

BALIERS

SPORTS + BUSINESS

ON SEPTEMBER ISSUE

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IRVING

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Editor's Note

The Ballers Magazine is a digital magazine dedicated to shining light on amazing people in sports that are inspiring the next generation.

Through a series of in-depth, exclusive interviews, this magazine will bring you along the journey to success of the industry's most incredible athletes and business professionals. From sports to business to motivation, we are committed to sharing stories that encourage you to seek greatness. Whether you are a sports enthusiast or are looking to enter the sports industry, we are excited to provide this platform for you to connect with these sports all-stars.

Connect with us at
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and let us know who you would
like to see featured on our
forthcoming issues.

*Sky's the limit,
keep ballin'.*

Sofi Dumont

SOFI DUMONT
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TAMERA YOUNG

SIMPLY UNSTOPPABLE.

For Tamera “Ty” Young, basketball was a world she was surrounded by since a very young age. Born and raised in Wilmington, North Carolina, Ty remembers watching her brother and sister playing sports in the backyard growing up, and quickly becoming passionate about the game of basketball. As her brother began mentoring her in the space, she became more and more immersed and determined to play the sport at the highest level.

This was only the beginning. Fast-forward a few years and Ty was embarking on a journey that would not only strengthen her love for the game, but would also solidify her interest in playing basketball at the professional level. During her time at Emsley A. Laney High School, Ty became the institution’s all-time leading scorer and led the team to a Conference Championship in 2004. **She didn’t just stop there.** As she embarked on her collegiate career at James Madison University, she continued to earn an array of accolades—including the conference’s all-time scoring record—and craft a legacy for years to come. Little did she know, but the opportunity to turn her dreams into reality was right around the corner. **She would be making history again.** With the No. 8 pick of the 2008 WNBA Draft, the Atlanta Dream selected Ty. She had done it. She had turned a dream that was close to her and her family’s heart into her reality. Not only that, but she had also achieved another incredible milestone—she became the first player from James Madison University to ever be drafted into WNBA. **The rest is history!** Throughout her WNBA career, Ty has played for the Chicago Sky, Atlanta Dream, and Las Vegas Aces in addition to playing overseas in the off-season. **And, it doesn’t stop there.** Off the court, Ty has pursued her desire to pay it forward and has embarked on entrepreneurial and philanthropic journeys. From basketball camps to giveaways to her annual Kill Cancer 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament, she has fostered different initiatives that focus on giving back to the community as well as mentoring the next generation. Along with this, she has also started her own business and created TY1 Gear. From signature clothing to motivational designs, Ty has shattered barriers in the fashion space and has designed several collections rooted on the values of community, self-confidence, empowerment, and loyalty. **Talk about impressive.** Currently, Ty is working on a series of projects off the court—one of which includes her own book—, and is continuing to train to achieve her goal of winning a WNBA Championship. **She is simply...UNSTOPPABLE!**



Let’s talk about Draft Night! You became the first player from James Madison University to get drafted into the WNBA. Could you share more with us about that feeling of getting drafted? What was that moment like for you?

It was an amazing feeling. You know, growing up as a kid, I always dreamed of playing in the WNBA. To get drafted was a dream come true—especially with the fact, like you said, that I was the first (person) from my school to ever be drafted. With the help of my coaches, that dream came true. Just proving the doubters wrong that didn’t believe I could make it into the WNBA because I attended a mid-major school, where no one ever made it (before), was an amazing feeling.



"Just my love for the game. I think my passion alone helped me—always being an underdog, coming from a mid-major, having to always prove myself, and having to work extremely hard. I think that carried over to the league, in (the sense) that, I never became comfortable and stagnant with where I was."

- Tamera on what helped her remain accountable and committed to overcoming the challenges she faced early on in her career.

Photographs courtesy of Tamera Young (@tyyoung11)

Reflecting back on your transition from college into the league, what was that process like for you? What was the biggest challenge that you faced early on?

It was a different world. You go from being the top player on your team and in your conference to playing in a league where everyone is great. It was an adjustment. You know, being away and being on my own was different. College is like a family. In professional sports, you become close with people but it is different. At the end of the day, it is a business. So the biggest challenge was being on my own. Whereas in school you have people over you making sure everything is okay and you are good, as a professional, you have to do everything on your own. You have to make sure you are in the gym. You have to make sure you are putting the time in. It is a job at the end of the day. If you are not willing to do your job correctly and stay on top of things, there is always someone waiting to take your job—that was the biggest transition for me for sure.

How did you keep yourself accountable as you worked to overcome these challenges?

Just my love for the game. I think my passion alone helped me—always being an underdog, coming from a mid-major, having to always prove myself, and having to work extremely hard. I think that carried over to the league, in (the sense) that, I never became comfortable and stagnant with where I was. I always wanted to be better. I always wanted to do better. I think the fact that I went to a mid-major school and started early with some of those challenges, that carried over and guided me through my professional career.

Throughout your career, you have also played overseas. Could you share more with us about some of the key takeaways you have learned during your time abroad and how those experiences have helped elevate your game?

Abroad is definitely mentally challenging. The play is definitely tougher. You know, it's funny because as Americans playing abroad, we always talk about how they foul you so hard and it's certain things that the refs are not going to call. In the end, those experiences just make you a tougher player because you are able to take hits better and enforce plays. Off the court, being overseas and being away from your family and friends for long periods of time, it toughens you mentally to be more independent. You learn how to occupy your free and idle time. Definitely for me, those were the times where I would capitalize to build. I think the mental aspect, on and off the court, of going abroad has helped me tremendously throughout my career. You know people talk about the money, but just the experience alone (is valuable). If it weren't for basketball, there are several countries that I wouldn't have ever had the chance to see, visit, and experience, so it was definitely a blessing.

Given the valuable experiences that you have gained from your time overseas, is playing abroad a route you would recommend for people who are looking to play basketball at the professional level?

I always tell people to do what is best for them. Everyone is not the same. Even though (playing) overseas did help me, it was still challenging for me because I would have loved to be home more. I love to be with my family. I think the love for the game (though) is what kept me going throughout the years that I did play abroad because I didn't want to do something else. I wanted to continue to play ball. But for sure, I would tell people to take that experience and see how it helps them to become a better person on and off the court. I definitely think we learn and we grow through different experiences, and I feel that playing abroad is definitely an eye-opener in so many aspects of life—the way they live differently, the language barriers, and just different challenges that you learn to adapt to. It helps you grow as a person, so I would definitely recommend it even though I know everyone is different.

