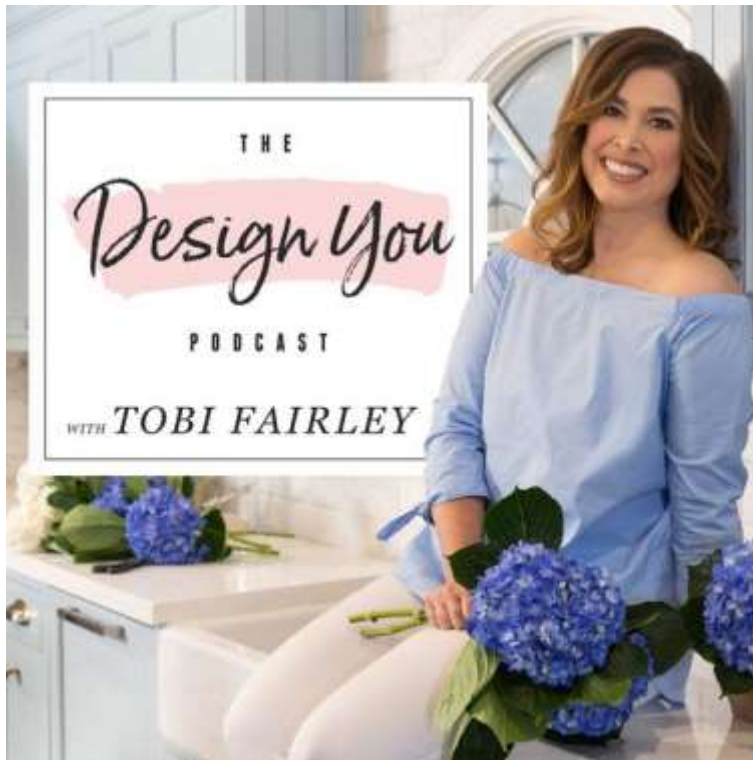


## Ep #117: The Truth Behind the Highlight Reel with Gail Davis



### Full Episode Transcript

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**Tobi Fairley**

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## Ep #117: The Truth Behind the Highlight Reel with Gail Davis

You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 117.

Welcome to the *Design You* podcast. A show where interior designers and creatives learn to say no to busy and say yes to more health, wealth and joy. Here's your host, Tobi Fairley.

Hey, friends, today is a really fun show, I have my friend, Gail Davis on the show today and this episode is a little different. I feel like it's sort of just a girlfriend chat, so we've talked a lot lately. She's been such a good friend to me as I've started doing lots of antiracism work and all sorts of things. But we don't just talk about that, we talk about design, and we talk about pricing and charging and running our businesses. And we have these great conversations often.

And so I wanted to just bring you onboard, kind of like a fly on the wall to listen to a great conversation, because we've been dying to talk here on my podcast about the truth in interior design. So the truth about how people price and how they charge, and the way that we unintentionally, even me, I'm sure can put up almost a façade and only show our highlight reel. And not really talk about some of the, you know, the hard parts of running a design and a creative business.

So we cover all kinds of things in today's episode, but I know you'll really, really like it. So enjoy this fun episode with lots of laughing with my friend, Gail Davis.

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**Tobi:** Hey, Gail. Welcome to the *Design You* podcast, this is going to be really fun.

**Gail:** Sorry, I'm giggling already.

**Tobi:** We are, we're going to have a five minute free chat, and we've been chatting for an hour I think, and we haven't even started yet.

**Gail:** Hey, Tobi, how are you doing today?

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**Tobi:** I'm so glad you're here. I'm doing great now, every time I talk – well, every few days that I don't talk to you I'm like I've got to have me some Gail. But we wanted to come on here and talk today. I think this is going to be really fun. I haven't had one of my friends, just a friend on in a while. I've been interviewing all kinds of people, but I just haven't had somebody that I just have kind of girl talk or down-to-earth talk with. So I think this will be a little bit, yeah, a little bit more relaxed, which is good.

But we were on the phone the other day, one of our many calls and we were just talking about what I'm calling truth in interior design, and it's kind of truth in business, but we were talking about how frustrating it is to just see the highlight reels of everybody. And then just see like me a business coach or somebody say, "Just charge this or just do this." And that all sounds wonderful, but that's not the reality so many times. And so we wanted to have a conversation about that, right?

**Gail:** Yes, we did. It's funny what you said about the highlight reel, everyone shows all the happiness, the sunshine and the rainbows that they have found. But what I would love for people to really share is the struggle that is there. I mean you don't have to share it all, but at least to give a good perspective of what's going on. And I always love to hear people say, like you said, "Just raise your rates, this is what you should be charging or get a licensing deal," as if that's going to be a million dollars overnight.

**Tobi:** Yeah, and as if you just go buy one, like you get a car or a book or something, just go get a licensing deal and just go get a five figure design fee, right?

**Gail:** Yeah. Yeah, and it's like, okay, so if it was that easy then every designer I feel would be working and then there would be no business coaches, because then you could just do it overnight.

**Tobi:** Right. And I think it's fascinating too to think about it, because of course we want to know about those highlights, because we want things to aspire to. And there totally, there are things that happen and there are things to work towards. But I think that the problem that we're talking about

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is that it's kind of like, I'm an interior designer or I'm an interior design coach. And I may have had one or two jobs that I got a \$20,000 design fee. But I go speak like it's normal for me to be getting 20, or 30, or 50, or a 100 on every single job all the time.

And almost I think it implies, and maybe they're not, it's not that they're lying I don't think. I think it's more that us listeners kind of make it mean that we're doing something wrong because we assume maybe that all their jobs are that way. And if we ask they might say, "Of course not, it's like one in 10." But when we're only talking about those jobs it makes the rest of us go, "Oh my gosh, I can't make ends meet," or whatever, "What's wrong with me? What am I doing wrong? What am I missing," that kind of thing, right?

