

CELEBRATE

Your Color



A MOVEMENT

*TO CAPTURE AND SHARE THE
BEAUTY AND DIVERSITY OF
WOMEN OF COLOR AND THEIR
UNIQUE STORIES*

VOLUME
2021

Market Street Studio
PHOTOGRAPHY

Authentic & Emotional

The CELEBRATE YOUR COLOR portrait campaign is all about showcasing the beauty of diversity and sharing the experiences and accomplishments of women of color. The project features 40 inspiring women and their stories.

Market Street Studio



Julie Lieblich is a portrait photographer specializing in modern studio portraiture. She is a native of Washington, D.C. Julie owns and operates Market Street Studio, a full-service boutique photography studio in Gaithersburg, Maryland. The studio supports many local businesses and special events throughout the year.

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Raquel Abeid

Diversity is one of the most beautiful and amazing things here in the U.S. Everyone has a different cultural background with many valuable traditions. I am so honored to be able to live here and my kids get this amazing opportunity of sharing their life with such cultural diversity.

I love that feeling of accomplishment when I really do my very best as a person, mom, wife, professional, etc.

Values to live by...

Kindness and Respect. With only these two values, our world would be a more wonderful place.

Farrah Ahmad

In a nutshell, diversity, equity, and inclusion is about empowering people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education, and national origin. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are about fairness, doing the right thing, but are also part of an obvious business decision. Diversity needs to take many forms: gender, socioeconomics, thoughts, disabilities, and many others. And then inclusion will ensure you listen to these different voices, so they feel valued.

My advice...

Let your own light shine, allow yourself to be you — your own, true, authentic self. Know that you are worthy of love, happiness, success, and peace. Trust yourself, have faith in God and the universe and learn to trust the “process.” Above all, self-love, self-respect, and dignity are all intertwined and come together to showcase the true you. Always reach out to friends and family for words of encouragement, strength, and positive feedback. Know that being yourself, being honest and transparent and true may not always be accepted by some, but be yourself anyway. Don’t seek approval or validation from anyone. Daily positive affirmations have helped me in my journey to becoming stronger and more confident, which ultimately leads to being more happy and fulfilled.





Colie Aziza

I grew up in the Bronx, N.Y. That is an ethnicity all to itself. I loved being who I was. My family celebrated being of African descent, and we also celebrated being from the Caribbean. I grew up loving my family and my community. I grew up in an ethnically diverse neighborhood, African-American, Latino, Irish, Italian, and Jewish. For the most part, we all got along while we were children. Folks didn't start to tribe up until we got older.

Being a woman of color, it can be a daily struggle, the micro-aggressions that you get from some white folks. I have experienced this on a regular basis in the workplace, with people questioning my competency and expertise. I usually speak my mind and then I get labeled the angry Black chick, but that's ok. I know who I am. If you do something that is uncomfortable for me, I think that it is important that I let you know. Not everyone is ready for the truth.

One of my greatest accomplishments is continuing to perform in music and the-ater and create a children's book while holding down a teaching career for 30 years, and just teaching for 30 years. Can't believe I'm here!

Words to live by...

"Be Easy." It's something many of the folks in the island St. Kitts said to me while I was visiting, and it stuck with me. So many times we are so hard on ourselves, and the pressure on people of color and women of color to show the world that they are not a stereotype is a heavy one, so "Be Easy" on yourself. Stand in your greatness. Love on yourself. Shore up your Root/Foundation, and be at peace.



Saerome Bae

I grew up in South Korea, which is racially very homogeneous, so I was lucky to grow up without having to deal with challenges that my other Asian Americans have experienced. My father, on the other hand, studied in the states in the 70's and experienced discrimination enough to decline a job offer with a green card and went back to Korea. I came to the states for college and have been here now for over 25 years. I have experienced some discrimination, however, I am hopeful that the world is changing rapidly and positively. I am honored to be part of this great experience and hope to contribute to make the world a better place for our one human race where discrimination, judgment, and mistreatment don't exist.

I am proud to be the first generation immigrant who has been living the American dream. I am proud to have earned my Executive MBA degree last May. I am proud of my start-up, VWell, Inc., which is a digital wellness platform connecting wellness instructors and clients. Most importantly, I am very proud to be a mom to my wonderful son, Aston.