Throughout your professional career playing in the league and overseas, what have been some of the sources that have kept you motivated to continue growing and evolving in the game?

I think my hunger for the game and always wanting to be better (have kept me motivated). I am super competitive, so I would always challenge myself—even if it was just a sprint—to finish in first place. My family has also kept me motivated. They have always been my backbone, and have always supported me. There were different challenges that I faced throughout my career where there were times when I wanted to give up. Having the support from my family (though) was one of the things that kept me going for sure.





Transitioning off the court, you have also worked to build your personal brand outside of basketball and have pursued your passions for fashion and motivation with your clothing brand. Could you share more with us about how you started your business and what inspired you to embark on that journey?

Well initially, you know being a favorite in the league when I was in Chicago and even when I was in Atlanta, there were fans that would always be like, “Where can I buy your jersey at? Where can I buy your jersey?” Even though I was a fan-favorite, I wasn’t the league’s “superstar” so my jersey was never sold during that time. They sold my jersey later in Chicago, but during that time my jersey wasn’t sold. I started with just t-shirts with my logo so fans could have something to purchase in support of representing me—that is how it all started. Then, just seeing the support and the love that I was getting from people continued to help me build a bigger brand for them. I became passionate about it—I would stay up late nights Googling and trying to figure out where I could get good quality from, and what I could put out. After I got the feedback and the support, it just continued. As I grew and my fan base grew, people would write me messages about how I inspired them and how they looked up to me. It made me want to motivate them more to be themselves, just believe in themselves, and be encouraged. That is what started the motivational clothing that I did with the “Believe in Yourself” and “Loyalty”

(collection). I am big on loyalty as well, so that is how that logo came about. I just wanted to do something different, where it wasn’t just a shirt with my logo, but it was more inspirational for people. Even if they had their own brands, they could still support and (be a part) in a different way.

As you mentioned, there were different areas of product quality and design that you had to learn about when you started your own clothing brand. How was that experience like for you? What were some of the challenges that you faced behind the scenes as you embarked on that journey?

When you are in the spotlight as a professional athlete, people are always watching—whether they comment about it or not. For me, I always wanted to be an authentic person and that is how I stand by with my brand. As far as the quality, I didn’t want to put clothing that I wouldn’t wear myself. So as I ordered different shipments and tried sample pieces out, I would see things like, “Oh, this shirt fades fast or it shrinks when you dry it. You could hang it, but a lot of people like to dry their clothes.” Overtime, through these experiences with the products that I purchased, I learned what the best quality was. I didn’t want to put out something that I was not willing to wear myself—that also stands with my brand. All of the clothing that I produce, I am actually going to wear myself. (In addition), I wanted my price points to be affordable for all types of people. I didn’t want to overcharge. In the beginning, I wasn’t making a profit and it wasn’t about (that). It was just about me building a brand for people to feel connected through my clothing. It took time, but it was something that I was willing to do because I always truly appreciated the support that I got from people over the years.



Let's talk about your love for sneakers! How did you become immersed in the world of sneaker culture?

As a kid, I always loved sneakers. I think it was because of my older brother. He was super into fashion, always fly, and always had dope kicks—he is six years older than me. Even my sister, she is three years older, and she was into sneakers at that time as well. My parents couldn't afford it, so there were certain shoes that were released when I was younger that I never got. I remember in high school, my first job was at Chuck E. Cheese and I worked just so I could buy some of my own clothes and shoes for school because there were certain things that my mother wasn't willing to buy. My love for sneakers definitely started as a young kid. Even though we couldn't afford it, the love was always there. As I got older and my jobs got better, when sneakers re-released, I had to get them. Now I am thankfully able to afford the love that I have for sneakers, whereas when I was a kid I couldn't. I don't think the love ever changed, but just the money to purchase them became better as I got older.

"My favorite sneaker of all-time is the Concord 11 Jordan. It was the sneaker that I wanted the most as a kid, and one of my first sneakers in high school. If I had to pick one shoe overall, I guess I would pick that one too because it can be a basketball shoe and a casual shoe (as well)."

- Tamera on her favorite sneaker in her collection.

Throughout this journey, you have not only become a veteran in the industry—playing both in the WNBA and overseas—, but you have also fostered a really strong personal brand off the court. How have you worked to balance the two: your career on the court with your brand off the court?

I would probably say no sleep (*laughs*), but you know there were times when I would take off from playing overseas to stay home and work on my brand. Even when I was overseas, we had a lot of free time. You know you practice twice a day for two to three hours out of the day. When you are in a different country, for me, it is not the same as being at home where I am just always finding things to do outside of my home. So the times that I was overseas, those were the times when I would be on the computer researching and learning for my brand. During the times that I was home, I tried to find different ways to connect with the community—whether it was giving away clothes, giving away shoes, or doing my Kill Cancer 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament back at home. I think when you want something, it is just about going out there and working for it. That is how it came about for me—there were things that I wanted to pursue and do, and I just put the time in.



You are very passionate about working with the youth and giving back to the community. From your 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament to your charity events, where did the inspiration for all of these great community initiatives come from?

Just growing up as a kid, having less, but wanting more (has inspired me). I feel like with my platform and with some of the things that I can do to connect with the youth, I can give back. I remember being a kid and having a favorite WNBA player, a favorite NBA player and favorite entertainers, and not being able to connect with them or ever meeting them. So I try to connect (with others) now in the best way that I can. The 3-on-3 Kill Cancer Tournament came about after my father passed away from pancreatic cancer. I had never heard of it until my father was diagnosed with it, so I wanted to be an advocate where I could help people learn more about it. Everyone knows about breast cancer, but you rarely hear about pancreatic cancer. I did the Kill Cancer Tournament with my best friend who had death in his family from cancer as well. It is a free tournament that we do annually, and it is a 3-on-3 (matchup) where we have a grand prize but we also take donations to donate to the Cancer Society. For me, being able to be in a space where I have those connections to give back, I just want to try to bless others.

Let's talk about mentorship! How has mentorship played a role in your life both on and off the court?

I think mentorship has played a big role. I have always been super family-oriented. Just the way that my mother raised me as far as having morals, standards, and being respectful, I think it goes a long way. Growing up, like I said before, I had different people that I looked up to but couldn't be connected with. Now, I try to connect back with younger kids and people who need some type of guidance or motivation because kids are the future. I feel like when you can help guide them, it will help them in the long run. We have so much going on in the world today where people need guidance and help, they just sometimes need someone to listen to them. I think that changes the mental space for a lot of people who even struggle with mental illness, so I think mentorship is super important for all types of people. Not just the youth, but adults as well. There are people that I have relationships with that help me in different areas of my life, and I am 33, so I don't think there is an age where you can't have a mentor in your life.

