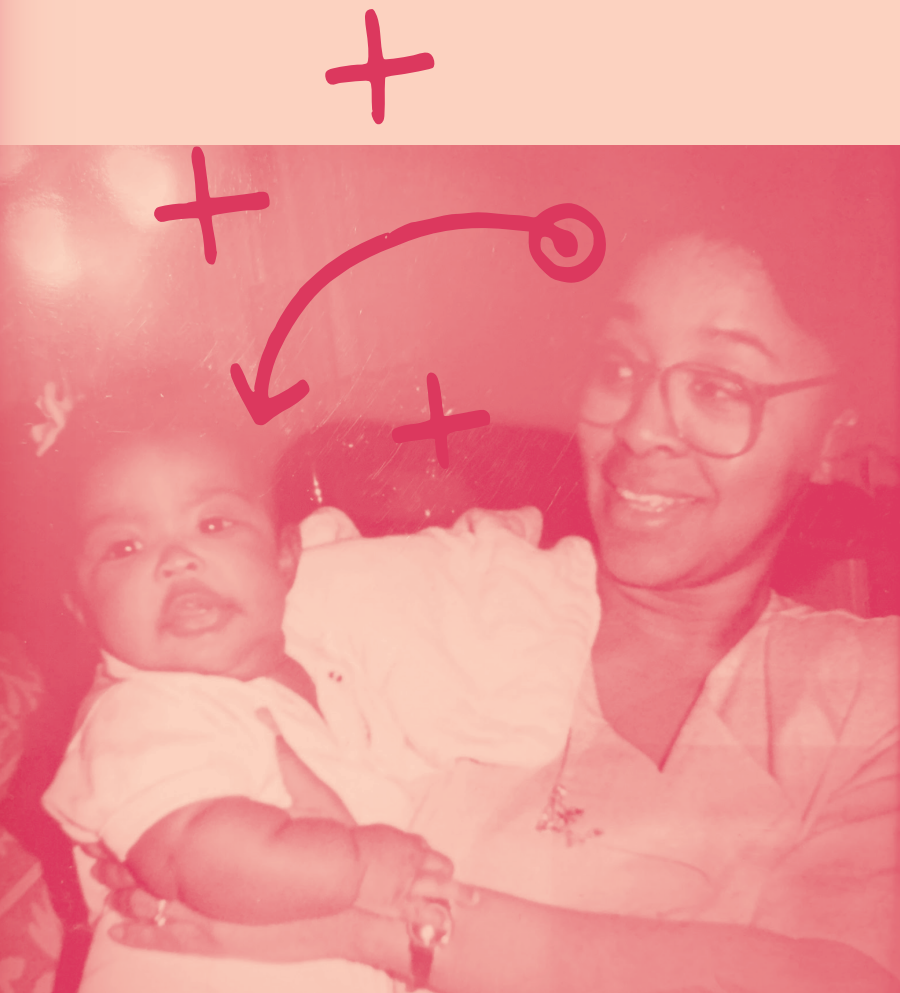


The *Creative* Black Woman's Playbook

Written by *Véronica Camille Ratliff*



I want to dedicate this workbook to every single one of my benevolent ancestors who sacrificed for me to one day create freely, and to my grandmothers who sowed seeds of intention through strength, ingenuity, and hard work. To my aunts who reminded me of my light even when I didn't see it. To my radiant mother who taught me how to read, write, and take pride in who I was destined to be. To all the black women working to dismantle systems of oppression, and to all the little creative black girls yet to reincarnate into this dimension. I pray you are born into a limitless reality and have the freedom to just be.



In a busy city with the mighty Mississippi River in view, my earliest childhood memory was my mother and I walking with my brother to the nearby art gallery. With my little brother gliding in a stroller, and my little sister, not yet born, I clutched my mother's heavy baby bag as I counted the stones on the sidewalk leading to our destination.

When we got to the giant glass door with golden trim, my mother (knowing her inquisitive whimsical daughter) looked me dead in my eyes and with a grin said, "Now don't touch anything when we get inside and stay by me." I remember the very moment I walked in. I felt so small compared to the sculptures, and the giant faces on the wall. My mother took me to each photo that day and asked how each made me feel. She explained to little five year old me that several artists created these faces and I could too if I wanted. After exploring the gallery, we walked next door where we caught the last few moments of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra doing there thang. There I was, entranced, as the violinist seemed to sway like tall grass to the music while the conductor played God. In that moment, I knew who I wanted to be. I knew my purpose. I knew I was born to create.

My name is Veronica Camille Ratliff, also known as V.C.R, and just like you I was born a creative black women. I have worked in the creative world for 10 years in various positions including artist management, a staff writer for major publications, a freelance violinist, a recording artist, and performer. I am the granddaughter of two powerful creative women. One a hair specialist, a nurse practitioner, a chef, a master gardener, and a scholar. The other a dynamic orator, an entrepreneur, a Bishop (one of the first women bishops in our city), a singer, and philanthropist. I am a daughter to a prolific writer, a Harvard scholar, and a niece to seven singers and orators. As a descendant of southern women who somehow lived to tell stories of chattel slavery, rape, and blatant atrocities that could make the strongest stoic tear up, I feel it is my duty to create by any means necessary and yours too. Not just because I can, but because so many black women before me could not.

