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Business

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Lori Butler

Creativity Meets Strategy At Drake Anthony

ALSO INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Financial Reset: Small Money Moves That Can Change Your Year By Spring
- Young Black Men Urged To Prioritize Health Screenings And Prevention
- Civil Rights Leaders Back Black Business Owners In \$70M Westport Lawsuit
- And Much More Inside!

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Servicing the Greater Kansas City Area

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Taking Care of Business...

As the Executive Director of Rasheed Communications and Editor of Taking Care of Business, a new innovative bi-monthly business news magazine, our hope is to bring to you local and national news coverage from the African American community. Our focus is on premier black-owned businesses, powerful women in business, minority small business owners, and startup companies. We distribute this bi-monthly publication commercially and residentially with a target circulation of 5,000 copies six times per calendar year.

We highlight corporations that reinvest in our communities and further advance African Americans and women up their corporate ladder. We also intend to expose those companies which do not. We would like to provide your business with the opportunity to expand your marketing and advertising promotions for the Summer. Our goal is to build bridges so that the businesses in our community will support each other more. We will continue to foster an environment that encourages customers to shop locally for goods and service as we work to strengthen our community.

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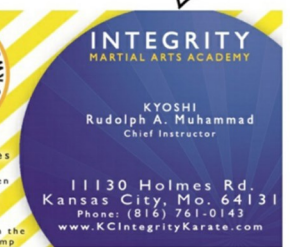
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FINANCIAL RESET: SMALL MONEY MOVES THAT CAN CHANGE YOUR YEAR BY SPRING

Many people want to get their finances in order for the new year. Whether your goal is to cut down debt or increase your savings, you're most likely to make progress if you have a realistic plan. While your knee-jerk reaction may be to spend less, focusing on extreme budgeting can often defeat your overall purpose. Instead, financial experts urge people to think about small but impactful changes that are manageable and sustainable.

Why It Pays To Think Small

Just thinking about a financial reset can create images of making drastic changes to your lifestyle. This can often create a self-imposed pressure to cut everything you can to meet your goal. Unfortunately, doing this only increases the likelihood that you won't stick to the changes you've made.

Financial experts say it's a much better idea for you to assess your life and set goals that are reasonable, simple, and straightforward. The aim isn't perfection or ambitious, far-flung outcomes. You need to look for changes that can be made without significantly disrupting your life while leaving room to adapt.

Additionally, thinking that your financial changes have to be big can stop you from getting started in the first place. For some people, the idea feels too large to ever be within range. Smaller changes keep your goals

Invisible Spending Is A Great Place to Start

Before you jump to changing anything, it's a good idea to start tracking your spending habits. The experts recommend doing this for at least 30 days. Seeing how much you spend in a month or more can reveal where the bulk of your money is going. While this may seem like a delay when you want to get started right away, it's actually an

essential step toward making goals that matter.

One thing that tracking your money usually reveals is invisible spending. This type of spending is defined as small expenses that can drain your finances without you noticing. Sometimes, these are one-off purchases, but they're more likely to be recurring ones. For example, you might not easily remember impulsive purchases like products that are on sale, but they affect your finances.

For recurring expenses, you may notice monthly subscriptions that you no longer use or use so sparingly that you can't justify the expense. This list can include gym memberships, cloud storage, and streaming services. According to CNET, Americans can spend up to \$1,000 per year on subscriptions, and about \$200 of that figure will be due to invisible spending.



If you're not sure about your subscriptions, then using apps that search for subscriptions in your spending may help. These apps can be especially helpful if you subscribed to a service that renews annually instead of monthly.

Another form of invisible spending is card fees. These fees can come from using your debit card frequently or incurring late fees on your credit card. For debit cards, it can be

helpful to withdraw money in higher amounts and budget what you have instead of getting funds haphazardly. Of course, the best way to manage late fees on your credit card is to ensure that you pay your bill on time.

10 Small Ways To Meaningfully Reset Your Finances

1. Make a Realistic Budget

Some people don't have a budget at all, while others set one that's too vague or doesn't cover everything. If this sounds familiar, it's time to get specific. Typically, this entails not only listing your expenses, but also making room for savings, debt repayment, and desired purchases. Two options you can use are the 50/30/20 or 60/30/10 budgets. The first percentage should cover your bills, while the second percentage is what you allocate to your desired purchases. Finally, the last percentage needs to cover savings and debt repayments. If your needs exceed what you've allocated for spending, then you know it's important to make adjustments.

