it isn't the end yet." Or, to put it in Biblical terms, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* Romans 8:28 (KJV)

I take comfort and go to bed earlier, knowing that the promises of God will come in His time and His way. God takes pleasure in being patient with me, and I should too!

By Gracia Rich

As President of Marker Construction Group, Peggy Hogan Marker is a highly esteemed veteran in the field of construction. With over thirty years of experience, she, along with her husband W. Grey Marker, II founded Marker Construction Group in 2001 which specializes in commercial, multi-family and high-end residential construction throughout the State of Florida. As a forerunner for women in construction, she has received numerous awards including being named a 2019 Influential Business Woman by the South Florida Business Journal.

FWM: Peggy, I'm so thrilled to interview you. Please introduce yourself and your business.

PM: My name is Peggy Marker and I serve as president of Marker Construction Group, a construction management and general contracting firm headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The firm, which my husband Grey and I founded in 2001, specializes in commercial, multi-family, condominiums, hospitality, health care, and high-end residential construction

PEGGY HITS THE MARK

UNDER CONSTRUCTION - PEGGY H. MARKER

throughout the state of Florida. My background includes ground-up development and construction, as well as lease negotiations for large shopping centers, mixed use/retail and apartment buildings.

In addition, I am part owner of my family's real estate development companies. Headquartered in New York, these companies include commercial, multi-family and residential holdings throughout the states of New York and Florida.

FWM: How did you get your start in the construction industry?

PM: I grew up in a family-owned development business, so I have always loved the industry and knew that it was the career path that I wanted to embark on. Together with my husband, who is a general contractor, we decided to open Marker Construction about 18 years ago.

FWM: As a woman in construction, what is the biggest challenge you've overcome?

PM: Often times, women in construction encounter challenges when clients, customers, or coworkers assume they're in a subordinate position to a man. Since my husband Grey and I work together, sometimes we'll be in a meeting and clients will direct the conversation to him, but he will redirect it to me.

FWM: What do you feel is your greatest accomplishment?

PM: My awards and accolades include being named a 2019 Influential Business Women by South Florida Business Journal, which recognizes the top 25 most influential business women in South Florida. Most recently, I was honored as a GlobeSt. 2019 Woman of Influence in the Humanitarian of the Year category. In addition, I was the recipient of the 2019 Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Mother's Day award, which honors those who demonstrate exceptional leadership, vision and compassion while positively impacting the South Florida community. Past awards include South Florida Business Journal's Up and Comers Award 2007, and Gold Coast Magazine's 40 under 40 award.

FWM: What drives you?

PM: When my husband Grey and I started the company, it was out of a desire to build better. To

not just have the client satisfied with the end result, but to also have a better overall experience.

Our team believes in this philosophy to build better. We have a large percentage of work that is returning clients because we always go the extra mile. We are also known in the community for our charitable endeavors and it's this community outreach that actually brings more business our way. People want to do business with companies that have strong corporate social responsibility.

FWM: How is your business empowering women and the community?

PM: At Marker Construction, 40% of our team members are women that serve in roles ranging from administrative to project management. Women in the construction industry always try to support other women in the business, even if they're a competitor. Women in construction are always looking for another opportunity to give another woman a hand up and to support one another.

In 2018, I created a company internship program for local high school students. This is due to a need in the construction industry to reach out to high school students — boys and girls — and get across the message that there are a multitude of career paths in construction — it's not a secondrate alternative to a college degree.

I currently sit on the boards of PAWS South Florida Rescue (an organization within the Humane Society of Broward County), Cold Spring Harbor Fire Museum, and the Community Foundation of Broward. The Marker Construction team and I are actively involved with 4Kids of South Florida — an organization serving foster children in Broward and Palm Beach Counties. Marker Construction Group donated the construction of a home for pregnant teens to 4Kids of South Florida, as well as various group homes for this organization. I previously served as a board member for the Museum of Discovery and Science, Humane Society of Broward County, Heart Gallery of Broward County, and Save the Children Long Island Council. I also previously served on the steering committee for the Holy Cross Dorothy Mangurian Comprehensive Women's Center capital campaign.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION - PEGGY H. MARKER

FWM: What advice would you give a woman who aspires to work in the construction industry?

PM: I believe that there is nothing preventing any woman from running her own company or taking on any role in the construction industry. The “sisterhood” of women in construction is strong and willing to offer advice, and eager to serve as mentors to other women. I know that for women or anyone in the construction industry, at the end of the day, it's all about ability to drive a schedule, manage people and understand the process.

FWM: How do you see the future for women in construction?

PM: There is not a lot of smoke and mirrors in the construction business. When a woman in the

business knows what she's doing, it's evident in the results.

FWM: How can our readers connect with you outside of this interview?

PM: Stay up-to-date with Marker Construction Group on our website <http://www.markerfl.com/> or connecting with our social media accounts.

LinkedIn: Marker Construction Group

Facebook: Marker Construction Group

Twitter: MarkerBuilds

Instagram: MarkerConstruction

All photos courtesy of Alison Frank Photography

MEET PEGGY H. MARKER



With over 30 years of experience in the construction industry, Peggy Hogan Marker serves as president of Marker Construction Group, a construction management and general contracting firm headquartered in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The firm, which she and her husband W. Grey Marker II founded in 2001, specializes in commercial, multi-family, condominiums, hospitality, health care, and very high-end residential construction throughout the state of Florida.

Marker's background includes ground-up development and construction, as well as lease negotiations for large shopping centers, mixed use/retail and apartment buildings. With her unique skill set, Marker offers an in-depth understanding of the construction industry, including the ability to schedule years out, and drive these schedules so all team members — from multiple architects, engineers, consultants, construction manager, developer and a multitude of other trades — work in synchronicity to complete the project on time and on budget.

In addition, she is a part owner of her family's real estate development companies. Headquartered in New York, these companies include commercial, multi-family and residential holdings throughout the states of New York and Florida.

Marker's awards include being named a 2019 Influential Business Women by South Florida Business Journal, which recognizes the top 25 most influential business women in South Florida. In addition, she is the recipient of the 2019 Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Mother's Day award, which honors mothers who exemplify the qualities of outstanding parenthood; demonstrate exceptional leadership, vision and compassion while positively impacting the South Florida community; and present traits and accomplishments aligned with Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies' mission. Marker Construction Group was recently recognized as a recipient of the South



MARKER

BUILD BETTER.

Florida Business Journal 2019 Fast 50 award, recognizing the region's fastest growing private companies. Past awards include, South Florida Business Journals Up and Comers Award 2007, and Gold Coast Magazines 40 under 40 award.

Marker is consistently featured as a construction industry expert in the Miami Herald and The Real Deal, and is frequently asked to appear live on Fox Business as a construction industry expert. Her professional affiliations include the Construction Association of South Florida, Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc., Commercial Real Estate Development Association, Urban Land Institute, Commercial Real Estate Women Network, National Association of Women in Construction, National Association for Industrial and Office Parks and Latin Builders Association.

Peggy Marker currently sits on the boards of PAWS South Florida Rescue (an organization within the Humane Society of Broward County), Cold Spring Harbor Fire Museum, and the Community Foundation of Broward. She is actively involved with Save the Children, and 4Kids of South Florida — an organization serving foster children in Broward and Palm Beach Counties. She previously served as a board member for the Museum of Discovery and Science, Humane Society of Broward County, Heart Gallery of Broward County, and Save the

Children Long Island Council. She was previously on the steering committee for the Holy Cross Dorothy Mangurian Comprehensive Women's Center capital campaign. Marker holds a Bachelor of Arts in political science and English from the University of Vermont. She is married to W. Grey Marker II, who is CEO of Marker Construction Group. They have three children, and reside in Fort Lauderdale.

About Marker Construction Group

Marker Construction Group, founded by Grey and Peggy Marker in 2001, is a construction management and general contracting firm based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. It specializes in commercial, multi-family, condominiums, hospitality, health care, and very high-end residential construction, throughout the state of Florida. The company's awards and accolades include the "Overall Best Craftsmanship" award by the Construction Association of South Florida (CASF) in 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2015, and 2016; Pyramid and Eagle Awards from Associated Builders and Contractors, Inc. (ABC) for superior craftsmanship, commercial work in 2016; and South Florida Business Journal's "Top 25 Contractors" in South Florida in 2014 and 2015, and was named one of the "Best Places to Work." Marker Construction Group's headquarters is located at 226 SE 12th Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301. **For more information, visit www.markerfl.com or call (954) 767-9767.**



Even though I am not self-employed at this time, I am still empowering women and communities when I complete a quality project and the communities know me as the “face” of that project.

”

By Gracia Rich

Trellis Y. Strickland is a rising star in the construction field. With years of experience, she has become a veritable force in this male-dominated industry. She has been a pivotal player in such projects as the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport and residential projects for the 1996 Olympics. As the founder of SYT Construction Management Service, Trellis will continue to reach greater heights by taking her love for building projects that reflect her clients dreams and turning them into beautiful realities.

FWM: Trellis, thank you for honoring me with this interview. Please introduce yourself and your business.

TYS: I’m Trellis Y. Strickland and I am a seasoned Project Manager with more than 25 years in the construction industry. I was self-employed for 15 years (SYT Construction Management Services, LLC) as a licensed residential light commercial contractor in Georgia, where I not only built and sold single family homes,

but I also provided commercial contract management services to other entities.

FWM: How did you get your start in the construction industry?

TYS: C.D. Moody Construction Company provided my introduction into the construction industry. While I was a student at the Georgia Institute of Technology, I was employed part-time with the Atlanta Public Schools System. The Moody Company held a partnership with the school system and was providing construction training for high school students. When my supervisor, an Assistant Superintendent, learned that I was majoring in Civil Engineering at Georgia Tech, she introduced me to Mr. Moody, the owner of the company. She felt that as a soon to be degreed engineer that I could benefit from his tutelage. After interviewing successfully, I was hired as an Office Engineer to work on the Concourse E project at the Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta Airport, and the rest is history.



FWM: Describe some of your most recent projects.

TYS: My most recent projects have all been multi-family projects, but I have extensive experience in commercial and residential construction as well. The multi-family projects range from single story garden style units to multi-story podium projects upwards of \$40 million.

FWM: As a woman in construction, what is the biggest challenge you've overcome?

TYS: Given that I am a Project Manager, the biggest challenges I've had to overcome are sexism and racism. Yes, the industry's culture has improved tremendously over the last 10 years, but just recently a potential employer thought I was a male because of my extensive resume. After the shock wore off and I informed him that I was a female, I explained that the resume he thought was so impressive was still

impressive even though it was for a female. He agreed, but I still was not selected for that position.

FWM: What do you feel is your greatest accomplishment?

TYS: My greatest accomplishment is to still be in the game after more than 25 years and still be a valuable contributor.

FWM: What drives you?

TYS: The desire to see a piece of vacant land transformed into a home or business and to also be able to surpass the owner's expectations, still drive me to this day.

FWM: How is your business empowering women and the community?

TYS: Even though I am not self-employed at this time, I am still empowering women and communities when I complete a quality project and the communities know me as the "face" of that project. They know me as the "face" because I have always made myself known to the areas I build in by attending community functions and immersing myself into the community.

FWM: What advice would you give a woman who aspires to work in the construction industry?

TYS: The advice I would give to women entering this industry would be:

- Know your stuff
- Be confident
- Take risks
- Be okay if you find yourself by yourself
- Network
- Get a mentor
- Know your community
- Have fun

FWM: How do you see the future for women in construction?

TYS: The future of women in construction is promising especially with the attention that women are receiving in all areas and on all levels. The conversations are being held worldwide concerning opportunity and equality for women in the workplace and the construction industry is certainly included.

FWM: How can our readers connect with you outside of this interview?

TYS: They can contact me via email at [syntconstruction@gmail.com](mailto:sytconstruction@gmail.com)

All photos courtesy of Ashley Nicole Photography



A life in the construction industry is what Trellis Y. Strickland has embraced. She has held positions in several companies since graduating from Jackson State University and Georgia Institute of Technology, as well as managed her own residential/light commercial construction firm. Ms. Strickland is a leader, motivator, encourager, mentor, organizer and team player in a male dominated industry. She is a results oriented, hands-on Construction Project Manager with extensive experience in large-scale commercial, multi-family, residential and mixed-use projects. Her work in the construction industry is noteworthy and exemplary especially in the Georgia markets.

After college graduation, Ms. Strickland began her career as a Project Engineer with the C.D. Moody Construction Company, Inc. After “putting in the work,” she was promoted to Project Manager within three years. The awesome foundation and instruction she received at C.D. Moody Construction

prepared her to manage and work on a variety of commercial projects including churches, schools, stadiums and the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

It was during her years at C.D. Moody Construction that Ms. Strickland “caught” the entrepreneurship bug, when she was afforded the opportunity to manage the construction of residential projects for the Historic District Development Corporation for the upcoming 1996 Olympics. The satisfaction she gained from building these single-family homes prompted her to end her employment with the Moody Company and start her own company, SYT Construction Management Services, in 1999.