INTRODUCTION

The Creativity of Black Women

“How was the creativity of the Black woman kept alive, year after year and century after century, when for most of the years Black people have been in America, it was a punishable crime for a Black person to read or write? Listen to the voices of Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Nina Simone, Roberta Flack, and Aretha Franklin, among others, and imagine those voices muzzled for life. Then you may begin to comprehend the lives of our “crazy,” “Sainted” mothers and grandmothers. The agony of the lives of women who might have been Poets, Novelists, Essayists, and Short Story Writers, who died with their real gifts stifled within them ... Therefore we must fearlessly pull out of ourselves and look at and identify with our lives the living creativity some of our great-grandmothers knew, even without “knowing” it...”

— Alice Walker in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* 2004

Imagine a world where you are less than human. Blood stained hands from cotton picking that had to be done by sundown. Swollen eyes and upper lips, paired with puss-filled gashes curated by the head mistresses' angry lash or boredom. How did black creative women find ways to express themselves when they weren't allowed to read or write? Women that were bred like cattle, who lived in fear of their children being sold to the highest bidder or used in a heinous science experiment with a 100% mortality rate. All praise to my

ancestors. Women who shriveled slowly, and died suffocated by a system of hatred they were born into.

My grandmother Clitheal L. Ratliff was a brilliant orator and entrepreneur who created a life for herself and her nine children centered around creativity and entrepreneurship. Before she passed on, not only did she build and fund her own church in the segregated and misogynistic South, she also started a scholarship fund for young students going to college that still operates to this day. Although she left a legacy that I hold dear, my mother always tells me stories of her secretly wanting to leave the comfort of her hometown and move to Los Angeles to become a singer. As a black woman living in the 1940s and 50s, she wasn't able to pursue that dream. Little did she know that her grandbaby would do just that in 2017 and I haven't looked back since.

I am overflowing with gratitude for all my experiences so far but I have made so many mistakes along the way. These mistakes taught me valuable lessons that I hope to pass on to you in hopes that your journey will be a little less bumpy than mine.

Now truth be told, we are all born creators, but that's another tangent for my next workbook. For now, I would like to remind you, my reflection, of who you are in order to get your mind prepared for the information I'm going to give you. For starters, the fact that you either decided to pick up, was gifted, or accidentally stumbled on this workbook, lets me know a little bit about your *soul's intentions*.



INTRODUCTION

Your Soul's Intention



Your *soul's intention* is the vibrational signal you send out every moment of the day. This intention is mirrored back to you through what you are drawn to, what is drawn to you, and what you create. Whether we know it or not, we as women—specifically black women—are creating all the time and have been since the beginning of time. Through cooking a meal from scratch, our beautiful experimental hairstyles, managing a team at work, writing a poem, painting a canvas, or having a child, we as black women have an innate need to create. This innate need is not only biological but it is ancestral. Imagine your creativity being suppressed for thousands of years. We are practically bursting at the seams. That need can be expressed in so many ways and all those ways are not only valid, but they are worthy of an equal and adequate *energy exchange*. An *energy exchange is a creative transaction made between two living beings that can be mental, financial, physical, emotional and/or sexual*. This exchange has built civilizations, started fortune 500 companies, entertained the masses, and birthed nations. These transactions are so important because energy is neither created nor destroyed and since the dawning of civilization, black women's creations, thus our energy, has been ciphend, sold, stolen, and taken for granted.

The problem is that navigating a capitalist, imperialist, patriarchal, racist industry, with only your talent, work ethic, and little industry knowledge (not to mention brown skin) can get tricky.

After countless conversations with my peers, I realized I wasn't alone in feeling discouraged by these challenges. Looking for funding, creative resources, or even a community to support you in your specific endeavors can take forever and can be disheartening.

After conducting research studies with fellow black femme creatives and working in the creative world all over the country, I have identified five common hurdles women of color face everyday.

Some are: sexism and misogyny, covert and structural racism, financial and mental health, resources, wage exploitation and colorism.

In response to this I've created a play-by-play, outlined here, of five rules that will help any black women be successful, dominate the creative workforce, and feel confident while doing it.

WHO ARE YOU?

MY NAME IS:

I AM FROM:

MY LINEAGE OF CREATIVITY IS:

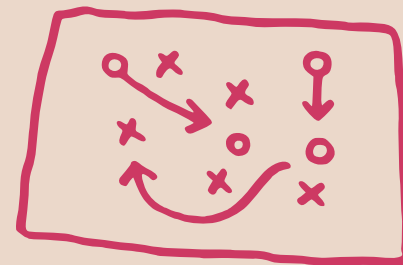
MY FAVORITE MEDIUMS ARE:

I WAS BORN TO CREATE:

PLAY BY PLAY — CHEAT SHEET

Introduction

The creative industries have some of the trickiest professions to break into. There aren't as many spots for us so finding your place or even creating it can be tricky. Systems of oppression such as classism, colorism, and sexism directly affect women of color on a mental, emotional, and even physical scale. Therefore as a black woman, you have to know *who* and *what* to be successful.



