

HUSTLE & GROW

YEAR 2026

SAUCELESSENTERTAINMENT.COM

COPENHAGEN'S POWER COUPLE

From filmmaking to
producing.

INTERVIEWS

We profile self
starters who are
shaking their
industries

GROWTH

Growing your
business and mental
health



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Editor's Letter

Welcome to our first edition of the Hustle & Grow magazine!

In a world where creativity and innovation often compete for attention, this publication was created to celebrate the individuals who refuse to wait for permission to pursue their dreams. Whether you're building a business from the ground up, directing your first independent film, stepping in front of the camera, writing your next chapter, or creating music that speaks to the soul, this magazine is for you.

Every entrepreneur, filmmaker, model, author, and musical artist featured in these pages shares something in common: the courage to create. Their journeys are filled with challenges, setbacks, victories, and lessons learned along the way. They remind us that success is rarely a straight line and that passion, persistence, and purpose often matter more than perfection.

Our goal is simple—to provide a platform where creative professionals and visionaries can share their stories, inspire others, and build meaningful connections. We believe that every project, every business venture, every manuscript, every performance, and every photoshoot has a story worth telling. By highlighting these stories, we hope to encourage our readers to take the next step toward their own ambitions.

Inside this issue, you'll discover conversations with emerging and established creators who are redefining their industries. You'll gain insight into their creative processes, their business strategies, and the experiences that shaped their paths. More importantly, you'll find proof that extraordinary achievements often begin with a simple idea and the determination to see it through.

To our readers, thank you for being part of this community. Your support helps amplify independent voices and fuels the creative spirit that drives innovation across every industry represented here. Whether you're looking for inspiration, education, networking opportunities, or motivation to begin your next project, we hope these pages serve as a valuable resource on your journey.

The future belongs to creators who are willing to take risks, tell authentic stories, and build something meaningful. We are honoured to celebrate those creators and share their work with the world.

Keep creating. Keep growing. Keep inspiring.

Sincerely,

Sauceless Entertainment LLC.

JOSEPH & HELENA
PALU





1. What led you to start a film production business in Copenhagen and how does the city's culture influence your work?

JOE: I started the production company here in Copenhagen because I saw a gap between how stories were being told and what stories needed to be told. Denmark is rich in aesthetics and minimalism, sure but emotionally, things are often left unsaid. I've always been drawn to the tension between what's visible and what's hidden. The city's culture reserved, structured, yet subtly radical feeds into that. I wanted to build a space where I could develop visual narratives that feel personal and disruptive at the same time. Copenhagen's culture pushes you to be intentional with every frame, every word. That pressure has shaped my voice.

HELENA: The Danish film industry is relatively small, and unfortunately, that often comes with a certain hierarchy. As a result, projects tend to be greenlit by the same circles of people, who often favour similar themes and narratives. That can limit the diversity of voices and stories that reach the screen, and doesn't

In the heart of Copenhagen, where cobblestone streets meet Nordic minimalism and cinematic light floods every corner, two filmmakers are blending art, production, and storytelling into something truly unique. Partners in life and in film, Joseph and Helena Palau created a production company

"Through the Eye Productions" and are carving out their own creative path—one frame at a time. In this Q&A, we sit down with the duo to talk about what it's like to collaborate both on set and off, how partnership and Copenhagen inspires their work, and the beautiful chaos of moviemaking.



2. For American readers who might not be familiar with Copenhagen's film scene, how would you describe it?

JOE: Copenhagen's film scene is smaller than the U.S., but that can be a strength. It's focused, tight-knit, and deeply invested in craft. You'll find a lot of strong auteurs and a respect for nuance and quiet drama. At the same time, it can feel very homogenous. There's a certain look, a certain tone that dominates. So if you're doing something that steps outside that norm if your stories are loud, multicultural, or politically direct it can feel like you're swimming upstream. But for me, that's motivating.

HELENA: As mentioned, it's a relatively small industry. The budgets here are a fraction of what a film budget in the states look like, and therefore the films that are being made is often cut to the bone, very character driven, indie kind of feel. I really appreciate that, as the films being made are told from the filmmaker alone. At the same time, I do think the industry can feel a bit stuck in time, and at times lacking in ambition. We're living in an era where technology allows low-budget films to be bolder, both visually and narratively.

3. What is it like to create films with your spouse?

JOE: Working with Helena is one of the most grounding parts of my creative process. She's got a sharp eye for truth and tone, she'll catch things I miss because I'm deep in the weeds. Where I might be chasing emotion and concept, she's laser-focused on clarity and intention. We complement each other because we don't let each other settle. It's also very vulnerable, you're not just collaborating, you're sharing the parts of your creative self you usually hide. But that's where the magic is. At the end of the day, if I make a film that she wants to watch 'twice', then I have succeeded.

HELENA: It can definitely be challenging at times, especially since, as the producer, I can never fully escape my director and his crazy ideas haha! But working with Joe is also one of the most rewarding experiences I get. I'm allowed in to the creative space from the very beginning and in a much more involved way than I usually am with other directors. There's also a real "us against the world" energy that kicks in during production, especially when things inevitably go sideways. Lastly he's one of the most talented storytellers that I've met, and his dedication.

