

MOOD

AUGUST 2026

ISSUE NO. 0001

REV. SHAWN AMOS

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your
joy

Style Purpose & Legacy
All in motion

SIG'NOMMO
A VISION OF STYLE,
PURPOSE AND
TIMELESS ELEGANCE

Pascal Marinier and the brand
that's redefining modern luxury

HARLEM
RISING

The new wave of
creativity, culture
and community.

**THE BLACK
COMPOSER PROJECT**
THE BEGINNING OF THE SONG
MEMORY, DREAM, AND AWAKENING
Honoring the past.
Celebrating the present.
Composing the future.



**FASHION
THAT
SPEAKS**

This season's
standout looks
and bold
new voices.

11

**BOOKSTORES.
ONE STORY.
NATIONAL
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bringing stories to
communities
across America.

Nº 1

the lifestyle

MAGAZINE

BE A PART OF THE STORY.. YOUR LIFE,
YOURCITY, YOUR MAGAZINE.

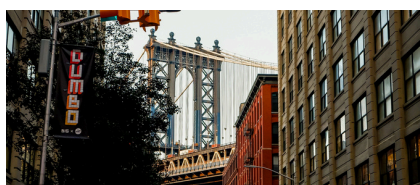


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table

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E



EDITOR'S LETTER

Welcome to our August issue—a celebration of fresh ideas, seasonal inspiration, and the stories shaping our community. As summer continues, we hope these pages offer insight, inspiration, and a moment to slow down and enjoy all that this season has to offer.

3

OTHELLO UNDER THE HARLEM SKY

rings Shakespeare's timeless tragedy into the heart of Harlem, where classic storytelling meets the neighborhood's rich cultural legacy. This powerful production invites audiences to experience themes of love, ambition, jealousy, and identity through a fresh lens, proving that great stories continue to resonate across generations and communities.

5

THE ART OF SLOWING DOWN

explores the beauty of choosing presence over pressure in a fast-paced world. This feature offers inspiration for embracing rest, mindfulness, and intentional living, proving that slowing down can be one of the most powerful ways to move forward.



1

EDITORS NOTE CONT

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enimill atinimax.

2

HARLEM RISING

Welcome to the August issue of Harlem Rising, where we continue to celebrate the people, culture, and progress that define Harlem. This month, we spotlight stories of resilience, creativity, and community that inspire us to honor our legacy while embracing the future.

4

FAMOUSLY YOU

celebrates the power of authenticity, reminding us that true influence begins with embracing who you are. In a world that often rewards imitation, this feature shines a light on the confidence, creativity, and individuality that make every person unforgettable.

“A beautiful
life isn’t
found, it’s
curated”

A

MAGAZINE

CONTRIBUTORS

--- ACERNATUM ---

01



**MICHAEL
LINTON**

Dominique Wilder is a four-time author, essayist, poet, communications strategist, and mother of two boys. Born and raised in the Bronx and based in Mount Vernon, New York, she writes to make sense of what she has lived through and to help others make sense of what they are living through. Her work explores faith, love, grief, motherhood, purpose, and hope. Dominique is the founder of Dominique Brienne, LLC and OMI: Hope Is Home. Whether she is shaping a book, a brand, or her own story, she helps turn what people mean into words that finally say it.

02



BETHANY CAMILLE JAMES

Bethany Camille James is a Founding Editorial Contributor at MOOD Magazine NYC, where she writes thoughtful personal essays exploring identity, relationships, creativity, music, and the evolving journey of adulthood. With a voice that is honest, introspective, and quietly witty, her work invites readers into the moments of uncertainty, growth, and self-discovery that shape everyday life. Whether reflecting on love, ambition, or the courage to embrace change, Bethany believes that the most meaningful stories begin with radical honesty and end with deeper understanding.

03



**MINKAIL G.
OLAITAN**

Minkail G. Olaitan is the Global Culture and Community Correspondent for MOOD Magazine NYC and Harlem Collective Opera, exploring the intersections of art, culture, history, and community across continents. Based in Lagos, Nigeria, his writing examines the ways creative expression becomes a vehicle for storytelling, identity, social reflection, and cultural connection. With a particular interest in the relationship between African and African diasporic traditions, Minkail brings a global perspective to conversations around music, theater, performance, and cultural preservation.

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A

EDITOR'S LETTER



EDITOR

Jarvis Ricardo Hester

When we say Let Us Curate Your Mood, we're making you a promise. Everything we've created is designed around one simple idea:

We want to help you live beautifully. And living beautifully isn't necessarily about how much money you spend. Sometimes it's discovering a free concert in a park on a summer evening. Sometimes it's finding an exhibition you didn't know existed, taking the train to a neighborhood you've never explored, or spending an afternoon surrounded by books.

And sometimes living beautifully means deciding that tonight, you're going all the way. That's why we've created two very different guides to experiencing New York.

Our Community Calendar is your guide to the incredible things happening throughout the city that you can experience for free.

Concerts. Festivals. Community celebrations. Art. Culture. Family activities. Neighborhood events. Things happening all around us that too many New Yorkers simply don't know about.

We want to change that. Because you shouldn't need a large entertainment budget to have an extraordinary month in New York City.

Jarvis Ricardo Hester

EDITOR'S NOTE CONT.

Then there's The Mood Guide. This is where we indulge. We've searched for some of the city's most luxurious experiences—the restaurants worth dressing for, beautiful hotels, unforgettable meals, wellness experiences, cultural destinations, sophisticated nights out and those wonderfully excessive New York moments when you decide: Yes. I'm doing that.

The Mood Guide isn't about luxury simply for the sake of expense.

It's about experience. Where should you celebrate the anniversary? Where do you take someone when you really want to impress them?

Where should you book the table when you've decided to treat yourself?

What's worth the splurge? Where can you disappear for an afternoon and feel like you've left the city without ever crossing a bridge?

That's The Mood Guide. One guide reminds you how much New York gives us.

The other reminds you how spectacular New York can be.

And both exist for exactly the same reason:

To improve your life.
PUT NEW YORK IN YOUR
POCKET

That's also why I want you to download this issue. Put it on your phone. Keep it with you throughout August.

When Friday afternoon arrives and somebody asks, "What are we doing this weekend?"—open Mood.

No budget? Open the Community Calendar.

Feeling fabulous? Open The Mood Guide. When you're standing in Harlem wondering where to eat, open Mood.

When you're looking for somewhere to take your mother, your best friend, your date—or yourself—open Mood.

When you have twenty minutes on the train, meet somebody whose story might inspire you.

This magazine isn't designed to be downloaded, read once and forgotten.

It's designed to be lived. Take it into the city with you. Try the restaurant. Attend the free concert. Visit the bookstore.

Buy the book. See the exhibition. Dress up. Go downtown. Stay uptown. Discover something in your own neighborhood. Support a Black-owned business. Treat yourself to something beautiful. Do something you've never done before.

Because ultimately, Mood isn't really curating restaurants, concerts, fashion, books, theater or events.

We're curating experiences.

Let us curate your mood.





HARLEM
BOYS *Choir*

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to feel it.*

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10 SAFETY TIPS FOR TRAVELING NYC

New York is meant to be explored. Move confidently, stay aware, and keep these simple habits in your pocket while you experience the city.