These age old social constructs were carefully crafted to keep the rich, elite, white people in power and keep you and me mentally enslaved. Working and thriving in your creative field is an act of defiance. If you are able to get into some of these fields, there is little room for error, you must learn as you go and no one can ever know that you don't have everything under control. This book outlines plays that will get you ready to create your creative legacy and win your unique race.

Despite the realities of racism, misogyny, and capitalism—we know there are plenty of spaces at the top for creative black women. Remember, you are running

your own race and can define your own success without competition or comparing yourself to others markers of success.

For this book, I conducted a focus group with 13 brilliant, creative, black women in the Los Angeles area. All ranging from age from 24 to 35, and each working in different creative disciplines. I asked them questions about growing up as creative black girls in black families and how that translates into their present day practices. When I compiled the data I was shocked at how correct my assumptions were, and how many of these women have the same experiences and challenges I have had. This information and more of my research will be presented throughout the chapters.

Now, the time has come. Ready... Set... Let's Go!

2

FINDING YOUR BLISS

In our formative years (infancy to age five) I believe we are in our purest creative state. With no previous reference of what to create, we just follow our bliss. Mimicking that in our adult lives can give us clues into what our soul's intention is for our journey. The first step in living your life as a fulfilled creative black woman is finding your bliss and incorporating it into your life in a regular way.

Calculated leaps of faith are essential to creating the life you want for yourself. These small risks such as starting the blog without promoting it or recording a song and not posting, are little ways to slowly ease yourself into your creative work. This leap can be big or small. For example, when I left college I moved back to my hometown for seven months and worked as a waitress to save money. Luckily, I found a restaurant where live music was performed day and night, so I was able to visualize myself doing the same. When I saved enough money (and you can never have enough) I moved to Los Angeles without even a place to live. This was my grand calculated leap. I have taken several calculated leaps that have led me right to you today. I always knew I wanted to be an author as well, but never knew how to get started. Prompted by a friend, I submitted a workbook proposal for a grant and the outcome was getting to publish this book!

You can better understand your creative path and where you might be able to take some calculated leaps of faith by answering the following journaling questions.

When answering these questions be honest with yourself and try to be open to what your inner child is telling you. When the creative hobby is identified, then it is up to you to take small steps toward integrating that hobby into your life permanently. No rush, no pressure of course.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE CREATIVE HOBBY AS A CHILD?

WHAT CREATIVE HOBBY BRINGS YOU PEACE AND JOY TODAY?

WHAT IS A CREATIVE MEDIUM THAT BRINGS IN SOME OF THESE FEELINGS?

WHAT CONSCIOUS OR SUBCONSCIOUS BLOCKS ARE STOPPING YOU FROM INTEGRATING THIS INTO YOUR ROUTINE?

WHAT ARE SOME WEEKLY THINGS YOU CAN DO TO INTEGRATE YOUR FAVORITE CREATIVE MEDIUM INTO YOUR LIFE?

WHAT IS ONE CALCULATED RISK YOU COULD TAKE TO FURTHER YOUR CREATIVE PRACTICE?



Creating your Ritual

Now I know what you're thinking. Ritual? I know that word has been somewhat demonized, but my daily ritual has saved my life and helped me center myself as a creative entrepreneur. **Ritual is defined as a series of actions or type of behavior regularly and invariably followed by someone.** I have to be honest with you. At the beginning of my journey, I was terrible at creating a solid routine for myself. As a sporadic creative, I didn't think it mattered. Slowly I realized that not having a solid practice in the morning and at night was literally creating a breeding ground for anxiety and depression. For an experiment, I started waking up early, walking for 30 minutes, praying and meditating for 30 minutes, practicing my violin and voice, and writing in my journal. This ritual that I have created for myself has changed my life. Once you have your daily practice established for a few months, set one goal that you can achieve within the following few months.

Document your creative fingerprint

Your creative fingerprint is the unique steps you take, based on your needs, that aid in the completion of a creative project or goal. You can identify patterns and systems that make your process run smoother. When you're first starting your creative journey, sometimes it's easy to get discouraged. Practice and repetition makes perfect. What has always worked for me is practicing on camera. When you document your progress, it can encourage you when you feel stagnant. This is also something you can share with your network to encourage them as well.

Growing up, our creative dreams are crushed due to the many pressures of life but believing your gifts are valid, and you are worthy of the life you envision is the first step into manifesting your life as a creative black woman.



To do this you must find the creative medium that draws you naturally. Taking a calculated leap into action is an excellent way to get you in your creative flow. Creating a daily ritual around this medium will help that seed to grow into a beautiful garden.