4. What're some hurdles you've had when forming your production company in Copenhagen?

JOE: The biggest hurdle has been representation finding my place as a storyteller of mixed heritage in a country that still leans toward one dominant cultural voice. Denmark loves order, and I tend to live in chaos and contradiction. Another challenge was navigating the admin side funding models, local bureaucracy, even things like tax categories when you work across art and commerce. But also: trust. It takes time here for people to trust someone doing something different. You have to build credibility through consistency.

HELENA: Securing funding for films in Denmark is a challenge, even for the larger production companies. Since Danish is only spoken in our country, most of our films don't travel outside of our borders, which makes the industry largely non-profitable from a commercial standpoint. We rely heavily on government-supported art funds and a few private grants, but the competition is intense, and the resources are limited. As a result, many production companies here are essentially treading water, especially those focused primarily on fiction.

5. What's the creative community like in Copenhagen? Have you found it supportive for independent filmmakers?

JOE: It depends on who you are and what you're making. If you fit within the existing structures, it's incredibly supportive. There's money, infrastructure, and mentorship if you speak the language, literally and creatively. But for indie filmmakers who are carving their own space, it can be isolating. That said, there's a quiet rebellion brewing. More people are experimenting, collaborating across genres, pulling in global influences. I've been lucky to find some allies in that pocket, a mix of local and international voices pushing the limits of what Danish storytelling can be.

HELENA: That's actually a really interesting question. The industry is mostly made up of independent filmmakers, but there's still a strong hierarchy. It can be hard to break in, and once people are in, they're often hesitant to let others in which creates a bit of a closed circle. That said, under the right circumstances, the community can be very supportive. It just takes time and persistence to find the right collaborators.

6. Are there any unique challenges or advantages to running a film business in a European city like Copenhagen?

JOE: The advantage is that there's institutional support for art. You're not just chasing clients or commercial work there's room to slow down, reflect, and make something meaningful. The challenge is that gatekeeping is real, especially in such a curated culture. It can be hard to break through with new ideas if they don't fit the usual mold. I've been lucky to find some allies in that pocket, a mix of local and international voices pushing the limits of what Danish storytelling can be.



7. What's a project you've worked on that really captures your style or philosophy as a filmmaker?

JOE: My most recent short film, which comes out this October, probably captures my voice more clearly than anything I've done before. It's intimate, unsettling, and satirical but grounded in something real. It plays with contrast: what's cozy on the surface but deeply uncomfortable underneath. That tension is where I like to live creatively. I'm drawn to projects that challenge cultural norms in subtle ways, that ask the audience to sit with discomfort without giving them easy answers. The process reminded me why I'm in this. And why I love

HELENA: Our latest project, which just went into post-production, really captures the kind of storytelling we're most passionate about. It's a bit different in both tone and style, which made it tough to get funded through the usual channels. In the end, we said "screw it" and found alternative ways to make it happen, and honestly, it's the project I'm most proud of. It reflects our belief in taking risks, trusting the story, and not waiting around for permission.

8. How do you navigate funding, grants, or support for creative projects especially as a small business owner?

JOE: With patience and strategy. In Denmark, there's funding available, but it's competitive and leans toward traditional narratives. I've had to learn to write applications like I'm telling a story because that's what they are. I also try to build layered projects: something that speaks to audiences on a deeper, emotional, or with a societal message underneath. That way, I'm not reliant on just one source.

HELENA: One unique challenge is the limited funding landscape as most films rely on public support, which can make the industry cautious and competitive. But there's also a real advantage in the strong cultural value placed on storytelling. Copenhagen offers a creative, reflective environment that encourages depth, even on a small budget.

9. Do you collaborate with clients or creatives outside Denmark, and how has that international aspect shaped your business?

JOE: I haven't co-produced anything internationally yet, but I'm actively in talks with teams from Sweden, Germany, and Canada, as well as creatives based here in Denmark who come from all over the world. That global exchange, just being in conversation with different perspectives has already shaped how I approach story and structure. It's helped me stay aware of how identity and cultural nuance can shift depending on context. Even without a full co-production under my belt yet, those international relationships push me to think bigger, listen

