

# O H D E A R

**Shining Light On Creatives  
Around The World.**

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# 01 Money Moves



# Brandon Hughes

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## Hello, what is your name?

My name is Brandon Hughes.

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## Tell me about yourself

Ok, no problem. I was born and raised in Memphis. That's Memphis, TN, in case some of y'all never heard of it. I spent a few years in other cities growing up, but Memphis never left me. I always knew this is where I was supposed to be. I'm the second born child of my parents, who mean everything to me. Growing up was good for me. I mean, we didn't have a silver spoon or nothing, but we had a spoon. lol. I come from a small family, some close, some not. Growing up, I was quiet, but I paid close attention to everything around me. I knew what I wanted out of life. I saw how hard my parents worked so we could have the things we needed and some of the things we wanted. I'm a college graduate and I've been married to my beautiful, amazing wife, Dr. LaShinda Hughes, for over 13 years. She's going to kill me for saying Dr., but hey, it's true. We're not big on titles at all. We don't have any children yet, but hey, you never know what the future holds. We do have a Prince, though. That's my lil fur bro who really thinks he's the king of the castle instead of a prince. (smh.) I'm intentional about everything I do. I'm a simple guy that works hard but loves to have fun. I enjoy the company of people. I definitely get that from my pops. lol....But yeah, that's me. Most would say I'm an extrovert, but honestly, I'm not. I always try to see the good in everything. One thing I always say is, "If you have a choice between positive and negative, why would you choose negative?"

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## Why did you start your business?

I started my business to assist those who really didn't understand the importance of owning real estate. Real estate is an asset! There are so many important factors to owning real estate. For one, just owning a piece of real estate gives you a sense of pride. No matter how hard it's been for you in the past, you get the feeling of accomplishment after closing on your home. Secondly, you've taken all the correct steps to make sure your credit is up to par by paying your bills on time. Thirdly, you've learned the important lesson of not excessively spending your hard-earned money. Definitely not lastly, but a very important factor is that you've learned how to save. All those reasons are why I chose to get into real estate. If I can assist people in these areas and help them achieve home ownership, then they will have a greater chance of not falling below the poverty line. That's what really grabs at the core of my heart.



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## What all does your business encompass?

Like I said earlier, I'm a simple guy, but my business encompasses much more. I'm more than just a realtor. I'm a life coach and more. If allowed, I help where help is needed. I mean, I've lived this thing called life on many different levels. I can reach just about anyone. Whether my client is having issues raising their son, having problems on the job, or even self-appreciation, I give much more than maybe most realtors, but it's because I care. No matter your race, we're all in this world together, so let's help each other. I love to see people happy! But for real estate with me, you get the whole package. From local lenders to professional pictures, an amazing office space, tax accountants, advertisements, you name it. I do it all for my clients. My ultimate goal is, of course, to get you into the desired home of your choice, but to also build everlasting relationships. We're all we've got!

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## What are the top three things that separate you from your competition?

This is a good question. I would say the top 3 things that separate me from my competition are first my heart. I care so much about educating people on the importance of home ownership. Especially in the African American community. I feel like often times we get forced into bad deals that lead to losing your home due to the lack of education. Of course, I build a relationship with all my clients and I'm forever grateful for them all, but it's even more special when I witness the struggle of some of my clients. To be honest, I've had many clients who I stuck by their side when they didn't know how to budget their accounts or even understood how credit was calculated. I mean, this is a one, two, or even three-year process. Man, it's a special feeling to see them make it to home ownership. Secondly, I would say I don't have a particular price point. Of course, the bigger the price point, the bigger the commission, but for me, I treat all people the same no matter the budget. As a profession in real estate, it shouldn't matter the price point. As realtors, we should go just as hard for those that may have a \$150,000 budget as we do those who have a \$1,000,000 budget. Thirdly, I would say my integrity. I get close to my clients. They are like family to me. If I see you have a bad lender who is just giving you outrageous numbers and I look at your finances and I know there's barely any room for you to have a decent lifestyle, I'm sorry, but it's my duty to step in and say something. Predatory lending is real and unfortunately, it still happens. My goal is for you to buy a home and keep that home until you feel like selling it. I dread getting that call from new clients who say they are looking for a rental because they were forced into a 3 year ARM and do not know the true meaning. Yet a balloon payment is due. To me, that means their former realtor was only looking for a commission. That's not what I'm about.

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## What is your approach to listing homes?

My approach to listing homes is to first ask, "Why are you listing?" After I learn that information, my next question would be to ask about the plan after the

house sells. We all know that in today's market, houses are selling for way above their listing price. I want to make sure you have a plan for where you're going to live after your house sells. Once all that checks out ok, then listing the house is easy. I will walk the property to ensure it's photo ready. If I see things that need to be addressed, then I will address them. I have a great team of people that help me, whether it's staging, cleaning, or professional photos. I even get my hands dirty as well because I want my client to get top dollar. I've pressure washed homes, driveways, etc. to make the listing look more attractive, not only for the seller but even for the buyer.

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## As a professional, what challenges have you met? How do you overcome them?

As a professional in real estate, as in probably every other field of business, I've learned that everyone is not happy for your success. One thing that definitely comes to mind is that I had a close realtor who has been in the game for quite some time but wasn't closing deals like me. So, of course, as a friend, I asked if I could just shadow him to see what the problem was. Huge mistake! This particular client was rude and challenging to everyone they came into contact with. On a few showings, this person's client stated, "Hey, I've heard of you" and tried to slide me their contact on the low. I played it off and kept it moving. After the showing was over, I told my friend, as any good friend should do, and I was told, "You just wanted to come ride along to steal my clientele." I just laughed at it. It was quite funny. I've also had realtors go behind my back and contact my clients after they knew I was their realtor. I mean, it's a very cold game out here. One thing that life has taught me is that I'm not in competition with anyone. I just want to see people win. If you have to do all that to get the client, then do what you have to do. I'm not built like that. I do things out of love. If I had to do all that, then I would have chosen to be in politics, lol. I just pray for them. An old quote that sticks with me is, "Elephants don't swat flies."