"It's a daily practice of never giving up and doing a little bit every single day towards your goal. Now my goal is just to be happy and to do the work that feeds my soul.

—Karon Davis (*Sculptor and Founder of the The Underground Museum*)

Q: Do you feel your race plays a part in your success in your creative field? Do you feel black women advance in your field at the same rate as white men or women?. Please explain?

A: Yes. On one hand I think it's great being a black woman. As far as creativity and general star power and greatness, we have it! Period. On another hand, I think since we are capable of so much, we often get looked at as superheroes or super-humans who can take anything. I don't have any direct experience as far as I know missing out on an opportunity because I'm black. Speaking generally I have noticed within music, the white-washing of soul music and it's fusions. It sometimes upsets me because I do see white people excelling in genres that would be deemed sub-par if executed by a black artist. Again, WE always have to be pushing boundaries—which is cool because we always can. But I sometimes hate that so much of changing the world is on our shoulders."

—Jacque Hammond (*Musician/Recording Artist*)

A: Yes, I think race plays a part. I definitely don't think black women advance in my field at the same rate as white men or women. I would say the field of ceramics is pretty saturated with white women, and the white men seem to be working with galleries or larger design studios. I've been the only black ceramicist at craft fairs I've participated in. I only know of one other black woman ceramicist in California who is making functional work the way that I am. While I can think of at least 4 other contemporary black women painters in general, I know of no other women painting with oil paint in my age range in Los Angeles. I know they exist, but I have yet to find them. I have this theory that black people in general are more naturally inclined to the arts because we are positioned to be more concerned with liberation. I think there is a free-ing that comes with each creative act. So in some ways I am feeding off the energy of other black artists, and hopefully they are doing the same off my work. In that way my race is playing a part in my success. I'm also mixed, which brings its own complicated layer to the concept of race, and I'm light-skinned, which brings its own set of privileges to the world in general."

— Hana Ward (*Painter & Ceramist*)

3

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Attract your team

The non-stop social media highlights of friends, colleagues, role models, and influencers, can get you down on your own accomplishments and make you feel drained before you've even had the chance to make anything. As a creative, it's easy to get caught up in your own head. You may feel like you have to turn off your phone, stay in, and isolate yourself in order to truly focus on you. On the contrary, sometimes it's best to craft the world you want to see around you little by little.

Social media can actually be a great tool to begin this process, by filtering your virtual gaze and being selective with what you take in.

To begin this process, let's answer a few questions:

WHO ARE THREE PUBLIC (EVEN WITHIN A SMALL CREATIVE COMMUNITY) FIGURES THAT INSPIRE YOUR CREATIVE WORK?

WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY WATCH AND DO IN THEIR SPARE TIME?

WHAT ARE THREE WAYS YOU CAN INTEGRATE THESE MENTORS INTO YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE?

Online

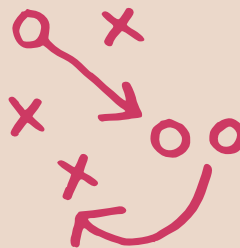
Identifying your virtual mentors is essential to streamlining your focus and setting your intentions for the type of people you want to surround yourself with in the real world. For example, if you aspire to be a contemporary artist, you may begin to follow the work of Lorna Simpson or Kara Walker. As a recording artist and author, my virtual mentors have always been Erykah Badu, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and Nikki Giovanni.

You can watch their talks online or in person, attend museums where their works are showcased, and find communities and individuals who are just as excited about their work as you are.

In the Real World

They say that iron sharpens iron and the more creative women you keep around you will inspire your creativity. Join meetup groups, Facebook groups, and communities where there are other creative black women who have the same focus as you. If you live in a city where there are many creative black women living and working, try

to find groups where people meet up in real life, so you have the opportunity to build these relationships offline.



WHAT ARE THREE VIRTUAL COMMUNITY HUBS YOU CAN JOIN THAT DIRECTLY CORRESPOND WITH YOUR DESIRED CREATIVE WORK?

WHAT IS ONE THING YOU COULD GO TO IN-PERSON WITHIN THE NEXT SIX MONTHS?

Don't Hide it, Divide it

Sharing resources is a great way to meet other creative black women with similar interests. Identify your creative needs and think about how you might be able to meet them collectively with other creative black women:

DO YOU HAVE THE TOOLS, RESOURCES, OR SKILLS, THAT OTHERS MIGHT NOT? IS THERE A WAY YOU CAN OFFER THEM TO A COMMUNITY AS A WAY TO BUILD A CONNECTION TO OTHER CREATIVE BLACK WOMEN?

WHAT ARE TOOLS, RESOURCES, OR SKILLS YOU NEED TO DO YOUR CREATIVE WORK, BUT DON'T HAVE ACCESS TO? IS THERE A COMMUNITY, ORGANIZATION OR SERVICE, WHERE THESE MIGHT BE OFFERED?