Ms. Strickland’s entrepreneurship journey was not easy by any stretch of the imagination and some days it was just plain hard, but she made it. While traveling through those 15+ years of being self-employed, she constantly had to be reminded of the 5P’s that had gotten her to that point: “proper preparation prevents poor performance.” Time and time again, she was challenged to prove herself and her skill set. Each time she was more than adequate for the task. During that time, she also managed several multifamily, commercial, mixed-use and white box projects for other companies that needed her management expertise and proven history of completing projects on-time and within budget. God’s grace has indeed kept her while she has worked in this industry, but she also believes that the mantra instilled in her by her parents: “it’s not what you expect but what you inspect that gets done,” has also helped her to remain a shining light in a rather “dusty” industry.

Currently, she manages multifamily and commercial projects throughout the City of Atlanta. Trellis Y. Strickland is a construction professional who is dedicated to ensuring the highest levels of construction quality while maintaining full adherence to the client’s needs.

THE AMAZING FRANCILLIA

Francilia Wilkins Rahim is the CEO and Founder of R.F. Wilkins Consultants, Inc., a development and management consulting firm dedicated to leveraging project management to drive the success of the nation's businesses. Founded in 2011, the firm manages a diverse portfolio of public and private sector projects including commercial real estate and construction, non-profit program expansion, MWBE and inclusionary initiatives, compliance, stakeholder engagement and technical assistance.

To date, Francilia has led the company in raising more than \$877 million for clients through grant writing, advocacy and events: growing its reputation in the ranks of top-performing management consulting firms, owned by a minority woman. She has aided in the development of numerous city-wide diversity and inclusion initiatives and continues to advocate for equal opportunity for minority real estate developers, contractors, and small businesses. In partnership with the New York Real Estate Chamber and New York City's Economic Development Corporation, she worked to develop the City's Emerging Developer Loan Fund. She leads Google's NYC Google Digital Coaches program in an effort to create access for minority and women small businesses throughout the city. In 2019, HNTB and the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey named R.F. Wilkins Consultants one of two Compliance contractors responsible for ensuring minority and local inclusion across the \$13 billion



A portrait of Francilia Wilkins-Rahim, a Black woman with shoulder-length dark hair, smiling and wearing a grey blazer over a black turtleneck. Her arms are crossed.

TO DATE, FRANCILIA HAS LED THE COMPANY IN RAISING MORE THAN \$877 MILLION FOR CLIENTS THROUGH GRANT WRITING, ADVOCACY AND EVENTS: GROWING ITS REPUTATION IN THE RANKS OF TOP-PERFORMING MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRMS, OWNED BY A MINORITY WOMAN.

John F. Kennedy Airport Redevelopment Project.

In addition to her role as CEO of R. F. Wilkins Consultants, Francilia serves as the Executive Director of the New York Real Estate Chamber, Member of New York State's Housing and Community Renewal's Multifamily Advisory Council, Vice Chair of Brooklyn's Pitkin Avenue Business Improvement District, Assistant Treasurer for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Queens Alumnae Chapter and the Vice Chair for I Am Acceptance, Inc. – a mental health non-profit. Formerly, she served as Director of Economic Development for

the National Black MBA Association-New York Metro Chapter, and Chair of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.'s Regional Economic Development Committee.

Francilia holds both a Bachelor's of Science in Finance as well as a Masters of Business Administration in Marketing from St. John's University. She has more than 13 years of multiindustry experience in strategizing, integrated marketing, stakeholder engagement, fundraising, project management, and diversity and inclusion consulting.



By Gracia Rich

Schillivia Baptiste is a prominent name in the construction industry. As CEO of Laland Baptiste, a construction management company headquartered in Brooklyn, New York, Mrs. Baptiste specializes in cutting edge projects, unparalleled services and customer satisfaction. With over 15 years' experience as a civil engineer, Schillivia brings a thorough knowledge of the construction industry from the ground up. It is her goal to inspire women and show them that there is room for them in this male-dominated field.

FWM: Schillivia, thank you for sharing your insight in the construction field. Please introduce yourself and your business.

SB: My name is Schillivia Baptiste. I am a Professional Engineer and the CEO of Laland Baptiste. Laland Baptiste is a Construction Management firm birthed in the heart of Brooklyn, New York. I am also a principal at Baptiste Engineering. Baptiste Engineering provides Civil Engineering Services. I am a wife and mother of two energetic boys. I am of Caribbean descent from the beautiful island of Trinidad and Tobago.

FWM: How did you get your start in the construction industry?

SB: I studied Civil Engineering as an undergraduate at Polytechnic University. My first internship was with the New York State Department of Transportation as a Transportation Construction Inspector for the redevelopment along the West Side Highway in Manhattan. From there I also interned with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey in the Traffic Engineering Division.

FWM: As a woman in construction, what is the biggest challenge you've overcome?

SB: I've overcome thinking I need to prove myself to my male counterparts. Being in a traditionally male dominated industry, you are often challenged and questioned in your decisions or direction. I've come to the place where someone else's insecurities are not my problem to fix. I provide my professional opinion and uphold the integrity of the profession.

FWM: What do you feel is your greatest accomplishment?

SB: My greatest accomplishment has been obtaining my Professional Engineering license.

FWM: What drives you?

SB: I'm driven by knowing that I'm making a difference in the lives of others and the community. I'm driven by my love for the Civil Engineering industry. Knowing that my design



that started as a concept, moves into full design and then construction is what impels me. These are some of the things that keep me moving forward.

FWM: How is your business empowering women and the community?

SB: My business let's women know that they can succeed in Engineering. With a 38% female workforce in my company, we live the truth that women can transform the Architecture, Engineering and Construction (AEC) industry. We also do a back-to-school drive where we provide backpacks filled with school supplies for children.

FWM: What advice would you give a woman who aspires to work in the construction industry?

SB: Be confident in who you are and what you know. It will often be tested, but like a house built on a good foundation, it will stand. Study and work diligently in school. Don't be afraid to ask your professor questions. Join study groups and participate in internships to

WITH A
38% FEMALE
WORKFORCE IN
MY COMPANY,

WE LIVE THE TRUTH THAT WOMEN
CAN TRANSFORM THE ARCHITECTURE,
ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION
(AEC) INDUSTRY.

determine which sub-discipline of Civil Engineering you want to make a career in. An engineering degree is a solid foundation with unlimited possibilities.

FWM: How do you see the future for women in construction?

SB: The future for women in construction is promising. There are many organizations and groups that support women in the industry. One of them being Professional Women in Construction (PWC) an organization whose mission is to support, advance and connect women and promote diversity within the AEC industry. There are others such as Women Builders Council (WBC), Construction Management Association of America (CMAA) and the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). All these organizations provide great resources for the woman engineer. The future for women in construction will be what we make of it. It starts in the elementary school years with the introduction of STEM programs, it continues into middle school with clubs such as First Robotics, it advances in high school with an introduction to AutoCAD and mentorship programs such as the ACE Mentorship Program. In college all the pieces begin to fit together and the questions of how one can make a difference arise and then the future is in your hands.

FWM: How can our readers connect with you outside of this interview?

SB: They can follow me on Facebook @lalandbaptiste, LinkedIn – Schillivia Baptiste, twitter@LadyEngineerNY or leaving a comment on our website www.lalandbaptiste.com. All photos courtesy of Jamel Browne Photography at

Queen of waxing.



By: Devin Nishea

The person that waxes you will know everything about your life by the end of your appointment. The good. The bad. The ugly. They eventually become your therapist; for 15-30 minutes each month. They become like extended family. I mean, they are most times in the most private of private areas. I wouldn't give my Waxing Specialist up for the world. They provide a variety of services, but they provide a

very specific service I feel every woman should experience at least once in their lives. It will definitely change your life and make you throw the razor away! After obtaining my Esthetics certification ten (10) years ago, I vowed to never be in another woman's nether region waxing or even being waxed myself! After a friend convinced me to do so, I tried waxing for the first time. My criteria was simple in finding a waxer; whomever I was going to pay to torture me with this service had to be VERY experienced! Experienced, as in many years under their belt experienced. After doing my research and talking with past instructors and other individuals in the industry, I came across who everyone referred to as the "Queen of Waxing." She came so highly recommended, I didn't mind the 45 minute drive! Trust me, she's that good!

As a birthday gift to myself, I made an appointment! Of course on the drive there I kept hyping myself up, while still being scared to death. When I finally arrived, I was still scared and not to mention, nervous. I walked into the salon and was pleasantly surprised; it was spotless and smelled absolutely wonderful. I have a "thing" for places that smell good when you walk in! It was time, the Queen herself came and swept me away into her private work area. After going over the process step by step, we got down to business. Now, I'm not saying the service was pain free, but I got through it (sweaty back, sweaty palms and all) and fell in love with the results! I quickly learned why she was dubbed Queen of Waxing. Coming from someone who vowed to never throw her razor away OR even wax anyone's nether region, I haven't used a razor in years! This is also one of my favorite services to render. I love the instant results you receive.

Fast forward two years later, I found myself being offered a job with a company that did nothing but waxing; waxing everything and everyone (men included, except their nether region). The training was intense, but I enjoyed every second of it! After doing facials in a spa setting for two (2) years, this was a welcomed fast paced change. I learned a lot while working there, I was even my location's trainer for approximately two (2) years! To see some of the ladies still waxing and even in business for themselves, makes my heart smile! I owe my waxing career to Dana Wadsworth, the Queen of Waxing herself. Had it not been for her taking the time to explain this amazing process (including the classroom) or made me feel comfortable while on her table, I would have never made another appointment with her again, let alone becoming a Waxing Specialist myself.

Where did you grow up? What did/do you like most about your hometown?

DW: I was fortunate enough to grow up in two different areas ...Fayetteville, NC and Tappahannock, VA. I liked Fayetteville because it's a diverse military town that gave me the opportunity to meet kids my age that had lived all over the U.S. and in some cases, internationally. That experience exposed me to so many different cultures and I appreciate that. Tappahannock is a small town nestled on the banks of the Rappahannock River in Virginia. It really holds a special place in my heart. Some of my most precious childhood memories took place here. Summers on the river there were the best and that's where I was able to cultivate my love for the water and outdoors.

Tell us about your start in the industry. What hurdles did you encounter early in your career and how did you overcome them?

DW: Prior to going to Esthetics school in 2002, I had already obtained my NC manicurist license in 1995 as well as a bachelor's degree in Business Management and Accounting from East Carolina University in 1997. When I graduated from my Esthetics program, I was fortunate enough to land a job at a brand new day spa just opening in Chapel Hill. It was actually an established salon that was expanding with a new day spa side. Since I already had experience in the beauty business with doing nails and had dual licensing with manicuring and esthetics, I was able to go into both roles at the day spa. They had nothing when I started. They had a beautifully decorated spa, but no service menu, barely any equipment and no products. They were starting from scratch. It was like a match made in heaven. I was able to pull from my previous experience and business background to get the spa up and running. My biggest obstacle was getting everything set up which included designing a menu, ordering equipment and products and helping find a massage therapist to join me. Luckily, my mother owned a day spa previously and was able to help me out with some ideas. Another challenge for me was the process of building clientele. Since the hair salon side was established in the community and really busy, I spent lots of time meeting clients of the stylists and trying to sell myself and the spa services to them. Eventually it took off! It's been seventeen (17) years since I became an Esthetician and I've never looked back!

BEAUTY - QUEEN OF WAXING

What interested you in teaching other Estheticians? Are you still teaching classes?

DW: I was fortunate that my mother was an esthetician. She was a spa owner for several years, then she eventually got into teaching. First with continuing education, then at the undergraduate school level. I had found my niche in waxing and I was comfortable speaking in front of people so I decided to put together some classes and teach continuing education. I found that my waxing classes became quite popular and would fill up with students. There was definitely a need for advanced waxing classes since most estheticians feel uncomfortable with that service upon graduating from school. Towards the end of my teaching career, I had started my own independent esthetics practice, Aesthetics By Dana, in 2008. After several years of teaching and giving up my free time for the classes, it became overwhelming and I wanted to focus more on my business, so I made the decision to end my classes.

For the aspiring Estheticians or Nail Technicians reading Formidable Woman, what advice would you give them?

DW: For aspiring Estheticians and Nail Technicians. Talk to people in the industry to get an understanding of what it's REALLY like. Most people may assume it's really glamorous and it can be, but it's also lots of hard work. You must be a people person to succeed in this business. You could be the most talented esthetician, but if you don't know how to treat and interact positively with people, they will not be a client for long. Be patient in building your clientele. You will not come out of school with a clientele. It takes years to build a strong and solid clientele. Also, keep learning. Lots of trends come and go in this business as well as productlines, techniques, etc. Stay on top of what is going on in the industry so you will always be able to answer your client's questions and provide them with the best services.