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**Tell me about your first sale and how different the listings are now?**

It's actually funny. My first listing was for a family member. I told my family that I was in real estate and it was on from there. We sat down on the couch and kinda went over everything I mentioned about getting a listing. I did my thing and put the house on the market. Shortly after the listing went live, the phones started ringing off the hook. You would have thought I was the number one draft pick. It was definitely a great time, for sure! The listings now are on a different level. Listings don't last 48 hours. 48 hours after a listing goes live on the market, it's under contract, which is a good thing. The thing that's rarely mentioned is the amount of time spent creating a spreadsheet for your clients to review 30, 40, or 50 offers. This market is insane!

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**Given the opportunity to live anywhere in the world for free, where would that be and why?**

Given the opportunity to live anywhere in the world, well, that's a tough one. I would have to say Memphis, TN. It's my hometown. I love it here! I know we might not get the credit we deserve, but there are a lot of great people here. It's been a long time coming. I truly believe we have the right people in place to move this city forward. I have great friends involved in local government who are making tremendous leaps. Keep watching, we are on the move!

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**Anything else you would like me to know?**

Of course! I just want to say, man, it's such an honor to be part of this magazine. I know how tough things can be behind the scenes, but just keep pushing forward. Always believe in yourself and your ability. Keep God first and share your talent with the world. I'm definitely looking forward to seeing more from you and people like you. I'm proud of you and your team for continuing to narrate a positive message. I would also like to give a huge shout out to my team. Patterson Homes Real Estate Co. PHREC. We are the largest black-owned real estate company in Memphis, TN. "To whom much is given, much will be required." (Luke 12:48)



# Jeremy Burch

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## **Hello, what's your name?**

Jeremy Burch.

## **Tell me about yourself.**

I am a 25-year old college graduate of Albany State University with a major in Visual and Performing Arts. Growing up, I've dabbled in several different interests, such as sports, martial arts, theatre, history, and even modeling. However, I've always possessed an aptitude and liking for art since I was a little boy.

## **Why did you start your business?**

I recognized the lack of a go-to, on-campus graphic designer while enrolled at Albany State, and I had recently become familiar with the Adobe software programs available in our Fine Arts Center graphics lab. I genuinely enjoyed experimenting with the various applications that Adobe offered, especially tinkering with vector graphics. Filling the unfilled niche myself only made sense. Since then, I've branched off to other clients, including friends, family, coworkers, and so on.

## **What all does your business encompass?**

Presently, my business involves the creation of logos, flyers, business cards, and, a recent addition, motion flyers.

## **What is your favorite thing about your position as an entrepreneur?**

Other than clients, of course, I don't have to answer to any superiors. Don't misunderstand. I fully recognize the importance of that structure within businesses that require it. But it is evident that I do my best work when I am my own boss.

## **Do you have any career goals?**

I would love to make graphic design a regular source of income. Especially as I develop my skill set. Graphic designers such as Jon Blaze and Doctor Tees are where I would love to be. More significantly, I have long dreamt of making my own cartoons.

## **Any advice for young entrepreneurs?**

There is NO perfect time to start. Time will pass regardless. Take the dive anyway and begin as early as possible. Even if you are inexperienced, and frankly, not confident in your craft, that's okay. You will figure things out as you go. You must be willing to suck at something first if you ever want to be great at it later. Also, this next piece of advice is cliché, but it's nonetheless extremely true. Practice. Practice. Practice. Make the effort, put in the time and work on your craft. That is the ONLY way to make improvement.





**How have your priorities changed since starting your business?**

Yes. My primary focus is to expand my skill set vastly beyond what it is currently.

**How did you raise the money to start your business?**

I didn't. The software was already available at the aforementioned Fine Arts Center at my university. Getting started did not cost me any extra money. It was just a simple willingness to put myself out there and put in the work.

**How do you define success?**

In the business sphere, success means having a passion for what you do, making a positive impact on the world around you, and being profitable as well. In the personal sense, living life on your own terms with good friends and good health is the epitome of success.

**With what you know now, how would you have done things differently at the beginning of your career?**

I most definitely would have started sooner than when I did, advertised my business more aggressively, and I would have made the effort to

learn and develop my skill set as early as possible.

**Tell me about a story of a terrible boss that made you want to do something differently in your business.**

Communication is monumentally important to me. Both what you say and how you say it matter. Unfortunately, the same can't be said about a former boss I had while working at my one and only retail job. I and he regularly butted heads, but one particular instance made me determined that my days at the job were numbered. He claimed to have shown me how to use a particular application on the device we use, called the first phone. I knew for certain that he did no such thing, and my boss attempted to gaslight me into believing that he had taught me to use the application and that I had forgotten. In fact, there were several instances where he did not show me how to do something at work, but I was the one who got in trouble. Needless to say, that made my blood boil. While I don't have to communicate with any bosses, I do make a point of communicating with my clients regularly and when needed. Simple communication goes a long way as it prevents unnecessary misunderstandings and conflict.



# Lawrence Briggs

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## **Hello, what's your name?**

Lawrence Briggs.

## **Tell me about yourself.**

Lawrence Briggs, "College Boy," is a real estate investor and financial literacy nerd (with style) from New Orleans! He shares tips and tools to help you turn earned income from a 9-5 job into passive income to achieve the lifestyle you desire!