Words to live by...

Anything in moderation, nothing too extreme!



Carmen Bell

Growing up in Omaha, Nebraska, with college educated parents, I was raised in a diverse neighborhood, but when the city zoned an area right below our house as Section 8, my life experiences quickly changed from the calm multiethnic (white and black) to seeing the world from a different lens. My family decided to buy a new house, because the crime would increase, school systems decline, and property value of the house decrease. During that time, white flight was prevalent and white people could exclude black people from “their” neighborhoods, which made it difficult for us to get a house. In the interim, since I was in 7th grade, I was able to attend a predominantly white school that was in one of the communities a fellow researcher my father knew lived in. There, I was the only black student. I had the “honor” of sitting behind a racist male student who spat on me because I refused to accept a paper he threw on the floor. I was almost expelled for flipping his desk over. My mother always told me not to let anyone spit on you or hit you in the face. A couple of months later, we were “allowed” in a community, but within a month we had a cross burned in our yard. The majority of people in the neighborhood came over with food, apologizing. That was the first time I realized there are good people and bad people; race has nothing to do with it. I was the first black student at my junior high, then the next year, busing started. Many of the black students thought I “talked white.” Luckily, my cousin was there and told them my entire family talked the same. I then had friends that were from my neighborhood, white, and those that were bused in, black. On a normalcy platform, I lived that life. I was on the pep squad, played the flute, sang, played multiple sports. I would say that I lived two lives, with the diversity occurring at school. I grew up in church, located in a predominantly black neighborhood, where my grandfather was a deacon. My family lived in an all-white community that is still less than 10% black families. I could write a novelette, especially regarding my college and onward, but there is not enough time.

My advice...

Be your own influencer, holding your head up high even when the weight of the world is on your back. You are fierce, fine, full of finesse, and fantastic!



Elsie Best _____

Words to live by...

“Don’t settle for average. Bring your best to the moment. Then, whether it fails or succeeds, at least you know you gave all you had. We need to live the best that’s in us.” —Angela Bassett

Pree Bhutani

Words to live by...

“Embrace what makes you unique, even if it makes others uncomfortable. I didn’t have to become perfect because I’ve learned throughout my journey that perfection is the enemy of greatness.”
—Janelle Monae



Sarabjeet Bhutani

Words to live by...

“Let us remember: one book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.” —Malala Yousafzai





Michelle Bustillos

I believe the world just needs to be more accepting concerning our differences. That's what makes the world colorful — diverse cultures, races, and the unique qualities everyone brings to the table. My love and devotion to God and my family, as well as my respect and compassion for the rest of the world is what motivates me. If someone has a problem with my color or my race, that's their problem, not mine. I am secure and happy with who I am and what I am.

My advice...

Love yourself first! Be happy and content with yourself and don't compare yourself to others. Know that you are special, you are unique, and you can accomplish anything.



C. Deshola Dawkins

Diversity is very important to me, because everyone has something to offer in our world. If we are not able to be diverse, then we can not grow as a community, organization, or world. Growing up as a person of color is what you make life to be. It could be challenging, exciting, and interesting. An accomplishment that I am truly proud of is raising seven children while attending college and receiving a Master's degree from Howard University.

One thing I wish non-POC would understand about our culture is that due to our history there is a lot of brokenness, and mental health issues challenges, but with the same breath there is also lots of gifts and talents within our culture despite our history.

How I celebrate...

To be a woman of color for me means living my truths every day in my dress, the way I wear my hair, and my acceptance of my community. I celebrate this by practicing who I am in my own environments daily.

LaToya Deang

Diversity is one of my family's values. We have chosen our workplaces, doctors, church, and neighborhood based on that value. I want my child to feel empowered and be confident in what she can contribute to society. Being a part of a diverse community that also respects the diversity within the community is the only way for her to feel those things.

My family raised me to be a strong, confident black woman, but society has a way of making you doubt yourself. I grew up always feeling like I didn't belong...like there was something wrong with me. Family and friends would tell me how smart and beautiful I was, but society would regularly tell me the opposite. So, it felt like there was a constant battle to prove that I was worthy.