2. Automate Your Savings

One great way to easily increase your savings is to make it automated. This figure doesn't have to be large—especially if you're not sure how much you can afford. Starting with \$20 may seem tiny, but that figure can quickly build. Financial experts suggest using high-yield accounts for your savings so you can get the most out of your money.

3. Pay A Little Extra on Your Debt

Being financially stable isn't just about growing your savings. You need to reduce your debt as well. While you can manage your debt by making the required minimum payments, it's better to pay a little extra so you can be out of debt even faster. Just an extra five percent can make an impact.

4. Make Small Investments

When some people hear about investing, they think about large amounts that they can't afford. Fortunately, this is no longer the case. There are reputable apps and traditional brokers that accept investments as low as five dollars. If you can afford more, then these small investments are a great way to build a diverse portfolio that will benefit you in the long term.

5. Ask About Lower Student Loan Payments

For some people, their student loan payments aren't set in stone. Financial experts recommend finding out if you qualify for a different repayment plan based on your circumstances. You can also investigate refinancing your loan. On the flip side, if you can afford it, opting for automated payments may reduce your interest rate. Making extra payments may also help to reduce your debt faster.

6. Lower Your Monthly Bills

Getting your monthly bills is another way to keep your spending low while making more money available for savings and investments. You can do this by cancelling streaming services that you no longer use or downgrading premium subscriptions and internet plans. You can also consider switching to a cheaper phone plan if you're not using all the perks that the plan offers. Additionally, you may be able to lower your electricity bill by using energy-efficient appliances and bulbs, as well as addressing any insulation issues in your home.



7. Grocery Shop With a Plan

Your groceries can also be an area where your spending grows unchecked. A good way to combat this is to have a plan every time you go shopping. You should check what's already in your kitchen before making a detailed list. This lowers your likelihood of impulse buying. Checking out

loyalty programs and coupons can also help to lower your grocery bill.

8. Pause Before Non-Essential Purchases

Even with a budget in place, it's easy for non-essential purchases to eat through it. That's why the experts recommend taking a 24-hour break before making a purchase. This is especially true if you're buying online. Most people have less trouble clicking that 'buy now' button than making an in-person purchase.

9. Shop Around for Insurance

It can be convenient to let your insurance auto-renew, but that's not necessarily in your best interest. There may be more affordable options that offer similar coverage. It's a good idea to see what's available to make sure your current insurance plans are the right fit.



10. Increase Your Financial Education

Although small changes to your lifestyle can make a difference, knowing how to set an overall goal to grow your wealth can do wonders. In this case, learning more about finances can shift your entire mindset for future planning.

If you're like most Americans, you want to make better financial decisions this year. It may be tempting to jump right into a rigid budget that should help you save money, but that can backfire. It's better to start small and have a plan that accommodates your current situation.

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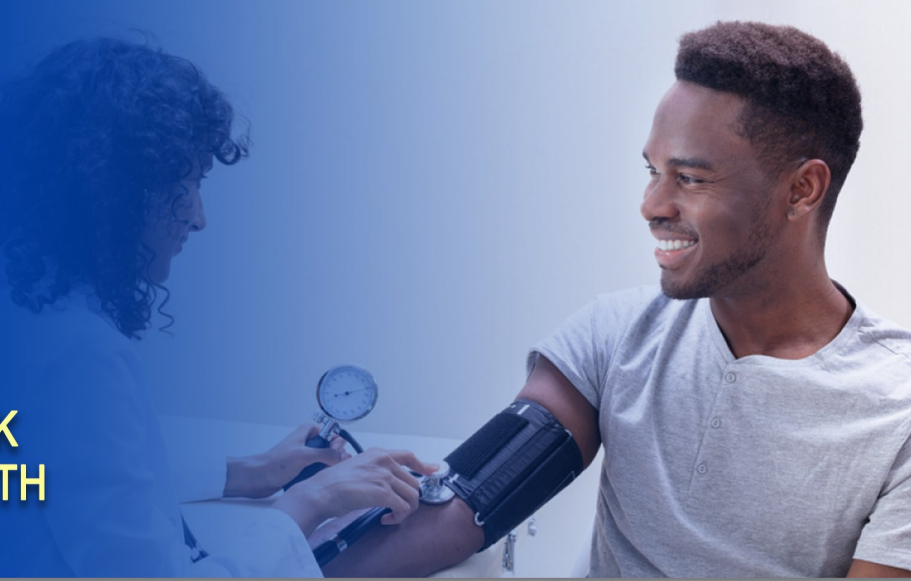
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Young Black Men Urged To Prioritize Health Screenings And Prevention