## **Why did you start your business?**

"College Boy" was the nickname given to me by my sister, Michelle Briggs, who was killed by a drunk driver. My sister and I loved talking about financial literacy and

generational wealth!

## **What all does your business encompass?**

I help people learn about financial literacy. While being a landlord, I am able to provide rental housing for people.

## **What is your favorite thing about your position as an entrepreneur?**

I enjoy having full creative control over my brand!

## **Do you have any career goals?**

My goals are always a surprise! Follow my social media platforms to stay up to date on what I'm doing on this amazing journey called life!



**College Boy™**

## **Any advice for young entrepreneurs?**

My advice for entrepreneurs is to start with their end goal in mind! With any goal, it is extremely important to visualize what you want to accomplish.

## **How have your priorities changed since?**

My priorities have changed because my social media content is being created more with a purpose of what my supporters want to view.

## **How did you raise the money to start your business?**

To fund my real estate investment property, I used money from working two jobs.

## **How do you define success?**

I define success by what you, as a person, feel is an accomplishment.

## **With what you know now how would you have done things differently in the beginning of your career?**

I would have not done anything differently. Everything that I have endured thus far has been used as a learning experience.

## **Tell me about a story of a terrible boss that made you want to do something differently in your business.**

In a previous job, I had a boss who did not listen to employees. For my business, my goal is always to listen to what people have to say.



# Charles Fatunbi

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## **Hello, what's your name?**

Charles Fatunbi.

## **Tell me about yourself.**

Charles Fatunbi is a director and technology consultant from Minneapolis, currently based in Atlanta, GA. Heavily influenced by his Nigerian upbringing, Charles is passionate about showcasing stories rooted in culture and exploring ways to translate them through visual mediums. With an expanding, yet carefully-curated portfolio, his work spans documentary, branded commercial, short-form narrative, and introspective music video. Charles' work in the tech space focuses primarily on exploring use-cases for virtual and augmented reality within marginalized communities and medium-to-large enterprises.

## **Why did you start your business?**

Capsoul Creative started after a conversation with my grandmother about her childhood and upbringing a few months before her passing. It really dawned on me how easy it was for these precious stories to be lost over time. I started the brand to serve as visual time capsule that documents and preserves our collective experiences as Black and Brown people through a very specific and artistic lens. The mission of the brand is simple: "Preserve the Imagination." This also serves as a universal call to action for our audience to document and execute their ideas.

## **What all does your business encompass?**

Capsoul Creative is a production agency that strives to showcase culturally-rooted stories across short films, branded commercials, and introspective music videos. Our current offerings include: Creative Development/Direction - Film Production - Products.

## **What is your favorite thing about your position as an entrepreneur?**

The ability to carve my own path while also creating an impact. I find joy in producing work that establishes a connection with our target audience and allows them to see versions of themselves represented in a visual format. The freedom to develop projects and pursue opportunities that align with the core values will always be a top priority.

## **Do you have any career goals?**

I would like to see Capsoul Creative expand into a full-service creative agency spanning premium production, experiential, and consumer products.

## **Any advice for young entrepreneurs?**

Write your ideas down and keep the promises you make to yourself.

## **How have your priorities changed since starting your business?**

I am solely focused on projects and opportunities that align with the mission and vision of the brand. I have also made it a priority to establish relationships and work with more creatives across different cities.

## **How did you raise the money to start your business?**

This was done by savings from freelance projects.

## **How do you define success?**

Success, to me, is identifying and walking in your purpose. For me, it also includes finding a way to create impact within your audience or community.

## **With what you know now, how would you have done things differently at the beginning of your career?**

There aren't too many things I would've changed other than making more of an effort to build the confidence to start earlier.



# Selena Young & Shauna Harper

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**Hello, what's your name?**

Selena Young and Shauna Harper.

**Tell me about yourself?**

We are two Black female entrepreneurs from Oakland, California. We are both members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. We started our company, Define Me Greek, in 2012. It's the first Greek apparel company to specialize in signature definition tees and accessories.

**Why did you start your business?**

We noticed there was a lack of unique Greek paraphernalia. Our goal was to create a signature apparel line with bold statements that are tailored to each organization at an affordable price. Every organization is different and every chapter is unique, so we thought about creating a way for members to stand out in a positive light.

**What all does your business encompass?**

Apparel and accessories for Black sororities. We have an extension of our brand called "Pretty Girl Boss" where we support the growth of women-owned businesses by providing grants, hosting entrepreneurial workshops, sharing business tips and resources, and so much more!

**What is your favorite thing about your position as an entrepreneur?**

We have the opportunity to create something magical! It's very rewarding to start with an idea and bring it to fruition. We have a flexible schedule and have the opportunity to travel the world, design meaningful apparel, and give back at the same time.

**Do you have any career goals?**

We would love to expand our brand by helping aspiring entrepreneurs launch their businesses. We're looking to invest in other companies/entities, participate in speaking engagements, and host business workshops to share our story and help others achieve their goals.





**Any advice for young entrepreneurs?**

1. Start where you are. If you have an idea, go for it! 2. Be sure to do your research - look for a way to stand out from your competitors. 3. Bet on yourself. If you believe in your dreams, the universe will conspire to help you achieve them.

**How have your priorities changed since?**

We originally started by creating t-shirts for our sorority. As the demand increased, we expanded to other organizations. Additionally, we launched "Pretty Girl Boss," which enables us to give back and support other entrepreneurs.

**How did you raise the money to start your business?**

We did not raise any money. We started with \$500 (individual contributions of \$250 each) and grew our business to six figures. This year marks 10 years in business!

**How do you define success?**

We define success when our customers rave about their experience with us and have pride in wearing our products.