What are some pieces of advice that you would give to someone who is interested in pursuing a similar career and play basketball at the professional level?

I would definitely say, "You have to be willing to put the work and the time in. It is not going to happen overnight. Sacrifices will definitely have to be made." There were times when I was in high school, where I had to choose between hanging out with my friends and going to the gym. I believe that if it is something you are truly passionate about and want to pursue, you have to put the time in. You can't expect others to just give it to you. It is way more rewarding when you know you have worked hard for something that you earn later.

On the entrepreneurship side of things, what are some pieces of advice that you would give to someone who is interested in starting their own clothing brand or business in the fashion industry?

I would say, "Take your time." Even now, I see a lot of people that are trying to do brands and come out with different things, and some of it you can tell they didn't put a lot of thought and time into it. So I would say, "Take the time and figure out what it is that you really want to do. Don't just put something out to say you did it or to put it out. It takes time and you definitely have to put the work in for it." I think that is the biggest thing—to put the work and the time in, and not (just) trying to do something so quick because you see everyone else doing it. Be passionate about what you truly want to do. I think when you have that passion and love behind it, everything turns (out) a lot better.

Reflecting back on your own personal journey, what is a piece of advice that you would give to your younger self and why?

There were times when I was stubborn, and I didn't want to listen until something happened. Then that's when I would be like, "Oh okay, now I see what my teacher or what my coach was trying to instill or explain." So I would say to my younger self to listen and be more receptive to the criticism from people who care about me.



"Basketball is special to me because it is something I grew up doing with my family. After falling in love with the game pursuing a dream of mine, it wasn't just my dream. It was also my brother's dream. So him helping and guiding me to achieve a dream that we both wanted as kids means a lot."

- Tamera on why the game of basketball is so special.

ASIA IRVING

*Men's Wardrobe Stylist, Designer,
and Creative*



Photographs courtesy of Asia Irving (@asiairving)

Asia Irving has been passionate about the world of fashion for as long as she can remember. This was a space that fueled her creative drive. It was an industry that fulfilled her love for visual storytelling. **The journey wasn't always this clear though.** Asia started her career in the business world. After majoring in Accounting and earning a business degree from Temple University, she embarked on a series of internships that would lead her to confirm her true desire to pursue a career in fashion. **Shortly after, she did just that.** Asia earned a degree in Fashion Merchandising at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, where she strengthened her knowledge in fashion and fostered her network in this arena. **She hasn't looked back since!** From designing her own sneaker with Nike, the Kyrie 6 'Asia Irving', to becoming a full-time fashion stylist and creative, Asia has continued to raise the bar and fearlessly pursue her dreams in the industry. **The best part of it all is...she is just getting started!**

You mentioned that you majored in Accounting in college. How was that transition of going from the business world to fashion?

It was a huge transition. I knew in school—I graduated from Temple University—that I did not want to do accounting after diving deeper into the program. I just realized it wasn't for me. I actually interned at Nike and decided, "Okay, let me try this area in a different setting to see how it would feel." I loved working at Nike, but I still realized that I hated accounting. I knew that that wasn't the direction I wanted to go. So while I was there, I made sure that I visited every department that I could and talked to as many interns in different departments (as possible)—just to see what their day-to-day was like, what were some of the things that they liked, and some of the things they didn't like about their professions. I just used that time to really find out, "Okay, what is it that I can do to use my business background and still head into the fashion (world)?"

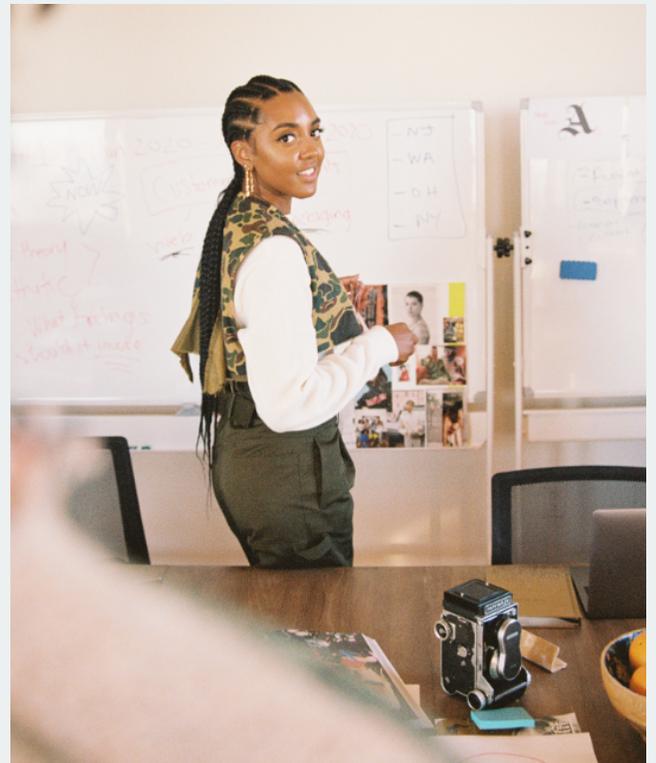
As you entered the fashion world, what were some of the challenges that you faced early on? How did you overcome them?

Contacts and being more comfortable with it. In order for me to be more comfortable with it, I obviously had to study my craft a little bit more and just have more confidence in my natural abilities. I have always loved fashion—it was always my way to express myself—but styling someone is completely different from dressing myself. So I had to figure out how to navigate through that and make the connections that I needed to, which was really hard. You know, I am a Black woman coming into some of these high-fashion places where they don't know me, they don't know my name, and I have little to no experience. It was kind of hard navigating through that part, but I would meet with different people (along the way). When I would see different people that I would connect with, they were more than happy to help me as well. Honestly, just getting out there, talking (to people), and networking as much as I could really helped me out.



You recently designed and launched your own sneaker, the Kyrie 6 'Asia Irving' basketball shoe, with Nike. Could you share with us what that process was like?