What's in store for 2019?

DW: In my own practice, I've noticed a recent surge of interest in lash and brow tinting. In fact, I have new clients that come to me just for that service. It's such a short and inexpensive service that can really deliver a huge impact. Create the perfect eyebrows for a woman and she can do anything! Another recent development I've noticed in skin care is the formulation of overnight masks. I've tried a few containing Vitamin C or retinol and they do seem to work well! You just apply the mask before bed, and rinse off in the morning! Voila! Better skin without missing a wink of sleep!

Do you feel like your life and career are coming full circle now? (Now you understand why you went through the things you've gone through...)

DW: I definitely feel like my life and career are coming full circle. In fact, my forties have been the best time of my life! I never understood why people dread turning 40! I feel like I have all the tools and have learned all the lessons I need to start my life NOW! In some regards, I feel like my best life is just beginning and that is such an exciting feeling. I have more confidence and clarity than ever before in all areas of my life. Looking back, I'm so proud I have been able to grow my business for the past 11 years.

What is the chapter of your life called at the moment?

DW: This chapter of my life is called Fearless. I'm at a point

in my life that I know what I want and I know what I don't want. When I have a goal to achieve or want to move forward professionally or personally, I make it happen no matter what. I've learned from past mistakes and I'm fearless to take chances in order to make the advancements needed to live my best life.

How does it make you feel to know people have dubbed you the Queen of Waxing?

DW: It's an honor to be known in the local professional community as the Queen of Waxing. I guess I earned that title honestly since I was able to help so many other estheticians improve their waxing skills in my classes. I truly do love helping others in this industry be the best they can be.

Do you have a favorite service to perform? Why is that your favorite?

DW: Well, isn't it obvious? Waxing! It's my favorite because it gives me and the client that instant gratification of change. I also enjoy it because I am really helping people feel better about themselves. I can see an immediate improvement in someone's demeanor once I show them a mirror and the hair they were so self-conscious of is no longer something they have to worry about.....at least for four weeks or so!

What do you do for fun?

DW: For fun, I love to travel and spend time with my two dogs, Gracie and Coco. I also enjoy antiquing and interior decorating. It's so rewarding to find an old piece of furniture that still has good bones but just needs a little cosmetic help! I'm definitely in the right career, since I'm always trying to improve the aesthetics of something whether it be a person's skin, a room or a piece of furniture.

How to do wind down from your day and take care of yourself so you don't burn out?

DW: Quiet time is key for me. I spend most of my days chatting with clients and lots of times I have the same conversation a few times in one day. That can be draining. At the end of the day, I like to come home, decompress and just be quiet. Once or twice a month, I like to have my own private spa day in my bathroom complete with tub soak, hair conditioning treatment and a facial. Occasionally, I will also treat myself to a pedicure. When I travel, I will sometimes visit a fancy resort spa to get the true client experience (but I keep my profession a secret as to avoid too many questions and too much conversation).

How can people find you on social media?

DW: You can find my on FB by searching Aesthetics By Dana and Instagram @danawads

What makes you a formidable woman? What makes me a formidable woman?

DW: I would say my determination and tenacity. If I have a goal, I achieve it. Maybe it doesn't happen as quickly or exactly how I want it to, but I'm always eventually able to achieve my goals. Setbacks are a certainty in life and I always try to take those lemons (setbacks) and find a way to make lemonade out of them and make it a learning experience.

Photo Credits: Makeup Dana Wadsworth

Hair Jackie Grady Hair Durham, NC

Photography Sabrina White of Defining Grace Photography



By: Devin Nishea

Alexandra Butler is a woman on the move and as a Makeup Artist (MUA), is a force to be reckoned. She has donned the faces from the everyday woman to being the key Makeup Artist for a major beauty brand! As many MUA's, Alex started out at the makeup counter and now she's adding her special touch to women like Missy Elliot, Cynthia Bailey, First Lady Avenet Gray and more. Alex has even taught her signature techniques to aspiring MUA's to sold-out classrooms across the United States. The journey for Alex hasn't been all glitz and glam, and even with each obstacle she's faced she knows that her steps have been ordered by God and has prepared her for the next level in life.

Where did you grow up? What did/do you like most about your hometown?

AB: I grew up in St. Louis, MO, specifically the Normandy area as a kid and Clayton all through high school. My mother moved us right before I went into high school to an area of St. Louis where the education system was the best in the city and the environment was diverse and affluent. I got to see what "applying yourself" looked like and it made me strive for greatness. I'm so grateful my parents saw fit to move us to an area where the families around us encouraged their kids to better themselves and apply themselves in life. Clayton High school still ranks as one of the top schools in the nation.

Tell us about your start in the industry. What hurdles did you encounter early in your career and how did you overcome them?

AB: My start in the Makeup Artist (MUA) industry was working at the MAC counter from 2009-2012. Before then I dabbled in makeup, but it was just here and there and I wasn't serious about it. Working at the counter encouraged me to

take it more serious and to look at it as a profession. Early in my career, one of the biggest hurdles was looking at other successful professional MUAs that would come to the counter. I wanted to be in their positions working freelance and doing all the fun jobs in film/TV. I felt like I was being left behind while they did the cool jobs working with celebs and I was stuck at the counter. Little did I know, God was just preparing me for what was to come.

What was the experience like working behind the scenes of your first television show?

AB: My first TV show was actually Vampire Diaries and I was on a Union set. I only worked a few times but it taught me a lot. Makeup Artists and Hair Stylists have unions and things are run very strict within them. So my experience was a great learning experience but it showed me that working on set of Union productions may not be for me because I love the chaos of being a freelance MUA and not knowing what my next day has in store. It was awesome seeing how things are filmed and what goes into production. My next TV opportunity was working on set of Love and Hip Hop Atlanta doing two seasons, and boy was that a totally different experience. But I'm grateful for both because they taught me things on two totally different perspectives. I was excited to see when you announced the campaign with Black Radiance.

How did that partnership come to fruition?

AB: The power of social media! I was working on set of the Real Housewives of Atlanta in 2018 and we were filming the reunion where I did cast member Cynthia Bailey's makeup. I used lots of different products on her and a few were Black Radiance products, so when I posted the look, I hashtagged the brand. I didn't think anything of it, I just informed my supporters of the products I used to create this particular look. So within a few weeks, I received an email from their Marketing team telling me they found my post and page through my little hashtag and wanted to know if I'd be interested in applying for their 2019 campaign. I submitted some pieces of my work and they chose me to be their artist! The rest is what you are now seeing from the marketing materials, to the YouTube features, to the MUA Talks collaboration.

How different is it working on the set of a television show, than working on the set of a beauty campaign? Is there a difference?

AB: Yes there is a huge difference. Working on set of a TV show, they have this area called video village where all the monitors are located. Usually the directors and producers sit in video village because that's where you can instantly see what's being shown on camera and catch all the playbacks. It's always best to stay near the monitors in case you see something that needs to be fixed and you can jump in when they cut camera to fix it. You have to work very fast when onset of a TV show because time is money and they have a schedule to abide by. On set of beauty campaigns, things are a little more lax because the whole shoot is based around beauty/makeup and hair. Everyone is there because of you, and their schedule is based

CONT'D ON PAGE 39

BEAUTY - WALKING BY FAITH WITH ALEXANDRA "ALEX" BUTLER

upon your abilities. Not saying you can take your time, but everything relies on the model in front of the camera looking amazing at whatever costs. It's still a great idea to find the monitors so you can see what the camera sees and it's much easier to jump in and fix things versus being on set of a TV show. Last year, you made a major announcement that you were coming in front of the camera!

What was it like being a part of the Glam Masters cast last year? What lessons did you learn during while taping?

AB: What an amazing experience that was. It was so surreal and went by so fast. I have always dreamed of being on a show and have been approached by many networks/producers about being on several shows, but those shows didn't really want to showcase my talent. They more so wanted to dig into my personal life. When Glam Masters came around, it was a show that would give me a platform to showcase my skill and I was super excited. Besides being on a reputable network, and with the possibility of working with Kim Kardashian seed like it would be a success. The casting process was long but well worth it in the end. The tasks on the show were challenging, inspiring, exciting, and made me push my skills to the next level. With this experience, I learned to stay true to who I was and any time the camera listened, I would be sure to "turn on" so the camera would be glued to me. From working on set of shows, I knew editing would play a major role so any chance I could get to speak positively about my culture, my educational background, my image, my idea of beauty, etc, I took it. And it really paid off because I was reflected exactly how I wanted when the show aired. I encourage anyone to apply for an opportunity like that.

With everything you have going on, how to do unwind and take care of yourself so you don't burn out?

AB: I have a super supportive husband who holds it down for me especially when I have to travel or am away for long hours. When I do finally get a break, I like to sleep and stay in the house, but going out to eat and going to the movies are my favorite things to do. I love a good cocktail and great food. And I love to people watch! I love the interaction you post between you and your husband online; you look like you compliment and balance each other out very well.

What role does he play in helping you out career wise? (Does he pack your kit? Does he wash your brushes? Does he travel with you?)

AB: My husband is a true team player. We have been married for 11 years in June but have been besties since we were 18 and 19 years old, so we know each other through and through. He is a major part of my success because he supports me in everything I do. Whether it's washing brushes, taking pics at classes, setting up, packing my kit, picking me up/taking me to the airport, staying up with me late if necessary, sending me makeup looks on Instagram, taking care of the household if I'm not home and taking good care of our doggie Baya. He also travels with me whenever possible or when I go to cool cities. He's the best.

Who are your beauty/makeup/fashion idols?

AB: I am still a huge fan of YouTube and literally watch makeup videos almost every night for inspiration or entertainment. I actually started on YouTube before working at the counter and before moving to Atlanta. That's where I developed my first social media following. My fellow MUAs are my main sources of inspiration, but of course all the greats have been people I've looked up to. Artists like Sam Fine, Pat McGrath, Alex Box, Carmindy Bowyer and Lisa Eldridge (who I met while being a contestant on Glam Masters. She was one of my judges.) These artists have developed a sustainable career in Makeup that are career goals.

What is the chapter of your life called at the moment?

AB: Isolation and Trusting God!!! Once I relinquished power and completely obedient to what He had for me, He took my dreams and aspirations and placed them so high in the clouds that I would've never asked for these types of blessings. He's also separated me from people, places, and things that weren't supposed to come along with me on this journey. Which was hard to comprehend, but I get it now. Besides, they always say if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans. He's always in control.

What makeup tips can you share with the ladies of the Formidable tribe?

AB: Less is more is my mantra. Makeup is meant to enhance, not create anew. Find the few things you would like to correct, maybe hyper pigmentation, or a crooked nose, or discoloration, and fix those things. Makeup should enhance the natural features we all have, without completely covering your entire face. Cake face makeup should be a thing of the past, let your natural skin peek through.

What makes you a formidable woman?

AB: What stands out when I hear formidable is the word, POWERFUL. I believe as a woman, I am strong, smart, intelligent, caring, funny, creative and POWERFUL! There's power in knowing who you are as a woman because there's no question or doubt when adversities come your way. As I get older and realize that God just wants us to be who He has made us to be as good people, it makes me feel powerful and proud to be this great person God created. Like a superhero! I can do anything.

Why did you decide to teach makeup artists what you'd learned throughout the years?

AB: When did you decide to take your classes on the road?

Are you still teaching classes?

AB: As a former Industrial Engineer, the urge to always understand the "why" behind things is what created a passion in me with everything I did. So as I learned about makeup, I always asked the question "why" so I could better understand things. While working at the counter and displaying techniques to customers, I realized the way I explained was really beneficial to those who listened to my explanations. After building a small following from social media and while working at the counter and not being pleased with the current job situation, I saw a need for a class that explained the "shy"



ANNE DESANTIS MODEL, ACTRESS, AND THE HOST OF "THE POSITIVE SIDE" ON RVNTV.

.....

Jury Speaks" on Oxygen TV. It was a small role, but interesting.

I am mostly known for being the host of "The Positive Side" on RVNTV and as the director of a non-profit called The St. Raymond Nonnatus Foundation. This is a Catholic foundation and it is my main line of work. We make outreach to families in crisis.

How has philanthropy changed your life?

My family and I support several organizations and non-profits. We have a heart for those who are doing mission work to spread the gospel of Christ. We like to support organizations which help families and individuals in crisis. The pro-life cause and feeding the hungry are two we support.

What advice would you give Entrepreneurs?

AD: My best advice for Entrepreneurs is to care about people. Once a person cares only about money and their future, something is greatly lost. In my opinion, a relationship with God is key. Let God lead the way. Without God, nothing is possible at all.

Otherwise, wake up every day with a positive spirit and think outside of the box, and keep plugging away!

When did you launch your acting career?