1



LOOK LIKE YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

Check your route before you start walking. If you need directions, step inside a store, hotel, café, or other populated place instead of stopping in the middle of the sidewalk.

2



KEEP YOUR PHONE CLOSE.

Avoid walking while staring at your screen, especially near intersections, subway entrances, and crowded areas. Know what's happening around you.

3



RIDE THE SUBWAY SMART.

Stay in populated areas of the platform, stand behind the platform edge, and keep bags and valuables close. Late at night, choose cars with other riders.

4



DON'T FLASH YOUR VALUABLES.

Expensive jewelry, large amounts of cash, cameras, and electronics can attract unnecessary attention. Enjoy your things without advertising them.

5



USE OFFICIAL RIDES.

When using Uber, Lyft, or another rideshare service, verify the license plate, vehicle, and driver information in your app BEFORE getting in. Never accept unsolicited rides from strangers.

6



TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS.

If a street, subway car, person, or situation feels uncomfortable, leave. Cross the street, enter a business, change subway cars, or find a populated area.

7



KEEP YOUR BAG IN FRONT IN CROWDS.

Times Square, trains, festivals, tourist attractions, and packed sidewalks can get extremely busy. Zippers closed. Wallet secure. Bag where you can see it.

8



SHARE YOUR PLANS.

If you're exploring alone, let someone know where you're headed. Your phone's location-sharing feature can also be useful when meeting friends or traveling late.

9



SAVE YOUR BATTERY.

A dead phone can mean losing access to maps, transportation, tickets, reservations, and emergency communication. Start the day charged and carry a portable charger.

10



KNOW 911 — AND KNOW 311.

Call 911 for emergencies requiring police, fire, or medical assistance. Use 311 for NYC information and non-emergency city services.

MOOD TIP:

AWARENESS DOESN'T MEAN FEAR.

Stay alert. Stay safe. Enjoy NYC.



911

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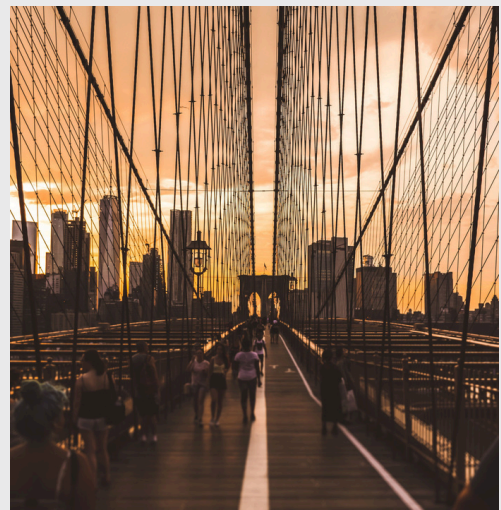
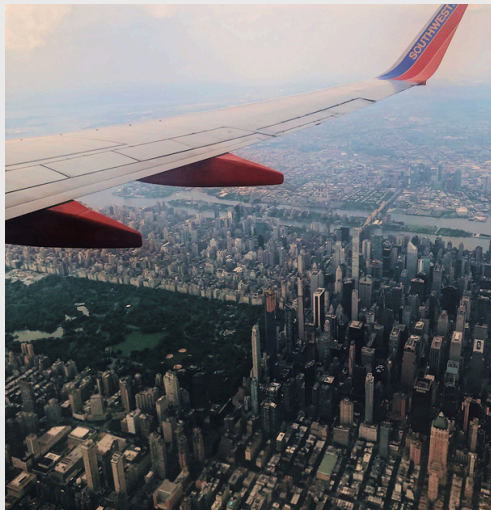


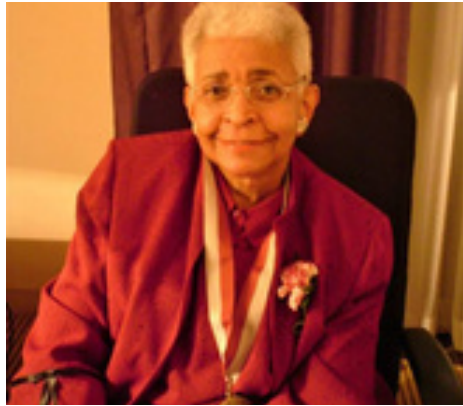
311

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--- ACERNATUM ---





THE BLACK COMPOSER PROJECT

Names like Florence Price, Margaret Bonds, H. Leslie Adams, Undine Smith Moore, Howard Swanson, George Walker, Mark Fax, and Adolphus Hailstork may be familiar to musicians and scholars. For many audiences, they aren't.

That is part of the problem.

Florence Price became the first Black woman to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra when the Chicago Symphony Orchestra premiered her Symphony No. 1 in 1933.

Margaret Bonds created music deeply connected to Black poetry and collaborated extensively with Langston Hughes.

George Walker became the first Black composer to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Music.

Undine Smith Moore devoted much of her life not only to composing but to educating generations of musicians.

And they represent only a fraction of the story.

But the Black Composer Project isn't interested in turning these artists into names we're supposed to memorize because it's culturally responsible.

We want you to hear the music.

Because that's where everything changes.

A composer's biography can tell you why someone mattered. Music lets you experience why.

THE FIRST NOTE CHANGES EVERYTHING

There is something dangerous about describing this repertoire only as "historically significant."

It can accidentally make living music sound like medicine—something good for us, something we ought to consume simply because we know it's important.

But this music is beautiful. Sensual. Spiritual. Romantic. Joyful. Devastating. Complicated. Funny. Tender. Full of longing.

It breathes. It surprises. It lingers long after the final note.

When audiences finally hear it—not as an academic exercise, but as living art—they begin to understand that these composers were never on the margins of music.

They were always part of its story.

The music was always there.

We are simply learning to listen.

There is a version of classical music history most of us were taught.

Bach. Mozart. Beethoven. Schubert. Puccini. Verdi.

Extraordinary composers whose music has survived centuries and deserves its place on concert stages around the world.

But that history is incomplete.

Because while those composers were writing, performing, and shaping the traditions we now call classical music, Black musicians and composers were creating too.

They were writing symphonies, art songs, operas, spirituals, chamber music, piano works, and orchestral music. They were conservatory-trained musicians, professors, conductors, performers, and extraordinary musical thinkers.

The music existed. We simply weren't always taught to listen for it.

That is where the Black Composer Project begins.

Created by Harlem Collective Opera, the project is not about replacing the classical canon. It is about expanding our understanding of it.

It asks a simple question: What happens when we make room for the music that was always there?

HARLEM RISING

Everyone knows the Harlem that changed the world. The Harlem of Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday. The Harlem Renaissance. Jazz clubs. Black literature. Fashion. Politics. Theater. Faith. Food. Entrepreneurship. It is an extraordinary inheritance.

But Harlem is not a museum. And its greatest days do not belong exclusively to the past.

Walk through the neighborhood now and another Harlem is taking shape—not replacing the one that came before it, but building upon it.

Young artists are creating work here. Designers are developing brands.



Chefs are opening kitchens. Musicians are experimenting with sound. Writers are finding audiences. Entrepreneurs are building businesses. Theater makers are creating stages.