**With what you know now, how would you have done things differently at the beginning of your career?**

We would have put more effort into marketing.

**Tell me about a story of a terrible boss that made you want to do something differently in your business.**

We've worked for managers who did not put customer experience as a top priority. We understand the value of our customers and pride ourselves on creating quality products with great customer service.

# Kim McCullough

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**Hello, what's your name?**

Kim McCullough.

**Tell me about yourself.**

I'm a mother, a digital writer, and a content creator. I was born and raised in Albany, Ga., where I still reside. I have a bachelor's degree in Mass Communications from Albany State University and a master's degree in New Media Journalism from Full Sail University. Currently, I am the Digital Content Executive Producer at WALB-TV and I'm also the creator and writer of Binge It! with Kim, where I review and rate binge-worthy shows and movies.

**Why did you start your business?**

I started Binge It! with Kim in February 2021. Watching television was always my favorite hobby, so I decided to take my love of writing and my love for television and combine them. If you are sad, watching funny or feel-good content can make you feel better. When I give and discuss recommendations with other TV lovers, I always see their faces light up. That makes me feel happy.

**What all does your business encompass?**

I don't really think of Binge It! as a business. I don't actually profit from the reviews, but the recognition and love from my community are enough for me. Each month, Binge It! includes a Binge of the Month and a Movie Spotlight!. I chose a popular series to review and rate, along with a movie recommendation I think people will enjoy. Starting in 2022, each article includes a video previewing my picks. Binge It! also has specials such as the Black History Celebration and an upcoming Austim Awareness Special in honor of my son. In between monthly picks, you can keep up with Binge It! and random recommendations on Binge It! with Kim's Twitter page.





**What is your favorite thing about your position as an entrepreneur?**

I love that I can control what content Binge It! delivers and discusses. Having creative control means the world to me because I can truly show my personality. If I want to try something new and different, I can. It also allows me to continue to make Binge It! better and better on my own terms. I know everyone's TV preferences aren't the same, but Binge It! helps open eyes to more genres that some may not watch otherwise.

**Do you have any career goals?**

My career is really elevating right now. After college, my goal was to make it in the news industry. In almost five years at WALB-TV, I have worked hard and been promoted from production all the way up to digital content executive producer. At the moment, I couldn't ask for anything better. But this is not where I stop. I want to eventually share my knowledge with others and teach the next generation of news journalists.

**Any advice for young entrepreneurs?**

Speaking as someone with passion instead of profit in mind, I say don't stray away from these hobbies and things you truly love. That will make for a successful business because your passion will outshine those that are just in it for the profit.

**How have your priorities changed since starting your business?**

My priorities change because I have to make time to continue to deliver when it comes to Binge It!. I'm a mother, and sometimes life becomes packed with different responsibilities and distractions. But I know Binge It! is something that I want to last a long time, so it's always one of the things that is at the top of my

priority list.

**How did you raise the money to start your business?**

I got lucky because the station helped me promote Binge It!. I made the logo myself on the computer, but the station helps me with promotion and advertising. I'm blessed that they believed in me enough to allow me to follow this passion project. In the beginning, I didn't have any money in mind. I just wanted to write and binge watch television.

**How do you define success?**

I believe that if you're doing something you love, something that makes you happy, and something that is close to your heart, you have reached success. Anything you're passionate about will eventually make money if you keep advancing in that business. I believe each level of your business will bring more purpose in your life, equaling the greatest accomplishment you can have.

**With what you know now, how would you have done things differently at the beginning of your career?**

In the beginning, I was nervous about actually posting my articles in some places because I was scared people wouldn't like them or wouldn't take them. I wish I had had the confidence then that I have now. I also would have included the videos and multimedia elements from the jump. I learned that people are more interested when visuals are involved.

**Tell me about a story of a terrible boss that made you want to do something differently in your business.**

I haven't had that experience. When I started working on Binge It!, my manager was completely supportive and allowed me to have creative control. He's still just as supportive as before.

# Omari McClendon Sims

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## **Hello what's your name?**

Omari McClendon Sims

## **What all does your business encompass?**

I do custom clothing, alterations, and styling services. Because I'm a model I'm able to give tips to people who want to model seriously, on walks, confidence, and presentation. I also do a little choreography on the side in my free time.

## **Do you feel like weight is an important part of being a model and why?**

Absolutely not! I've never understood why certain sizes were required to be a model. Everyone should have the chance to showcase their style, and creativity! The most important thing to me is the drive of the model!

## **Any advice for upcoming models?**

Be persistent, never give up, and always be willing to create your own content. If there is ever a time where you could do a shoot on your iPhone, DO IT ! You should always want to have content for yourself !

## **Do you have any career goals?**

Modeling and clothes customization is pretty much where I see myself. I went to school for forensic science and throughout realized it wasn't really what I wanted, but switching gears to modeling and clothing allowed me the opportunity to embrace myself and find something new to love!

## **What fashion shows would you like to model / walk in?**

Any fashion show that comes my way! I'm always down to work on projects! My dream however, is to walk in a COACH fashion show! I love a good coat/ jacket, and bag!

## **What is a misconception about being a model?**

That we are all stuck up! A lot of people say I tend to look unapproachable, but it's honestly a "RBF", if you know you know. I can promise I'm a very nice person!

## **What is your greatest strength as a model?**

My willingness to do whatever! Being a risk taker in modeling can sometimes produce the best work.