I am proud that I graduated from Florida A&M University, a Historically Black University, with a degree in Mechanical Engineering, and that NASA found me worthy enough to fund my educational journey. I am also proud of the daughter that my husband and I are raising. She will be a force to be reckoned with and I cannot wait to see the strong young woman that she will become.

My advice...

Find your village! We are not meant to live this life alone. Find those people who support you and hold you accountable for becoming who you are meant to be.



Michelle Duncan

My childhood was WONDERFUL! My parents ensured that we didn't have a care in the world. Our house was filled with love and fun! It wasn't until I got to high school that I realized we are not all "the same." The people who looked like me told me that I wasn't "black enough" for them because I love Rock music, didn't speak the same as they did or dress the same way they did. I was excluded and as a result, an entire group of people never got to know me.

One of my favorite accomplishments is finishing culinary school at 37 years old and graduating Cum Laude while being married, raising two children, and working full time.

In my very first Head Chef position, my entire staff was male. They didn't want to listen to a thing I had to say. One day I sat them all down and cooked for them and from that day forward they never gave me a hard time about anything culinary. Next, I worked on EARNING their respect.

My advice...

Ask yourself two questions: 1. Who is influencing you to feel this way? 2. Why do you care what those people think about you? Then you call me and we'll get all dressed up and go out and make some NOISE!





January Gabriel

In my early years, it was normal, as I lived in a neighborhood where my uncles, aunts, cousins, grand- and great-grandparents were all neighbors. Then we moved to Potomac and white people would pet or touch me; sometimes they asked and sometimes they didn't. They made me feel like an alien. They would ask, "what are you?" or they would say that my braids made me look like "Predator." I was seven years old. It was a harsh shift in my day-to-day life.

As a young woman I was often looked at as an object, rather than a living human being. My voice was often silenced or covered by shouts of fools. I was not seen for who I was but for who others perceived me to be. I am proud of myself for letting go of all those things that I am not, and for being who I am today.

I am truly proud of myself for rededicating my life to Christ in 2015. It was a huge gift for me to be fully immersed in the love and peace that surpasses all understanding.

My advice...

I would suggest that women who are struggling with self-worth stop digging and start building. Start in the mirror. Start writing, or drawing or dancing or whatever your expression is...start reading and learning and allow yourself space, room, and time to grow. I suggest getting involved in a community helping others, so you're not so self-centered/focused and can actually see what you can do. You'll be amazed.



April Harris

Being a woman of color means every day I have an opportunity to make a difference in a world full of hatred. I celebrate by showing up for war with Peace in my heart.

Favorite quote...

“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Marvellous are thy works; And that my soul knoweth right well.” —Psalm 139:14 KJV

Sandy Harris

From August of 1989 to August of 2013, I had the precious privilege of performing as a vocal recording artist with the 3-time Grammy Award Winning Sounds of Blackness! Who knew that performing would be such a joy?? Our music represents the full spectrum of black music, and as a contemporary gospel group, our songs predominantly present positive messages of uplift, resilience, and encouragement. We tell the story of our African American culture, paying tribute to our contributions to music and society at large. What touches me most is when someone says “your music brought me through really rough times” or “your music saved my life”... so very humbling. Music is energy and vibration that can uplift the spirit and soothe the soul. Such a blessing to have contributed to this special group!

My experience...

My photoshoot date was 6 months after I had celebrated my 60th birthday. I had stepped into my 60s with a renewed sense of power, grace and joy. I have relaxed into who and what I am, and I recognize that I am enough. I’m at a stage in my life where I am very real and very human, and I have no need to be anything other than my authentic self. This photo shoot was a gift to myself to capture the magic of this time in my life...and Julie captured the radiance of my true nature shining through. I am so grateful!





LaTricia Henderson

I have always been proud of who I am and where I'm from. I was blessed to be raised by strong women (didn't realize how hard it was for my mom until I was grown and had to pay my own way)! I was very much aware of how systems weren't established to help or protect my community. I didn't encounter obstacles myself until I entered the workforce. Career advancement has not been easy, but I have been diligent and consistent and I believe I will continue to progress. I am determined.