Once you meet people you might like to build a creative connection with, you have to follow-up and build those relationships. One of my creative leaps was meeting fellow singers and musicians at open mics. Not only was I inspired by their vulnerable performances, but I met women who were just as motivated and wanted to perform just as badly. They say that dinner is the best way to make friends, so to build

these relationships, we started having weekly dinners where we cooked for each other and the conversations inspired each of us to create in our respective disciplines.

I created a yearly goal vision sheet that I fill out every year at the beginning of the year and my friends and we share this sheet with each other and keep each other posted on the goals both professional and personal. Check it out.

To begin I would start with Diagram A, your Yearly Personal Goals. This can be any goals you want to achieve in these three areas, physical, mental/emotional and financial. When completed, I would move on to Diagram B which helps you get specific on the steps to reaching each goal. Remember, there is no right or wrong and you should allow yourself space to modify each diagram every quarter based on your productivity. There is no race.



“There are certain things we know we can’t change—our race and gender being one of them. What we can change is how we THINK, our approach, how we show up, how we work, how far we decide we will go and so on. If we’re being rejected from certain spaces, maybe that space is not intended for US. Why do we want to be a part of a space that we feel rejects us in the first place? We need to remember we have the power to CREATE our OWN spaces. Spaces FOR black women, black men, black children, spaces for us and by us, black people. We have the power to do what we want to do, on all levels, the resources ARE there. Our path may be more challenging than some people’s paths, but the journey is important, it’s infinite, it’s special, it’s ours.”

— Kyria Smith
(Fashion Designer)

Personal Goals

PHYSICAL	MENTAL/EMOTIONAL	FINANCIAL

QUARTERLY 1 JAN – MAR	QUARTERLY 2 APR – JUN	QUARTERLY 3 JUL – SEPT	QUARTERLY 4 OCT – DEC	NOTES

4

KNOW YOUR WORTH

and add tax

On average, Black women in the U.S. are paid 38% less than white men and 21% less than white women.²

When presented with information that Black women on average are paid 38% less than white men, 72% of Americans think it's not fair.³



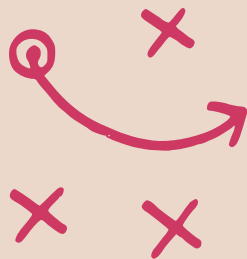
Everything is numbers

Some black women are made to believe they cannot start charging for their creative content, projects, or ideas until they have decades of experience, but that is truly not the case, and shouldn't be. Anytime you are providing ideas, time or creative content to a person or business, you should be getting paid.

Your thoughts and ideas are valuable, and once you turn those into a work or invention that is the result of your creativity, therefore that is your intellectual property. **Intellectual property is a work or invention that is the result of creativity, such as a manuscript or a design, to which you have rights and for which you may apply for a patent, copyright, trademark, etc.** Creativity and output

are both something you should get paid for. Your time is also valuable, and a billable asset and should be monitored during creative meetings and sessions. When I first began setting my prices, I didn't know where to start. In most cases I was just happy to get a gig. When the gigs started picking up, it was important for me to assess what I had to offer and how much money I wanted for it. I created an Intellectual Property Price List that helps me keep track of all my services and pricing. I make sure to keep a log of clients and dates in order to raise the price when necessary. Feel free to use the one below to do the same thing.

A way to figure out what your bottom line lowest rate should be is to add up all of your necessary monthly expenses and to divide that by 160, (you'd need to work 40 hours per week at this rate to hit this minimum monthly income). Another helpful way to look at this same exercise is to make a monthly budget that would feel abundant, what is your hourly rate when factored this way?



Intellectual Property Price List

DATE	CLIENT NAME	PRODUCT/ SERVICE	RATE	TIME	TOTAL
8/8/19	LA Phil	Violin Composing	\$400/hr	3 hours	\$1,200

But what do I say?

Discussing money can be really challenging. Before services are rendered, pricing should be discussed and here are some ways to start that conversation:

- ◇ Thanks so much for this invitation/I am very interested in this opportunity,
- ◇ "What's the budget?" / "What's your price point?"
- ◇ "Here are my pricing packages for this kind of project...."
- ◇ "I generally charge \$X.XX for this type of project but I can be flexible if needed"

Exposure Culture

A funny pattern I noticed when I first began performing is that "exposure" was treated as currency in most situations. Because I was just starting out I leapt at EVERY opportunity that was presented to me. I didn't even know or think I could ask for money for my services even though I was just starting out. To be quite honest, I struggled with this for a long time. After getting played time and time again, I frankly became burnt out by

"We are inner warriors, facing double discrimination and enslavement (mentally and physically). We express our strength in our creativity. We are loyal and confident. Our creativity tells our story as a survivor."

—Jaimie Glatt
(*Mindfulness Expert and Coach*)

all these energy exchanges, I decided to create boundaries between me and my patrons.

Truth is, some opportunities are once in a lifetime, and you will recognize that based on your discretion, BUT you should ALWAYS ask, "is there a budget?" or "is this paid?" first in order to set the tone of the conversation. The general rule of thumb is that you NEVER waver from your bottom line rate. That means no discounts, and no free work. You should always negotiate your rate with the consumer.