## **How do you handle negativity?**

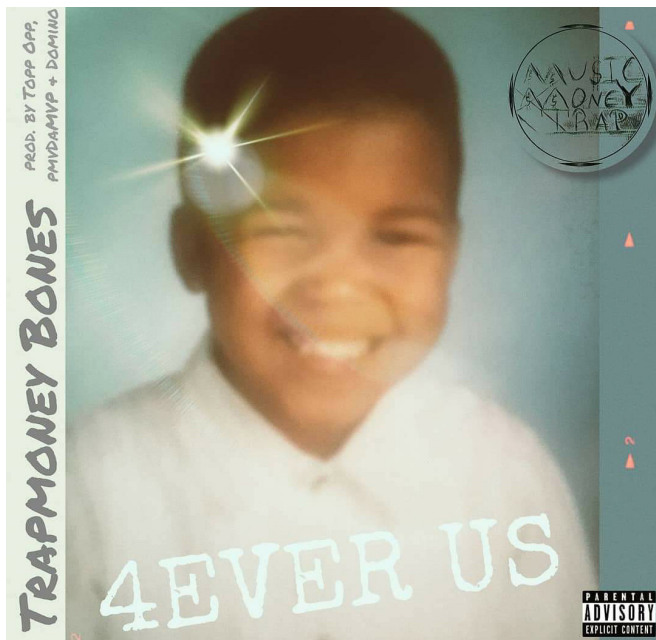
Very well! I really don't pay attention or put attention towards negativity. All positive vibes over here!

## **Who are your favorite models to watch?**

I've self titled Zendaya as a model because she eats me up every single time! I also enjoy Alton Mason, and Winnie Harlow.



# 02 Music you Should Know





## Jimmy Bones

### Hello, what's your name?

Jimmy Bones.

### What all does your business encompass?

I am a music artist and have a label named TrapMoneyMusicBrand.

### What got you into music?

Honestly, the journey that I've had so far. The path I've walked, the misadventures, the vacations, the trials and tribulations I've overcome. I've hit what I would call "rock bottom," and the music was the only thing that kept me sane.

### Do you have a favorite artist you want to work with?

Dwayne Carter. The greatest rapper alive, bar none. I don't want to be a groupie, but that's a dream colab. Growing up, Young Money was my favorite label. All the artists went nuts. I really witnessed Weezy become a legend coming up so, that's one.

### If you weren't making music, what would you do?

That's the funniest question ever. I don't know what I would do. It would be something I don't love because I love the entire music process. It brings me joy. It keeps me on earth. I would just have a 9-5 or 12 hour shifts, but I would still make music for the love. I won't ever stop.

### Can you describe the kind of music you make?

Hip-Hip , Lofi rap. I have a ton of more music

on the way. I have storytelling in the smooth jazz style . It's not hardcore. It's for everybody.

### If you had to show someone your music for the first time, what song would you play for them?

I would play my song " Misterie" or "80s." On all streaming platforms, my first project is called "4ever Us." I love both of those songs equally.

### Who are your top 5 favorite artists right now?

Lil Wayne, NBA YoungBoy, Drake, and Future Gunna.

### If you had the chance to tell the younger you something, what would that be?

I would tell the younger me how to be a man on his own. How not to wait for another person or depend so much on another. Tell him to believe who people are when you find out. Tell him you don't need friends. I would tell the younger me so much, he would be gravy.

### Where would you like to hear your song played?

I want to hear my song played in every car, every house, every club, every block party, house party, office events, state fairs, the carnival, ya moms house, 92.3 Chicago. I want to hear my songs played literally everywhere music is played.