CYC was just what I needed at this point in my life. There were so many things that I LOVED. First, it helped me to get back into myself. I hadn't dressed up in over a year. Also, although the last couple of years have been challenging for POC, I have been blessed to have great leadership in my professional and personal life. My photoshoot got me ready to really let all of that sink in and embrace it!! I feel ready and focused for all of the wonderful things that are coming my way.

Words to live by...

Lately, I think about GIG — Grit, Influence, and Grace. I heard someone say that POC need this to keep making progress. It resonated with me, and I think about it whenever I have challenges.



Andrea Hernandez

Words to live by...

“Experience has taught me that you cannot value dreams according to the odds of their coming true. Their real value is in stirring within us the will to aspire.” —U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor

Leslie Holmes

DE&I is having a presence from all races, cultures, religious backgrounds, ages, socioeconomic statuses, languages, disabilities, sexual orientations, but also diverse experiences and skills. We are stronger as a nation when we encourage diversity of thought, foster an environment to cultivate ideas, promote justice and fairness, and simply make people feel welcomed. It is important that every voice be heard, and for those quieter voices, to allow the time and space for processing so their voices can also be heard. We need to open our minds to learn from the experiences of others. When a company puts in place DE&I programs, it takes commitment, training, ongoing work, and must be promoted from the top. Know that you need all three in order for people to truly feel as though they belong.

My advice...

Always remember that in the eyes of God (the only opinion that matters) you are worth everything. You are the beneficiary of God's work. You are beautiful because you are a woman of color. You are strong because you are still standing. Surround yourself with positive people, move those out of your life that do not have your best interest at heart, do not be afraid to ask for help, and give yourself permission to love you. Each day, choose 4-5 self-affirmations and say them out loud: 1. I am strong and confident, 2. I am where I am supposed to be at this point in my life, 3. I love my body and am comfortable in my own skin, 4. I will live in the moment today and not stress about my past or worry about the future, and 5. I choose to be happy.





Joyce Hunter

Growing up as a person of color was 99% fun. Occasionally, I would run into an unenlightened person, but I would chalk it up to how much they lost by not getting to know me.

Being one of the first women of color at Villanova was a bit of a struggle, finding my own space and voice in a predominantly male and white environment. My parents gave me a strong sense of self with the scripture Philippians 4:16 — “I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me,” and 2 Timothy 1:7 — “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

How I celebrate...

I celebrate my individuality. Whether I wear my hair in dreadlocks or straight, or wear the clothes acquired during one of my trips to Africa, I celebrate all that makes up me: growing up in west Philadelphia, to Villanova, to University of Penn, to being one of the pioneering women in the information technology space, to being an appointee for the first African-American President, to leading a cybersecurity think tank and the data science camp.



Larissa Johnson

As a Black, Irish, Scottish, English, Manx woman, I believe in the intersectionality and interconnectedness of all things and that is what informs my work and life decisions every day. As a woman of color, I feel that it is my duty to make sure that all people are considered when I am in decision making spaces. I cultivate meaningful relationships and empower those that are not in the room to become part of the conversation and when their voice(s) are missing, I make sure I speak up to include them. My piece of advice to those who are struggling with their self-worth is to make a list of all of your strengths. Know your worth. Take up space. Speak up. And if there is not a seat at the table for you, bring your own chair.

Words to live by...

“Life is better when you’re laughing.”



Cheryl Kern

Faith is a foundational value in my life. Hope ranks high that we can transcend obstacles. Transparency and humility are important to me as well. I was raised to be proud of my heritage, surrounded by love from family and friends and immersed in a community that understood the opportunities before us as much as the obstacles that might lie ahead. Growing up as a person from a marginalized community prepared me well for the world I entered as an adult.

How I celebrate...

Being authentic, being a parent and spouse, maintaining lifelong friends and embracing life as fully as possible. I celebrate by loving who I am and uplifting others.



Tania Malferrari

Diversity is important so that one is not made to feel like “an other.” It frees your mind to tackle other, more important matters when one feels part of one human race. Diversity means representation of the global populace; equity is having a seat at the table regardless of color, creed, socioeconomic standing or any other man-made “classification.” Inclusion to me means that one is not forgotten.

How I celebrate...

Celebrate your victories, no matter how small. Little steps still cover some ground and move you forward.