AD: I launched my acting career in 2014 at the age of 49. I have been homeschooling my kids for years. I have a degree in teaching. Before motherhood, I was involved in a few different careers including, teaching, sales, and fitness/nutrition.

What types of connections did you make while acting?

AD: I have met so many great people in the acting world. However, the greatest people I have met are people just like you and me, since I interview them on my TV show "The Positive Side" on RVNTV.

Tell us about your TV show "The Positive Side" on RVNTV.

AD: I interview Artists, Models, Actors, Authors, Non-Profits, and Businesses who are doing amazing work to help bring goodness to the world. The most profound lives, I have found, are those people simply doing wonderful work to help make the world a better place.

Which films are you best known for?

AD: I have an IMDB for a cameo role as Marcia Clark from the OJ trial. This was a show called "The

Facebook: Anne DeSantis, from PA
www.facebook.com/inspirationsbyanne123

Twitter: @annedesantis2

Instagram: deantisanne

Pinterest: Anne DeSantis

Website: www.annedesantis.com

www.nonnatus.org

TV Show:

<https://rvntv.tv/channel/the-positive-side>

Actress, Model and Influencer, Natalija Ugrina: New film, "Fight of Fury" is an action-packed film that also raises awareness for human trafficking.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT

Natalija

HOLLYWOOD'S POWERHOUSE WOMEN YOU NEED TO KNOW - NATALIJA UGRINA

How did your upbringing influence your decision to be an Actress?

NU: I wanted to be an Actress since the age of 6 but life took me in a different direction. I was very good in school so I ended up studying Economics in Rome and I remember being on the 3rd year and feeling so down because I didn't study what I wanted to study. One day, I couldn't take it anymore and made the biggest decision of my life: I am going to work hard to finish my degree and as soon as I graduate, I am gonna move to LA. Looking back now, I am so glad I made that choice and happy to call LA home, it's truly the best place to live.

What is your favorite childhood memory?

NU: Summers spent on the Island of Brac in Croatia with my grandparents. I can't pinpoint one particular memory, everything about it was magical and even now I go there every summer.

You just wrapped up filming, "College Ball." Tell us about your experience.

As an Actor, you are happy when you get a good role but even happier when you are working on a movie that has a huge message and can impact society. Working on "College Ball" movie was a great experience because of the stellar cast: the great Tom Sizemore, former football player Shawne Merriman, and Emmy Winning TV Host Ro Parrish, amazing producer Barry Barrister and director Andre Roberson, but also because the movie fights racism and wants justice for college athletes. College Ball is one of the most powerful stories of love, equality, and drama based on true events.

What intrigued you about your new feature, "Fight of Fury?"

NU: Fight of Fury is an action-packed film that also raises awareness for human trafficking. It shows one man's quest to fight for something real, and meaningful. The movie will also show the bond between two people that cannot be broken. The audience will be on the edge of their seats as they watch a fight for survival. Ultimately showcasing that when you want something, you never give up. The movie is produced, directed and written by Shuny Bee. I am playing the role of Ruxanda who works for Brutal, one of the bad guys and I enjoyed working on this movie because I never worked on a movie with so much action and

fighting scenes. It was an unforgettable experience, knowing that Shuny Bee is an actual grandmaster and worldrenowned martial artist.

What was it like to model?

NU: I was very tall at the young age and modeling agent approached me when I was 16 and signed me up for the Fashion TV International Modeling Contest. I ended up being one of the finalists and moved to Italy soon to pursue a modeling career where I signed up with Elite Model Management. I worked for hundreds of fashion designers and walked Fashion Week in Milan, Los Angeles, Paris, and New York. I appeared in publications like Vogue Italy, Elle and Harper's Bazaar.

How did you become an influencer?

NU: I was never too much into social media but I remember going to an audition and they asked me how many followers I had. I was surprised at first, hearing that large following was one of the requirements to get the job, but over the next few months, it started happening more and more often. I decided to create an Instagram profile, posted a few photos and people seemed to love my content so much that very soon first Instagram gigs start to come. I have over 410k followers on Instagram at the moment and influencing became a part of my life and pretty much a full-time job. I think it's impossible to be in the show business and not to be active on social media, it's all very connected!

What roles are you seeking?

NU: I feel that if you have model looks people judge your acting abilities a lot and instantly assume that you are in the business just because you "think" you can act and have no real acting background. I studied at The Lee Strasberg and UCLA, and I am a Method Actor so every role that let's me showcase my acting abilities and skills is my dream role.

What should we expect to see from you over the next few months?

NU: At the moment, I am working on my travel series and a feature movie. I am involved with a few other projects as well, but can't reveal much, so stay tuned :)

<https://www.instagram.com/natalijaugrina/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NatalijaaUgrina/>



I majored in Communication and Journalism at Rutgers University in New Brunswick with a minor in Theater Arts. I went on to study at Atlantic Acting School in NYC and have taken many courses throughout the years in both a group setting and one on one. I think it's important in any field you're in to continue to learn and hone your skills.

When did you launch your acting career?

PL: I always loved being in front of an audience whether it was in front of the camera or on stage. I grew up dancing and performing, so it's what I love to do. I started doing background work years ago to better understand the business and to see if it was one I could see myself in. I worked for free...a lot... but I was still happy and kept coming back for more. I always feel at home when I'm acting.

What is it about performing that moves you?

PL: Performing for me has always been an escape from reality. No matter what I am going through in my life, I can step away and step into another character, another mind, another life. I've always said film has this same effect. You get to watch a movie for two hours and get lost in another world. When another actor's performance evokes emotion from me whether it's

tears, laughter or suspense I can't help but feel moved.

What roles interest you?

PL: I love roles that challenge me. I don't want to play myself. That's too easy. I've always wanted to be in an action film and show off some of my hard work at the gym (lol). I think my dream role would be playing alongside Leo DiCaprio. Leo, if you're reading this you have your people call my people (lol).

Share your experiences in film.

PL: I have been very fortunate in my life to be involved with a few great films. From shorts to features, I have been able to take away something from every single one. I think we learn from being on set and working with new people. I love to surround myself with people in the business who are more experienced. One of the highlights was when I had the opportunity to work on *Black Swan* as Mila Kunis' photo double. Being on a larger set, with seasoned actors like Natalie Portman was different from the indies I had worked on. It was a cool experience!

Who inspires you?

PL: That's an easy one! My parents. I don't think I ever realized just how much of their work ethic they instilled in me. They are dedicated to their professions but seem to flawlessly balance family and personal life. My dad is a perfect example of living the American dream. He came to the U.S. by himself with next to nothing and he worked his way up to owning his own business. My mom is a college professor who never stopped learning. She has 4 masters degrees and a doctorate. They never gave up and encouraged me to chase my dreams.

What are your current projects?

PL: Currently, I am working on the production side of things, which is new for me. I came across a Greek novel entitled "*Crossing Souls*" several years back. I immediately thought it would translate perfectly on screen. We were able to acquire the rights and are currently looking for investors for the feature.

I am also working on my second children's book entitled "*Different is Beautiful*". The book touches on the theme of disabilities and not judging a book by its cover. I think it's something that continues to be relevant in today's society.

www.penelopelagos.com

Writer and Director,
Pamela Perrine, film
“The Journeyman”
stars Jay Mohr, and
features the song,
“The Last Day,” Moby
and Skylar Gray.

PAMELA PERRINE

HOLLYWOOD'S POWERHOUSE WOMEN YOU NEED TO KNOW - PAMELA PERRINE

When did discover your love for writing?

PP: When I was young, my family moved around a lot. I started to write in journals as a way of expressing my frustration by having to move so many times, leaving friends, neighbors, schools etc., As my journaling progressed, it became more detailed. It wasn't until years later I looked back at those journals and was moved by the detail and emotion of such a young girl. I laughed, I cried, and it inspired me to write my first screenplay. I've been writing ever since.

Where do you draw your inspiration?

PP: I'm inspired by ordinary people who do extraordinary things. Those who defy the odds, humbly make sacrifices, make things happen with no expectation of receiving credit, having the favor returned, or hoping it will go viral on YouTube. I love to see changes taking place in people's lives, in families, communities, schools, all because of someone's story or actions. These don't have to be radical or always political, but are changes of the heart, which in turn can bolster waves of change. These changes often come with a price, and obstacles to overcome. Nothing comes easy when overcoming adversity. I like to use those difficult times as the focal point of my inspiration and go from there. Sometimes I find a location, hear a song or a dream, write a script around it.

When did you make your directorial debut?

PP: In 2018, with *Angels in Rocket Field* in which I wrote, produced and directed.

Tell us about your recent film, "The Journeyman."

PP: *The Journeyman* is about a mother's desire to be reunited with her son. She believes her love is stronger than the mental disease that has taken him away from her. This story is about her fight to stay alive. —My hope for this film is that people will pay attention. So many people with mental health problems are ignored, misdiagnosed, and mistreated when their sickness should be taken as seriously as any other life-threatening disease. Also, families, must they keep breaking up? The effects this has on the children, is devastating. We've known this for years, but the statistics for both of these situations, are staggering. Broken homes and misdiagnosed mental cases on average is ten years. Perhaps we should start by changing the term "broken home", which has a direct negative effect on the child hearing this. This film addresses all of these issues. *The Journeyman* stars Jay Mohr, and features the song, "The Last Day," by Moby and Skylar Gray.

How have you changed the world?

PP: I haven't changed the world yet, but the world has
25 FWM - WWW.FORMIDABLEWOMANMAG.COM

changed me. As a result of these changes, I've been able to reach goals and open doors for myself, that I might have missed otherwise. I've realized it's through my filmmaking I can make a difference, one scene at a time, one heart at a time. Maybe I've helped change someone's world, it doesn't get any better than that.

What themes run through your writing?

PP: Moral dilemmas, betrayal, mystery, and redemption.

Tell us about your company, The Hawk Swoops Productions.

PP: I created my own production company in 2018, to have control over my projects, for tax and legal reasons, and to eventually find collaborators and secure financing for films in development. Once the films were released my goal was and is to stand on my own, financing all acquiring my content and taking on other projects, and acquiring more gear and equipment, as well as employees. The name "The Hawk Swoops" comes from my favorite poem, "Dreams," by Langston Hughes, the first verse:

Hold fast to dreams

For if dreams die

Life is a broken-winged bird

That cannot fly.

"I never wanted to be that broken-winged bird letting go of my dreams."

As a member of the Alliance of Women Directors, what challenges do you see in the industry?

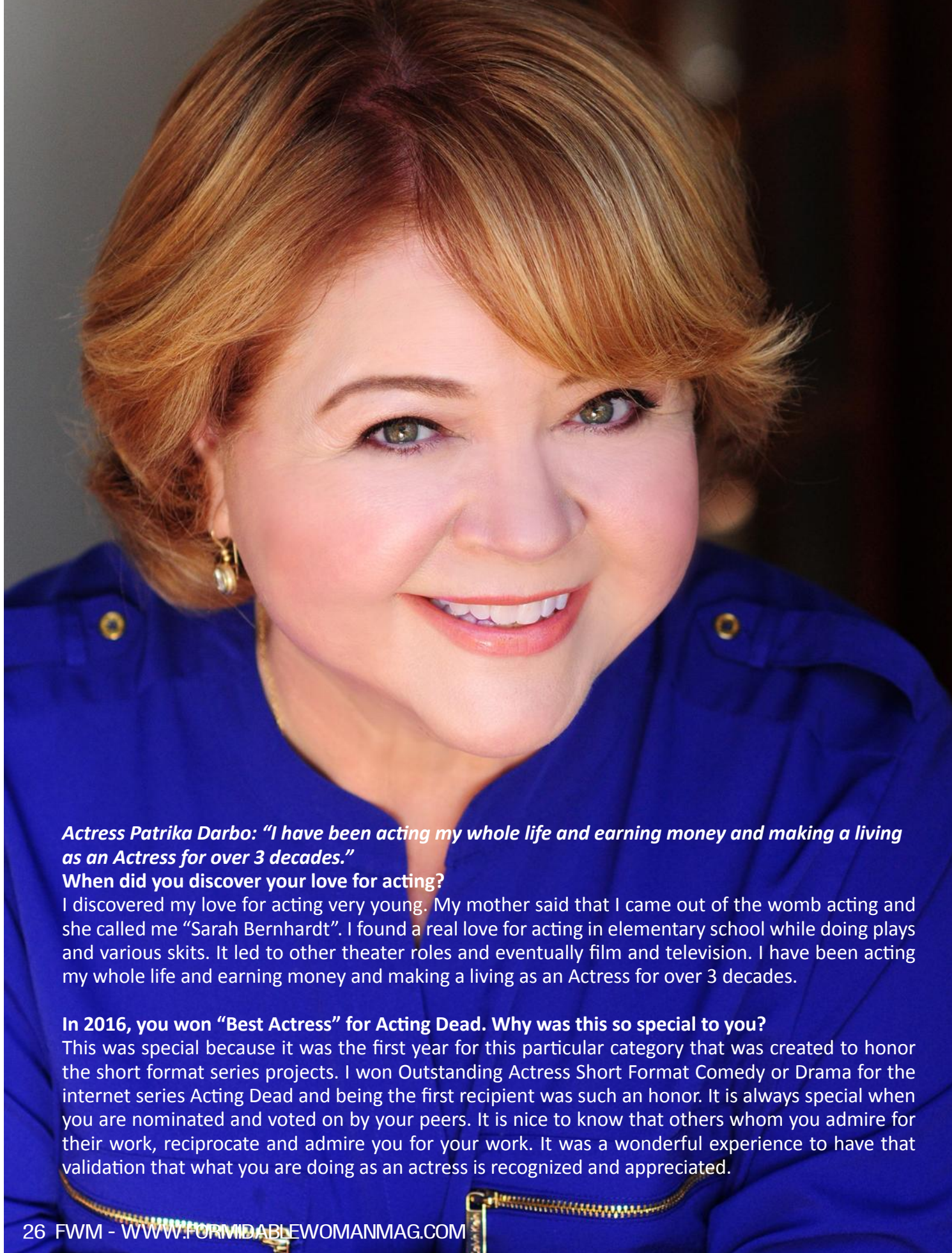
PP: Well a few years ago it was one female director for every 22 male directors, so that has improved. However, even with studios that have committed to the "4% challenge", female contributions still are not recognized equally. We have a long way to go. For example, there is no indication that the pay scale has changed. There still needs to be more female editors, producers, and cinematographers. Marketing and distribution isn't where it should be either. I just read that Netflix has canceled 8 series created by women. So overall, there are some improvements, and I see more changes forthcoming, but I feel that as with any strong role in any career or hierarchy, team, the woman's role is always the one least likely to be taken as seriously, a liability, if you will. More than hiring challenges need to be implemented, the entire landscape needs to change.