# Mystory

## Hello, what's your name?

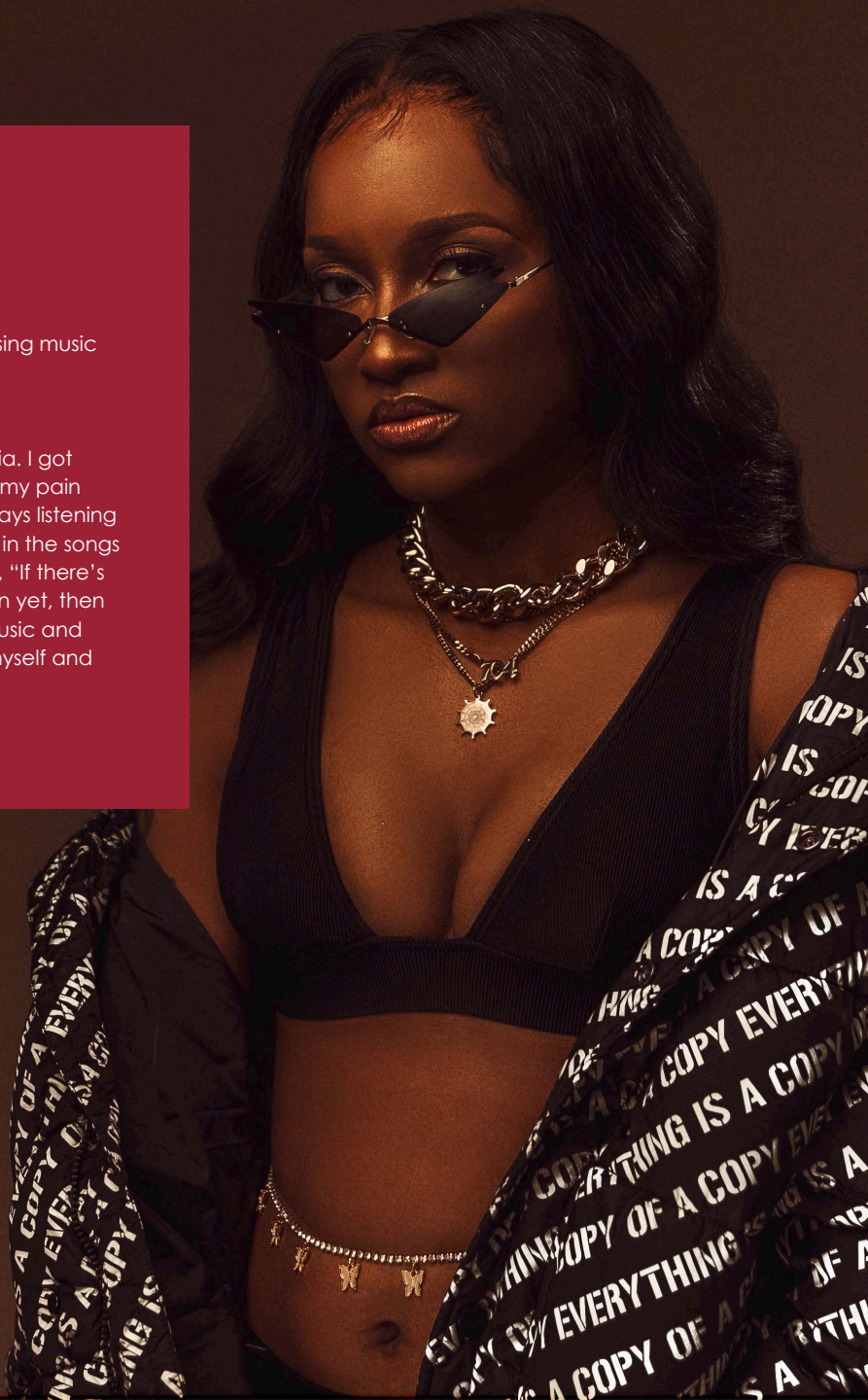
## Mystory

## What all does your business encompass?

Being a rapper with an emcee's heart encompasses using music as a vehicle to self express and share my story.

## What got you into music?

I began pursuing my music career while living in Georgia. I got started because I was in search of an outlet to express my pain after my grandfather passed away. I realized I was always listening to music for healing, but I couldn't hear my exact story in the songs I would play. There's a quote by Toni Morrison that says, "If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it." This inspired me to create my own music and also curate a space where I can be transparent with myself and my listeners.







**Do you have a favorite artist you want to work with?**

There are so many artists that I would love to work with. A few of them that come to mind are, Lauryn Hill, Janelle Monae, Missy Elliot, H.E.R, J. Cole, and Kendrick Lamar.

**If you weren't making music what would you do?**

If I wasn't making music I would remain a student of it. I would study music, continuously listen to other artist's bodies of work, and stay immersed in its beauty. Additionally, I would still remain creative through other forms of art that I'm currently involved in (i.e: painting, dancing, fashion, etc). Visibility is an essential part of our being. As Black creatives, we strive to see ourselves, especially because society has refused to see us. In seeing ourselves, we sometimes see each other. That sense of community is important, and I would like to embody this through creating even if I wasn't making music.

**Can you describe the kind of music you make?**

The music I make is multidimensional. Being a rapper with an emcee's heart means that I have catchy cadences, and quotable punchlines, while the foundation of my lyrics are centered in self-reflection and storytelling. People can vibe to my music, and they also receive lyrical content from my songs as well.

**If you had to show someone your music for the first time what song would you play for them?**

Wow, this question is hard, because what I play often changes depending on where I am in my experience. But, if I had to show my music today, I would play "The Good Hour" or "Wakanda Fever".

**Who are your top 5 favorite artists right now?**

I would tell my younger self, " You are beautiful. Each version of yourself that you evolve into is another layer in your experience. Remember that the tables always turn and experiences that seem unfavorable add more texture to your overall story. Be yourself, unapologetically. Speak your mind. You are a star. I love you. "

**Where would you like to hear your song played?**

I would like to hear my music played everywhere. As long as the energy is right, there are no limitations of where I want to hear my songs. It puts a smile on my face when I hear people playing my music in their cars now, so I can imagine how it will feel when it reaches the masses or the ears of a new listener/supporter. As long as there is someone out there who is open to listening and receiving my music, that means the world to me.





**Hello, what's your name?**

Hey! My name is LexC!

**What all does your business encompass?**

I am a music artist and operate under my company LexC Solo Group. My artist name is LexC, and I sing, rap, write, model, and audio engineer. (I also recently got certified as a Personal Trainer and Nutritionist! Woot! Woot!) My company revolves around my own artistry and helping other upcoming artists to develop their artistic style, appearance and brand, and digital presence.

**What got you into music?**

I first started singing when I was 3 years old. I sang "Amazing Grace" at my grandparents' church in Delaware. I started writing poetry at 8 years old then started applying my words to music. I'm not sure who I get the talent from because literally no one else in my family has gravitated to music or ever pursued a career in it, but I've always loved the effect music has on people. It helps to timestamp certain periods in time for things that were happening in the world on a large scale or in my personal life on a smaller scale. I was also a very shy and quiet kid growing up. Poetry and music was the only way I could get my thoughts and feeling out clearly. Everyone says music is like a therapy, and it is. It's also an outlet I chose,

and I've been developing my ability to communicate through song ever since.

**Do you have a favorite artist you want to work with?**

I have 3 artists who I would say are my top influences, and they are Beyonce, Aaliyah, and Alicia Keys. Beyonce is the all-around artist. She shows the athletic side of it. She's truly a powerhouse when it comes to performances. I always loved how Aaliyah was smooth and sultry and beautiful without seeming to try very hard. For Alicia Keys, there's always been a soulfulness about her that I love! Though Aaliyah has passed, I have had the opportunity to work with her family and with the first artist to sign to Blackground since her passing, which is as close as I'm gonna get. As for Beyonce and Alicia Keys, I'm probably one or two connections away from that happening!