The process was really fun! You know, now I can say that it was fun (*laughs*). In the middle of it, obviously we had our highs and lows but it was an interesting experience. I would say it was harder than I initially thought it would be. Designing and selecting what you want a product to look like for others, I think that was what was difficult for me. I just wanted to make sure that it was perceived well and that my messaging was received as well. I would say (that) choosing the print or the colors was the hardest part. Seeing the final product was honestly the easiest part. After numerous meetings with the Nike team virtually and in-person, once I was able to get the sample and see the final product, it made it all worthwhile. There were many nights where I was like, "Damn, I don't know if they are really going to like this." As the launch date started getting closer I started getting a little bit more anxious, but then after it was over, it was a sigh of relief.



What were some of the inspirations behind the design of your sneaker?

There were a lot of inspirations. I am huge on color theory, so getting those purples and the meaning behind what purple represents—royalty and women empowerment—was huge. I really wanted (the color) to be a huge signifier of that. I was (also) inspired by one of my favorite camo jackets—I am huge on thrifting. Whenever I am in a different city or a different country, I love going out to see what fashion is available. I am a huge fan of camo and the idea of love in general, so I had to make sure those were transparent in the design. The pops of color and the accents of color were very important to me as well. It is all in the details for me. Then, the Nike team that I was working with surprised me with a few details on the design too. They crossed out 'Kyrie Irving' and put 'Asia Irving'—which had never been done in Nike history before—, so that was a pretty cool surprise for me when we had our final meeting in person.



Throughout this journey, you have also started building your personal brand in the industry. How did you get started building your personal brand and what has that process been like for you?

I am still going through the process right now. I feel like branding is a never ending process, but I started taking my personal brand a little bit more seriously like a year-and-a-half ago. I have a manager who I work closely with, Thamy Nuñez, and she has helped me to really develop my brand and some of the goals that I really want to tackle while I have the time and the attention right now.

Could you share more with us about how your background in business has helped you as you have entered the fashion world and the business side of this space?

It has helped a lot—from budgeting (to) research (to) networking. Obviously in business school, networking is pretty much all that you do, so it really helped me once I did enter this world. It was just basically going from one space to another, but pretty much doing the same thing. I think my business background definitely helped me out with budgeting, managing my time, and creating those relationships in a different industry.

"I learned that I am capable, and am (going) in the right direction. I learned that whatever I put out there to be received and whoever needs to receive it, (he or she) will do. It was very inspiring and motivational. It was more so a moment of thinking, "Trust in yourself, you got it. Keep going."

- Asia on what she learned about herself throughout the process of designing her own sneaker.



What is your favorite memory in the industry thus far?

The ESPYs—that was huge. That was a big summer. There were so many new experiences around that time, but I felt like it was a big spark to get me (to) where I needed to be. Styling my brother for the ESPYs and getting a *Sports Illustrated* fashion nomination from that was great—it was a really exciting experience.

Reflecting back on your own personal journey, what is a piece of advice that you would give to your younger self and why?

I would tell my younger self, "Don't shy away from things that really excite you and really move you. Those things are important." It is important to reflect back on yourself—that is the only way for you to grow. I would also say, "Actively work on the things that you want to do." You know, I was so afraid to go home and just accept some of the talents that I had for the sake of making my father happy or making sure I had a stable environment to be in. If I would have followed that, I don't know if I would be here at this moment. So I would definitely say, "Don't shy away from things. Don't let anyone dim your light. What's for you is for you, and you should trust that."





Photograph by Jackie Beale

MEGHAN MCPEAK

*Play-by-Play Broadcaster | Washington
Mystics & Capital City Go-Go*

Born and raised in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, Meghan McPeak grew up surrounded by the game of basketball. From a young age, Meghan was inspired to get active and become immersed in sports after watching her older brother in this world growing up. As she continued to solidify her love for the game, she strengthened her skills on the court and was able to utilize sports to help pay for college.

This is where it all started. During her time at Humber College, Meghan solidified her interest in taking her talents to the sidelines, and decided to pursue a major in the school's Radio Broadcasting program. **It was only up from there!** After graduating from college, she gained great experience in radio as a play-by-play broadcaster for McMaster University. From there, Meghan continued to step outside of her comfort zone and network with fellow professionals in the industry. Shortly after, she

was brought on by MLSE and NBA TV Canada to the G-League affiliate of the Toronto Raptors, the Raptors 905. After three seasons there, Meghan raised the bar again and pursued an incredible career opportunity with Monumental Sports & Entertainment in Washington, D.C. Currently, she is the play-by-play broadcaster for the 2019 WNBA Champions, the Washington Mystics, as well as the Capital City Go-Go—the G-League affiliate for the Washington Wizards.

How was that transition from college into sports broadcasting? What were some of the challenges that you faced early on?

Luckily for me, I didn't really run into any struggles or troubles early on. As most people will tell you, the biggest hurdle was just trying to find work, a gig, or an opportunity. When I graduated, I was basically in a job six months later that I wanted to do as my career, and that is very, very uncommon. It is very seldom to graduate, and within a year, you are already in a role getting experience doing exactly what you see your future job and future career in. The downside to that was that I was not paid for it. It was four years of unpaid experience—it was an internship at the beginning where I was able to use it as a graduation internship that I needed for college, and I just kept sticking with it (afterwards). You know, as much as it sucks to not get paid, I am forever grateful for those four years of experience because it propelled my career faster than it may have gone—with the opportunities that I have been given and have worked hard to get along the way now that I am 11 years in.

In 2018, you became the first female play-by-play broadcaster in 30 years to call an NBA game. Could you share more with us about what that experience was like for you?

I wouldn't say it was really an experience, I didn't look at it that way. I looked at it as, "I have a job to do. I am going to do it to the best of my ability, and to the best that my talent will allow me to." It just so happened that I also made history at the same time. I wasn't and still am not focused on being a "trailblazer or pioneer" in that space. I understand the magnitude of it and respect the magnitude of it, but I try not to put too much into it. I would rather look at it from the standpoint of—if me doing the job and being in the role that I am in for the time being means that one little girl, or especially one little Black girl, happens to see me on TV one day and is inspired by it, then I have done my job. I have impacted someone's life. That is really all I care about as well as just doing the job to an above-satisfactory level for my bosses. I honestly could care less about being the first, second, or twentieth (person), it really doesn't matter to me. I am just happy that a door is open, and I am helping to keep the door open. I care more about impacting the next generation, and generations to come, than I do about making history. I know that it comes with it, but I will be happier if when it's time for me to retire, I have impacted a little girl's life—that (means) more than the accolades I have gotten.

How did you get started building your personal brand?