Chinyere Mathewson

Growing up with a West Indian mother and an African-American father, I've had the privilege of experiencing wonderful cultures, foods, and traditions. I learned that Diversity leads to understanding, connection, and inclusion. Making space for diversity at home and in media, advertising, movies, school, workplace, church, and every aspect of life — creates space to move away from tolerance towards an authentic acceptance of every individual.

My advice...

When people hire me as their health coach, they often lead with “I want to lose weight!” They're usually shocked at how much health coaching involves working on small, consistent habits that make you feel GOOD and make you feel WORTHY.

We tackle things like stress, sleep, unplugging from work, drinking water, and walking — long before discussing Oreos. Simple daily habits literally have the power to shift your mood. The reality is that when you're in a better mood overall, a lot of us organically gravitate towards healthier habits and increased feelings of self-worth.

Lastly, don't compare. Be you. Social media makes that difficult for most of us. Comedian/actor Deon Cole said it perfectly: “Cardi B doesn't even look like Cardi B!” Social media isn't real, set your own goal posts and vision for your life, then take action to make it happen.





Dr. Katrina E. Miller

Returning to school to pursue a Doctorate degree after the age of 50 was one of my greatest accomplishments. I was the youngest person in my cohort.

One thing I wish non-people of color understood is that culture, traditions, and experience vary with every POC. While there may be similarities, we are not all the same, and each POC sees the world through their own personal lens.

My values...

As a woman, I value honesty, truthfulness, and faithfulness.

Morgan Monfou

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are incredibly important to me as an artist. What a boring world we would live in if we were all the same. These three things allow me to create art on everyone. Learning about other cultures gives me a chance to learn more and grow as a human being. I don't think we should ever stop learning and growing.

Growing up as a Black woman was difficult at times, but now that I am older I would not have had it any other way. My struggles have made me who I am today. I am stronger because of my color. Struggles I often faced as an adult were feeling like I had to prove to management that I was just as good, if not better, than my coworkers. I became very resilient; you develop a thick skin and it just pushes you to keep going.

My advice...

Our color does not make us a threat. We are amazing, talented, loving, and brilliant and deserve to be heard.





Carol Moulton

DEI has been my life's work and passion for over 30 years. When leadership truly understands and incorporates DEI principles, everyone benefits: the organization, the stakeholders, and the employees. One of my greatest accomplishments was deciding to go back to school and pursuing a PhD in Psychology.

My advice...

Allow that Spark of the Divine that is in you to shine!

Tameka Nicholson

Being a woman of color is a daily struggle. You learn to expect that you'll be the only woman of color in the room, expect that you'll have to be smarter, work harder, and always be one step ahead. It's my reality. So, you learn to live/deal with it by becoming more confident, more prepared, and embracing it and using it as an opportunity to bring other women of color along on the journey with you. Growing up, I always felt like I had to be better at everything. To show the world that POC are not all negative statistics.

To be able to continue to advance my career as a woman of color in a predominantly non-POC industry, and not compromise my culture and my authenticity, is a huge accomplishment. To be able to have balance as a wife, mother, sister, cousin, friend, etc., and not lose ME while living in my purpose.

Having one black friend does not make you an expert on black culture. Having one negative interaction with a POC does not define an entire race! My culture is my daily life, my history, and my future. Just like yours. It's not a fad, something cool to do at the moment, or a trend. You can't embrace our music, our talent, and our athletic abilities when it's convenient and provide you joy and remain silent when we are mistreated, targeted, discriminated against, and/or killed.

Words to live by...

She believed she could, so she did!





Anu Pahwa

It is very important to me that I bring in my own culture and at the same time I respect others' values and beliefs. Being in IT and struggling with my next move for career advancement was not easy. I did not give up and did not lose hope, tried several different opportunities to get to where I wanted to be, and did not lose the motivation to grow, learn, and do better. My most important values are gratitude, family, integrity, loving life, & thankfulness.

My advice...

Don't give up; do not lose hope; be optimistic and you will achieve it!

Euna Patil

As a woman of Asian descent it means I can bring diversity. I celebrate it each day, being proud of where I came from, how that changed and evolved into who I am today, and how this will allow me to celebrate today and tomorrow. I celebrate this journey by surrounding myself with a diverse group of friends and coworkers.