**If you weren't making music what would you do?**

If I weren't making music, I would be getting into a few things, and this is something I could never make my mind up about haha! I would dive into the fitness or physical therapy route because fitness has been part of my life since I was a kid. I would also explore entertainment law because when I was younger I thought I wanted to be a lawyer first. Plus, it seems like a natural route coming out of music. I've also thought about getting into psychology because I love understanding how people think.

**Can you describe the kind of music you make?**

I typically make R&B but not like how most people think about R&B these days. My R&B is like late 90's, early 2000's R&B with a bit more updated sounds. I love stacking my vocals and harmonizing, and I still very much believe in bridges being in songs despite current trends. I have, however, been experimenting with rap, and right now it's giving very much Megan thee Stallion, Nicki Minaj, Beyonce as a rapper vibes!

**If you had to show someone your music for the first time, what song would you play for them?**

This depends what they're asking to hear from me - R&B or rap! My current favorite R&B song of mine is "Bed Dream," and my first rap song is called "All Keeps." I think both give a good representation of what you can expect from me in either lane.

**Who are your top 5 favorite artists right now?**

Besides myself, LexC, at number 1, the list would then have to go (for mainstream artists): 2. Nicki Minaj 3. Doja Cat 4. Beyonce 5. Summer Walker Now, this doesn't necessarily mean I listen to these people on a daily. This list is more me saying that I respect what these ladies are contributing right now. I actually don't listen to mainstream radio because I don't love the direction music's been going in recent years, but that's a whole different conversation for another day haha!

**If you had the chance to tell the younger you something what would that be?**

I would tell my younger self to, "Start sooner, fight harder, and be a little more defiant earlier on." I've been doing music for so long but didn't start professionally until college because I just didn't have anyone in my family pushing to help me build on this love when I was younger, except for my cousin in middle school. I wish I wasn't so shy, and when I started I wish I spoke up more to my parents about the hobbies I actually wanted to get into.

**Where would you like to hear your songs played?**

I would love to hear my music being played on different YouTuber channels, during halftimes at sports events, on the radio, in the clubs, and in movies and TV shows.





# 04 Beyond Beauty



TIANA

# Brown

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## Hello, what's your name?

Hi, I'm Tiana Brown.

## What all does your business encompass?

Haute Beauty Services is all about enhancing the beauty that is already you! I am a makeup artist that specializes in several aesthetics such as Minimalist, Special Event, Publication Ready, Bridal, and Film.

## What made you get into the beauty field?

I love this question, haha. I got started in makeup after having a bad experience. I was going to a prom and had an appointment at a certain makeup counter. Not only did I receive subpar service, but my skin broke out a few hours later. After that, I became a makeup enthusiast (have to start somewhere lol) for a year and began taking clients shortly after. I just knew there had to be better experiences out there in this industry and I wanted to be part of that.

## What is the most satisfying thing about your career?

Making people feel special! It's so often that I get a new client that is a little hard on themselves or feeling unsure about whatever is going on in their world, but for 45 minutes, they get to feel relaxed and beautiful. They leave feeling 10 feet tall, and I love providing that brief relief.

## Do you have any career goals?

My career goals are to continue flourishing in several artistic and entrepreneurial entities, including feature film opportunities, branding, more publication deals, and teaching.

## Where do you get your inspiration from?

I am inspired by artists like Sam Fine, Pat McGrath, Danessa Myricks, AJ Crimson, and more because they created an artistry space for more black creatives to explore. I also get my inspiration from my clients! Their trust in my services allows me to create passionately. What is the least favorite aspect of your career? All the MUAs say it with me: "Washing Brushes." Hahaha.

## If you could, what beauty product would you use to make your job easier?

There are a few products, but mainly, I would say skin prep products. When the client's skin is prepared properly, everything else falls into place.



## Is pricing for your business difficult? If so, why?

I have not found pricing to be difficult because, typically, people know what they are getting when booking my services. With price inflation since the pandemic, people don't really question how much anymore. They see times are changing and adapt accordingly, in my experience.

## What do you wish clients understood about the industry that you're in?

That this industry is not just about trends and "it" products. This is an inclusive space for all with products from everywhere! Whether you wear high-end products or drug store brands, you are seen and you are beautiful.



# TAYLOR Evans

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## **Hello what's your name?**

Taylor Evans

## **What all does your business encompass?**

THE WKND BEAUTY & ESTHETICS offers makeup services, lash extensions, microshading, facials, and waxes. I took my passion for all things beauty and my desire to be an entrepreneur and turned it into a business to where I can be creative and help others. The skills I have learned has given me the ability to help those enhance their natural beauty. I am a licensed Esthetician located in Columbus, Ga.

## **What made you get into the beauty field?**

Since a child I have always been gifted in art and while growing up I became fascinated with makeup. I loved everything about it, so I decided I would go to college for Esthetics to learn how to better my craft all while learning many other services. Seeing how easily I picked things up in school & my enthusiasm of being there just confirmed I was on the right path. It was then I knew I was meant to be in the beauty industry. Now every service I perform is like a canvas for me I'm able to show off my artistic skills

## **What is the most satisfying aspect about your career?**

I love that as an Esthetician there is such a broad range of services you can choose from. You're not limited to just doing one thing! I learn new things every day, and the beauty industry itself is constantly evolving so I'm never bored with my job. I love that you have the ability to take certain services and customize it as your own, and of course I love meeting new people every day while being able to create a bond with my clients.