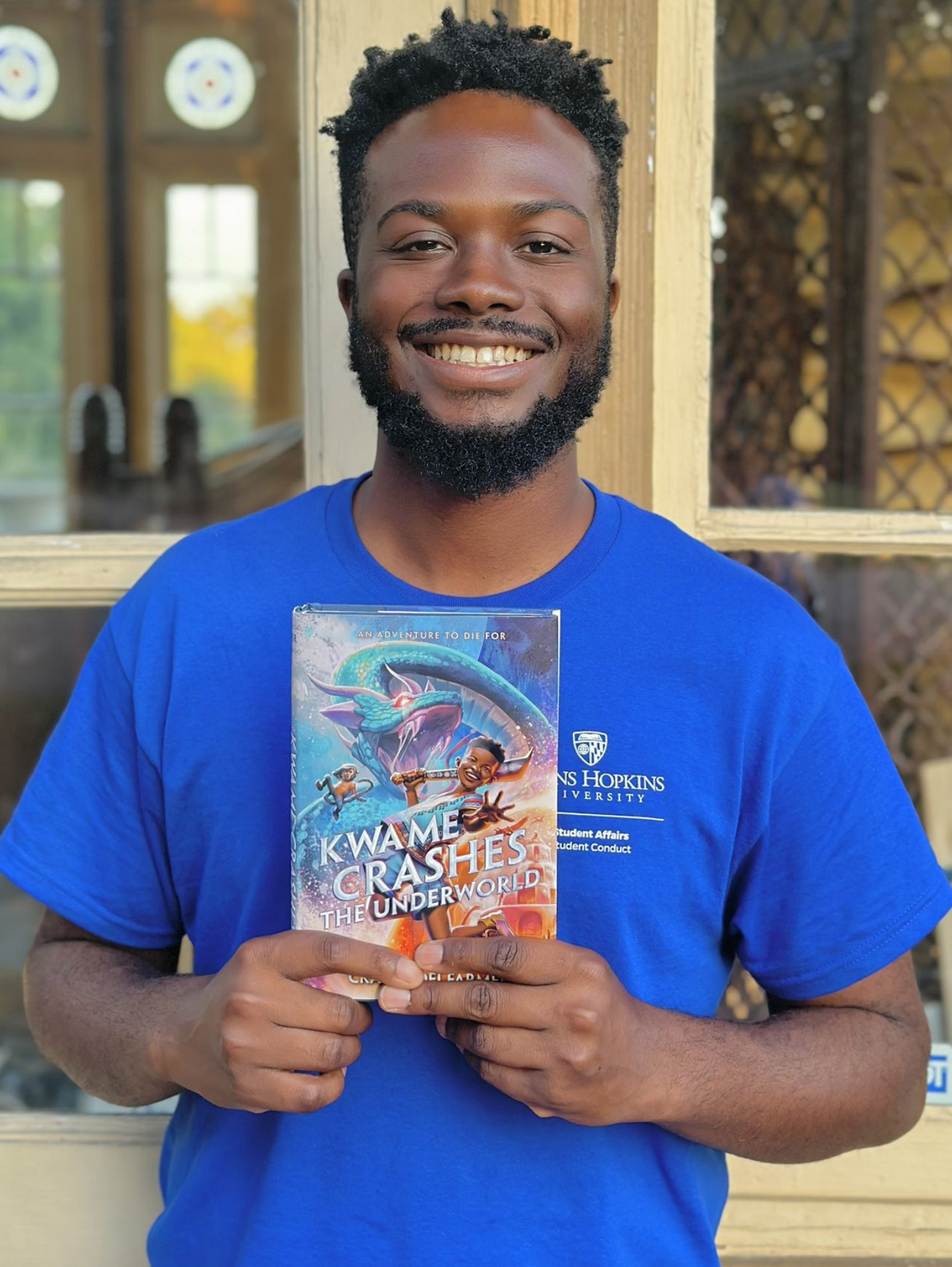
HELENA: We haven't co-produced internationally yet, but our crews are often made up of people from all over the world. That brings a very unique energy and sense of solidarity to set, which I absolutely love. It naturally broadens our perspective and how we tell stories, even when the projects are local.

10. What advice would you give to someone in the U.S. who's thinking about starting a creative business or even working internationally, like you've done?

JOE: Don't wait until it's perfect, build something small and real, and let it evolve. Understand your "why" deeply, because it'll get tested when you're operating outside your comfort zone. And find collaborators who challenge you and make you feel less alone. Working internationally is humbling, it teaches you to listen more and speak with purpose. Lean into that. Don't just bring your voice bring your curiosity, too.

HELENA: Choosing to step outside the norm and pursue a creative dream can be terrifying. But something shifts when you push through the fear and do it anyway, despite the anxiety and the self-doubt. Even if things don't turn out as you want, you'll still walk away with growth, perspective, and most importantly; the realization that no one is paying as much attention to your failures as you are.

Craig Kofi Farmer



1. What inspired you to pursue writing, and how did you first turn your passion into a business or career?

A: My pursuit of writing really started with a love for reading. I fell in love with reading when I was ten years old; my mother had just brought home the first Percy Jackson novel, titled THE LIGHTNING THIEF (2006). I remember being struck by that book. The main character sounded like a kid. He was funny. Sympathetic. Easy to read. The accessibility of those books kept me turning the page again and again. I loved reading those books so much that, in between releases, I started to write my own stories within that universe. Writing about something I loved reading about, helped me fall in love with writing. I loved creating worlds, writing relationships, and building out conflicts. I loved the agency I had, to lead the narrative and define the story.

But every original character I wrote was a white character with blue-green eyes. None of them looked like me, like my family, or like the kids I grew up around. They all looked like the literary heroes I grew up reading—and deep down, I wanted to look like my heroes. As I got older, I grew more assured in my identity. I found my community (of Black nerds), I grew pride in my Blackness, and I no longer wanted to look like anyone else. And after seeing projects like Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse (2018) and Black Panther (2018), I saw that there was a huge demand for Black characters to serve as the leads for their own fantasy, superhero, and science fiction stories.

These projects proved to me—and to pop culture—that Black characters and stories were not only marketable, but they were lucrative. People wanted to see heroes that looked like them, which was exactly how I felt when I was younger. Since I still loved writing, I decided to take a leap and write the story that I would've loved to read when I was ten. A story with the voice, the whimsy, the fantasy, and the epic-ness of Percy Jackson...but with the mythologies of my family and with Black characters as the leads.