Exposure is great sometimes but usually, if a client values your work, they will offer to pay you something, especially if that's your sole profession. Exposure is great but it doesn't keep the lights on. Use discernment when you are taking on new projects. Your gifts are extremely valuable. If they weren't they wouldn't have sought you out.

Know when to Say "NO"

No is a complete sentence and you shouldn't feel bad for declining offers. Of course, when you first begin working you will likely accept most reasonable offers that come your way, but always keep your Yearly Goals in mind. There is only so much time in a day, week, or month, and if you fill your time with projects that aren't aligned, you will have a difficult time meeting your actual goals. It's okay to say no if



it doesn't feel right for you. The fact is, if it's an opportunity that's truly aligned with you, it will always come back around at the right time.

Bottom line, your time is valuable. Your creative ideas are valuable. Your creative projects are valuable and they deserve an energetic exchange. Money is a necessary energetic exchange for the value of your work. At your discretion, it's totally fine to do free work, but always remember to never underestimate what people are willing to pay for your product. Exposure doesn't pay the bills so take that **ONLY** when absolutely necessary. Saying no will get easier with time and the more you say it, the more you will truly receive payment you are worth and find clients that value your work as well.

Q: What obstacles have you, as a black woman, faced in your creative field?

A: I have had to face everyday issues that any black woman has to face. I will say the most significant obstacle I face specifically tied to my art, is the need to be amazing. It's hard for me to do anything less than perfect. I can't afford to be mediocre like white males or even white women. When you create, you want to do so freely, without expectation, without judgement. It becomes harder when the majority of the world won't see your best as even good enough.

— Destinee (Filmmaker/Actress)

5

THE POWER OF ADMINISTRATION

The Major Key



Paperwork is the work

Years ago when I started creating professionally, I thought I had found a way around having to do math and paperwork. I realized I was mistaken when I learned about all the bureaucratic and financial documents I needed to file to function as an entrepreneur and sole proprietor. To be quite honest, after 10 years, I am still learning about the paperwork I need to survive. I have missed out on countless payouts not having the proper documentation so here is a list of a few documents and administrative systems you may need to get you started.

Read the Fine Print

This may be the most important part of this book. Contracts and written agreements are so important. As a creative is very easy to gloss over contracts in order to rush to the fun parts of your job, but you must internalize that paperwork is a part of your career. Not only should you be reading over your contracts, its best to have a legal professional to read over contracts as well. If you don't have the money for legal counsel, maybe you can go to a law school

or legal aid service provider and have a student look over it for you. For example, when I first began creating, I never contacted anyone and skimmed over paperwork. Because of this I ended up missing out on thousands of dollars for a song I wrote for one of the biggest artists of our time. In the back of the chapter there will be examples of contracts so make sure you familiarize yourself. Remember, your contracts can make or break your career.



Document Everything (and then some)

I cannot stress enough how important it is to document everything, from meetings, to people involved, to the lyrics you may have helped on. It's essential that you know how much time you spend on a project and how much of your intellectual property they used toward it. Now I must admit, when you're in your creative flow it's hard to think about documentation but below I will suggest what has worked for me.

Tools that I use!

Thank heavens for technology! If you have a phone you can have a successful career. Voice memos, video, photos, notes, hand-written memos, or even voicemails can save your creative career. **DOCUMENT EVERYTHING** when you are working with clients. When money is involved things can get tricky so the more evidence the better. Saving

everything in a file either virtually or physically can save you a lot of trouble in the long run. Don't chance it.

Your creative fingerprint is the unique steps you take, based on your needs, that aid in the completion of a creative project or goal. You can identify patterns and systems that make your process run smoother. Read through everything and read between the lines. This is so important, sis. Oh, and make a lawyer friend.



Invoice No.:

Address: _____

Address: _____

Sales Person	P.O. No.	Shipped Date	Shipment	Terms	Reference

Notes:	Subtotal:	
	Processing Fees:	
	Taxes:	
	Total:	

Keeping a client testimonial log is also a helpful

[illegible]

NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT

This Non-Disclosure Agreement is entered into on this ____ day of ____ by and between _____, with its principal place of business at _____, (the "Disclosing Party") and _____, located at _____ (the "Receiving Party").

During these discussions, the Disclosing Party may share certain proprietary information with the Receiving Party. Therefore, in consideration of the mutual promises and covenants contained in this Agreement, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, the parties hereto agree to the following:

1. Definition of Confidentiality. In this agreement, "Confidential Information" refers to any information which has commercial value and is either (i) technical information, including patent, copyright, trade secret, and other proprietary information, techniques, sketches, drawings, models, inventions, know-how, processes, apparatus, equipment, algorithms, software programs, software source documents, and formulae related to the current, future and proposed products and services of Company, or (ii) non-technical information relating to Company's products, including without limitation pricing, margins, merchandising plans and strategies, finances, financial and accounting data and information, suppliers, customers, customer lists, purchasing data, sales and marketing plans, future business plans and any other information which is proprietary and confidential to Company.