## **Do you have any career goals?**

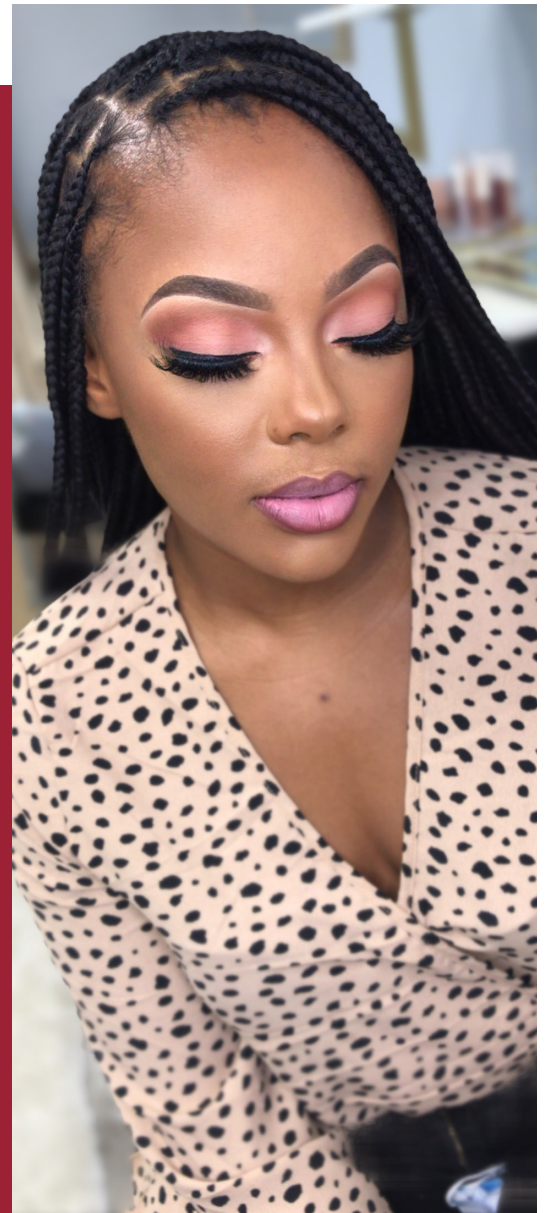
My goals are to be able to take the knowledge that I have gained and build a facility to create trainings dedicated to help younger girls interested in my field to become certified in different services. I would like to place my beauty bar in different cities so everyone can be pampered.

## **Where do you get your inspiration from?**

I get my inspiration from my mother; she has always been a go getter and such hard worker. Shes always taught me that the sky is the limit and has taught me to always go after my dream no matter what. No dream is too big, and just like her inspire to be the best at everything I do. My mother has molded me into the Boss I am today.

## **Is pricing for your business difficult? and why?**

Pricing for my business isn't difficult for me, I believe in charging for your worth and time. I give my clients a 100% in every service that I





perform, so I feel comfortable with the prices that I charge. My clients know that with my prices comes with the best quality and customer service.

**What do you wish clients understood about the industry that you're in?**

I wish that clients understood that every Esthetician has their own way of doing things in this beauty industry. One esthetician may have a different technique from the other and that's okay! What may work for one person may not work for somebody else. Just please do your research on your beauty professional when booking for a service, and also the service you are inquiring about.



# 05 Through the Lens



# Arik Sparano

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**Hello, what's your name?**

Arik Sparano.

**What all does your business encompass?**

Photography.

**What gear do you use?**

Canon 5d mk iv, Canon 24-105mm, Canon 50mm 1.2, Canon 85mm 1.4, Sony A7ii, Sony 24-70mmF4, Sony 85mm 1.4, and the Sony 35mm 1.4

**Do you have any career goals?**

To own my own photography studio, teach photography to others, and learn film photography.

**Out of all the gear you have, is there a purchase you regret?**

I would say the flash equipment I bought. I have 3 flashes and all this extra gear I don't use.

**When did you know you wanted to be a photographer/videographer?**

I first picked up a camera when I was 10 or 11 years old.

**What are the best and worst parts of what you do?**

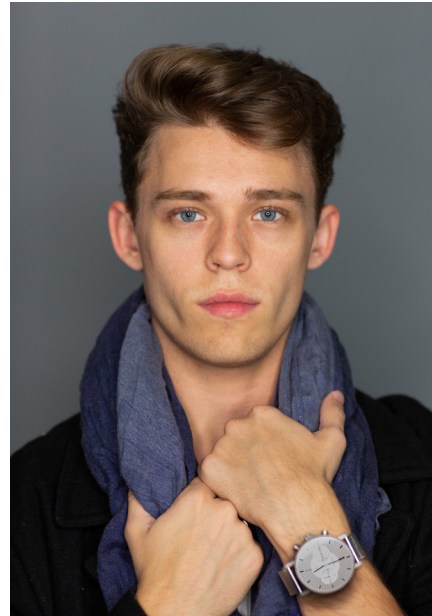
The best part is meeting the clients and seeing their reaction when they see the finished result. The worst is when you deal with a difficult client or the long hours editing on the computer.

**If you weren't a photographer/videographer, what would you do?**

I would probably say veterinary or in marketing.

**Is the business side of your career more complicated than people think?**

Yes, definitely. It took me a while to get started and I'm still learning.





# Michele Howard

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**Hello, what's your name?**

Michele Howard.

**What all does your business encompass?**

Photography (portraits, headshots, seniors).

**What gear do you use?**

Canon R6.

**Do you have any career goals?**

To start teaching photography.

**Out of all the gear you have, is there a purchase you regret?**

Yes, the canon Rp and the 35mm lens.

**When did you know you wanted to be a photographer/videographer?**

It was in 2017.

**What are the best and worst parts of what you do?**

The best is working with the clients and the worst is editing.

**If you weren't a photographer/videographer, what would you do?**

Best working with the clients worst editing

**Is the business side of your career more complicated than people think?**

Yes! Photography systems and you have to deal with taxes.



**OH**

**DEAR**