I decided to take another leap and try to get it on shelves—after all, countless people have written books and tried to publish them, seemingly without any insecurity or doubt. Maybe they did it for attention, maybe they did it for fame, but I was trying to write a story for the kids who looked like me...so didn't I owe it to them to pursue publishing with that same kind of confidence? I pitched my story to agents (a process called "querying"). Through this process, I got an agent, Emily Forney from BookEnds Literary, who was also passionate about championing Black children's fantasy. Emily and I worked together to edit my story, make it stronger, and punch up the "voice" of the book. From there, the ball was in Emily's court; she pitched my story to publishers like Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Disney, etc. I decided to go with Macmillan Publishing/Roaring Brook Press, and that story I wrote became the Coretta Scott King Award-winning KWAME CRASHES THE UNDERWORLD (2024) and jump-started my writing career.



4.What challenges have you faced in the publishing or business world that you feel are specific to being a Black creative entrepreneur?

A: This is a good question. Before I had an agent, I did a good amount of research into publishing. I saw that there were some authors who got pushback from their publishers about writing books featuring non-American mythologies. Some had publishers who were reluctant about publishing stories about Black characters.

Some authors had marketing teams who balked at the idea of having a Black character even featuring Black characters on the front of the book. (Apparently, some authors say they've been told that having a Black character on the front of the book can limit sales in certain parts of the country.)

I'm happy to say this has never been my experience. I was intentional about my publishing team; my agent, my editors, and my imprint are dedicated to representation in children's literature. Even the things I couldn't control, like publicity and marketing, have people in those roles that are also committed to making publishing more accessible. So, my experience within my publishing team has been nothing but positive. Outside of the industry, though...there will always be people who discredit Black stories and Black art. I just remind myself that my voice comes from a place of love for my community—their voice seems to come from a place of hate.

3.What has been the most rewarding part of writing “Kwame Crashes The Underworld.”

A: I would probably say school visits. As a children's author, I'm offered several opportunities to visit schools and present my books, discuss being an author with the children, and do all this in an engaging, colorful, and splashy format. Being able to connect with kids, especially kids that look like me or kids that went to the same schools I did, has been a beautiful experience. Kids have such capacity for empathy and energy, and I always leave school visits feeling replenished.

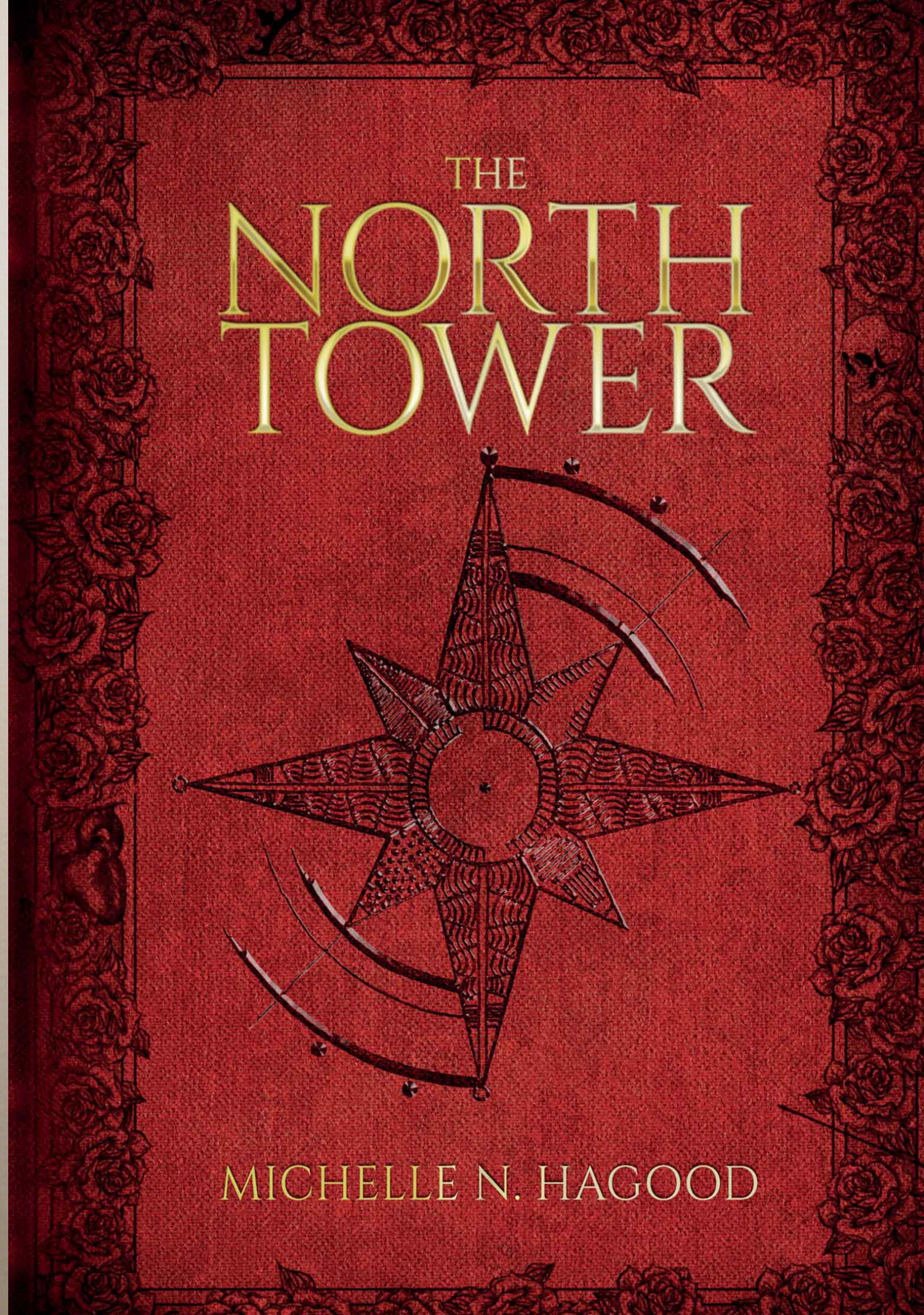


5.Where do you usually write, and how does your environment affect your creativity?