2. Exclusions. Receiving Party's obligations under this Agreement do not extend to information that is: (i) publicly known at the time of disclosure or subsequently becomes publicly known through no fault of the Receiving Party; (ii) discovered or created by the Receiving Party before disclosure by Disclosing Party; (iii) learned by the Receiving Party through legitimate means other than from the Disclosing Party or Disclosing Party's representatives; or (iv) is disclosed by Receiving Party with Disclosing Party's prior written approval.

3. Obligations of Receiving Party. Receiving Party shall hold and maintain the Confidential Information in strictest confidence for the sole and exclusive benefit of the Disclosing Party. Receiving Party shall carefully restrict access to Confidential Information to employees, contractors, and third parties as is reasonably required and shall require those persons to sign nondisclosure restrictions at least as protective as those in this Agreement. Receiving Party shall not, without prior written approval of Disclosing Party, use for Receiving Party's own benefit, publish, copy, or otherwise disclose to others, or permit the use by others for their benefit or to the detriment of Disclosing Party, any Confidential Information. Receiving Party shall return to Disclosing Party any and all records, notes, and other written, printed, or

tangible materials in its possession pertaining to Confidential Information immediately if Disclosing Party requests it in writing.

4. Term. The provisions of this Agreement shall survive termination of this Agreement and Receiving Party's duty to hold Confidential Information in confidence shall remain in effect until the Confidential Information no longer qualifies as a trade secret or until Disclosing Party sends Receiving Party written notice releasing Receiving Party from this Agreement, whichever occurs first.

5. Severability. If a court finds any provision of this Agreement invalid or unenforceable, the remainder of this Agreement shall be interpreted so as best to affect the intent of the parties.

6. Relationships. Nothing contained in this Agreement shall be deemed to constitute either party a partner, joint venture or employee of the other party for any purpose.

7. Integration. This Agreement expresses the complete understanding of the parties with respect to the subject matter and supersedes all prior proposals, agreements, representations, and understandings. This Agreement may not be amended except in writing signed by both parties.

8. Waiver. The failure to exercise any right provided in this Agreement shall not be a waiver of prior or subsequent rights.

9. Governing Law. This Agreement shall be governed under the laws in the State of _____.

DISCLOSING PARTY	RECEIVING PARTY
Signature: _____	Signature: _____
Printed Name: _____	Printed Name: _____
Title: _____	Title: _____
Date: _____	Date: _____

THOUGHTS

(for notes, or whatever)



6

THERAPY AND ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS

Let it out

A quarter of African-Americans seek mental health treatment when in crisis, even though African-American adults are 20 percent more likely to report serious psychological distress as adults; are more likely to have feelings of sadness, hopelessness and worthlessness in general as adults; and are more likely to attempt suicide as teens ⁴

Your feelings are Valid.

In today's social climate, black women are consistently dismantling systems of oppression that have held us back for centuries. While doing this necessary work, it's so important that we understand that without a healthy mental health routine, success can be a curse. It's hard to see all the good that you are accomplishing when you're distracted by the overachiever social construct. There is absolutely nothing wrong (in fact, it's necessary!) with taking time out for yourself, accessing your feelings (good or not so good), and doing what you need to do to find balance. I have personally had to take 4 month sabbaticals from performing just because of my mental health needs (against my will might I add). Here are a few tips that have worked for me.

Identify Your Support System

As I touched on earlier in “Building Community” it is so very important to surround yourself with people who mirror your interests. This community can consist of friends, yoga buddies, the Sunday brunch crew, fellow church or mosque members, or a licensed professional therapist. Now there are levels to friendship and not every friend will be able to hold space for you during every moment of your life. If you can identify one person that you can count on during a breakdown you are doing amazing. Anxiety and depression can make you feel alone, isolated, or abandoned. You can have all the success in the world and still feel like you aren’t doing enough. When you can’t make that phone call or get out of bed, you can always try mindfulness breathing and meditation exercises to come back to center. Remember that you are never alone, no matter what your mind might tell you.

My Mental Health Journey

Personally, I have always struggled with anxiety and depression. Whenever I would have an episode, I used to bury myself in work and not come out of my room for any reason. No one knew that I was spiraling, but me, and only a few of my friends dared to ask what was wrong. The superwoman complex had been handed down to me from my mother, grandmothers, great grandmothers, aunts and all the black women I knew. I thought that showing emotion and asking for help was inherently a huge mistake and a sign of weakness. This has been the plight of so many black

women. Later in life, when my depression got so bad that I lost 15 pounds and attempted suicide, I decided to find help. Help for me started with telling my closest friends and family about my mental health issues. To my surprise, these family and friends didn’t abandon me or dismiss my illness as a passing fad. They stayed present with me, prayed for me, showed me meditation techniques, got me out the house, and even suggested different therapists I could try.