I think I am still figuring that out. I am weird in the sense that I am an old soul—and it is not just about how much sleep I get or the music that I like (*laughs*). In a time and society where social media runs everything, I am not the biggest fan of it. If it were not this industry, my job, and my career aspirations, I may only just have Instagram to keep in touch with my dad's side of the family that's overseas in Scotland and my mom's side of the family—that I now only get to see via FaceTime and/or Instagram because of where I am living. I understand that it is necessary for sports media to have a brand (on social media), but it doesn't mean I have to like it. So, I am still

learning how to build my brand and utilize social media to the best of my ability. I probably will never truly understand it and understand how to best utilize it, but it is a learning thing. I think everyone is learning. But at the same time, with what is going on in the current climate with the multitude of different pandemics we are experiencing—whether you talk COVID-19, racial injustices and systemic racism, or even what is going on overseas with Lebanon and what they've been going through—social media has also given me a platform to use my voice and take advantage of my voice. Part of that also stems from seeing Natasha Cloud—who decided to opt-out this season to focus more on social injustice and social justice reform—become more vocal and utilize her platform. It gave me the inspiration to also become more vocal. She is a really good friend, and I am thankful for the friendship that we have. Just conversations with her have allowed me to feel more comfortable in using my voice. I have taken to Twitter every single day, since at least mid-June or early July, to do a daily count of how many days—and counting—it has been since Breonna Taylor was murdered in her sleep in her home. I am becoming more and more comfortable in my blackness and using my voice and my platform. I'm not saying I am a celebrity or anyone famous—because I do not see myself that way—but if I have a platform where people will listen regardless of how many followers I may or may not have, I don't see why I should not use my voice and my platform for that.



Photograph by Robert Banez



Photograph by Ned Dishman

"I care more about impacting the next generation, and generations to come, than I do about making history. I know that it comes with it, but I will be happier if when it's time for me to retire, I have impacted a little girl's life—that (means) more than the accolades I have gotten."

- Meghan on the experience of becoming the first female play-by-play broadcaster in 30 years to call an NBA game.

Throughout this journey, you have also stepped behind the camera and have tapped into the production side of things with your mini-series "Inside the Lines" and the "No Mercy: The Pops Mensah-Bonsu Journey" documentary. Could you share more with us about what inspired you to work on those projects?

I wanted to do something outside of my comfort zone. I was brought on at Monumental Sports & Entertainment not only to be the voice of their championship WNBA team, the Washington Mystics, as well as their G-League affiliate for the Washington Wizards—the Capital City Go-Go—, but also to help create content and different avenues for the network. Part of that was getting my feet wet doing other things, rather than just being on camera. I felt like once I was here for a year and the WNBA season was done, I was comfortable enough to try something outside of my comfort zone. That is kind of when the production aspect came into place. We needed to come up with some other content for our corporate partnerships and sponsorships, and I thought of doing the mini series, "Inside the Lines." I utilized my Color Analyst, Tony Massenburg, as the on-camera talent—which allowed me to be behind the camera. They were really short, little videos that gave players a chance for fans to get to know them better. With the G-League, fans have a lot more access to the players, but people don't always know the players too well from who they see on the court. I wanted to give (the players) an opportunity to let us get to know them more outside of being a basketball player—that was really fun. Then, in the Summer of 2019, our General Manager for the Capital City Go-Go—Pops Mensah-Bonsu—informed us that he would be getting inducted into the George Washington Athletics Hall of Fame. He played basketball there for them, and was part of the turnaround of the program. So I asked him, "How would you feel if we followed you around for Hall of Fame Day?" He is always really relaxed and super great about helping us create content, and the more I spoke to him prior to it happening, I began to realize that this story was bigger than just his induction. If not for everything he had gone through up until he got to George Washington (University), he may not be who he is and who we know him as. He may not have turned into the type of professional player that he was in the NBA and overseas in many countries. Also, I wanted to tell that story of (him) transitioning into his life on the other side of pro sports within the front office too. I am grateful and will be forever thankful to him for trusting me with his story, and allowing me to be the one to tell it and bring it to life in 33 minutes. Believe me when I tell you, I could have easily made it into a 60 or 90 minute (documentary). The crazy thing is we didn't even scratch the surface of his entire story, but we got the major important parts—that also leaves room to maybe have another one down the road.

What are some things that keep you motivated and inspired throughout this journey?

I think it goes back to the next generation. If I can alleviate some of the hurdles and obstacles the next generation of women, Black women, Black men and women, or simply just men and women of color and minorities have to experience or go through, then I feel like I am doing the right thing. I feel like I am having an impact. It is crazy because a year ago, a young little girl—who although by age she is young, but by her mind, determination, and perseverance I want to say she is like 35—named Pepper, was working on a project on her own and was at the (Washington) Mystics practice. I was at the Mystics practice as well and happened to be eavesdropping a little bit over her conversation with one of the players, I believe at the time it was Tianna Hawkins. Just hearing what she was saying and the story that was coming out of her mouth was so heartbreaking. She is a young girl of mixed race who was getting bullied at school by her friends because she was “too athletic” and “kept winning.” She was being bullied because she was good, and she didn’t back down from being good. I couldn’t understand it. It was breaking my heart to hear her tell the story. She was actually working on a video about bullying, how that can affect people, and how it is not very nice. She was eight at the time. Eight years old. This wasn’t even the first time she had been talking about the uncomfortable conversations. When she was done talking to Tianna, I mentioned something to her and her dad about getting her on the game broadcast the next day somehow, someday, and have her tell her story. I made sure it was okay with her parents, and they said that was totally fine. She was ready to do it. She felt confident to do it. So I called my producer and I said, “We gotta get her on. I don’t know how, but we have got to get her on.” We had to find a way to get her on with myself and my analyst Christy Winters-Scott. So we brought her on at halftime. We had her on for nearly seven minutes, and she blew away the viewers. She was articulate, she was intelligent, she got her point across, and answered our questions seamlessly—and we did not give lobs or little kid questions. We asked her adult-verbiage questions, the hard questions. She answered them like a champion. She has taken these moments and ran with them. She is now part of the WNBA Media covering the league this season and getting involved with all of the Zoom (calls). She has her own Instagram show and podcast. She has her own article that she writes covering the league as well too. She has the ability to run the world when she gets older. I am proud to call her a friend, and I see her as family. I am thankful that I happened to be doing the wrong thing and eavesdropping that day a year ago, because it has been so inspiring to see her grow in a short time. She will probably take my job one day, so I need to maximize my time while I have got it (*laughs*). But people like her are why I utilize my platform, because I hope that her time—when she gets a little older—is less tough and has less obstacles than what I had and what people before me had.