Our Asian (Taiwanese) culture is loving, and we should strive to see that we are all equals. We should interact with each other like there's no color! That's what I'd love my children to see.

Words to live by...

At any given moment, you have the power to say: "This is not how the story is going to end."

"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." —Ralph Waldo Emerson





Mafeda Richardson

Being a mother to three beautiful, kind, caring, and loving children is one of my greatest accomplishments. I try to instill in them some of my own core values like family, freedom, loyalty, courage, and connection.

I enjoyed the CYC shoot because it allowed me the time and space to focus solely on my care.

Words to live by...

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” —Maya Angelou



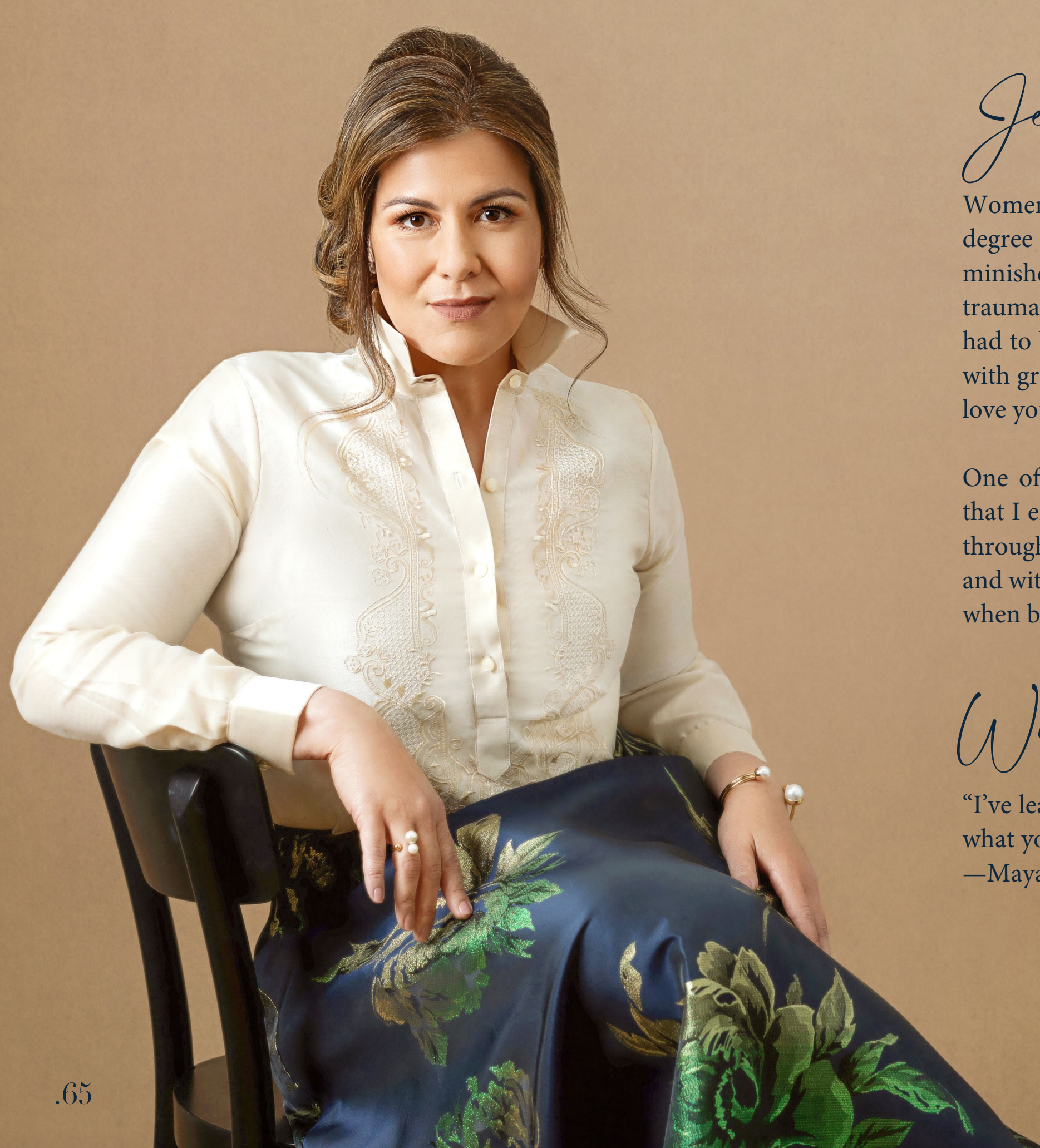
Mannikka Rosa

I grew up in a predominantly white neighborhood. I was always welcome, but inside I felt out of place often. I mastered the art of code-switching when I would head to my inner-city church on the weekends. It was a lesson of survival I learned at a young age. I also grew up during the Michael Jackson “Black & White/Heal the World” era. The language was very flowery and hopeful for change. I also hung around a lot of Jewish people. We learned a lot from each other’s culture. It wasn’t until middle school that I started to notice my “otherness.” Still, attending public school in a diverse area made it easy for me to accept difference and feel connected.

I remember for dance competitions and performances struggling to find the right color tights and get the perfect red lipstick. I was so aware at a young age of what was the desirable beauty standard and it wasn’t me. I lost confidence a lot. Especially being surrounded by so many white, skinny blonds. Ten years ago, I decided to go natural. It was the best gift I could give myself in resisting those inner thoughts that tried dimming my light. Today, I am so grateful for the natural hair journey and the confidence I have wearing my hair in the way that mother nature intended. I can wear clothes, makeup, and hairstyles in a way to express myself now that I never could before.

Words to live by...

“SLOOOOOOOWWWWWWWWW
DOOOOOOOOOWWWWWWWWN” —My Mom



Jennifer Simpson

Women who struggle with self-worth are firstly struggling with some degree of trauma inflicted by another individual. The result is a diminished sense of self-worth. My advice is to forgive and release the trauma and accept it as part of your soul's journey — something that had to be learned. From that point, make it your goal to fill yourself with gratitude for all the good in your life, no matter how small. The love you fill yourself with will replace any concern about self-worth.

One of my most important values is extending grace to everyone that I encounter. It's important to be mindful that everyone is going through something on a daily basis. To treat others from this lens and with grace ensures a kinder and more nonjudgmental experience when being out in the world.