A: I can honestly write anywhere that's quiet. As long as I have space to think and time to put it on the page, I can knock out a lot of writing. I find that if I'm in a more active area, my mind lends itself to fight scenes, chase sequences, anything that is more chaotic and colorful. If I'm in a more serene space, the calm helps me think about the plot, conversations, and reflections on a deeper level.



Michelle N. Hagood



THE
NORTH
TOWER



MICHELLE N. HAGOOD

1. How has the rise of digital platforms, self-publishing, or social media changed the way you connect with readers and promote your books?

A: I've noticed that readers are less apprehensive about my work. Before, whenever I would say that I'm an indie author, I would get a lot of hesitation or people saying they would look up my books before committing. But now that social media and readers have pulled off the shroud of taboo that used to hang over self-publishing, I've found that people are excited, if not seeking me out because I am an indie author. I get to share in the excitement of this little world of mine instead of begging for them to give me a chance. I mean, I still am begging, but now it's not into the void of social media hoping for a reader to bite. I now get to ask them directly. What I love most about social media, is that readers from all over can reach out directly to me. I'm not this distant figure floating off in the distance. We can talk about the books and swap theories or discuss characters and plot points. I get to be a fangirl with them about this little world I created.

2. Many authors treat their writing as both art and entrepreneurship—how do you approach the business side of being an author?

A: Honestly, I am still trying to figure that out. My love of writing and storytelling is why I do what I do. Selling and promoting my writing makes me want to crawl under my bed and never come out. But unfortunately, you can't make a living selling books without promoting said book.

2025 was my first year as a full-time author with no other job to fall back on. I packed my calendar full of in-person book events and book signings. I posted every day on my social media, and when I got burned out from that, I took a break and created more focused posts. I opened my TikTok shop and started selling on there instead of just on my website. I tried messaging and sending my book directly to bookstores and book reviewers. I tried so many different things that I am physically exhausted and I hardly got any writing done, which impacted me a lot more than I was willing to admit to myself. My approach is completely different than when I started in January, and maybe that's the point, you know? Don't be afraid if it doesn't work. Just pivot and try something new. My plan for 2026 is so different I had to create a spreadsheet to keep it all straight. I'm really excited to see how it all plays out and to see what I learn in the process.

On top of that, I've taken something from my 9 - 5 days, and that's work life balance. In order to do this and do it well, I know I need to keep myself from burning out. So while I want to promote and talk about my book all day long, I have a hard end time each day. That way I can write, read, start/finish an art project-- something that breathes life back into my soul so I can do it all again the next day, bright eyed and tail wagging. It's all about balance.

3. What strategies have you found most effective for building and sustaining a loyal readership in such a competitive genre?

I think it's interacting with readers-- in comments, DMs, or in person at live events. Even if I'm not posting content every week, it's just enough of a touch point to keep the relationship alive. Even if it's not about my book! I had a comment thread going with a reader about another series we both loved. It was fun! And that now that reader comments on most of my videos or posts, which I love! It actually feels like I have a new horde of friends.

4. How do you approach developing characters throughout multiple books?

I love this question. I think of every character as a chunk of clay and every interaction with another character, an emotional event, the main climax of the story, whatever-- all impacts that chunk of clay in a different way, shaping it into something different by the end of each book, or even sometimes at the end of a scene. I mean think about it, us as real people aren't the same at the end of every calendar year, right? Something over the 365 days has changed us, maybe not dramatically, but in small noticeable ways that when you look back, you can see the differences.

I think the same should be for characters of a book. The main character, or really any character in the cast, should not be the same person you have met on page one. So after different points in the story, I ask myself "How did this change the character? Was it for good? Or was it bad?" Think of it like this-- if you throw your character into a dark hole for a week with no light, when they get out do they hate darkness? Do they sleep with a nightlight from then on or do they just sleep with the lights on? Or maybe, darkness is now a comfort. They seek out shadows and tuck themselves inside them.

I am a huge fan of consequences in stories, so I love getting to play with the cause and effect on a character's mental state or how they approach the world in the aftermath.

5. Any suggestions for how new authors can get started writing their stories?

My favorite quote is by Shannon Hale. "I'm writing a first draft and reminding myself that I'm simply shoveling sand into a box so that later I can build castles." Give yourself permission to be bad. All of the books you love and see on the shelves are the products of hours upon hours of work. Your first draft isn't going to be winning any prizes, and that shouldn't be the goal of it. Get the story out, by any means necessary, and that means writing garbage. My first drafts make me physically ill, but they also bring me to my favorite stage of the process which is building castles. What's been growing in my head, I can finally shape and draw out. It's the closest thing to real life magic there is, at least in my opinion. You can always go back and fix it later, but you have to have something in order to do that.

Anna Kovaleva of Align Mco

1. What inspired you to start making jewelry and clothing? And how did your journey begin?

A: Ever since I was young, I remember making hand made jewelry. After covid, I was thinking of ways I could combine my hobbies and turn them into additional income but also provide something to others.