ADVOCATES URGE YOUNG BLACK MEN TO PRIORITIZE EARLY HEALTH SCREENINGS AND WELLNESS



The African American Health Coalition is working to raise awareness about men's physical and mental health, particularly among young Black men who often wait until they have a problem before seeking medical attention. The organization's community chef, Daniel Pinesette, teaches others how to make healthy meals and educates the community about food and nutrition. The African American Male Wellness Agency hosts monthly sessions called "Real Men Real Talk" to create a space for Black men to be vulnerable and engage in thoughtful conversations about mental health.

It's time to focus on men's physical and mental health. It's time to encourage men to see doctors more often, raise awareness about specific issues like prostate and testicular cancer, and address men's mental health challenges, such as depression and anxiety.

When it comes to health, too many young Black men wait for a problem before they act. A crisis shouldn't be the wake-up call; prevention should be the plan.



Houston chef Daniel Pinesette Jr, 25, is the community chef at the African American Health Coalition. Nutrition

education is deeply personal for him. His father passed away from congestive heart failure in 2017. It reshaped his entire outlook on life, food, and health.

Chef Daniel Pinesette is the community chef at the African American Health Coalition. He educates the community about food and nutrition. Credit: Jimmie Aggison

"My dad was the cook in the family," Pinesette says. "After he passed, I realized it wasn't just what he was eating, it was that he wasn't paying attention to his health. Not taking medicine, not seeing doctors, not knowing what was really going on. I didn't want to repeat that story."

So, he picked up where his father left off, only this time, with intention. As a graduate of Galveston College's culinary program, he now teaches others how to make the food they love without sacrificing their health.

When Pinesette speaks to his peers, he often hears the "same excuses" as to why they usually don't get their health checked.

"When I talk to guys my age, they'll say, 'Oh, I need to go,' or, 'I'll do it next week,'" he says. "They'll say they're hurting but don't want to get checked out because of money or fear. A lot of it is just avoiding the conversation altogether."

That attitude, waiting until something's wrong, is exactly what doctors and community leaders want to change.

According to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services, young people must see health care providers regularly. Regular check-ups ensure that adolescents receive the recommended clinical preventive services, including immunizations, screening tests, and health counseling, which are essential for their age group.

Routine health care visits help prevent unhealthy behaviors, promote healthy decision-making, and reduce the likelihood of developing major health issues now and in the future.

Young people don't have to wait until they are 40 years old to prioritize health screenings. Medical experts emphasize that young adults should be aware of their blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels, as early screenings and awareness are crucial for maintaining long-term health.

"A doctor and patient should be partners in health," says Dr. Julie Nguyen, a primary-care physician at Houston Methodist, in a statement. "Working together, we can help you live a healthy life."

This means it's never too early to establish a relationship with a primary-care provider. Even healthy, young adults benefit.