What is your mantra? "All the happy things.."

<https://twitter.com/pamelajperrine>

<https://www.facebook.com/thepamelaperrine/>

<https://www.instagram.com/thepamelaperrine/>



Actress Patrika Darbo: *"I have been acting my whole life and earning money and making a living as an Actress for over 3 decades."*

When did you discover your love for acting?

I discovered my love for acting very young. My mother said that I came out of the womb acting and she called me "Sarah Bernhardt". I found a real love for acting in elementary school while doing plays and various skits. It led to other theater roles and eventually film and television. I have been acting my whole life and earning money and making a living as an Actress for over 3 decades.

In 2016, you won "Best Actress" for Acting Dead. Why was this so special to you?

This was special because it was the first year for this particular category that was created to honor the short format series projects. I won Outstanding Actress Short Format Comedy or Drama for the internet series Acting Dead and being the first recipient was such an honor. It is always special when you are nominated and voted on by your peers. It is nice to know that others whom you admire for their work, reciprocate and admire you for your work. It was a wonderful experience to have that validation that what you are doing as an actress is recognized and appreciated.

What have you learned over your years of acting?

PD: Always be nice to everyone. It takes less energy to be pleasant and kind as it does to be mean and nasty. The assistants on your way up will be the casting directors, producers, and directors on your way down and how do you want them to remember you? Also, study and learn your craft. Take acting classes and workshops. Audition for theater and independent projects whenever possible. Get out there and get yourself prepared so you are ready when those opportunities come around.

Share a memory on set that changed your perspective. There are so many memories that I have that have probably changed my perspective in ways that I don't often think about. I have worked with so many wonderful people both in front and behind the camera. One experience comes to mind right now. When I was working opposite John Malkovich on *In The Line of Fire* I just remember watching his every move and learning so much from observing him. He was so polite, giving as an Actor and inspiring creatively. One minute he was himself and the next minute he was this horrible, evil character. It was seamless how he went in and out. Perhaps it did not change my perspective but reinforced that you can be a brilliant Actor and a wonderful person at the same time.

What was your favorite role?

PD: I have been blessed to have so many wonderful roles. I think it would have to be Marlene in *Daddy's Dying, Whos Got the Will?* I performed it on stage and reprised the role on film. Del Shores wrote this part for me and he is so talented and wonderful at creating these brilliantly crazy and complex characters. Of course, I also adored playing opposite the great Beau Bridges.

Tell us about the Performer's Peer Group.

PD: I am the Co-Governor for the Television Academy's Performer's Peer Group. The Television Academy is the governing body of the Emmy Awards and within the Television Academy, everyone who works in television is represented by a peer group. The performers have a group as do the producers, professional representatives, wardrobe professionals, etc. There is a select committee that represents each of the peer groups. Our job is to advocate, delegate and act on behalf of our peer group and their best interests within the Television Academy. As one of the Co-Governors (alongside Bob Bergen of Porky Pig fame) of the Performer's Peer Group, we are

now heading into Emmy season which is my busiest and most exciting time of the year.

What have been your most recent roles?

PD: Most recently I have had the pleasure of working on the daytime drama, *The Bold & The Beautiful*. The fantastic and iconic soap actress, Darlene Conley who played the role of Sally Spectra passed away some years ago and Brad Bell, the executive producer created the role of Shirley Spectra, Sally's sister just for me. I started under contract and now they bring me back from time to time. I love playing this role because Shirley is so manipulative, underhanded, resourceful, conniving, protective and complex. I hope to continue playing this role in the future. The cast of *The Bold & The Beautiful* is so wonderful to work with as well. I also got to play Mrs. Clause this past holiday season in the Netflix holiday film *Puppy Star Christmas*. This is the second time in my career that I got to play this particular character. The film is loaded with dancing and singing elves and dogs and it was just so much fun to make. It is a great holiday film and whenever I get a chance to work with dogs...count me in!!!

How do you inspire women?

PD: I know what it is to work hard and struggle in what often is a man's world. I have mentored many young actresses throughout my career. If I can impart any amount of wisdom on a young woman from what I have learned in my life and career, I will do it. Again, I always tell young women to follow their dreams. Do not let anyone tell you that you can't do something. Work hard, learn, research, practice and reach for the stars. I tell them to never lose sight of their morals and values. Above all, treat others the way you want to be treated and know that you are amazing and valuable. We have to foster and nurture our young people now more than ever and I always try to remember that when I meet young women.

What is next for you?

Right now I am signed on to do a series called *Aunt Cissy*. It is a spin-off of the classic television series *Family Affair*. I star alongside Kathy Garver who played Cissy in the original series. It is very funny and I am looking forward to it. I am also getting ready to shoot a very interesting project called *Vinyl Child* which I am looking forward to working on very soon.

Instagram: @darbopatrika

Twitter: @patrikadarbo

Facebook: Patrika Darbo



JULIE UPTON

JU: I didn't really choose the business, it sort of chose me. Someone dared me to enter a bikini contest at a concert when I was fifteen years old and wearing braces. I was already in a bikini, so I took the dare, and won. It just so happened that the owner of the bikini company was in the audience and approached me and asked me to model for them. That was my first ad campaign, all with closed smiles to hide the braces. That started a pretty solid many years of swimsuit modeling and big campaigns, and some other local acting things in central Florida. Then a few years after I moved to South Florida to attend the Art Institute. I got an Agent there. They sent me on my first audition which was an industrial that was all improv. And I booked that. So they started sending me on anything and everything commercially or with dialogue, and everything really flowed. I started studying acting, and things just clicked. Bigger breaks came later.

Author, Life Coach, and Artist, Julie Upton interview with Formidable Woman Magazine.

Share your upbringing with us.

JU: I was born in Cocoa, Florida, and grew up around the beach, all things art, and a lot of strong women. It just seemed nothing could take the women down. I was raised by my mom, and we lived with my grandmother until my mom married my stepdad just before I went into the seventh grade. So it was always me, my mom, my sister, my grandmother and great-grandmother (who lived to be 96). My Nanny & Granny were total firecrackers in every sense. They were always beautifully put together- nails, hair, and lipstick done even to their last days, & they would scream at the T.V over politics and sports. Always good for a laugh, which we did plenty. They grew roses and gardenias, which still remind me of childhood, and they were both soft & strong in all the best ways. They instilled in me a love for things to be beautiful, organized, and to smell pretty- which still shows up in all I do (both figuratively and literally). They are responsible for my passion, fire, strength, and ability to overcome hard things.

You have been in over 250 national commercials. How did you break into the entertainment business?

28 FWM - WWW.FORMIDABLEWOMANMAG.COM

What was your favorite role?

JU: It's a close tie between playing Beth in the play "Blue Surge" in LA; we had packed houses every night in a small amazing theatre that isn't there anymore. Several big celebrities came to our shows and were so complimentary. We had such an amazing response, and I'll never forget how powerful that live experience was with both the audience and my awesomely talented cast of friends. My other super powerful memory that's forever in my soul and body was playing the redneck pregnant Wanda in "The Baby Dance"- which still is a big dream of mine to play again in some future heavenly theatre run.

Have you always been a creative?

JU: Oh for sure. But I think we all are, whether we realize it or not. God is the ultimate creator, and God is in all of us. So anything we do is creative. Even cleaning a home, or making a meal, or gardening, being a mom or caretaker- creativity takes any form. My mom put me in art classes at a really young age, when she noticed that instead of coloring in the coloring books like most kids, I would take a separate sheet of blank paper and draw the picture in the coloring book. Basically copy it, and then color my own drawing. Either I was creative, or bull-headed, or both. We're still not sure. ;)

HOLLYWOOD'S POWERHOUSE WOMEN YOU NEED TO KNOW - JULIE UPTON

Tell us about your TV career.

JU: I've been working in this industry for a long time, and taking whatever roles I felt comfortable with as they came. There were years that not much was happening, like when Florida lost their film incentives, and when I went through some big life challenges. One thing I think most people don't know is that I said, "No" to many roles. I've always had solid convictions about what I will and won't do. And I don't just mean nudity or sexual situations; I mean content, violence, or what I feel is putting junk or darkness out there. I even turned down a three movie deal in my first years in LA over some sex scenes, in the height of my career, and lost an Agent over it. I went without an agent for two years after that. But I've never been moved by fame or money, if it meant being at the expense of who I am.

What did you learn about yourself acting?

JU: I've learned so much about myself from acting. It's so much more than people think it is. I grew my real voice and finally started using it because of acting. I opened my heart in real ways because of acting. I gained my confidence because of acting. I healed traumas through acting. I realized valuable emotional things that I never received as a child through acting. I overcame two cancer battles and two serious car accidents through acting. Acting is therapy, creation, self-expression, and so much more. Sometimes I lose possible Life Coaching clients because they see my acting, and it makes them doubt my ability as a Life Coach. But if they really understood, they'd know what an asset that is. Some of the best coaching techniques & modalities that I've used to heal and shift people in the greatest ways- I learned in different acting classes over the years. Acting is literally "living truthfully in and imaginary circumstance", and the intimate study of human behavior. I think Life Coaching or any type of psychology, and acting together makes perfect sense. There's no faster road to compassion and empathy, than walking in another's shoes. And through my acting, I also found compassion and empathy for myself. Many live their whole lives, and never find that.

Share your book, "*Perceptions and Projections- The needless Drama, How to Finally Live Drama and Blame Free*".

JU: God put this book on my heart hard about ten years ago. I was juggling so many things, that it kept getting put aside, and then I literally felt like God was haunting me about it, no joke. And every issue I witnessed in my life, in my clients lives, in our politics, medical industry, justice system, race issues, in our relationships- seemed to always boil down to this root cause of Perceptions and Projections. In fact, in most conflicts, both sides were living completely different realities. So the basis of my book, is that we don't see things as THEY are, we see

things as WE are. That's why twenty different people in a room can listen to the same person speak, or witness the same events, and walk away with twenty completely different stories as to what was said or happened there. In the same way, every person reading this interview may hear something different in it. This is what's creating all the chaos in our world today, and what always has. And it's not just some people, or people who aren't wise or educated or thoughtful, it's all people. It's all of us. So this has become a huge part of my mission, to support people in this area.

Tell about being a Life & Business Coach.

JU: Being a Life Coach is one of the most humbling things I've ever done, & also some of the most powerful work I've ever witnessed. I've seen people struggling in almost every area of their lives, or really having a hard time finding their joy or passion with anything anymore- then through our work together, in a very short time completely transform all those areas in drastic ways with incredible results. I've seen people rekindle romance and intimacy in their marriages, strengthen bonds with their kids or family, drop weight quickly without even a big extra focus there, gain major confidence, and get some of the biggest career goals or accomplishments they've ever had... all simultaneously, and within a few months of our working together. Those breakthroughs make me literally dance in my living room.

How important is charity to you?