2. How do you balance being a single mom and running a business?

A: Being a single parent and running a business while also working full time 8-4 pm does have its pros and cons. However, over time I got the hang of it by creating a strict schedule (which typically never goes smoothly) but also remembering that its not the end of the world and just enjoy my time. I usually also have my daughter next to me when I make new jewelry pieces and she gives me her input a lot

3. Where do you draw inspiration from for your designs?

A: As far as my inspirations, I tend to go for in the moment and what aligns with my business and what it stands for. My shirts all have custom messages on them that aligns with goals, dreams and aspirations. My jewelry varies and I make custom color pieces.





5.What advice would you give to other single moms thinking about starting a creative business?

A: GO FOR IT BUT TAKE YOUR TIME. find your niche , see if it something you'd like to do long term. Create a few products see how they sell and what type of feed back you receive from them.

4.If you had unlimited time or resources, what would you love to do next with your business?

A: In the perfect world I would take my business up a notch. Invest in lots of marketing , creating more designs with hoodies, sweatpants / co-od sets, have booth sets for custom charm making.

Lone Wolfe, Musical Artist



1. What inspired you to start your journey as an independent artist/business owner, and what were those early days like?

A: Bow wow. Simple. My mom took me to my local record store in my neighborhood and she let me buy the scream tour vhs and the beware of dog album. Seeing a kid not to much older than me move so many people on stage and have people inspired and screaming his name moved me like nothing else. I instantly became obsessed with the process of writing songs and making music. Since I didn't have any equipment or money for that matter my mom got me a old school tape recorder and some tapes and I would beat box and harmonize melodies into the tape recorder and then writer over that around the age of 8. I honestly still do the same thing today but with voice memo on my iPhone.



2. What does “hustle” mean to you, and how has that mindset shaped your path so far?

A: Means to do what you love and make it not feel like work. People think in some aspects that hustle means to grind hard with labor and do things you don't have to get where you need to be. but to me that's a mindset everything you do, even the stuff you don't want to do, is what I love to do because it's all apart of the mission I was assigned since that seed the creator planted in me when I was 8 to create songs. So I won't label things in negative ways if it's getting me to the goal of being an artist.

3. What has been the toughest obstacle you've faced, and how did you push through it?

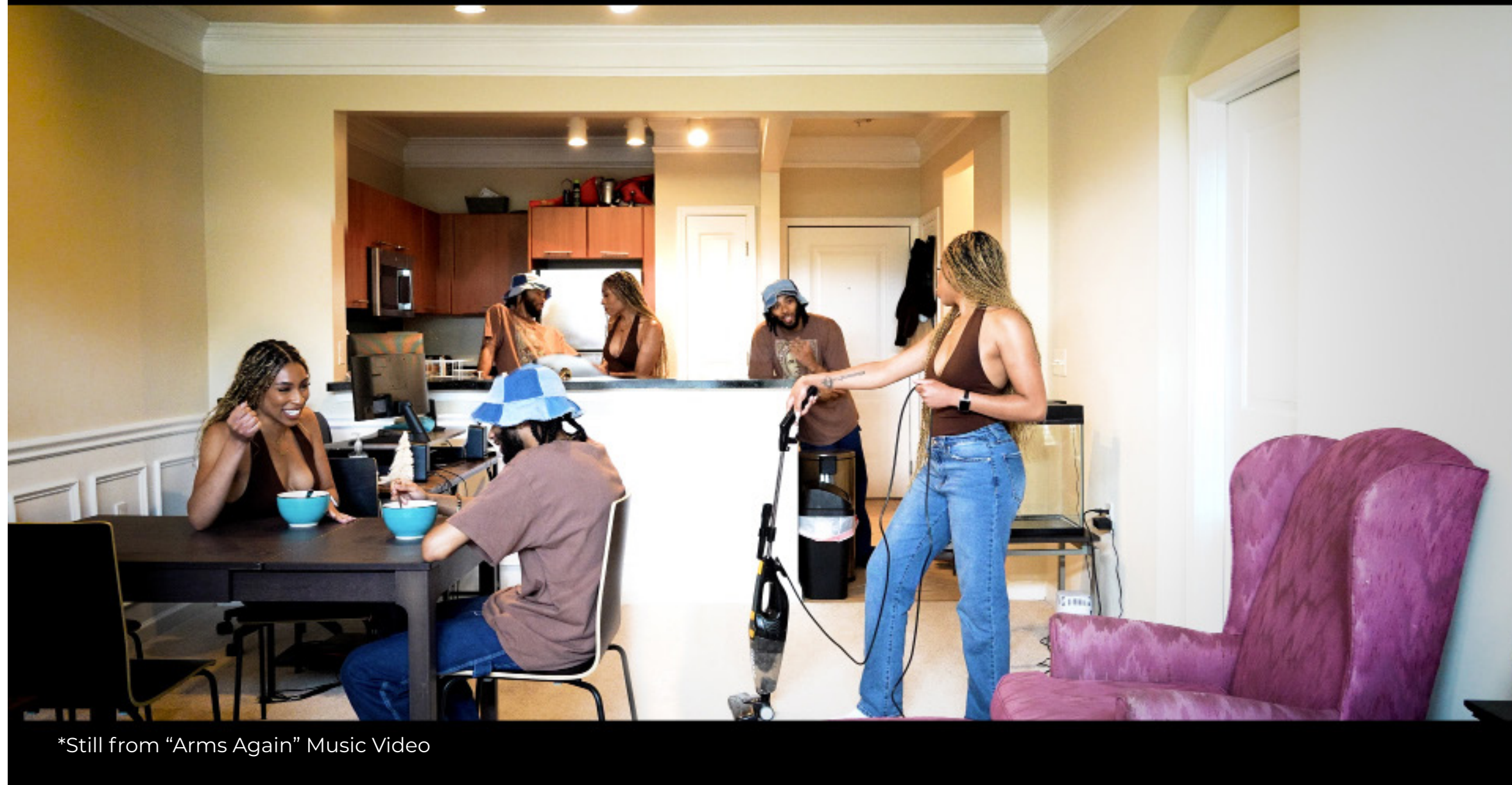
A: Switching from being a rapper to a pop singer, then having my first song as a pop artist doing 50k in the first 4 months and having managements, producers and labels hit me up promising me dreams and me listening to them and putting my career in their hands which led me to not drop for almost two years and stall my moment as a brand new artist. Now I'm working from the ground up again to maintain and curate a new organic fan base without a label or management and just pure talent, Godsense direction and research.