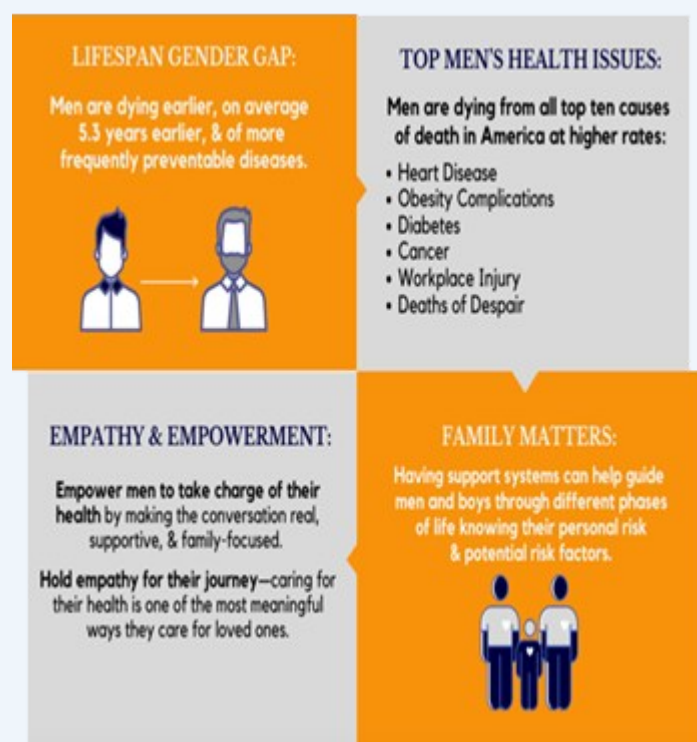
Shifting the Mindset

That's the message Jamail Johnson, VP of strategic partnerships for the National Center for Urban Solutions,

wants young men to hear loud and clear. As the former executive director of the African American Male Wellness Agency in Houston, the organization is shifting the focus from "catching up" to staying ahead.

"We're trying to get men to think about health the same way they think about money or cars," he says. "You don't wait until your engine blows to check the oil. The same goes for your body."

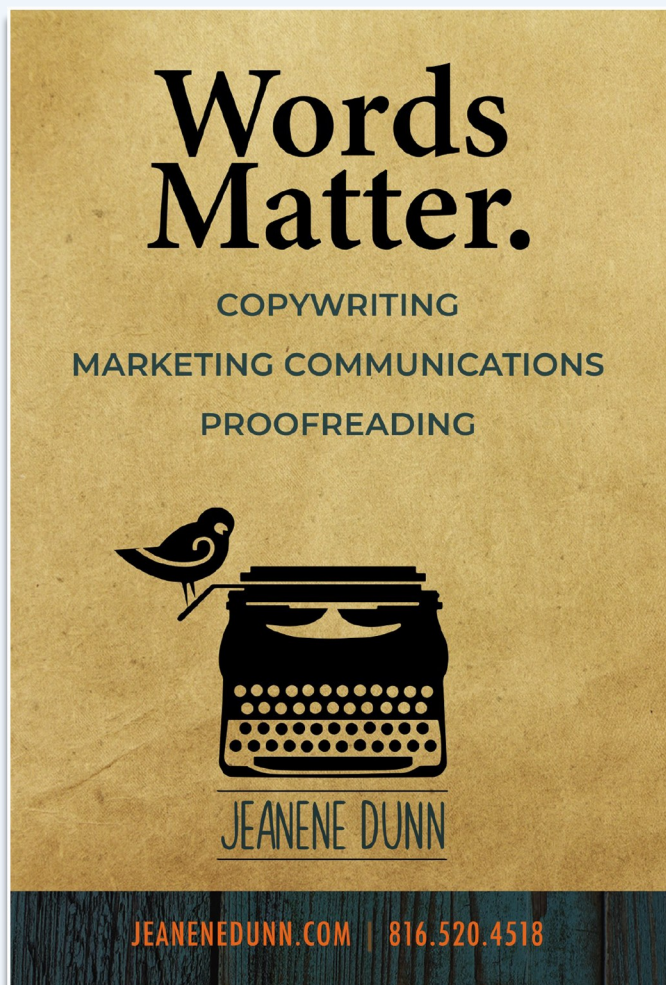
For many Black men, especially those in their 20s and 30s, building careers or families, health often takes a back seat.



"Our first doctor's appointment is in the emergency room," Johnson says. "We glorify strength so much that we try to fight through the pain. And by the time the heart attack happens or the stroke hits, our body is saying, 'I can't go any further.'"

Johnson points out that elevated blood pressure, poor nutrition, chronic stress, and lack of exercise often develop years before symptoms emerge.

"What we treat as old-man issues are showing up in our twenties and thirties," he says. "We have to give attention to our bodies now."