Words to live by...

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."
—Maya Angelou

Staci Spencer

You can't pick and choose parts of the black culture you like or want to appropriate (music, style, language) and disregard the rest of the black experience because you don't understand it or it makes you uncomfortable. Lean into the other parts that we have to deal with on a daily basis (racism, discrimination, police brutality, etc.) if you're trying to be an ally.

Words to live by...

YOU are enough. Only worry about being the best you every day and a good person in general.





Andrea St. John

Our country has a tumultuous, complex, and intricate history which is interwoven with several civilizations. In order to adequately explain and educate others on the cultural significance of each citizen, resident, and immigrant, it requires critically examining our history, not to find flaws but to find the truth. In that work lies the quest to explore the magnificence of different cultures, religions, languages, and ethnicities in order to adequately respect their norms, traditions, or intrinsic values. I am proud of be an American. I'm an African American woman who understands that my part to play in our modern history is dependent on consistent homage I pay to my ancestors, the brethren of my acculturated community, as well as the sustainable existence I strive to create for my legacies. It is imperative that I educate others on the importance of inclusivity and how equitable practices are necessary to grow mindsets across any category to ensure access for those who need it.

I am proud to be a womanist, a mother, and an educated woman of color. Neither of my grandmothers or grandfathers had access to public institutions of higher education. Thank God that by the time my father was of age, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had been passed in Congress and Brown v. Board of Education of 1954 was upheld by the Supreme Court so that I could have access to an education at any institution of learning that I choose. In many of my positions, I've been the first African-American woman to hold the position of an Assistant Principal. I am most proud of that.

My advice...

Pick your head up, remember your name, and celebrate the fact that you are healing, breathing, and living for an awesome purpose. If you continue to work on making your visions come true, then your goals will eventually be met and all that you need will be consistent blessings. If you do what is right, you will be rewarded.

Kimarie Tobe

Going back to school after having to start my life all over again after having my last son, who was born premature and has cerebral palsy, is one of my greatest accomplishments. My advice for other women is take time out and invest in getting to know you and develop the most important relationship, which is with yourself.

Words to live by...

I learn me by watching me and I love it. #pushforlove.