Reflecting back on your own personal journey, what is a piece of advice that you would give to your younger self and why?

I am an introverted-extrovert. While I enjoy people, I also very much enjoy myself and my alone time. If I am in a room with a large group of people or even a medium-sized group of people, I will typically stand back and watch before I interact. Not necessarily the greatest thing when you work in media, but that is how I am. I would tell my younger self, “Talk to people. Be more open. Be more welcoming. Enjoy life because you are not going to be happy doing anything if you don’t enjoy life. Why have the passion, conviction, and determination to go after a career that you want if you don’t enjoy life? And vice versa. You can’t do one without the other.” Also, I would tell my younger self to enjoy the journey. Not just the journey in your



Photograph by Billy Sabatini

career, but the journey that we know as life. Enjoy it. Absorb the bumps, absorb the obstacles, but fight through them at the same time. Take that bump and keep on moving because if you don’t, you are going to get brought down and life is going to be tough. Why not enjoy it and push through.

KESHA MCLEOD

*Visual Architect, Stylist, and
Author | KMCME*



Photographs courtesy of Kesha McLeod (@kmcme17)

How was that transition of going from college and working with an agency to having your own business in personal styling?

For me, working with that agency and then going on to another agency to work as a junior stylist was really great. To become my own personal brand definitely had it's growing pains, but it was definitely worth it once I realized who I was, what my self-worth was, and how to build myself up. I feel like that alone was about seven years in the making. There is always the intern or styling space where you are on top, but separating yourself and having that distinction of knowing what you are great at is important. Once (you) have that, you can touch and do any and everything. For me, I know that anything that I touch and I work with is gold, so I can now write about it and share (my experiences) with the next generations coming up. I have always believed that you can't take away what God has placed in front of me, so all I can do right now is just share my blueprint on what I have done. I think you see that in any kind of success story—where (people) write about their journeys five, ten years into their careers to inspire the next person.

Kesha McLeod discovered her love for fashion during her time in college. For this Queens, New York native, attending Katharine Gibbs School for Fashion Merchandising solidified her interest in the world of styling and visual architecture. She was inspired by the opportunity to help people represent and express themselves through clothing. **She did just that!** Kesha began her journey in the music and entertainment industry working with record labels and artists as a fashion stylist. **It was only up from there.** As she continued to collaborate with different artists and agencies, Kesha further established her brand and business in the industry. She then transitioned into the sports industry where she continued to raise the bar. Over the years, she has styled some of the industry's top athletes such as Serena Williams, James Harden, and P.J. Tucker, and has also worked with an array of brands such as Nike, Vogue, and Parkwood Entertainment. **She doesn't stop there.** Recently, Kesha wrote and published her own book—*The Essential "How To" Guide: Styling and Understanding Your Business*—where she shares advice for the next generation of stylists and fashion creatives to be successful in the space.

"Just listening to them, looking at who they are, and understanding their goals (inspires me). Understanding and really knowing what they want to accomplish, motivates me to make everyone happy by fulfilling their (visions).

- Kesha on her sources of inspiration and motivation throughout this journey.

Could you share more with us about the process of writing your own book? What were some of the challenges that you faced early on as you embarked on this journey?

One of the things that you do need is someone to proofread your book and help you format it. I fortunately had a really good friend—who is a journalist—and my cousin help me format, develop the graphics, and everything else for the book. All I had to do was really put my all into the writing. I think it took over a month for me to really just sit there night and day and write (it). For me, my goal was to cover a lot of the questions that people had about me and my journey. I wanted to (highlight) the steps that I took—to give them a map of the journey that they are going to (embark on). There are always different ways to get there, but I wanted to give them a map that would guide them in the right direction.



Throughout this journey, what are your sources of inspiration and motivation?

I think the people I work with. Just listening to them, looking at who they are, and understanding their goals (inspires me). Understanding and really knowing what they want to accomplish, motivates me to make everyone happy by fulfilling their (visions).

You have collaborated with an array of brands such as Vogue, Nike, the WNBA, and the NBA. What have those experiences been like for you?

You know when you first start out and you get hired for a job it's like, "Hey, here are the instructions. We need it to look like this." When you get really experienced it becomes, "Okay, what do you think? What should we do?" So becoming that visual architect has allowed me to build a creative (vision) for these brands that expands across the entire commercial. You can bring those ideas and color schemes to clients and propose them as it unfolds. That is the growth that you see—it goes from companies telling you what to do to you sitting on the board and suggesting your ideas. People now trust you on making the right decisions for their companies and organizations.



"I would say, "Write what your end goal is and then figure out how to get there." I compare my journey to running a race or driving from one destination to another, in the sense that, I know where I am going in the end. I can see my ending. I need to see the vision and have that be at least 90% clear. If you can see it and feel it, you will definitely start to live it."

- Keshha on pieces of advice she would give to someone interested in pursuing a similar career path.

What are some pieces of advice that you would give to someone who is interested in pursuing a similar career path in the fashion industry?

I would say, "Look at your journey. Look at your end goal. What is it?" This is a piece of advice that is not just for stylists, but for creatives in general. What is your end goal in all of this? Write out your goals. That is something that I did and continue to do—I write my intentions daily. I would say, "Write what your end goal is and then figure out how to get there." I compare my journey to running a race or driving from one destination to another, in the sense that, I know where I am going in the end. I can see my ending. I need to see the vision and have that be at least 90% clear. If you can see it and feel it, you will definitely start to live it.

Reflecting back on your own personal journey, what is a piece of advice that you would give to your younger self and why?

I would tell my younger self, "Don't take it too seriously. You will get it in the end." I took a lot of things very seriously, and there are a lot of moments that I would have loved to relive to feel it. For instance, I ran into a video director that I worked with early on in my career and I knew him, knew his name, but could not remember the video or the look (that I did) because I didn't feel it. Life was a blur back then and I was moving so fast. I would definitely tell my younger self to know and embrace all of those feelings. Now, I can tell you how I felt two years ago in certain moments. I wish every job and everything that I did (early on in my career), I could feel, understand, and live through those moments again—rather than just wanting to move on to the next project or the next thing that fast. I really wish I would have documented those moments in my head in detail. So I would just tell my younger self, "Take your time. Enjoy it. Stick your hand out the window as you are driving on this journey."