4. In an industry full of trends, how do you stay true to yourself while still innovating?

A: I mean depends on the trend, if it aligns with who you are or if you just want to have fun with your art there's no problem with that either. Grabbing inspiration from the world actually helps your art as well and not making it only about you 24/7. So sometimes you can take trends and flip it to your comfortability and that can be used as innovation. Think of it as the saying says “use the world as your oyster.”

5. How do you stay creatively motivated while managing the business side of things?

A: By not fixating on trying to “stay on” all the time. Every light bulb burns out and that's ok but when I'm in that flow state I let it be that and take full advantage. I create a song everyday when I'm inspired by joy, pain, love, grief whatever but there is also times where it's time to just chill and I embrace that chill as well and maybe switch it to other things that life has to offer such as nature, traveling, golf, crocheting, learning a new language, etc. I also take time to focus on promoting my body of work too so in that time I might shift my motivation to promote my brand and artistry instead of creating



*Still from "Arms Again" Music Video

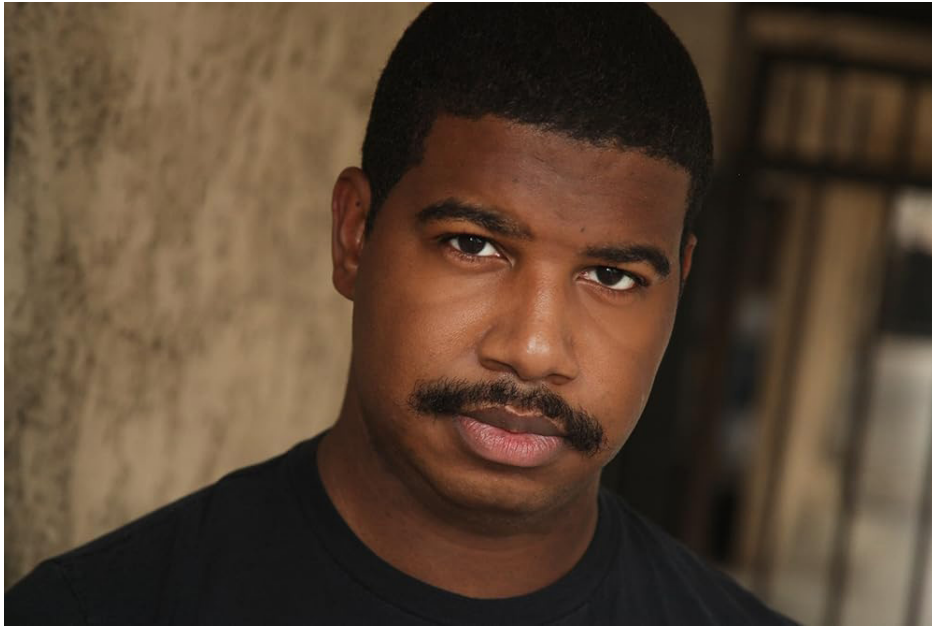
6. What are some key decisions or habits that have helped you grow your brand or audience?

I is for sure becoming holistic and trusted in clean eating and herbal healing, trusting God over the word of man and religion, trusting myself most definitely and the skills I have in creating is to be trusted as well. And also not being so hard on myself to have it all correct. My relatability as an artist is my imperfections and I stay true with that through my music.

7. Where do you see yourself and your brand in the next 3–5 years?

A: Doing music festivals, creating music festivals, having supporters, laugh and cry with me at concerts. Just a safe haven for people to come and feel loved and free to be expressive.

Omari Williams, Actor



1. What first drew you to acting, and when did you realize this was more than just a dream—it was your path?

A: Something that first drew me to acting was acceptance. I had a hard time fitting in growing up and I felt like whatever character I played, regardless of what their stance was, or how they looked or anything, they were accepted in the realms of the play/show whatever the type of media it was. When I found ways to explore myself within the characters I played is when it turned into something more. That and the camaraderie I felt being a part of something bigger than myself is what kept me in it.

2. What has the hustle looked like for you—auditions, rejections, side gigs—what kept you going through it all?

A: Hustle to me looks like taking the little things when I can get it, even if the pay isn't great. I've had many acting jobs over the years that haven't been lucrative, but I've made connections with people that I might not have in any other space. Many of my subsequent jobs started with me saying yes to something smaller with someone I didn't have any relationship with, and then later they called me back for something else, because they know my work ethic.