New residents are meeting families who have called these blocks home for generations.

And throughout it all, Harlem continues doing what Harlem has always done extraordinarily well: creating culture.

THE NEXT HARLEM RENAISSANCE DOESN'T NEED A NAME

We love naming movements after they've happened. History makes creativity look wonderfully organized.

A group of artists appears. Something changes. Years later, somebody gives the moment a title and puts it in a textbook.

But living through cultural change feels different. It's messy. Someone is rehearsing in a room nobody knows about.

A designer is working from a tiny studio. A chef is testing a menu. A writer is reading something new.

A musician is experimenting with a sound that doesn't have a category yet

A business owner is unlocking the door for the first time.

Nobody knows which of these things will matter twenty years from now.

That's what makes now exciting. Harlem doesn't need to announce another renaissance. It needs room for people to create.

CULTURE LIVES WHERE PEOPLE DO

The most interesting culture doesn't always begin inside institutions. Sometimes it begins at the barber shop.

The bookstore. The church. The restaurant. The stoop. The rehearsal room. The park. The beauty salon.

The coffee shop where somebody has been sitting with a laptop for four hours and one cup of coffee.

These are the places where people meet. And when people meet, ideas travel. That's part of Harlem's enduring creative power.

The neighborhood has always understood that art and everyday life don't have to exist separately.

Music leaves the stage. Fashion walks down the sidewalk. Politics enters the barbershop. Faith becomes music. Food becomes memory. Conversation becomes art.



BROWN IS HAVING ITS MOMENT



Fall 2026 Is Less About Following the Rules—And More About Deciding What You Want to Say There is a particular moment in New York when summer begins to loosen its grip.

The evenings get cooler. The light changes. Sandals start sharing sidewalk space with boots. Jackets appear over shoulders. And suddenly, getting dressed becomes interesting again.

Fall has always belonged to fashion. But this season feels less interested in telling us exactly what to wear and more interested in giving us a vocabulary to work with.

Fall 2026 is about personality. After seasons dominated by restraint and the idea of “quiet luxury,” fashion is becoming expressive again. Not necessarily louder—but richer. More texture. More shape. More layering. More personality. The question isn't simply: What's in? It's: What do you want to say? Because before we introduce ourselves, our clothes have already begun the conversation.

New York will never abandon black.

Let's be serious.

But this fall, brown offers a beautiful alternative.

Chocolate, espresso, caramel, cognac, and deep tobacco tones bring warmth to the season without sacrificing

sophistication. Instead of treating brown as simply another neutral, try wearing several shades together.

A chocolate trouser with a camel knit. Cognac leather against cream. Deep espresso from head to toe.

The effect is luxurious without trying too hard.

And don't be afraid to interrupt all that earthiness. A flash of red, cobalt, green, or another color you love can completely change the conversation.

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CHAMBER *Orchestra*

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WEAR YOURSELF

From Paris to Harlem, Sigi`Nommo designer Pascal has built a creative life around one simple belief: originality is power.

There are interviews you prepare for. Then there are conversations that quietly begin rearranging the way you think.

When I sat down with Pascal, the artist and designer behind Sigi`Nommo, I expected to talk about fashion—collections, fabrics, inspiration, maybe the business of building an independent label in Harlem.

Instead, we talked about identity.

Pascal grew up in Paris, one of the great fashion and art capitals of the world. But what struck me about his story wasn't who inspired him.

It was that, from a remarkably young age, Pascal never seemed particularly interested in becoming anybody else.

He was comfortable being different. He didn't need to look like everyone else, think like everyone else or create like everyone else. Where many of us spend years searching outside ourselves for clues about who we're supposed to become, Pascal learned early to trust his own instincts.

For him, originality wasn't something to discover later.

It was something to protect. And that conviction would eventually become the foundation of Sigi`Nommo.

PARIS, THE WORLD AND BACK TO HIMSELF

Paris may be where Pascal's story begins, but it certainly isn't where his world ends.

Travel became part of his creative education. Different countries exposed him to different relationships with color, art, architecture, clothing and culture. Museums offered one kind of education; neighborhoods offered another.

He watched. He absorbed. He experienced.

But there is an important distinction in the way Pascal talks about those experiences.

He didn't travel the world looking for an identity. He traveled with one.

The world expanded his imagination without replacing his voice. That's something many of us struggle to understand.

Raturesto
consequ omnis
aset, as eaquo
expliquo digent
aute siminullaute
sinctota.





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Inspiration doesn't have to mean imitation. We can admire someone without becoming them. We can experience another culture without losing our own. We can learn from another artist without surrendering the thing that makes our work distinct.

Pascal seems to understand instinctively that the purpose of discovering the world isn't necessarily to find someone else to become.

Sometimes it simply gives us more language for expressing who we already are.

IMAGINE THE LOUVRE

During our conversation, Pascal gave me an image I haven't forgotten.

Imagine walking into the Louvre. People travel from around the world to stand before masterpieces that have survived generations.

Now imagine entering those galleries and discovering that every painting looked exactly the same. Same colors. Same composition. Same perspective. Would anybody make the journey? Probably not.

We value great art precisely because it is distinctive. We don't stand before a masterpiece wishing the artist had tried harder to look like everybody else.

So why do we do that to ourselves? How often do we trade our own colors for somebody else's approval?

ENTIAM DOLUPIT OFFICIAE



ENTIAM DOLUPIT OFFICIAE





ENTIAM DOLUPIT OFFICIAEBIS DOLOR
AUTAT ALIQUIS RE ETUS DOLUP.



How often do we hide the parts of ourselves that stand out because fitting in feels safer?

Pascal's answer is embedded in his work: Your originality is your power.

WHEN ART LEAVES THE MUSEUM

Sigi`Nommo begins with Pascal as an artist. Before the garment, there is the canvas.

His artwork eventually finds another life on clothing, transforming paintings and visual ideas into pieces that can move through the world.

That process changes the relationship between art and audience. Museums generally ask us to stand back and admire.

Pascal asks:

What if the art walked out the door?
What if the canvas walked through Harlem?
Caught the train? Went to dinner? Danced?
Lived?

Suddenly, the person wearing the garment becomes part of the artwork.

That's what makes Sigi`Nommo interesting. The clothing carries Pascal's artistic language, but the person wearing it brings another story entirely.

Their body. Their personality. Their culture. Their confidence. Their way of moving through the world. The designer begins the conversation. The wearer finishes it.

PARIS TO HARLEM

Perhaps that's also why Pascal's work feels so at home in Harlem.

Harlem has always understood the power of individuality. Artists here have spent generations refusing to disappear—turning personal expression into music, literature, fashion, dance and movements that eventually influenced the world.

Pascal arrives carrying Paris and the many places his travels have taken him. Now Harlem becomes another chapter.

Not because he's trying to become Harlem.

Because every place we genuinely experience leaves something with us. His journey isn't about collecting identities.

It's about allowing a larger world to deepen his own.

And ultimately, that may be the real philosophy behind Sigi`Nommo. Pascal isn't asking you to dress like him.

That would miss the point entirely. He wants you to experience the same freedom he discovered for himself: the freedom to stop looking around the room for instructions.

Wear the color because you love it. Choose the piece because you respond to it. Be elegant. Be eccentric. Be quiet. Be outrageous. But be recognizable to yourself.