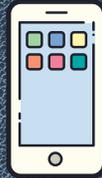
OUR SERVICES

WHAT WE DO

Help our clients take their brands to the next level while strengthening their platform in their respective industries.

OUR CLIENTS

ENTREPRENEURS | ATHLETES |
INFLUENCERS | BUSINESS
PROFESSIONALS | BRANDS



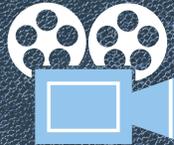
SOCIAL MEDIA
MANAGEMENT



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BRANDING



DIGITAL
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CREATION



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MORGAN JONES

Creative & Entrepreneur

Founder | Athletes to Visionaries



Photographs courtesy of Morgan Jones (@visionswithmo)

Morgan Jones was surrounded by the world of basketball from a very young age. Growing up in Orlando, Florida, Morgan remembers her family members, coaches, and mentors encouraging her to play the game at the highest level. As she continued to develop and strengthen her skills on the court throughout high school and college, Morgan began to inch closer to the goal of playing professional basketball. **Before she knew it, she had accomplished just that.** After graduating from college, she embarked on her professional career and headed to Puerto Rico to play basketball. **But, life had other plans.** Throughout that time, Morgan faced a series of challenges that pushed her to reflect on her passions, personal goals, and true interests in life. It was then when her purpose began to unfold. She was interested in using her own experiences to impact the next generation. **She wanted to pay it forward.** As Morgan began her career off the court as a sports broadcaster, she continued to brainstorm ideas about ways to support, encourage, and mentor athletes beyond the game. Suddenly, an idea came to mind—Athletes to Visionaries. An idea that initially began as a hashtag to empower athletes to understand that they are more than what they do, but quickly became a network for them to discover their identities and true potential beyond the court. Since then, Morgan has grown “Athletes to Visionaries” through workshop events and mastermind groups, and has continued to guide student-athletes to discover who they are. **Truly inspiring!**

When was that moment when you realized you wanted to step away from playing the game on the court and transition into the mentorship and empowerment side of the industry?

I played basketball my whole entire life. I had a sister that was two-and-a-half years older than me, and I followed her footsteps growing up. I followed the people that were leading me in my life—which were my parents, coaches, and mentors—, and was always told that the dream was to get to the professional level. When I was a little girl, I would go to WNBA games and would watch the cheerleaders. I would want to take pictures with the cheerleaders and not the players. So this idea of my journey (playing basketball) was something I think I was a little bit confused about for a long time. But I followed it, and ended up becoming pretty good at basketball—I was the ninth player in the country coming out of high school so I got to select almost anywhere I wanted to go for school. I went to Northwestern University initially, and then I transferred to Florida State University to get more of an athletic experience. There, when I graduated, we were in the Elite Eight and we lost to South Carolina to go to the Final Four. Then I transitioned to saying, “Okay, what’s next?” I decided to go pro, I tried out pro, and went to Puerto Rico. I played a season there. Beautiful place to be, great people, but at that point, I was at a place where I was exhausted mentally, emotionally, physically, and it was no longer fun. I was not having fun playing the game of basketball. I was a bit over the: “I love you when you are doing great, I hate you when you are not.” I can just remember the coach saying something in Spanish and what he said was, “Morgan, your job here is to score the ball. If you don’t score the ball, you can go home.” I was like, “Wow, that is really where my value lies. Right there.” That became a real issue for me, and that started to make my spirit uncomfortable. I was at a place where I was playing for teammates, I was playing for the people, and I got to the place that everyone told me: “This is it. You are here playing at the pro level.” Yet, my value was still only if I put that ball in the basket. For me that was the point where I was like, “Alright, I am going to take the leap of faith and just say ‘What’s next?’” I think all athletes come to that point at some time. In stepping out and seeing, I realized that it was a lot more difficult than I could have ever imagined.

What were some of the challenges that you faced when you made that decision to step away from the game?

As an athlete, you become so conditioned to the next game, the next practice, the next meal, and the next workout that going from that to having your whole entire day a blank canvas to recreate who you are, that is a very difficult transition for a lot of athletes. I fell into depression, substance abuse, and then I found myself pregnant all within a year. So that is when I had to stop and say, "Woah, I have not healed the athlete-identity in Morgan and here I am about to walk into the identity of being a mother. If I don't start to define who I am right now, and what I want the standard for myself and my life (to be), someone else will." That is where my deep discovery process started, that is where everything that you see now started and manifested outward.



You have also gotten involved in the world of sports broadcasting. Could you share more with us about how you got into that space and what your experience has been like thus far?

I got into that world just operating in alignment with who I am and the desires that I wanted for myself. When I first went through that pivotal moment in my life, I made a vision board. I sat down and took the time to really craft out the type of lifestyle that I wanted (to have), and the type of person I wanted to be—rather than focusing on the accolades or intangibles. When I started to create it that way, that is when the universe essentially started to align itself with what I wanted. One day, I was overhearing a conversation where someone was talking about hiring for a broadcasting position and a light bulb just went off. That is what I wanted. I reached out, I followed up, I got the opportunity to do that, and it has been going phenomenal. In terms of what I have learned in broadcasting, to me, it applies to everything else in life. You know, it's the professionalism, it's showing up prepared, it's knowing the game, and it's making sure that you are confident in yourself. If you are confident in yourself and you are confident in what you do, other people will buy into whatever it is you are trying to tell them.

You shared that throughout this process you did a lot of self-reflection and goal-identification focused on what you wanted to do off the court. When was the moment that you decided to start your own organization, Athletes to Visionaries, and what inspired you to create this platform?