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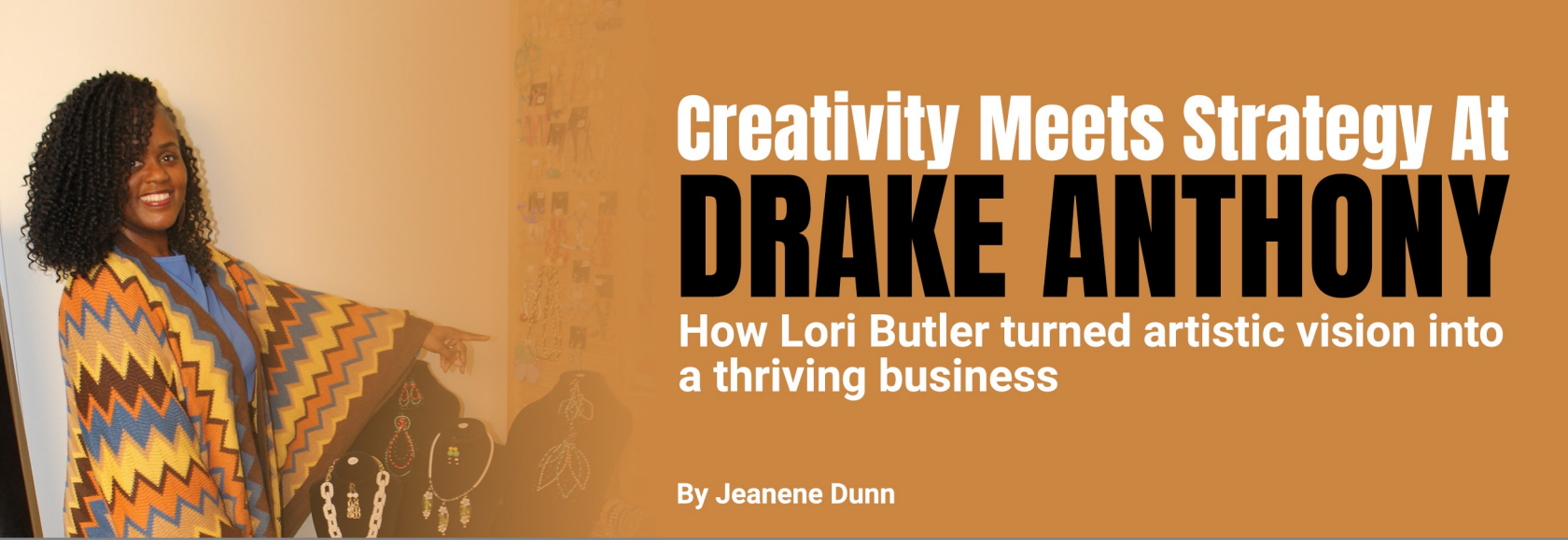
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Creativity Meets Strategy At **DRAKE ANTHONY**

How Lori Butler turned artistic vision into a thriving business

By Jeanene Dunn

In a business landscape where many creative ventures struggle to balance artistry with sustainability, Butler has managed to do both. As the founder and designer behind Drake Anthony, she has grown a jewelry brand rooted in imagination, personal style, and disciplined business planning. From custom designs for special events to one-on-one consulting and styling services, Butler has built her company by pairing creative vision with strategic decision-making.

“Creativity is what draws people in,” Butler said. “But intention is what allows the business to grow and last.”



Turning Talent Into A Business Idea

The business name carries special meaning for Butler and marks a turning point in her creative journey.

“Drake Anthony is named after my son. I was pregnant and home on maternity leave when I started creating again, and that’s when the business really took shape.”

Butler’s path to entrepreneurship began long before Drake Anthony became a recognizable brand. As a teenager, she experimented with unexpected materials and learned how to blend contrasting elements into wearable art.

Friends soon began asking where she bought her jewelry.

“When I told them I made it, they started asking me to create pieces for them,” she said.

What began as a creative outlet quickly became a lesson in listening to customers and responding to demand. Over time, Butler has built a loyal following by creating one-of-a-kind necklaces, earrings, bracelets, and specialty pieces for sororities and milestone occasions — even while working full time.

“I’ve always believed that if I focused on quality and relationships, the business would grow naturally,” Butler said.

Designing For Life’s Big Moments

Drake Anthony has continued to thrive by focusing on meaningful jewelry rather than mass-produced trends. Butler says redesign work, special-event commissions, and private styling appointments now drive much of the business.

“People want jewelry that feels connected to their life,” Butler said. “They want pieces that mark moments.”