The world already has everybody else. It doesn't need another copy.

Perhaps the greatest thing fashion can give us isn't another trend to follow. Perhaps it's permission to be seen.

Your originality is your power. Wear it.

By Bethany Camille James

When your life suddenly changes for the better, how do you make sure you're leveling up with the life you asked for?

At the end of June, a tarot reader on Threads told me that the trajectory of all Taureans was about to change for the better. Mind you, this was during a time when Nick and I were in the thick of everything, and I was working for pennies at the museum.

Normally, I scroll past zodiac predictions without much thought, taking them with a grain of salt. But something about this one caught me at exactly the right moment. So I took notes and decided I would come back at the end of the month to see if they were right. Now that July has come to an end, I can confidently say this was quite the whirlwind of a month. (I'm blaming Mercury Retrograde for this one.)

From getting a new job and finding my groove in music again, to my friendship with Nick—my best friend—officially moving into a situationship, and becoming a Founding Editorial Contributor at MOOD Magazine NYC, it's safe to say that my life looks very different than it did at the beginning of the month. But I can't help wondering:

Who am I supposed to become now that life has given me this upgrade?

Am I supposed to become more structured? Create a strict routine? Have every hour planned and accounted for?

Or am I supposed to continue figuring things out as I go?



Typically, I'm the figure-it-out-as-I-go type of person. But maybe I'm being asked by God, the Universe, or whatever higher power is guiding me to change the way I think and move through the world.

The thing about change is that it always feels foreign.

Even when it's good.

So how do you know when change is leading you somewhere better and not somewhere worse?

That question has been following me through every part of this new chapter. Especially with Nick.

To say we've been at an interesting point would be an understatement.

We're both at a place where we're trying to understand how far the limits of our relationship go. Almost daring our chemistry to color outside the lines of our usual friendship.

And while that sounds beautiful, I wasn't completely comfortable with it.

I wasn't expecting us to take this route of exploration, but at the same time, it wasn't entirely something we could control.

Because you can't control who you love.

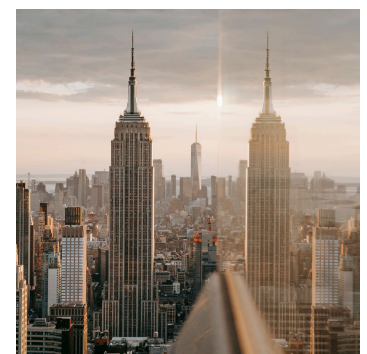
But you can control how you respond once you realize that love exists outside the boundaries you originally created. And when I tell you I've been fighting the urge to run from this connection, I feel like a hamster running endlessly on a wheel.

Nothing is inherently wrong.

But when you start exploring how deep your feelings go, there is always the possibility that things become messy. And I've been trying to move beyond the messiness, the uncertainty, and the grey areas.

Because maybe this was part of the level-up too. Maybe growth isn't always about having everything figured out. Maybe sometimes it's learning how to exist in uncertainty without sabotaging something beautiful.

Because how could I ever expect to receive better if I keep destroying what I already have?



There is a moment in every great Fela Anikulapo-Kuti performance that feels less like a concert and more like a ceremony. The horns lock into a relentless groove. The dancers move with deliberate, almost ritual intensity. The call-and-response between Fela and the chorus rises like a communal prayer and a political indictment at once. The stage becomes a village square, a parliament, a temple, and a battlefield. Time stretches. The audience is no longer passive. It is implicated.

This is not entertainment in the narrow sense. It is theater in the highest order: long, layered, confrontational, and collective. It is, in many ways, a people's opera.

Nikki Grimes captures this beautifully in her remark: "When I think of the Harlem Renaissance, I think of bright colors, and bold, dynamic art. African American artists of the period were, in large measure, breaking out of the constrictions white society had set for them. They were claiming and remaking their own images, and doing so in bold and striking ways."

I live in Lagos, and I have never walked the streets of Harlem. Yet, the more I sit with both traditions, the more clearly I hear a shared language—a language of scale, storytelling, social urgency, and communal belonging.

They feel, at times, like twins living on either side of the ocean. One was born in the heat and confrontation of Lagos. The other continues to grow in the layered memory and resilience of Harlem. Different languages, different costumes, same fundamental ambition: to make the grand stage answer to the people.

Consider one of Fela's most piercing stage statements: the performances of "Zombie." On those nights at the Afrika Shrine and on international stages, the song was never merely a tune. It was a theatrical indictment.



theatrical indictment.

Fela used the extended form, the relentless groove, the dancers, and the chorus to mock the blind obedience of soldiers who followed orders without conscience. The performance held up a mirror to military power and public complicity. It was satire, mourning, and mobilization at once.

The audience was invited not only to dance but to recognize itself inside the critique. The stage became a place where social violence was named in real time and where dignity was insisted upon through rhythm and collective voice.

By **Minkail G. Olaitan**

Global Culture and Community Correspondent, Mood Magazine / Harlem Collective Opera

OTHELLO UNDER THE HARLEM SKY

There is something fitting about watching Othello unfold beneath the open sky in Marcus Garvey Park. The evening breeze, the sounds of Harlem beyond the amphitheater, and the park's towering trees create a backdrop that no Broadway theater could replicate. In the hands of the Classical Theatre of Harlem, Shakespeare's tragedy doesn't feel like a centuries-old classic—it feels startlingly current.

Directed by Carol Cofield, this year's free Uptown Shakespeare in the Park production strips away any notion that Othello belongs behind museum glass. Set against a modern military backdrop, the production leans into themes of power, race, masculinity, and manipulation without sacrificing Shakespeare's language. Instead, it invites the audience to see just how little has changed when it comes to jealousy, insecurity, and their destructive consequences. In other words, it's messy as heck.

James Udom delivers an emotionally layered Othello. Rather than portraying the Moor of Venice solely as a tragic hero, he allows us to witness a respected leader slowly unravel under the weight of calculated lies. His transformation is heartbreaking because it

feels believable. Opposite him, Nick Westrate's Iago is chilling—not because he is loud or overtly villainous, but because his manipulation is so controlled and methodical. Every smile seems to conceal another calculated move. The supporting cast gives the production remarkable depth, with performances that strengthen the emotional weight of Shakespeare's tragedy. What makes the production especially memorable, however, is its setting. Marcus Garvey Park is more than a venue—it becomes another character in the story. As daylight fades and darkness settles over Harlem, the tragedy seems to intensify. The audience isn't simply watching Shakespeare; they're experiencing it as part of the neighborhood's living cultural tradition.

There is a unique sense of community that comes from hundreds of New Yorkers gathering for free theater, proving that world-class performances need not come with Broadway prices.

If there is any criticism, it is that the contemporary military concept occasionally overshadows quieter emotional moments. At times, the production's emphasis

on physicality competes with the intimacy of Shakespeare's language. Still, these moments are minor compared to the production's overall achievement.

The Classical Theatre of Harlem has once again demonstrated why its Uptown Shakespeare series has become one of New York City's cultural highlights. This Othello is accessible without being simplistic, modern without abandoning the text, and emotionally resonant from its opening scene to its devastating conclusion.