3. Can you recall a role or moment that felt like a breakthrough in your career? What made it different?

A: In terms of a breakthrough moment in my career, I've had a handful. The first was working on a short webseries when I first got out here that was received well enough to get a second season. In that season, we had a team of writers as opposed to just one, and they were writing for me then. Not my character, but for me to do as my character. When something is written for you, it is different in that you're trusted more in your portrayal, rather than just writing for some John Doe character that you have to fill.

4. What's your approach to building relationships and making connections in such a competitive industry?

A: My approach to building relationships is to seek things out on a ground level. Not just going to the most popular or highest paying companies. I am a member of a theatre group in LA and I wanted to join because I believed in the people running the company. It's a group of friends who wanted to create art together, despite how hard it is to run a business. I attended and am now running a cold reading group with a bunch of creatives because I love to see people put their hearts into something original. I'm not in these groups because I think it's going to be the next big thing, but because I enjoy the relationships we have fostered. If they become fruitful, then so be it, but I seek things out with the mindset of community first.

5. In what ways has your idea of success changed since you started out in the business?

A: The ways that my idea of success has changed has become broader. Before, I only wanted to do television and stage with the biggest productions. That way was very outwardly focused, but I've learned that you can be a successful artist in many ways without being in the spotlight. There are so many interests of mine that have melded with acting that I didn't know were possible. The goal is to get paid consistently doing what I love to do, perform. That can be motion capture, commercials, audio dramas, or even short form content. The ways to get to that goal have opened tremendously in our time.



6. How do you mentally and emotionally handle rejection or long stretches between work?

A: To handle rejection in this line of work, you just have to move on. It can be easier said than done for projects you're really excited about, but at the end of the day, bills need to be paid and sometimes you have to move on. You have no choice. For me specifically, I have other avenues in my life that sate my thirst for creativity. I attend and now run a cold reading group with other creatives every Tuesday night, and have a virtual Dungeons and Dragons campaign that I've been a part of for nearly 5 years.

7. What's next for you—and what keeps your fire lit when the spotlight's off?

A: The next thing I'd like to do is book consistent voice-over work to relegate my other non-artistic jobs. The fire is constantly lit when I listen to ads, go through industrial training videos, and watch indie animatics online. There is such a boom in independently produced stuff, I know they're always looking for voice actors. I would love to lend my talents in that regard.

Catherine Hayes

1. Are there specific Liberian traditions, fabrics, or symbols that you incorporate into your pieces? If so, why are they meaningful to you?

A: Yes, definitely. We draw a lot of inspiration from Liberian culture, things like old artifacts, Firestone stamps, and historical figures who made a real impact on Liberia's story. Those elements are meaningful because they represent pride, heritage, and resilience. When people wear Bunjee, we want them to feel connected to that cultural history and know there's a deeper story behind every design.

2. What inspired you to start your clothing brand, and what was your initial vision?

Me and my best friend, who's from New Orleans, started Bunjee because we realized how similar Liberian and New Orleans cultures are, especially through food, music, and spirit. Both cultures have deep roots, strong communities, and a shared rhythm that's hard to explain unless you've lived it. Our vision was to merge those two worlds into one brand that celebrates heritage, unity, and pride through fashion.

3. How would you describe your brand's style and identity in three words?

A: Cultural. Bold. Authentic.

4. What makes your brand different from others in the market?

A: Bunjee is more than just clothing; it's culture you can wear. Every design tells a story that connects two worlds, the soul of West Africa and the energy of New Orleans. We're not just following trends; we're preserving history and turning it into something stylish and meaningful for the next generation.

5. Can you walk us through your design process, from concept to final product?

It starts with research and inspiration. We look into Liberian history or New Orleans traditions, anything from vintage stamps to local sayings or visuals that speak to both cultures. From there, we sketch out how those ideas could come to life on a shirt or hoodie, experiment with colors and placements, and finalize the design before going into production. Every piece goes through that thoughtful process.

6. How do you build and connect with your target audience or community?

We connect through storytelling and authenticity. Whether it's social media, pop-ups, or collaborations, we always share the meaning behind each design. We want people to feel part of the culture, not just buy into it. Our audience connects with that realness because they can feel that Bunjee represents something bigger than just clothes.

Events of the Year



Events of the Year



Events of the Year



Events of the Year



Geekout Room Game of The Year (2025)



Geekout Room Movie of The Year (2025)



Model Spotlight





Anna Kovaleva



Model Spotlight



@figgyfatale

Arnette Figueroa

Photo taken by Maze Studio

Photo taken by Chase Stevens



My name is Arnette Figueroa. I'm fueled by my hyper fixations: horror, anything of spooky nature, bodybuilding, thrifted fashion, and cosplay. I'm an alternative model and actress that has been published and featured on Giant, House of Cards, HBO, cosplay magazines, etc. I'm working my way to become a final girl as her final form...



Photo taken by Arielle Lewis Studios

Aunyea Hall

@aye_you_en_why_eh_aye

Aunyea has made a name for herself in the DMV area as a model and business owner of “aHALLic” a company that specializes in personalized bottles, bouquets, event planning and more!





Arly Garcia



Giana Lee

*Because of her
I will not fall*



Thanks

www.saucelessentertainment.com

Contact



| sauceless.entertain@gmail.com |

| 123 Street Name City
Name, State, Country