She frequently designs jewelry for weddings, formal galas, graduations, and professional events, working directly with clients to match pieces to outfits and occasions.

“When someone comes to me for a big event, I want their jewelry to feel like part of their story,” she said.

Her one-on-one consulting and styling services have also expanded. During private appointments, Butler helps clients select or design accessories that complement their wardrobe and personal style, treating jewelry as part of a complete look rather than a standalone item.

“It’s not just about the jewelry,” she said. “It’s about helping someone feel confident when they walk into a room.”

Growing Through Experience, Not Trends

One of Drake Anthony's signature traditions is Festive Friday, an annual shopping and social event held on the first Friday in December. "Festive Friday is something my customers look forward to every year," Butler said. "It's more than shopping. It's about community."

Beyond Festive Friday, Butler has expanded into a full calendar of community events. Over the past year, Drake Anthony has participated in First Fridays, the Spring Chick Event, Mimosas in the Park, Fall Fest, Juneteenth celebrations, and Biscuits, Beats & Brews, in Columbia Mo.

"These events help me meet people face-to-face," Butler said. "They're not just sales opportunities. They're where I get inspired and learn what my customers want."

Marketing Through Relationships

Rather than relying heavily on paid advertising, Butler has grown Drake Anthony through social media and word-of-mouth. Instagram and Facebook allow her to share new designs, announce events, and give followers a behind-the-scenes look at her creative process.

"The most effective way I've grown my customer base is through relationships," she said. "My clients wear my jewelry, people ask about it, and that starts a conversation."

She is also exploring new platforms, including Etsy and the live-selling platform Whatnot, to test handcrafted items and reach new audiences.

"I'm always looking for ways to meet customers where they already are," Butler said.

Meeting And Exceeding Business Goals

In earlier years, Butler set clear goals for Drake Anthony: expand her reach, grow brand visibility, and create steady revenue while maintaining her full-time career. Today, she says she has not only met those goals but surpassed them.

"I wanted to build something people recognized and trusted," she said. "Now I see repeat customers, special-event commissions, and new people finding me through events and social media."

She continues to operate Drake Anthony as a lean, family-centered business, using limited outside help during major events while handling design and consulting herself.

"Balancing a full-time job with a business means I have to be very intentional with my time," Butler said. "But staying hands-on keeps the quality and the relationships strong."



What's Next For Drake Anthony

Looking ahead, Butler is developing ideas for an annual Drake Anthony signature summer event that blends jewelry, fashion, and styling into one experience. She is also exploring the submission process for Kansas City Fashion Week, inspired by designers who value collaboration over competition.

"I don't believe in competition the way people usually think about it," Butler said. "I believe in community and supporting each other."

From teenage artist to established brand owner, Butler's journey reflects steady growth grounded in creativity, discipline, and connection.

"Without my customers, there is no business," Butler said. "They are walking, talking advertisements for Drake Anthony."

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KC CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS BACK BLACK BUSINESS OWNERS IN \$70 MILLION WESTPORT LAWSUIT



At one of the busiest corners in Kansas City's Westport entertainment district, local civil rights leaders stood back in December 2025 with two men who've launched a multi-million dollar lawsuit against the Westport Community Improvement District and its members, claiming they were barred from owning a business in the district after revealing their business concept — a nightclub intended to appeal to Black clientele.



In front of Holy Brunch KC, at 4128 Broadway Boulevard, which previously housed Westport Ale House and now sits on the verge of closure as well, representatives of the city's Urban Council — a coalition of the Urban League of Greater Kansas City, NAACP—Missouri State Conference, Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Greater Kansas City, and the Urban Summit — surrounded business owners Christopher Lee and D'Mario Gray, who are Black, at a news conference announcing the organization's intent, along with the National Urban League, to file an amicus brief in the case.

Traffic whizzed by the shady corner of Boulevard and Archibald Avenue on the cold Monday afternoon. A few by-

standers, including Jackson County prosecutor Melesa Johnson, watched as Gwen Grant, president and CEO of Kansas City's Urban League, led the news conference, pleading for government officials to evaluate the CID and hold them accountable for alleged racism.

It would really be uplifting to those of us in the Black community if we didn't have to come out here in the freezing cold," Grant said, her breath visible in the 34-degree weather.