In a city where theater often comes with an intimidating price tag, this production is a reminder that some of New York's richest artistic experiences are still free—and sometimes they happen under the stars in the heart of Harlem.

by Jennice Powell



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FAMOUSLY YOU

Rev. Shawn Amos on Legacy, Identity, and the Freedom to Become Yourself
In a world constantly telling us who we should become, perhaps one of the
greatest acts of courage is simply becoming ourselves.
It sounds easy. It rarely is.

We spend much of our lives surrounded by instructions. Family tells us who we might become.

Culture tells us what success should look like. Social media shows us what everyone else appears to be doing. Algorithms reward sameness while convincing us we're expressing ourselves. Somewhere in all that noise, it becomes remarkably easy to lose the sound of our own voice.

That is what makes Famously You so interesting.

The uplifting Roku Original, hosted by musician and NAACP Image Award-winning author Rev. Shawn Amos and executive produced by Gabrielle Union for Ferrero's Famous Amos brand, appears at first to be a celebration of talent. Everyday people share extraordinary gifts

alongside celebrated performers in a joyful reminder that brilliance isn't reserved for celebrities.

But spend some time talking with Shawn and another idea begins to emerge.

Famously You isn't really asking whether you have what it takes to become famous.

It's asking whether you have the courage to become you. For Shawn Amos, that question carries the weight of a lifetime.

GROWING UP WITH "FAMOUS"

Long before Shawn stepped in front of the camera for Famously You, the word famous already had a very particular meaning in his life.

His father, Wally Amos, built Famous Amos cookies into one of America's most recognizable brands.

For most people, Famous Amos was something encountered in a grocery aisle: the familiar name, the packaging, the cookies. For Shawn, Famous Amos was Dad.



That distinction matters. Imagine growing up close enough to watch someone you love become an American success story.

You don't only see the finished product. You see what comes before it. The ambition. The work. The uncertainty. The victories.



And eventually, the disappointments and reinventions that rarely make it onto the packaging.

Shawn had a front-row seat not simply to the building of a business, but to the building of a legacy.

And with that came a lesson that would remain with him long after childhood.

When life presented Wally Amos with a challenge, Shawn remembers his father returning to a remarkably simple question:

“Now what?”

Not: Why me? Not: What if? Just: Now what?

There is an entire philosophy of living contained inside those two words.

They acknowledge that something happened.

Maybe it hurt. Maybe it wasn't fair. Maybe it wasn't what you planned.

Maybe the thing you thought would last forever didn't.

Fine. Now what?

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BECOME A PERMANENT
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It turns your attention from what cannot be changed toward what can still be created.

And if there is a quiet philosophy running beneath *Famously You*, perhaps this is part of it.

Life changes. Plans change. Success changes. Our understanding of ourselves changes.

The question is what we do next.

THE SHADOW OF SUCCESS

There is another side to growing up around an extraordinary legacy.

At some point, you have to decide who you are. It would have been easy for Shawn's life to become an extension of his father's story.

When a parent's name is known around the world, the shadow can be enormous—even when that shadow is cast by love.

But becoming yourself sometimes requires separating inheritance from identity.

What have I been given?

What do I admire?

What do I carry forward?

And what belongs uniquely to me?



S hawn's life and creative career have taken their own shape through music, writing, storytelling and now television. His journey has not been about pretending his father's legacy doesn't exist. Nor has it been about living entirely inside it.

It's about becoming whole enough to carry where you come from without allowing it to dictate where you must go.

That's a very different understanding of legacy. Legacy isn't replication. Your parents' dreams don't have to become your dreams.

Their gifts don't have to become your gifts. Their definition of success doesn't have to become yours.

What they give you can become a foundation rather than a set of instructions.

And sometimes honoring where you come from means having the courage to go somewhere entirely your own.

Think about the people who become truly unforgettable. Michael Jackson. Cher. Diana Ross. Three completely different artists.

Three different sounds. Three different images. Three different relationships with fame.

Yet each became unmistakable. You recognize the voice. You recognize the silhouette. You recognize the presence.

Nobody had to tell Cher to become a slightly better version of somebody who already existed.

Diana Ross didn't become Diana Ross by disappearing into the crowd.

Michael Jackson's artistic identity became so distinctive that movement, clothing, sound and image could communicate his presence before his name appeared.

Their individuality became part of their power. Of course, fame is complicated, and celebrity is never proof of authenticity. But many of the

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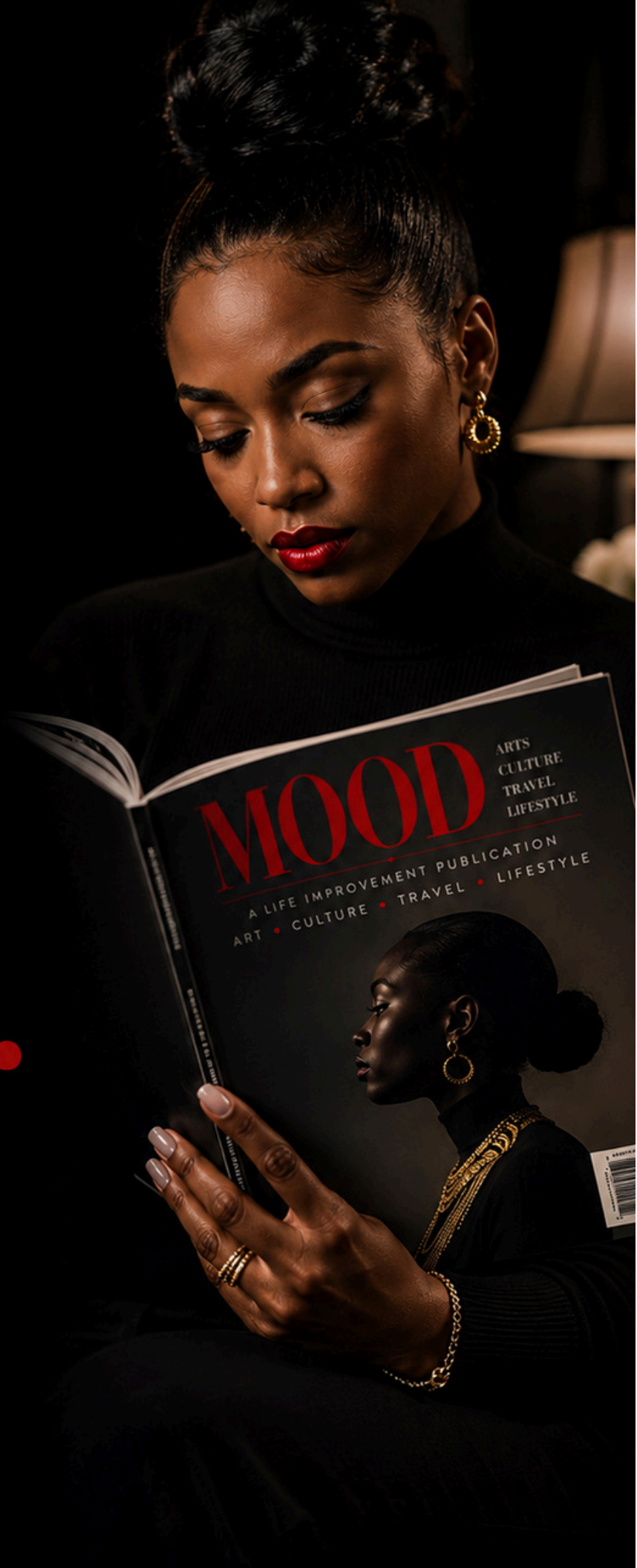
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when you get closer.
You're close enough
to live it.*

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People whose work remains culturally resonant share something important:

they developed a voice we could recognize as their own. They gave themselves permission to be distinctive.