Even though you may feel alone, isolated, and maybe behind, you are not. You are surrounded by people who love you, support you, and would be willing to help if you asked. There are so many trained therapists that specialize in your individual mental health needs and can help you find balance again, just like me. If you feel like you have absolutely no one, take a deep breathe. The breathe is the only constant thing we have as human beings on this planet. When you come back to your breath, you remember you are alive. A simple count down from four to one can save your life. Honestly it has consistently saved mine.

Mindfulness Meditation and Journaling

Mindfulness is a state of active, open attention on the present. When we are mindful, we carefully observe our thoughts and feelings without judging them as good or bad. Now I know you have heard this word floating around, so what’s all the hype about?

As a born skeptic, I have to

“I find my balance by always coming back to my breathe. This is my living walking meditation. I wake up early and I spend a lot of time getting ready before I go into the world. That’s my sacred me time.”

—Savannah Woods
Art Worker

experience things for myself before I will ever endorse them. Mindfulness meditation is one thing that is changing my life, and my mental health for the better. Chatting with one of my support sisters and best friend, Jaimie Glatt (Certified Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction Coach), we talked about some ways black women can find balance through mindfulness.

“I started using Insight Timer Mindfulness app and paired meditation with diary writing. Following this course, my writing shifted more and more from negative emotional processing to expressing more gratitude. Gratitude allows one to see themselves more non-judgmentally, and in this practice, my accomplishments came to my mind more frequently. Problems were shifted into creating more solutions. Mindfulness also helped me to live more in the present moment and journaling became more of a positive refresher. This improves your emotional intelligence and self efficiency as well.”
—Jaimie Glatt

She also shared some examples of journaling styles, that I am including below, and I must say, they are now both a regular staple for me.

Self-Efficacy Journaling (Write down your energy replenishers)

PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Negative thoughts in the morning	Do what makes you feel confident first thing

PROBLEM	SOLUTION

Accomplishments Journaling

(Write down an obstacle from your day or week and an adjacent achievement to counteract it. You can also add how it made you feel).

OBSTACLE	ACHIEVEMENT	FEELINGS
Could not secure job in desired field	Accepted into Masters program to secure license	

7 NOW LET’S HUDDLE

“The only thing that separates women of color from anyone else is opportunity. You cannot win an Emmy for roles that are simply not there. So here’s to all the writers, the awesome people that are Ben Sherwood, Paul Lee, Peter Nowalk, Shonda Rhimes, people who have redefined what it means to be beautiful, to be sexy, to be a leading woman, to be black,”
— Viola Davis

Everyone should not just be feminist, but they should be intersectional feminists. In order to truly understand and support intersectional feminism, you have to understand that the playing field (no pun intended) is NOT level. Black and brown women face challenges that many will never see and it’s because of a system that has been created for them to feel isolated, inferior, and not worthy of payment or placement. The common quote “Black women have to work 3 times as hard to get half as much” is supported by statistical facts that seem to be overlooked when creative resources are assembled.

Life is school. School was created as a metaphor for life. When you realize this, you will realize that every mistake is a lesson, a quiz, a test. In Life Class we either learn from our mistakes, pass the test and move on or we stay in the same class for years until we figure it out. I have

10 years of mistakes that have taught me that little by little you learn, you adjust and you move on to the next lesson.

This workbook was not intended to frighten anyone from going for your dreams as a painter, a sculptor, a recording artist, a creative director, or designer. My music, my life, and all other books that I write are ways for me to stand in solidarity with women of color. The more we pass on our stories to ones coming after us, the more doors that will be open for black women to burst through. Thank you for going on this journey with me and if you know someone, anyone who may need this workbook, pass it on. The work continues with each one of us. Love and Light. —V.C.R



THE CREATIVE BLACK WOMAN'S PLAYBOOK

52.

WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE TAKEAWAY FROM THIS WORKBOOK?

[illegible]

53.

CHAPTER 7 — NOW LET'S HUDDLE



GLOSSARY

Creative fingerprint: the unique steps you take, based on your needs and practice, that aid in the completion of a creative project or goal.

Sexism: prejudice or discrimination based on gender, see *especially*: discrimination against women, trans and nonbinary identifying people.

Misogyny: a hatred of women

Structural Racism: in the U.S., is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantage one racial group (in the U.S., white americans) while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for another racial group (in the U.S., people of color).

Soul's Intention: the vibrational signal you send out every moment of the day

Energy Exchange: a creative transaction made between two living beings that can be mental, financial, physical, emotional or sexual.

Colorism: biased judgments, attitudes and behaviors toward an individual based on the lightness or darkness of their skin.

Intellectual property: a work or invention that is the result of creativity, literary and artistic works, designs, and symbols, names and images used in commerce.

Ritual: is defined as a series of actions or type of behavior regularly and invariably followed by someone.

Citation

1. <https://leanin.org/data-about-the-gender-pay-gap-for-black-women#endnote1>
2. <https://leanin.org/data-about-the-gender-pay-gap-for-black-women#endnote7>
3. <https://www.cabwhp.org/mental-health.html>

THOUGHTS

(for notes, or whatever)



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