JU: I have always served or volunteered in one or more capacities, and been a big financial giver. I believe being significant is far more important than being successful. I led Children's Ministry classes for about 15 years at different churches, and I volunteered extensively with inner city/abused/neglected kids for years at other charity organizations. I've always given time or resources or helped someone weekly, or daily, or whatever I feel led to do. I think it's the antidote for the troubles of both success and hardships... in either time, get the focus off ourselves, and onto someone else. It solves almost everything. Nothing grows a heart like service or giving.

What is in store for you in the upcoming months?

I'm promoting my book and preparing for speaking engagements and some corporate consulting, beginning to audition for roles here in LA again, have some exciting things happening with my art that I can't mention yet, and continuing my work with clients.

<https://julieuptonnow.com>

<https://www.amazon.com/author/julieupton>

<https://www.facebook.com/jupton1>

[imdb.me/JulieUpton](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1045744/)



Kaira

By Gracia Rich

*Kaira Akita is a GAME CHANGER! Using her skills in design, storytelling and creative expression, she is teaching women how to transform and present themselves through creative expression. Known for her roles in Tyler Perry's *Why Did I Get Married*, *The Family That Preys* and the Sundance film turned BET'S first scripted television series, *Somebodies*, Kaira has been gracing our screens for over a decade. With her signature poise, grace and undeniable style, Kaira is changing the minds of her industry on how we are portrayed as well as*

FWM: Kaira, I'm so excited about this opportunity to interview you! Please introduce yourself.

KA: I'm Kaira (sounds like Tyra) and I'm a creative spirit on assignment to use my work in design, storytelling, and self-discovery to transform how women and creators show up for themselves, each other, and the world. I'm a woman who is many things, often all at once -- tough, delicate, compassionate, warm, creative, logical, charming, focused, powerful, free. I consider design my love language, I love all things style, and I have a life-long obsession with greatness, identity, purpose, and the musical Queen of all musical Queens, Ms. Patti LaBelle (don't agree? fight me!). Professionally, I started my creative career thirteen years ago as an actress and was blessed to have success right out the gate, including two number one box office hits with Tyler Perry, a Sundance film, BET's first scripted series, a Roger Ebert Thumbs Up Award, a NAACP Theater award, and roles on HBO, Lifetime, TBS, and more. But it wasn't until things got quiet in my acting career that I discovered my most important role yet -- becoming myself. Like for real, for real. Who was I beyond my talents? Beyond other people's idea of me? Beyond being my mother's daughter? Beyond the hidden wounds and brokenness, I accepted as part of my personality? These were the tough questions I had to answer if I was going to continue to pursue my best creative identity, life, and work.



I'm continuing to sharpen my tools in design, storytelling, and self-discovery to help women and the creative community better connect with themselves and their work.

FWM: Kaira, I'm so excited about this opportunity to interview you! Please introduce yourself.

KA: I'm Kaira (sounds like Tyra) and I'm a creative spirit on assignment to use my work in design, storytelling, and self-discovery to transform how women and creators show up for themselves, each other, and the world. I'm a woman who is many things, often all at once -- tough, delicate, compassionate, warm, creative, logical, charming, focused, powerful, free. I consider design my love language, I love all things style, and I have a life-long obsession with greatness, identity, purpose, and the musical Queen of all musical Queens, Ms. Patti LaBelle (don't agree? fight me!). Professionally, I started my creative career thirteen years ago as an actress and was blessed to have success right out the gate, including two number one box office hits with Tyler Perry, a Sundance film, BET's first scripted series, a Roger Ebert Thumbs Up Award, a NAACP Theater award, and roles on HBO, Lifetime, TBS, and more. But it wasn't until things got quiet in my acting career that I discovered my most important role yet -- becoming myself. Like for real, for real. Who was I beyond my talents? Beyond other people's idea of me? Beyond being my mother's daughter? Beyond the hidden wounds and brokenness, I accepted as part of my personality? These were the tough questions I had to answer if I was going to continue to pursue my best creative identity, life, and work.



Today, after a few years of self-discovery and spiritual interruptions, I don't have all the answers, but God has revealed enough for me to take the next steps forward with a clear voice and vision that brings my true self in alignment with my creative work. It's an exhilarating time and I look forward to being more visible and sharing my process, platforms, and gifts with the world from this new place of self-awareness. My life and career as a designer, storyteller, and creative thought leader are blossoming in unexpected, exciting ways, and I'm grateful for this next chapter of harvest. Life is good, God is great, and I'm showing up with my best.

FWM: You are a creative, making your mark both on and behind the screen. Have you always had that passion, and what would you tell women who dream to be a part of the industry?

KA: Yes, I've always been very creative, ambitious and passionate. It's just a part of my DNA. But I was always searching for more...like I wanted to make sure who I was as a person was just as big and powerful as my talents. Even as a kid. That seeking was painful at times but now it all

makes sense. So, if you want to be a part of the creative industry -- whether that's entertainment, fashion, design, music, etc. -- you can only rely on being a creative for so long. Being a creative will make you a part of the industry, but knowing who you are and why you serve will put you in position to change the industry and make real impact. As creatives, that should be our ultimate goal. So, allow space for self-discovery as you pursue your creative dreams. The two go hand in hand. And once you know who you are, surround yourself with a community that cheers you on, holds you accountable, and pushes your edge. I've been blessed to connect with several creative women who "see" me at my highest identity and encourage me through.

FWM: What advice would you give women in regard to claiming their power in today's society?

KA: Stop playing and show up. Each one of us has a unique combination of gifts, DNA, and spiritual assignments that will never be released if we don't step into our power and take ownership of our assigned territories. Connection, compassion, creativity, vision, vulnerability, soft power, strong leadership -- our culture is hungry for more women in every industry to bring these to the table in a way only we can. I believe the current state of our society and systems represent a physical, emotional, and spiritual reckoning that demands self-aware, self-defined women show up and claim their power like never before. That includes you. Reclaim yourself, then claim your territory! Don't look at the famous woman to do it. Look at yourself, at the woman right next to you in the trenches. Time to get it done for you, for her, for all of us. No permission needed. No explanation required. Your power is waiting on you -- not the other way around. Reclaim yourself, then claim your territory! And know you don't have to do it alone. There are several amazing creative women with perspective and communities who have helped me tap into my voice and power, including Christina Dunbar (@christinadunbar), Dayka Robinson (@daykarobinson), GG Renee (@ggreneewrites), Jennifer Arnise (@jenniferarnise), Bessie Akuba (@bessieakuba), Andrea Pippins (@andreapippins), and Sarah Jakes Roberts (@sarahjakesroberts). It's our time. Let's show up.

FWM: On your website's Self-Discovery Page you have my favorite Audre Lorde quote, "If I didn't define myself for myself, I'd be crushed into other



people's fantasies for me and eaten alive." Please tell me how this quote resonates in your life?

KA: How much time do you have? WHEW. So much of my identity journey is wrapped up in this quote. This has been my favorite quote since a few years back when I literally felt like I was being swallowed whole. So much to unpack about how we define ourselves around what others want from us. I started to feel like my entire life and sense of self was built as a reaction to what other people wanted/needed from me and I didn't even know it. My friend/writer GG Renee (@ggreneewrites) helped give me language around this. It's like they saw this superpower that I had but I wasn't in control of it, didn't know how to use it or what to do with it, so they took pieces of it for their own purposes. And each time, they took a piece of me. Until I started doing my own work. And then this quote took on a double meaning. I kept chipping away at myself long enough to realize I was also the other people — the other me, the FALSE ME, was trying like hell to crunch the REAL ME into its own tiny little fantasy version of me that I had grown accustomed

to. So, God started giving me some tough love clarity around this and I finally stopped crushing myself to "fit" into my own false fantasy and anyone or anything trying to do the same melted away because we were no longer in contract with each other. It's really that easy. And that hard.

FWM: What tools and/or strategic partnerships have you put in place to help women? And the community?

KA: I'm continuing to sharpen my tools in design, storytelling, and self-discovery to help women and the creative community better connect with themselves and their work. It's a growing process but an organic extension of who I have been in real life for years.

Currently, I'm developing two projects that amplify and empower women and creators -- a dark comedy series about identity & daughterhood and a design makeover show -- under my CREATIVE SPIRITS ONLY production banner. Previously, I also used my storytelling skills behind the scenes to

develop, produce, direct, and co-write a one woman show called A ROSE CALLED CANDACE which premiered in Los Angeles in 2018 and set the stage to work with women-driven companies/community groups such as InkSpot Entertainment and Black Women's Wellness. I'm also setting the stage for my first self-discovery speaking series, the CLAIM YOUR TERRITORY TOUR, based around my personal journey at the intersection of self-discovery and spirited creative work. That won't come to life until 2020 but starting September 2019 I will open up a private list via my website where I can begin sharing insight to women and the creative community on a regular basis.

FWM: What advice would you give your younger self growing up as a woman in this world?

KA: Be gentle with yourself and just keep showing up. It will all make sense in the greater vision for your life. Oh, and stop eating sugar cubes and whole tubs of cream cheese icing -- that's the worst.

FWM: Please tell me about your passion brands, AKITA HAUS and CREATIVE SPIRITS ONLY.

KA: Design is my original creative love language — and I'm finally building an official home for it at AKITA HAUS, a multi-disciplinary design studio that specializes in interior, wardrobe, and brand design as well original products and premium lifestyle content. It's a reflection of all the design work I've been doing behind the scenes for years as a hobby. Now, I'm ready to build a business. CREATIVE SPIRITS ONLY is my production banner where I'm developing coming-of-identity stories for myself and other spirited women and creators. The brand spans television, film, theater, and event production, and the ultimate goal is to turn the writing-directing-producing process on its head and create an environment that nurtures industry newcomers who are in touch with their inner creative spirit and want a safe, supportive incubator to birth all the disrupting, daring, and delightful stories that want to come through them. I've had many brands throughout the years, but I consider AKITA HAUS and CREATIVE SPIRITS ONLY my first passion brands because they are the only endeavors where I'm not forcing the flow, limiting myself, or doing something only because other people want me to do it. They both feel like a spiritual experience that's moving through me, for something bigger than myself. It's just the verrrrrryyyyyy beginning, but I'm committed for the long haul.

FWM: How can our readers connect with you outside of this interview?

KA: You can connect with me and my design, storytelling, and self-discovery work via my website at www.kairaakita.com. I'm also on Instagram and Twitter @kairaakita.

All photos courtesy of Trokon George

Kaira Akita is a multi-gifted creative spirit on assignment to use her work in design, storytelling, and self-discovery to transform how women and creators show up for themselves, each other, and the world. Best known for her early career performances in *WHY DID I GET MARRIED*, *THE FAMILY THAT PREYS*, and the Sundance film turned *BET*'s first scripted television series *SOMEBODIES*, Kaira has spent over a decade on camera, behind the camera, and beyond.

Now entering a season of personal and professional re-imagination, she is poised to bring a new voice to the creative world as a delightfully daring designer, storyteller, and creative thought leader.

Currently, Kaira is building AKITA HAUS, a multi-disciplinary design studio; developing content for herself and others under her CREATIVE SPIRITS ONLY production banner; touring the festival circuit with her starring role in the indie drama short EPIGENETICS; appearing in the Netflix anthology series DOLLY PARTON'S HEARTSTRINGS; and setting the stage for her first self-discovery speaking series, the CLAIM YOUR TERRITORY TOUR. She has also been selected as one of the participants of WOMEN IN FILM LOS ANGELES' sought-after Mentorship Program, where she receives industry support and strategy under the guidance of Marvel casting director Sarah Finn and producer Melanie Donkers

FORMIDABLE

WOMAN MAGAZINE

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2019

*Defying the
Odds: Women In
Construction*

THE POWER
AND PLEASURE
OF PATIENCE

**HOLLYWOOD'S
POWERHOUSE
WOMEN YOU
NEED TO KNOW**

**NEDRA
BUCKMIRE**

A GIFT TO ADMINISTRATIVE
PROFESSIONALS

FEATURE STORY - NEDRA BUCKMIRE

Introduce yourself and your business.

NB: My professional career has spanned across nonprofit organizations, architectural, investment banking and media and entertainment industries. My innate gifting is in administration and leadership. With more than 20 years in executive support while in Corporate America, it's allowed me to cultivate a career teeming with knowledge, skills and business acumen to be a highly skilled and sought after senior administrative professional. Providing senior executive assistance to c-suite level executives and all this position entailed has shaped and prepared me for where I am right now. When you spend the majority of your career being the right-hand woman for a leader of an organization it causes you to think and act differently. It raises your level of awareness of how you show up every day because how you show up impacts more than just you. I understood wholeheartedly while in those roles that influence is a force but it's not forceful. When you harness the power of your influence, you understand the power of your presence. My position carried weight and responsibility yet my influence impacted countless people even when I wasn't aware. I became keenly aware of the impact on a daily basis. I showed up in excellence every day. The same weight and responsibility rests upon me as the CEO of Hope Fulfilled Life Coaching. What I've learned in Corporate America has influenced how I conduct my business. My business provides group and individual coaching services, mentoring partnerships and empowerment encounters. All of these offerings are in existence to inspire hope, ignite passions and rewrite futures. Speaking nationally and internationally is an additional platform that is one of my greatest joys as it allows me to flow freely in my God-given ability. I am a certified master life coach and have the unique pleasure of seeing my client's goals and dreams come to past. As an ordained minister and pastor, I've been blessed to have many years of practice speaking, leading and empowering people to be their absolute best selves.