And that may be the most fascinating tension inside a show called *Famously You*.

It's a show connected to celebrity that continually redirects the spotlight away from celebrity. Back toward us.

THE QUIRKY PART IS THE GOOD PART

Most of us learn very early which parts of ourselves receive applause.

We also learn which parts make people look at us strangely.

So we edit. We soften an opinion. Change the outfit. Hide an interest. Lower the voice. Make the dream more practical.

Become a little easier to understand. A little easier to categorize. A little more like everybody else.

And then we wonder why we don't feel completely ourselves.

Famously *You* offers another possibility. What if the thing you've been trying to edit out is part of your shine?

The quirky thing. The strange thing. The passion nobody around you understands.

The laugh that's too loud. The clothes that are too much.

The idea everybody told you wouldn't work. The part of your personality that doesn't fit neatly into a box. Maybe those aren't flaws in the design.

Maybe that's the design. The people who stand out are often the people who eventually stopped spending so much energy trying to fit in.

Not because they never experienced fear. Because they decided authenticity was worth the risk.

THE FREEDOM TO BE WHOLE

During our conversation, Shawn spoke thoughtfully about becoming whole. That word stayed with me. Whole.

Because authenticity isn't necessarily about reinventing yourself. Sometimes it's about ending the division between the person you know yourself to be and the person you believe the world will accept.

We carry labels assigned by family, profession, race, class, religion, culture and circumstance.

Some are meaningful. Some are useful. Some become limiting when we begin believing we must fit completely inside them.

But human beings are rarely that simple. We contradict ourselves. We evolve. We surprise ourselves.

We contain more than one thing. Wholeness means allowing those pieces to coexist, and there is tremendous freedom in that.

You stop auditioning for your own life.

You stop asking everyone in the room whether you're allowed to become the person you're already becoming.

You begin listening to something quieter.

Your own inner knowing.

That may be what Famously You is ultimately guiding its audience toward.

Not fame. Recognition. Not recognition from millions of strangers. Recognition from yourself.

FINDING YOUR OWN SOUND

That philosophy also lives inside Shawn's music.

His artistic influences include unmistakable voices such as Elvis Costello, Marvin Gaye and Stevie Wonder—artists whose work could be admired but never easily duplicated.

What connects artists like these isn't that they sound alike.

It's precisely that they don't.

Each developed an artistic vocabulary distinct enough to become identifiable.

Shawn's own musical journey continues in that tradition of searching for honest expression rather than imitation, including new music on the horizon later this fall.

Because inspiration should expand us. It shouldn't erase us.

The goal isn't to encounter someone extraordinary and ask, How do I become them? The better question may be:

What does their courage teach me about becoming myself?

LEGACY BEYOND A LOGO

Eventually, our conversation returned to Famous Amos.

The brand created by Wally Amos now lives within Ferrero, another family-owned company.



or Shawn, there is meaning in that continuity. Because a legacy is larger than ownership. Larger than packaging. Larger than a logo.

The most important things we inherit from people aren't always the things that can be trademarked.

That's your shine. The world already has everyone else.

What it doesn't have—and what it will never have again in precisely the same combination—is you.

So maybe the spotlight isn't asking you to perform. Maybe it's simply asking you to stop hiding.

Step into it. And become, fully and beautifully,

THE BOOKSTORE THAT REFUSED TO BE SILENT

There are bookstores you stumble upon. And then there are bookstores that come looking for you. When I first learned about AfroLit Alcove, I imagined four walls, neatly organized shelves, and the familiar scent of paper waiting patiently to be discovered. Instead, I found something far more radical: a bookstore on wheels.

It made me wonder... Who says stories have to stay in one place? For Sheymirra Lawson, the answer was obvious. They don't.

Some people open businesses because they discover a gap in the market. She opened one because she felt a gap in the culture.

"In 2024, as the world shifted in ways that threatened my rights as a woman, my culture, and even the safety of my son, I refused to be silent or still."

That's not the beginning of a business plan.

That's the beginning of a movement. AfroLit Alcove wasn't created simply to sell books. It was born from the conviction that stories can preserve what politics sometimes tries to erase.

And perhaps that's why it feels less like a bookstore and more like a traveling sanctuary.

Instead of waiting for readers to walk through a front door, Sheymirra loads Black literature onto a trailer and brings it directly into neighborhoods, festivals, schools, and community spaces throughout Birmingham.

It's a beautiful inversion. Because for generations, Black communities have traveled extraordinary distances to find books that reflected their lives. Now the books are making the journey instead.



LET US CURATE YOUR MOOD

Sheymirra's path to bookselling wasn't linear. A former educator turned Learning and Development strategist, she has always believed knowledge changes lives.

Today, she's simply delivering that belief one bookstore stop at a time. And while social media has helped thousands discover AfroLit Alcove through TikTok Lives and Instagram, it's the conversations that happen after someone picks up a book that seem to matter most.

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YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S HAPPENING
ACROSS THE FIVE BOROUGHS.

**AUG
2026**

AUG
1
SAT

POPSICLE! THE STREETWEAR FASHION SHOW

12:00PM - 2:00PM

Museum of African Diaspora
685 Mission St, San Francisco, CA



MANHATTAN
FREE

AUG
2
SUN

WELLNESS WALK: LOOP THE LAKE

8:00AM - 10:00AM

Marcus Garvey Park
Central Park North, East Harlem



MANHATTAN
FREE

AUG
4
TUE

HARLEM NIGHT MARKET

5:00PM - 10:00PM

West 125th Street
Between Lenox & 5th Ave



MANHATTAN
FREE

AUG
7
FRI

BRONX SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

6:00PM - 9:00PM

Concrete Plant Park
1370 Bronx River Ave, Bronx



THE BRONX
FREE

AUG
8
SAT

BROOKLYN BOOK FESTIVAL

10:00AM - 6:00PM

Brooklyn Borough Hall Plaza
209 Joralemon St, Brooklyn



BROOKLYN
FREE

AUG
9
SUN

QUEENS CARIBBEAN CULTURAL FEST

1:00PM - 7:00PM

Roy Wilkins Park
Merrick Blvd & 177th St, Jamaica



QUEENS
FREE

AUG
11
TUE

HARLEM ART WALK

6:00PM - 9:00PM

Various Galleries & Spaces
125th St & Frederick Douglass Blvd



MANHATTAN
FREE

AUG
14
FRI

STATEN ISLAND FRIDAY NIGHT FILMS

8:00PM - 10:30PM

Snug Harbor Cultural Center
1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island



STATEN ISLAND
FREE

AUG
16
SUN

NYC CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL & HARLEM SPELLING BEE