Dr. Melvia Wallace

Alongside my core values of quality, integrity, and excellence, I believe that education is key to having more choices in life. Two of my greatest accomplishments have been completing my doctorate and owning my own business.

Doing the “Celebrate Your Color” photoshoot gave me an opportunity to celebrate my weight loss journey and see myself through a different lens!

Words to live by...

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”
—Philippians 4:13

Dr. Monica Wallace

I grew up in Prince Georges County, Maryland. School integration, “busing,” began when I was in second grade. My home school was predominantly Black. We were taught to be gracious, friendly, and welcoming. Like we were welcoming someone into our homes. The transition at our school went fairly smoothly. Our friends, however, who were taken from our school and bused into White schools were met with hostility, protest, and even being spit on. When I was nine, my family moved to a neighborhood where we were the second Black family. This was a neighborhood where the Black kids were bused into the White school. My older sister and I experienced being chased home from school, having mud thrown at us, and being called the N-word. This school was still very segregated. On the playground, the Black and White girls played separately. One day, I was told I had to go play with the White girls, because I lived in the White neighborhood. I cried that day, but it made me stronger. I’ve continued to have similar situations throughout my life. Now I expect it. You learn to have your guard up in every situation because you never know how you will be treated because of the color of your skin.

Overcoming Struggle...

Most of the time, when I walk into the room with a patient, although I have a name badge on which says “Physician” or “Dr.,” they do not think that I am actually a medical doctor. It probably happens more often in the Surgical/Operating room setting because everyone is dressed alike in scrubs. However, I have experienced over and over in my career that if I am with a non-POC, who could be a medical student, nurse, transporter, etc., the assumption is that the non-POC is the Physician and not me. Just a couple of weeks ago, I was in scrubs and told by a White male Pediatrician that his call room was ready for me to clean it. Overcoming this is still a daily struggle. It’s changing the way women of color are viewed and educating people to the fact that women of color are Physicians and there are many of us out here.





Serena Wallace

Being a woman of color means that I am undoubtedly among the strongest group of people on the planet. I celebrate it by continuing to live in my truth and passion. There's a daily struggle of being judged, stereotyped, maligned, and underestimated every time I enter an environment where I am not represented. I overcome it by quietly, yet boldly proving who I am by my actions, words, and deeds.

One of my greatest accomplishments is possessing three (3) college degrees: Bachelor of Arts from the University of Virginia; Master of Arts from University of Maryland Baltimore County; Master of Fine Arts from George Washington University.

Words to live by...

“To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under the Heavens.” —Ecclesiastes 3:1

Rainia Washington

My upbringing was amazing as a young black girl in East Cleveland, Ohio. I was surrounded by so many role models that looked like me and encouraged me to push forward to be whoever I wanted to be. “The sky is the limit and the world is your oasis,” is what my Mom would tell me. Seek after goals that will bring you joy and personal success.

My neighborhood challenged me, encouraged me, and supported me! I am proud of my upbringing and attribute much of my success today to teachers and friends from high school, counselors from summer programs, parents on my block, and most of all, my mother, Mamie Wiley, who set the right example for me as a strong black woman who didn’t let any obstacle prevent her from being the best provider, leader, friend, and role model!

I am proud of being the mother of two beautiful and strong children. My role of being a wife to an amazing husband, Sammie Washington, and the mother of two amazing kids has been my greatest accomplishment in life. They challenge me and bring me joy all at the same time. This is the strongest love I’ve experienced and live every day to the fullest with my family.

Words to live by...

Please don’t allow others to determine your self-worth! You are the author and finisher of your own fate, so live to your best abilities at all times and continually give your best. Your self-worth is determined by your own barometer — never forget that!





Dawnita Wilson

Growing up as a POC in a predominantly white area is ultimately what inspired me to do the work I do today. Being the only “one” taught me the importance and significance of inclusion and belonging.

As a leader of diversity, equity, and inclusion for almost 15 years now, it’s at the foundation of who I am and what I do. I am committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of their differences, has the opportunity to experience the world in the most authentic way. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are important because they are a catalyst for driving positive change.

How I celebrate...

To be a woman of color is to be confident, powerful, and resilient. These are things that I celebrate each and every day through my work and with my tribe of phenomenal women.

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