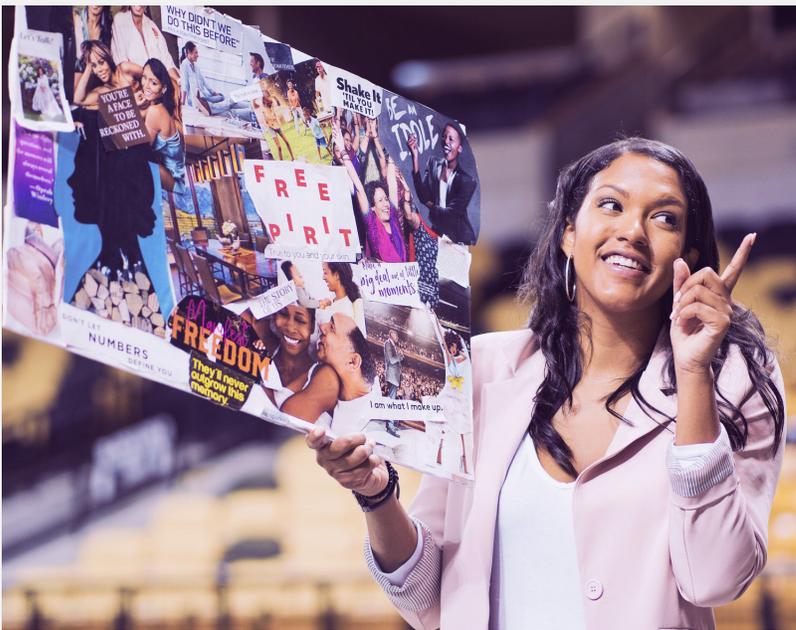
Athletes to Visionaries started out as just a hashtag. It was something in my heart that was saying, "How can I help athletes understand that they are more than what they do?" In doing that, I was trying to find the word of how I was going to take them from just being an athlete to the transformation that I was trying to make. The word "visionary" came up. Visionary meaning: a person who has goals and original ideas about what their future can and will be like. I was like, "Alright, let me just start this as a hashtag." Then, I started asking myself how I could turn this message into something tangible, something that can be experienced, and something that people can be a part of through my story. That is when I decided to have an event in my hometown for athletes, female athletes in particular. It was a completely different approach than what most coaches and athletes are used to—which is that when you go to events, you go to play your sport, you go to get better, or you go to get looked at by colleges. My event was strictly a personal development event for athletes, and it really went phenomenal. It ended up being a sold out event of 150 athletes who were there to hear the message from five dynamic women that are doing things beyond the game. All of (our panelists) were speaking to these girls about the potential that they have, and their ability to do and be anything that they desire. That went so well that I got featured on CBS and ABC News, and negotiated deals with major apparel brands that approached me about my programs. From there, it really took off.

That's incredible! Could you share more with us about the mission of Athletes to Visionaries?

At Athletes to Visionaries, we guide student-athletes to discover who they are beyond the label "athlete," so that they can have hope and direction for their future. We do this through workshop events, mastermind groups, and tools that they can use to visually remind themselves of who they choose to be. We are actually having an exclusive product launch this September that will help collegiate athletes gain clarity on who they are, and how their unique gifts can serve the world and communities surrounding them. With this product, they will also become part of a program where they will be mentored by me, guided by my resources, and assisted by experts who will also help them on their journey. It is really just about building a safe community for athletes to successfully transition and discover who they are.

What were some of the challenges that you encountered early on as you embarked on this journey? How did you work to overcome them?

I think I encountered tons of challenges (early on), and they came when I heard "no." I have learned to embrace the word "no" more than I have ever had before, because that (word) gives you the opportunity to learn, pivot, and grow. That has been a big part of the success for me in continuing pushing forward. I think what a lot of people struggle with is hearing "no," and when they hear that they don't keep going. It's 'no' and then it is like, "Oh well this is not for me" or "Maybe I am not supposed to be doing this." What I try to remember is that 90% of the battle is a mental game. 90% is mentally affirming myself (about) what I am doing, why I am doing it, and who I am doing it for. If I can stay in that, that is how I can overcome those challenges and things move forward. As soon as I start taking the word "no" personally or obstacles personally without seeing it as opportunities to pivot and grow, that is where this journey doesn't become fun.



"At Athletes to Visionaries, we guide student-athletes to discover who they are beyond the label "athlete," so that they can have hope and direction for their future. We do this through workshop events, mastermind groups, and tools that they can use to visually remind themselves of who they choose to be."

- Morgan on the mission of Athlete to Visionaries.



What are some things that you have learned and discovered about yourself as you have embraced new experiences with your organization?

I learned that I am my greatest competition, truly. I have learned that it is me vs. my beliefs, me vs. my limiting beliefs, me vs. my habits, me vs. my attitude, and me vs. my choices. I think when you start to truly take accountability for yourself, your life, and your actions, that is when you actually start to take more control of your life in general. You take control of your destiny and where you are going. I have learned (that) the more you blame other people and you look to your left and right to see what other people are doing, the more you miss your own calling.

Transitioning into the advice side of things, what are some pieces of advice that you would give to someone who is interested in pursuing a similar career path and starting their own organization?

I would say, "Commit yourself to the mission of it." If your mission is strong enough, you will withstand the ups and downs that you go through every day in that endeavor. Whether that is a big business, small business, t-shirt company, blog, or whatever it is, get rooted in the mission of it. I know a lot of people might say, "Well, I don't know what my mission is and how to create a mission." Essentially, your mission comes from your "why." Your 'why' has to be solid. Anyone that is reading this, I want to encourage you that if you don't feel like you know your 'why' right now, that is okay. You can't just turn on a light switch and say, "I know my why." Your 'why' comes through the most difficult times in your life. When they say, "Your message is in your mess," that is the truth. If you can stick to that, get solid on your 'why', and allow life to show you your purpose, then the business and everything else will flow from there. I think a lot of times we focus on just trying to have a business or entrepreneurship in our life because it looks good. But, how you are going to withstand your business while also being fulfilled in doing it is if your 'why' is strong enough to push through the days where you don't want to do it.

Reflecting back on your own personal journey, what is a piece of advice that you would give to your younger self and why?

I would say to my younger self, "Don't fall victim to culture and society's way of success, relationships, and who you are supposed to be." I don't ever feel like it is too early for anyone to start to really get aligned with who they truly want to be. Right now, the world is truly divided in a lot of ways—from the music that we listen to to the images that we digest—and it gets very confusing for a young person or someone starting out as to what "success" is. I would tell myself, "Being aligned with something bigger than yourself, and having a spiritual alignment with whoever you worship is the way to go."

ENJOYING THE PROCESS

“IT’S NOT THE DESTINATION,
IT’S THE JOURNEY.”

- RALPH WALDO EMERSON

A DAILY WORKSHEET TO REMIND YOU THAT LIFE IS ABOUT ENJOYING THE MOMENTS ALONG THE WAY. THROUGH THE UPS AND THE DOWNS, LIFE IS ALL ABOUT THE JOURNEY, NOT THE DESTINATION. BE PRESENT. LIVE FOR THE MOMENT. YOU’VE GOT THIS!

DAILY AFFIRMATIONS

DAILY GOALS

WRITE DOWN SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE MOMENTS OF THE DAY.



BALLERS

T H E M A G A Z I N E

Sky's the limit, keep ballin'.