12:00PM - 4:00PM

St. Nicholas Park
145th St & St. Nicholas Ave, Harlem



MANHATTAN
FREE



FREE
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the public



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Space is limited



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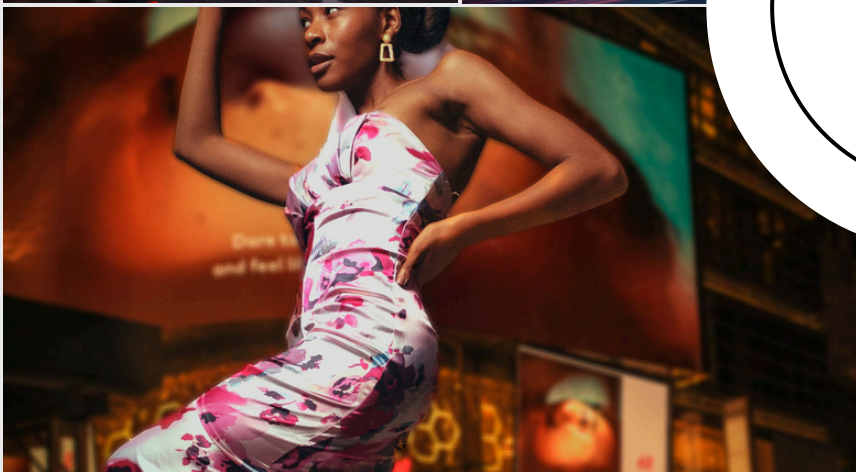
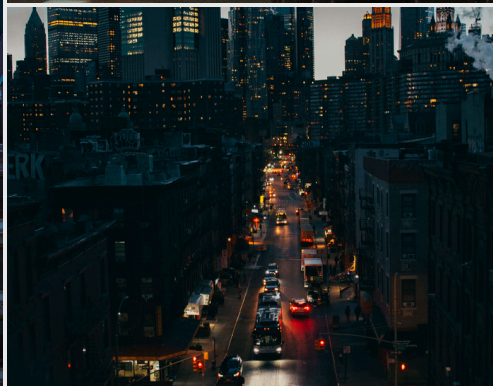
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DOESN'T SIMPLY
COME ALIVE AT
NIGHT—IT
REMEMBERS
WHO IT HAS
ALWAYS BEEN.

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Our future.
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YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S HAPPENING
ACROSS THE FIVE BOROUGHES.

AUG
17
MON

HARLEM SUMMER JAZZ SERIES

7:00PM - 9:30PM

Marcus Garvey Park
Central Park North, East Harlem

AUG
18
TUE

BROOKLYN COMEDY NIGHT

7:30PM - 9:30PM

Littlefield
622 Degraw St, Brooklyn

AUG
19
WED

QUEENS HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIR

11:00AM - 3:00PM

Roy Wilkins Park
Merrick Blvd & 177th St, Jamaica

AUG
20
THU

BRONX ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

6:00PM - 8:30PM

Bronx Art Space
305 E 140th St, Bronx

AUG
21
FRI

OUTDOOR MOVIE NIGHT: BLACK CLASSICS

8:00PM - 10:30PM

St. Nicholas Park
145th St & St. Nicholas Ave, Harlem

AUG
22
SAT

STATEN ISLAND COMMUNITY DAY

12:00PM - 4:00PM

Snug Harbor Cultural Center
1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island

AUG
23
SUN

SUNDAY SOUL SESSIONS

4:00PM - 7:00PM

Richard Rodgers Amphitheater
Marcus Garvey Park, Harlem

AUG
24
MON

YOUTH LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

10:00AM - 1:00PM

Harlem Community Center
125 W 131st St, Harlem

AUG
25
TUE

QUEENS CARIBBEAN NIGHT

6:00PM - 9:00PM

King Manor Museum
150-03 Jamaica Ave, Jamaica

AUG
26
WED

HARLEM POETRY IN THE PARK

6:30PM - 8:30PM

Marcus Garvey Park
Central Park North, East Harlem

AUG
27
THU

BROOKLYN FOOD TRUCK FEST

5:00PM - 9:00PM

Prospect Park - LeFrak Center
171 East Dr, Brooklyn

AUG
28
FRI

BRONX HIP HOP HISTORY TOUR

6:00PM - 8:30PM

Various Locations
Mott Haven & The Bronx

AUG
29
SAT

FAMILY FUN DAY IN THE PARK

12:00PM - 4:00PM

Clove Lakes Park
1150 Clove Rd, Staten Island

AUG
30
SUN

GOSPEL IN THE GARDEN

3:00PM - 6:00PM

Conservatory Garden
Central Park, Manhattan

AUG
31
MON

BACK TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY GIVEAWAY

11:00AM - 3:00PM

The Gathering Spot
384 North Yard, Brooklyn

AUG
2026

PAGE 2



MANHATTAN
FREE



BROOKLYN
RSVP



QUEENS
FREE



THE BRONX
FREE



MANHATTAN
FREE



STATEN ISLAND
FREE



MANHATTAN
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MANHATTAN
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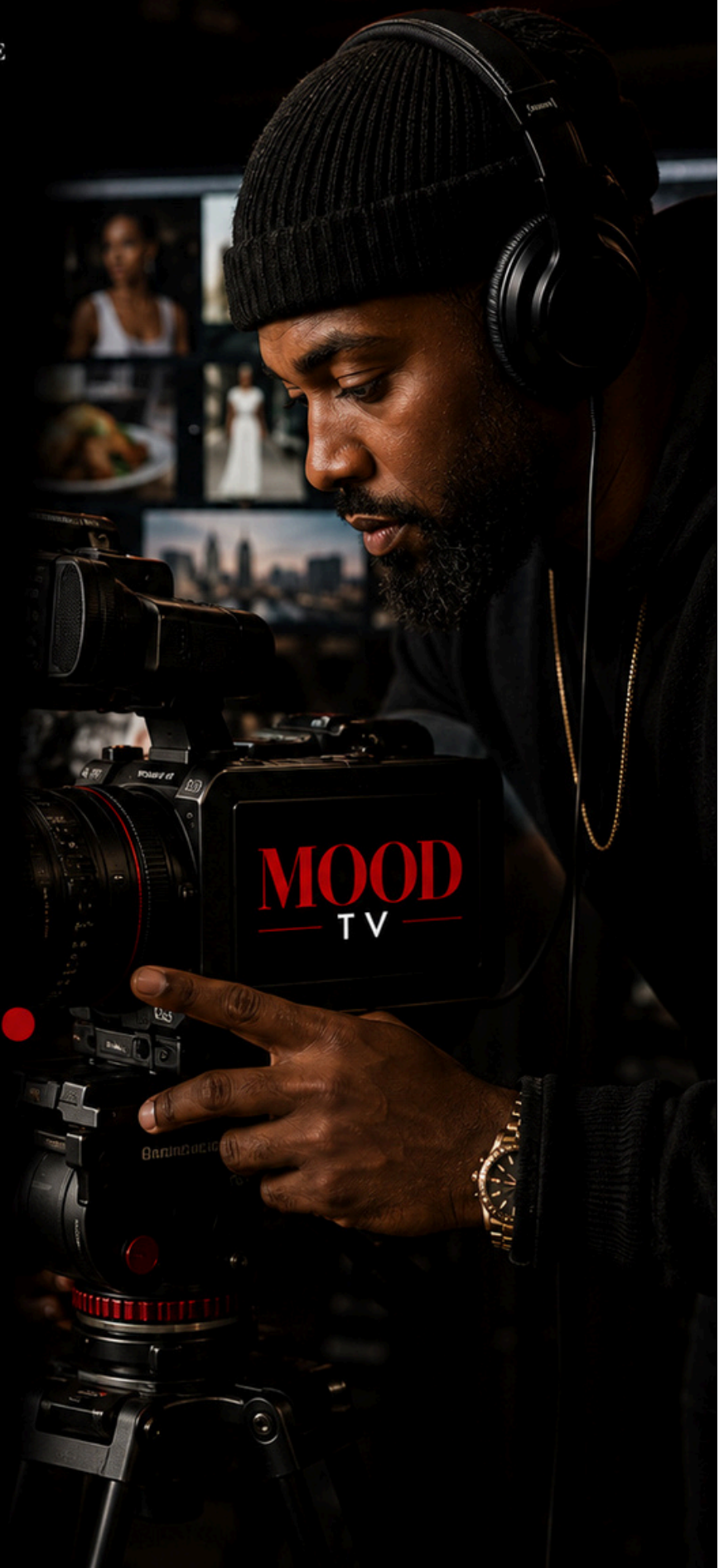
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THE MOOD GUIDE