"The news on this racist situation came out over a month ago ... when you see something is wrong, you're supposed to say something. And the city has been silent."

City Manager Mario Vasquez met with the Urban League on Monday, according to press secretary Sheraz Honcutt. The city is also working to provide them with the Westport CID documents at their request, she said.

In a federal RICO lawsuit where plaintiffs are seeking \$70 million, the owners of three separate businesses allege that landlords pulled out of deals after owners revealed concepts for restaurants and clubs that would cater to young Black customers.



The lawsuit originated last October over a lease dispute at the former Westport Ale House.

After the bar and restaurant closed last year because of its history of fights and shootings, Christopher Lee pitched a restaurant and cocktail concept called Euphoric Bar and Lounge. But Lee later held a hiring fair promoting the concept as Ale House West, which seemed to be a continuation of the same nightclub atmosphere that landlord Hal Brody, who is white, believed caused problems at the original Westport Ale House, according to court documents.

Christopher Lee, co-owner of Euphoric LLC, speaks to reporters after a press conference outside Holy Brunch on Monday, Dec. 8, 2025, in Kansas City. The event, organized by the Urban Council and other Black community organizations, addressed allegations of racial discrimination against Black-owned businesses in the Westport neighborhood.

Lee and Euphoric co-owner Damion Johnson, along with Brody, signed a 10-year lease for the space, the lawsuit says. The Euphoric owners allege Brody, former Westport Regional Business League executive director Franklin Kimbrough and CID board member Brett Allred then refused to let them access the building.

The suit alleged Brody broke a binding agreement on the advice of Allred and other business owners in the district, acting out of racial prejudice against a Black-owned business, allegedly because Westport business owners feared violence that comes with crowds that listened to hip hop music.

Two other businesses, The Sourze, LLC, and UniKC LLC, allege similar incidents in 2020 and 2021.

The lawsuit escalated when a complaint of Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, or RICO, was added. While the federal crime is widely associated with mobsters and organized crime, the law is designed to target any enterprise that engages in a pattern of illegal activity as part of a coordinated scheme.

Due to the racial prejudice alleged in this case, local civil rights organizations are showing their interests by filing an amicus brief: a legal document submitted by non-parties to a case to offer arguments and help guide the court's decision.

Grant said the brief is planning to be filed in the next two weeks.

"It's important that these community leaders are here behind us, throwing in their support and letting the court know that.. everyone here cares about this issue, and Greater Kansas City cares about this issue," attorney Stephen Williams, who is representing the Black business owners said.

It's been very frustrating," Lee said during the news conference. "I have a business that I run. It's impacting my business. This lawsuit takes up all my day, so it's extremely stressful."

Tensions over the lawsuit have risen so high that Holy Brunch closed its doors two days after the press conference, stating the restaurant was "collateral damage" in the controversy and "created an environment of harassment, intimidation, vandalism and fear.... to our business, to our homes and to our personal lives", according to the eatery's statement on Facebook.

Allred, who owns several businesses in the district, denied allegations in a lengthy Facebook post in October. The Westport CID has denied all allegations in the lawsuit.

The civil rights leaders at the news conference said they aren't surprised by the allegations, given the history of redlining and racism in Kansas City. But they urge city leaders to "clean their house" before the city hosts the FIFA 2026 World Cup in six months.



A community member holds a sign during a press conference outside Holy Brunch on Monday, Dec. 8, 2025, in Kansas City. The event, organized by the Urban Council and other Black community organizations, addressed allegations of racial discrimination against Black-owned businesses in the Westport neighborhood.

At the news conference, Grant read a list of demands for the city, which included terminating the street agreement with the Westport CID that gave control of Westport streets to the CID, having the Civil Rights of Equal Opportunity Department monitor all CIDs, amending the CID regulations and requiring the CIDs certify compliance with nondiscrimination and equitable access requirements, and face suspension or dissolution if they fail to do so.

"We believe that now is the time for all of us to come together based upon the fact that the World Cup is coming," president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Greater KC Dr. Vernon Howard said.

"We don't want to show ourselves as a city that segregates ourselves, that is not together. So I'm calling on the city of Kansas City as we also call on our community to rally against racism."



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Our lending team builds lasting relationships, offering loans for real estate, equipment, and operating needs. We work with local builders and developers to support community housing.

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