Why did you start your company/brand?

NB: When you realize the power of your story and how it influences others, it compels you to respond to the greatness within yourself and others. About five years ago, women began to flood me with requests to mentor them. I earnestly wanted to give them my absolute best self; therefore, I enrolled in a coaching program and received my certification by an accredited organization. I immediately began to think about what else I thought I needed to add to what I already knew in

essence negating what was already resident within me to empower them. My husband brilliantly pointed out to me that I totally neglected to understand the value and worth of who I was, at that moment, and what originally inspired them to ask for my guidance. When people are drawn to you because whatever you possess touches them deeply, it may not be readily known by you initially because it simply flows effortlessly from you. However, I realized that the women who reached out to me were already impacted by my life exactly where I was. The ability to inspire and ignite others to act upon their aspirations brought me and still brings me great joy. These reasons embody my why because I love seeing others rewrite their futures simply because they took a chance and believed in themselves enough to take action; therefore, shaping and rewriting their future. This is why I started Hope Fulfilled Life Coaching. Empowering others to believe again and see their dreams realized is priceless.

Describe your journey to success.

NB: One of the definitions of success is an accomplishment of an aim or purpose. It can simply be stated as achieving one's goals. If I solely rely on this to equate success for me personally, it would be accurately defined but wouldn't be my complete story. I agree with the definition; however, it carries a greater meaning for me personally. My journey of success has been one interlarded with disappointments, challenges and overcoming self-limiting beliefs. Many successful journeys are not paved with ease but the end result after having come through the tough places creates a sweet victory. Although struggles paved the way for my success, it doesn't have to always lead the way. I realize that without the challenges I've faced, I would not have been able to sustain success in certain areas. My muscles of endurance were built to last and stand firmly and successfully in the truth I learned along my journey. Truth taught me many valuable lessons. There are many things that are true but all may not be your personal truth. This type of personal truth causes you to govern your life accordingly. The truths are irreplaceable and foundational values of your existence. I know what is true—I am where I am because I didn't relent. Through the tough places success was established. I am a work in progress understanding that there are many more successes I will experience as I strive to be, do and live better.

What is your super power?

NB: My super power is speaking life to dormant dreams.

FEATURE STORY - NEDRA BUCKMIRE

When you help someone recognize their super power, it unleashes a force that cannot be tamed. The force is their self-confidence. Appreciating one's abilities and qualities is essential to walk purposefully. A few years ago while creating content for a group empowerment session entitled, *Awakening Your Dream*, I created an acrostic for the word D.R.E.A.M. The words are Divinely – Realized – Expectation - Awaiting – Manifestation.™ I specially crafted this four-week session to provoke those taking the course to spur them to awaken dreams they've put on the shelf, dream big and be intentional about what they intensely desired to accomplish. It's immensely fulfilling seeing someone who has given up because they don't believe they are capable of accomplishing whatever dream or aspiration they've sat on the shelf and left to die. When the light bulb turns on and they realize the only thing stopping them is themselves, their super power is uncovered and they can learn to soar and in turn strengthen someone else.

What would the seasoned you tell the younger YOU?

NB: Life teaches us many things if we are willing to learn and alter our behaviors in order to grow and mature and not repeat the same lesson. I've experienced some very dark places and because of those experiences it impacted me believing in myself. There were times in my life where I thought I'd never be doing the things I'm doing now. They honestly were never a thought. Growing up in Brooklyn, New York, I didn't imagine traveling locally and internationally speaking and empowering others. I didn't have positive affirmations assuring me I could do and achieve anything I desired. I don't ever recall someone telling me as a young girl or young woman they believed in me. I've felt like I was an underdog and under achiever. Therefore, I'd tell my younger self, you are capable, you are more powerful than you can imagine, you can do whatever you put your mind to—believe in yourself because others are waiting on you. They need your voice, your message and your passion to spark and unleash their dormant dreams.

What mechanisms have you put in place to help women? And why women?

NB: Being a woman, innately qualifies me to understand women particularly those that have had to overcome traumatic life experiences but not limited to those women exclusively. When you've walked through sexual abuse, illness, low self-esteem or whatever

other area you can name that makes and indelible mark upon your life and you emerge in victory, you are qualified to respond to the need in those areas and provide solutions where possible. Methods that I've utilized that have proven to help women along their journey are intimate gatherings—connection points where women can be free to be themselves. In settings like these, focused conversations guide our time and/or activities and ultimately helps them to start the process of facing whatever challenges may be holding them back. They are able to reflect, realign and realize what can be possible as they overcome their areas of challenge. Teaching is a powerful method of transformation. When people come to me and state they are ready for a change, they have already recognized that where they currently live and function is no longer acceptable which is why they are compelled to change. Mentoring is another powerful mechanism utilized which continually proves to be integral as skills, expertise and experience is imparted to a willing learner.

Connection points, teaching and mentoring are just a few areas that I have in place to empower women. I am passionate about lifting, empowering, stretching and growing women because I am a woman. I know first hand what it's like when you feel defeated with no seemingly recourse in sight. I was intimately acquainted with not understanding my worth and value. When you don't know who you are, you'll accept what someone tells you even when it's not the truth. Speaking life to women that don't understand who they are and are searching for significance fuels me to leave no woman left in despair and uncertainty. I'll believe in her so she can believe in herself.

How can our readers connect with you outside of this interview?

NB: I'd love to have readers connect with me via Facebook as Nedra Buckmire or Hope Fulfilled Empowerment. On Instagram and Twitter, you can connect to Lady Buckmire, via my website at www.nedrabuckmire.com or via email at hopecoachnb@gmail.com. I look forward to connecting soon.



Who is Carrie Peele?

CP: In 1989, newly divorced with two small children to support, I started a luxury transportation company on three credit cards and built the largest woman-owned service in the Carolinas. I was fortunate to sell the company in late 2014 and started The File Depot. Today I am president of Mako Documents which securely stores, scans and shreds documents, files, hard drives and the mountains of paper in your business. I love giving back to my community through numerous charities. I started the Triangle Ladies Power Luncheon in 2010 -- a monthly white glove luncheon that supported women in business. My motto is to have lunch with someone EVERYDAY. I am the chair of the Raleigh/Durham Women Presidents Organization and the founder and chair of Athena of the Triangle. Married to David Franks the keyboardist for the Band of Oz, I enjoy country living where there is never a free moment on the farm.

Why do you have such a passion for helping women enter the entrepreneurial world?

CP: I believe that the only way you can control your own destiny is to own your own company. You're the captain of your ship, and you have the opportunity to bring many more with you.

What has been your biggest hurdle?

CP: I have never looked at anything as a hurdle. I look at every situation as an opportunity. Recently I got a frantic call from a young mentee all in a panic, "We're going to be sued." "Stop," I said, "Take a deep breath." "Have they filed any paperwork?" I asked. "No," she replied. "Here's what's going to happen." I told her. "There's going to be some huffing and puffing, even name calling, but everything will turn out in the end." One week later she called, "I didn't need to worry. It happened exactly as you predicted." One thing that we share with all our young entrepreneurs, "Take a breath! Don't worry until you have too. You may think a situation can't be fixed, but if you just take a step back, all the pieces will all fit."

With all the hats you wear, how do you balance everything in your professional and personal life?

CP: Everything I do has a time stamp on it. Anything that gets done gets put in my calendar. Every night on Monday night from 6-10 is date night. Every Friday from

5-9 is family meal. Sprinkle a few things in the week so everybody feels special.

Please tell us about Athena of the Triangle.

CP: Athena of the Triangle is a nonprofit 501c-3 helping women entrepreneurs of the Triangle with advisory panels for one year. Our goal is to empower them as strong leaders in either multi-national corporations or their own business ventures. The women going through the program average a 41% increase in net business profit and 38% increase in personal wealth during her year. We help women entrepreneurs with mentors for an entire year. We provide advisory panels around leadership, finance, and marketing. We also provide women in the "corporate world" mentorship in leadership. www.AthenaTriangle.org

What is next?

CP: It brings me joy to continue to work and to bring value to other people and companies. I don't think I'll ever stop! One the major joys and advantages of having been an entrepreneur for 40+ years is being able to share the wisdom I learned from the mistakes I made, so others don't have too. You never stop learning. I learn something new everyday -- whether it's teaching my 6-yr old granddaughter -- or not -- or doing something outside my comfort zone.

How can people connect to you outside this interview?

CP: carrie@cpeelegroup.com
www.AthenaTriangle.org



By Gracia Rich

Terra Newell is a SURVIVOR. In August of 2016, Terra found herself fighting for her life when she was brutally attacked and assaulted by John Meehan, her mother's ex-husband. The incident ended with Terra having to take the life of her attacker. Her family's story was told in the Bravo show, "Dirty John." Since that time, Terra has been an advocate for women who have suffered abuse and trauma. She has rebuilt her life and is now a beacon for women who overcome such brutality everywhere. Terra feels that if her story can save one person's life, it was worth going through it.

FWM: Terra, I am so pleased to meet you! Please introduce yourself to our readers.

TN: My name is Terra Newell and I am 27 years old.

I am best known for my role in the popular LA Times podcast, Dirty John, which was made into a hit TV series on Bravo and Netflix International. My personal story is also shared in The Dirty Truth Documentary on Oxygen and Netflix International, which features Laura Richards and my mother, Debra Newell. I am a survivor of a brutal assault by my mother's ex-husband and am devoted to sharing my experience in order to help others strengthen their knowledge on self-defense, red flags in relationships, and the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Some of my current projects include public speaking engagements such as speaking at Crimecon and also an upcoming College speaking tour. I am currently sharing my experience about EMDR Therapy on my blog along with other life experiences.

FWM: Your story is very inspiring. How do you continue to maintain a positive outlook?

TN: As I see it, I was given a second chance at life. Even though I went through such a traumatic event, it was such a blessing. John could no longer hurt my family, nor anyone else. I am now able to live my life without worrying about John's threats, I am able to have a relationship with my mom again, and I have gotten so many opportunities that I wouldn't have had if I didn't have my experience. I am so happy for my life and just feel that everything happened the way it was supposed to in the end.

FWM: What advice would you give women in regards to claiming their power in today's society?

TN: I would say that it's important for woman to realize they have a voice and that we are powerful. I get many messages from women saying they don't know what they would do and that they think they would die if they were in an attack. I just want woman to know that they can defend themselves, they can do anything they put their minds too.

FWM: I've read that traveling is one of your favorite pastimes, where has been your favorite destination so far?

TN: I've been to so many great places lately! I just got back from Auckland, New Zealand and Sydney, Australia. I did a trip where I went to each city in the countries 5 days each. Auckland was great, but I really enjoyed Sydney, Australia. The people were very lovely, the airport experience was great, Bondi Beach was great, and so was the Harbor. I went to the zoo and had the best behind the scenes experience. I also



had a lot of people that I met up with there that were able to show me some great parts of the city, so it was great having the local's perspectives.

FWM: What tools and/or strategic partnerships have you put in place to help women? And the community?

TN: I have partnered with Laura Richards along with my mother, Debra Newell, for the majority of my speaking engagements. We are trying to get people motivated to take action in order to put new laws in place for Coercive Control. Laura Richards has helped place a

stalking law in the UK and is now working on one in the States. Other than my partnerships with them, I am helping spread awareness about PTSD from my experience. I was also a part of spreading awareness during National Crime Victims week with Dignity Health and going out on the streets letting people know their rights and that there are free resources out there to get help.

FWM: What advice would you give your younger self growing up as a woman in this world?

TN: If I had to give my younger self some advice... I would say trust your gut and have faith. Everything in my life has always worked out in the end and then whenever I felt in my gut that something wasn't right, it never was.

FWM: How can people connect with you outside of this interview?

HW: I have a Blog, Terranewell.com, they can always leave a comment on there. I am the most active on Instagram, @terra newell and will get to all my messages and comments on there. Lastly you can tweet me @terra_newell.

Photos by McCall and Nikki Ryan Photography

LITERACY MOGULS PUBLISHING



WHAT WE DO

- Manuscript Editing
- Self-Publishing
- Book Cover Design
- Book Formatting

The mission of Literacy Moguls is to make a difference by modeling literacy in the U.S. We aim to give voice to writers. In essence we are helping to make dreams come true.



By Gracia Rich

Aishah Tatum is your Holistic Life Coach. She educates on healthy lifestyles and is the founder of Integrative Wellness. Aishah is also the author of "The Fearless Woman." Aishah believes that healing comes from within and it is a concerted effort between mind, body and soul. It is her hope to lead women into a place of peace and fulfillment.