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PAGE

1

OF 2



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THE ART OF SLOWING DOWN

INSIDE AGAIN VINTAGE, WHERE EVERY OBJECT—
AND EVERY BOOK—HAS SOMETHING TO SAY

5

Have you ever walked into a place and immediately felt your shoulders relax? Not because someone told you to. But because the space itself seemed to whisper, You can slow down now. That was my first impression of Again Vintage in Brooklyn.

It isn't just a shop. And it certainly isn't just a bookstore. It's one of those rare places where every object seems to have survived long enough to earn a second life. A vintage chair sits comfortably beside a stack of carefully selected books. Handcrafted ceramics catch the afternoon light. Just beyond them, the scent of freshly brewed espresso drifts from SUBLIME, the café tucked inside the store.

Together, they create something that's becoming increasingly rare: a place that doesn't ask you to hurry. I couldn't help wondering... when did slowing down become such a luxury?

For co-founders Sara Elise and Ryann Holmes, that question became the foundation of their business.

"We kept asking ourselves, What would it look like to slow down and build a space entirely on our own terms?"

Sometimes the most meaningful businesses don't begin with a business plan.

They begin with a question. Again Vintage grew from years of experience in design, hospitality, community building, and creating welcoming spaces. Rather than following trends, Sara and Ryann chose to follow intention. Every vintage piece they source, every locally made object they display, and every book they place on their shelves is selected with care.

Their collections reflect travels through the Catskills, Japan, and the Mediterranean, while their books celebrate local authors, artists, and creators whose voices deserve to be discovered.

Nothing feels accidental. Everything feels considered. Maybe that's because they believe our homes tell stories long before we do.





The rituals you keep, the objects you surround yourself with, and the food you consume are all design decisions."

I loved that idea.

Because we often think of design as something reserved for architects or artists.

But maybe design is simply how we choose to live.

Reading, they explained, follows the same philosophy.

"We believe a book is one of the few objects that can change the shape of a room just by sitting in it."

Think about that for a moment.

Not because of its cover.

Not because it matches the furniture.

But because someone eventually opens it.

And once they do, the room is never quite the same.

When our conversation turned to Black-owned bookstores, their admiration was immediate and sincere.

They described these spaces as more than places to purchase books. They are archives of memory, gathering places for communities, and champions of stories that history has too often overlooked.

Supporting Black-owned bookstores, they believe, is one of the most meaningful ways to ensure those stories continue finding the readers they were written for.

It's a reminder that buying a book is rarely just a transaction.

Sometimes it's an investment in preserving culture.

Other times, it's an investment in someone finally seeing themselves reflected on the page.

As I prepared to leave, I found myself looking around one last time.

The books. The coffee. The vintage treasures. The conversations quietly unfolding between strangers.



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TO OUR COMMUNITY

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we all grow.



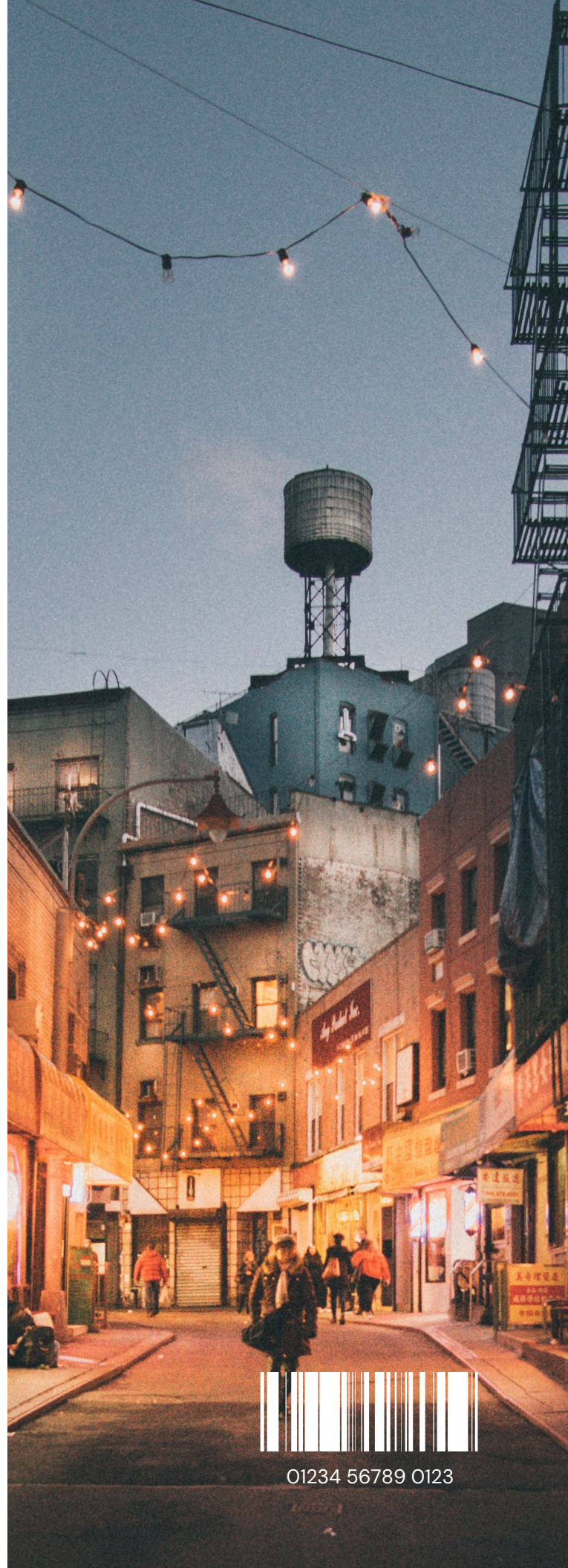
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KEEP DISCOVERING WHAT MAKES LIFE
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