FWM: Please introduce yourself and your business.

AT: I'm a Holistic Life Coach, Healthy Lifestyle Educator and founder of Integrative Wellness. I provide Health & Wellness Education to women that desire to live a more Holistic Lifestyle. I teach others how to nourish their lives from the inside out and put a lot of focus on inner healing, self-love and spiritual alignment. The biggest objective for my work is to help others ultimately manifest their gifts to the world, which is hard to do when you are unhealthy, unbalanced and out of alignment with your purpose. I find that the biggest challenge for most is the mindset shift, its understanding how to uproot a lot of the disempowering beliefs they have that are limiting their potential and shaping their life. I take my clients through a 7-step process of detoxing the mind, body-using plant-based nutrition, spirit, and emotions as they focus on holistic self-care.

FWM: Tell us about the multidimensional facets of human beings.

AT: God gave us a mind to think, a body to live in, his spirit to occupy that body and so often times we are not really conscious of our true nature and how powerful we are. We forget that we are spirits in bodies and not just bodies. Because of our unique nature and inner power, it can be easy to allow the physical environment, experiences and circumstances to take us out of operating fully in alignment with that power. We have an experience and we label it as good or bad, we form beliefs around these experiences, and habits around these experiences and as a result we experience life based on our perception and interpretations instead of consciously creating our reality based on the truth. These beliefs that we form create the reality that we experience. So, we end up in careers and jobs we don't like, relationships that don't serve us, we end up experiencing lack instead of abundance and we don't really nourish our bodies so people end up with dis-ease and other health related issues. Everything begins and ends in the mind, and that impacts every other area of our lives. When one area of our lives is out of balance, it can ripple into other areas as well. If we want to get our lives right, we have to look within and start the healing and mind renewal process.

FWM: You are the host of "The Fulfilled Life Podcast." Please tell us more about it.

AT: The Fulfilled Life Podcast is a show I created to highlight industry experts on their strategies, tips and advice on how they are creating a Life they Love and what others can do to add more joy, happiness and wellbeing to their lives. I realized that we all desire the same thing, to be happy, healthy, wealthy and live at the highest level of our being. I wanted to use this space to have others share their journey of success with the belief that it would inspire listeners to find their inner voice, move past fear and align with their ultimate purpose.

FWM: You've been a vegan for nearly a decade, what advice would you give to anyone considering this lifestyle?

AT: It was a somewhat challenging transition because I couldn't give up the bbq salmon and the big blocks of cheddar cheese. That took about 6 months to completely walk away from. The first piece of advice would be to do your research on vegan nutrition. Going vegan isn't just about giving up meat and dairy, there are vital nutrients that the body needs, B12, vitamin D, and calcium to name a few that you have to make sure you are getting or you can end up with serious deficiencies that lead to health problems and disease. There are a lot of unhealthy

5 WOMEN OWNING THEIR LANES - AISHAH TATUM

vegans, so you want to transition the right way. Secondly, be patient with yourself. Like any new lifestyle change, it can take time. So, start small, with meatless Mondays and then try eating vegan 3 times a week until you transition fully. Above all, be patient and gentle with yourself.

FWM: How are your efforts empowering women?

AT: I like to share my own story of being able to overcome abandonment, low self-esteem, unhealthy relationships and toxic lifestyle habits to inspire women with the knowledge that no matter your past, you can write a new story. We all have a story, and in taking an honest look at ourselves we can begin to transform our lives to experience all the good that God has for us. Everything I give to the world is given with the message of self-responsibility. That we are responsible for our own healing, our own wellbeing and that we are the authors of our own story. We hold the pen so we can write what we want. Not one of us had control over how our childhoods or our story started but we do have control over how it ends. I think that is the most empowering concept to embody, because when you reach that point of understanding, you become free, free from the past, free from emotional bondage and free to create a life you love, one that Honors God and serves the world. Having the ability to possibly help save a person's life by teaching them how to create a healthy lifestyle is now my driving force. My goal is to get as many

people as I can a little bit healthier.

FWM: Give us some insight from your book, "The Fearless Woman."

AT: The Fearless Woman is a Book of Affirmations that helps women create an empowering belief system, develop unstoppable confidence and renew their self-worth. It is both inspired by and dedicated to my Mother, Lydia, who at the time was just diagnosed with cancer. My mother was the most fearless woman I knew and the affirmations in the book are inspired by her courage and fearless nature. It is a great book for women who need a mindset shift.

FWM: What is new for Aishah Tatum in 2019?

AT: This year I launched a signature program called, Elevate Your Life, which is an 8-week life detox program that focuses on inner healing, self-development and holistic self-care. I am also hosting my very first wellness retreat in Georgia and I am super excited about it. I will be doing a lot more speaking engagements and workshops this year.

FWM: How can people connect with you outside of this interview?

AT: You can connect with me at the following: Instagram: [@aishahtatum](https://www.instagram.com/aishahtatum) and Facebook Page: [facebook.com/aishahtv](https://www.facebook.com/aishahtv)
Photos by @peachcityphotography

BEAUTY - WALKING BY FAITH WITH ALEXANDRA "ALEX" BUTLER CONT'D

behind makeup application. I decided to reach out to my followers to ask them what cities I should visit. I developed a syllabus of how I apply makeup step by step, and I took my show on the road. This was in 2012 and I taught every year through the end of 2017. I'm currently not teaching large classes for several reasons, but I still offer personal lessons to those who inquire. And that includes everyday women wanting to learn how to do their own makeup and MUAs wanting to be mentored.

We're going to put some positive vibes in the atmosphere; who would you love to have in your chair next?

AB: I would love to work with Oprah or Michelle Obama. I feel they are amazingly strong women who share a similar aesthetic in beauty that I tend to portray on clients. They have a major voice and with a major voice, the perfect look is necessary. I feel I could enhance their already beautiful faces in a way that would wow their socks off and give them a new perspective of makeup.

For the aspiring artists reading Formidable Woman, what advice would you give them?

AB: My best advice is to save your money and to stick to your own journey. Save your money because your first couple years will be an investment into your business in the form of purchasing makeup, materials, equipment, classes, business expenses etc. And sticking to your own journey is super important so you aren't comparing your path with someone else's. You don't know what prayers people pray, or shoes people fill to accomplish the things they accomplish. And you may not be willing to do the things they had to do to get

where they are. Stay true to yourself and trust God.

Do you feel like your life and career are coming full circle now?

AB: Absolutely!!! And that comes with age and understanding that I am not really in control. And I can tend to be controlling. Relinquishing that control and trusting God has been the biggest lesson I've learned in my career and in life. My faith has been unwavering and makes life a lot easier by just letting things happen as they may. Tithing also helps with that...

What do you do for fun?

AB: If I've had my rest and am not exhausted of sleep deprived, I have been known as "THE GOOD TIME". All of my friends know, when I'm around it's about to be laughs all day long! I love physical activities (and am a true jock/tomboy-I played basketball from 1st grade to my junior year of college) like kick ball, skiing, bowling or laser tag. I love to go out to eat and drink, especially a good brunch. Going to the movies is one of my favorite things to do and it's a part of my self-care routine, so I go solo sometimes during the day during the week. I love pedicures, manicures, massages, facials, live music, walking the Beltline, shopping, festivals... I love vacationing and am looking forward to a trip with my husband to Greece and Paris this September

How can people find you on social media?

AB: You can find me on Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter as [@themuaalex](https://www.instagram.com/themuaalex). On Facebook, Alexandra Butler Makeup Artistry and on YouTube as AlexandraBond. Of course my website, is www.themuaalex.com.



By Gracia Rich

Tiffany Williams-Parra is a Fitness Queen. She is Health Coach, author and the owner of Phoenix Fitness Fanatics! of Ontario, California. Tiffany has overcome many obstacles in her life and has made it her goal to empower women through fitness. She wants women to understand that we can become whomever we want to be, we just have to put in the work.

FWM: Please introduce yourself and your business.

TWP: Hi! My name is Tiffany Williams-Parra, Owner of Phoenix Fitness Fanatics! I am a heart centered entrepreneur focused on helping women transform their minds and bodies in order to create the best version of themselves inside and out. I launched my business in Ontario, California a little over a year ago, but with Virtual Fitness Coaching you can be anywhere in the world serving clients. 2019 has been a very busy year so far. I co-authored a book that will be coming out in August, hosted my first Women's Wellness Retreat in the beautiful mountains of Big Bear, CA., was featured in our local area magazine as one of the "Women of Power" in the industry, started a beta test group surrounding releasing weight and keeping it off by following my methodology for this process, and currently I am working with some amazing individuals to open a local community center/gym where we will focus on fitness, nutrition, nurturing kids talents, and selfcare for parents.

FWM: Tell us about your fitness journey.

TWP: I am so passionate about what I do because of my own personal fitness journey. Back in 2008, I weighed in at almost 300 pounds. After being told my blood sugar levels were off the charts and my blood pressure was high, I decided to get into action. The thought of my son growing up without his mother just ate me up. It ate me up enough to the point that I knew I had to do something. I gradually started making changes in my life to create a healthier lifestyle. First, I started walking, then running 2-3 miles a day, then I got really laser focused on what I ate and when I ate it. Now don't get me wrong, I will eat the things I love like chocolate or ice cream, I just do it in moderation. By staying consistent in my practice and dedicated to me health, I released over 100 + pounds in a 3-year period and have maintained my

goal weight (Give or take a few pounds.) Up to date, my blood work each year is great, and I feel amazing!

FWM: I LOVE how you said released the pounds instead of lost. Explain your philosophy behind that.

TWP: I say released because something that is lost can be found, sometimes without even looking. I don't plan to find the weight ever again!

FWM: What advice would you give someone who is feeling overwhelmed in their fitness journey?

TWP: Don't give up. In this journey you must shed quite a lot of tears, sweat, and blood at times in order to push through. Our bodies are magnificent and if you get out of your own head, you can create the best version of you yet!

FWM: What is your motivation?

TWP: There are a couple of things that have motivated me in my journey. My family has been my biggest motivation. Raising happy healthy kids these days can be a challenge. Especially with the saturation of unhealthy foods and outside influencers. I just remind them once again, "Moderation is key." Having the ability to possibly help save a person's life by teaching them how to create a healthy lifestyle is now my driving force. My goal is to get as many people as I can a little bit healthier.

FWM: How do you empower women?

TWP: I empower women by teaching them to learn how to accept themselves for who they are inside and out. You must love yourself unconditionally in order to get through this journey otherwise you will backslide right on back to square one.

FWM: Tell us a bit about a day in the life of Tiffany Williams-Parra. I heard it begins with a 3:45 am wake-up call.

TPW: Yep, that's right! My alarm goes off at 3:30 due to my husband's work schedule. I try to lie in bed most days and meditate for about 15 minutes then I drink a bottle of water (I sleep with one next to the bed). After that, I freshen up, throw on my favorite workout gear, and it's off to the gym. I meet a few people at our local gym at 4:30 for an hour to an hour and 15-minute workout. This gets me so pumped and ready for my day! After the gym I head home, wake my son up, get dressed, then it's off to school for him and work for me. As an up and coming Entrepreneur in the Health and Fitness Realm, I also work as a Full Time HR Manager at an entertainment venue. After spending 8 -9 hours there I come home, spend quality time with the family, and start it all over again.

FWM: What piece of advice would you give your younger self?

TWP: The best advice I would give my younger self is to never let others dim your shine. I dimmed my shine for a very long time due to what people said or thought about my decisions. Today I shine bright and I want to illuminate the world!

FWM: How can people connect with you outside of this interview?

TWP: You can connect with me at the following: Instagram: [Phoenixfitnessfanaticscoachit](https://www.instagram.com/Phoenixfitnessfanaticscoachit), Facebook Business Page: www.facebook.com/PFFCoachIT/ and Facebook Group Page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/373719946381942/>
Photos by Casey Jade Photography and Tiffany Williams-Parra



Become A Certified Coach Trainer With The Open Your Own Coach Training Academy Program



NOW AVAILABLE



NOW AVAILABLE



NOW AVAILABLE



There is almost nothing a coach wants more than an avenue to bring their business to the next level and the Open Your Own Academy program provides you this opportunity.

You will receive a crash course in opening and running your own program. ICI Director, Dr. Shekina Moore, will mentor you and be available for any questions you have. You will also learn how to train your students so that they earn ICF learning credits from you.

PROGRAM GOALS -----

At the end of the Open Your Own Academy program you will:

- have a company in which you will be able to train and certify others as coaches
- have all the materials you need to train them (you can modify these and call them your own)
- be able to apply to the ICF on behalf of your coach training programs (we show you how.)
- be certified as a coach trainer (you can choose to be a certified life coach trainer, girls empowerment coach trainer, spiritual coach trainer, business coach trainer or relationship coach trainer)