**Gail:** Right. So for me I love when I have conversations with designers and they make it seem as if they're doing six figures and more. I love the conversations when they say, "Well, I won't just do a room, I have to have the whole house or I'm not going to do it." And the reality is people aren't always just going to sign up and give you their whole house. Sometimes it just starts off as a room and it's them feeling you out and then if it feels good then they hand over the rest of the house to you.

So it's having these conversations with these people who are like, "I won't get out of bed for less than, it has to be a \$200,000 job." And I'm like, "Okay, well, I'm going in and I'm getting this living room, so hopefully [inaudible]."

**Tobi:** Right. Well, and I think the thing is, and again we're not disparaging the people who can get that or do get that more often than not. But I think what you said the other day when we were having this conversation that I thought was so great and so important is that sometimes when we're only interviewing or talking to, or watching a panel discussion of the people who have kind of 'made it'. They're only telling the story of when you've arrived. But what a lot of people need to know is what it looked like on the way there, right?

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**Gail:** Yeah, on the drive there because even though you reach your destination there's times you ran out of gas, you had a flat tire, the windscreen got busted.

**Tobi:** Your muffler needs to be fixed.

**Gail:** Yeah. It wasn't like a straight run, and that's where the disservice comes into, because then now it makes, you know, I'll just say me, me as a designer thinking, I am missing the mark, not on just one point but on all 10 points. So what am I doing? Should I be switching to something else? And it's just – a perfect example is just like when Covid started, then all of a sudden everyone's like, "Slash your prices." If it wasn't slash your prices then it was like start doing a – was it the virtual consultations?

And everyone can't all of a sudden pivot to virtual consultations because that may not be your niche and that definitely is not your client. So if you decide to switch to that then how do you get back going to luxury? Because those are two different things, let's call it what it is. And it's just – it makes me crazy that I think people just get on Instagram and they're like, "This is how I did it."

Or the panels where they talk about, "I got this licensing deal and I work with this, and then I got this book deal and I got this." What a lot of them will not tell you also with the book deals is that they're paying for that.

**Tobi:** Most of the time, you're paying for it. I did a podcast called The Dirty Little Secrets of Interior Design that was really popular probably about a year ago. And that was one of the things I talked about, I was like, "Let's just be clear, most of the people that are doing that are paying." And most of the people I know that do the like, Rizzoli, beautiful, and they're beautiful books.

I mean my friends that have done that are literally paying \$250,000 because they're hiring a book agent, and they're getting the person to write it and the photographer. And you get a very small amount of money for your photography, so you spend your own money to do it. And so it's more,

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yes, it makes you feel good, it gives you confidence, and it gives you credibility. But it is also a vanity project; it is a bucket list project that you're paying for.

So I'm not saying for those people not to make those books, it just helps us to know that you don't arrive and then suddenly you get a book deal. Like that's the part we're talking about. What parts are you all paying for yourself? And which of these projects, like it would be so wonderful, and not that we have to tell the whole world all the time, but we don't want to diminish the projects.

But in the design industry, in our inside conversation if we're like, "Well, let me just be honest with you, this amazing project that was on the cover of this magazine, it really helped my credibility. But I didn't make any money on it, I didn't charge enough. I didn't finish it. I passed a lot of things on at cost so that I could get published." Then we could go, "Oh, interesting, okay." Then we'll chalk that up to a marketing expense, we still want it, it still got us credibility. But it's not pretending that we're getting all of these houses and we're just rolling in the dough from all of these, right?

**Gail:** Right. Well, it's just like when people, they ask me, "So you did the show house, how many clients did you get out of that?" And I was like, "Okay, first off when you do a show house that's not what you're going in, like you can't go, "I'm only going to do this because I'm looking to get clients.""

It's like a show house is a marketing tool, like period, amen. If you get a client out of that, if you get five clients, if you get eight clients, you count it all joy, and you keep it moving. It is a very strategic marketing tool that allows you to just unleash all your creativity in a room to showcase what you can do.

But it's so funny that people, you know, when I did my first real show house, because like them rooms and all, but I mean I was in an actual house and a whole set up. There was a woman there and she kept saying – a designer, she's like, "Okay, well, did anybody come through? Did you

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set up any appointments?” And I was like, “It’s a show house. I don’t have conversations with people, this is not a sale.”

This is like people coming through, checking out to see. People are in a neighborhood, they are homeowners, that’s great. Five times out of ten they’re going to take your card, they’re going to take a picture of your home; they’re going to ask you things about where you got it before they’ll try to do it themselves.

Then down the road you may hear from someone and I actually did hear from someone and then Covid happened. So I will be working with them once we start moving. But it was funny, even with – she also took out an ad in the local magazine, and I think it was – here’s another thing that people don’t understand, those ads can run you north of \$2,000. And so she was like, “They want me.” They came to her; they wanted her to do the ad. She’s like, “Well, have any of you done it? And how many clients have you received from that?”

And I was like, “Once again, it’s just for show, it’s a marketing tool, if someone finds you, great. But you need to understand that \$4,000 you’re about to drop is just going to be \$4,000 you’re going to release and you’ve got to let it go.”

**Tobi:** Right, and that’s been my experience too. I think one show house I did in Little Rock, I did get a client from and I ended up doing two houses for her. But that’s the only one that comes to the top of my mind with all. And I’ve probably done – I don’t know – six or eight show houses over the years. But like you’re saying it’s a major investment, advertising’s a major investment, all that stuff is. And it’s not that any of those single things gets you a bunch of work, it’s just that you’re continuing to build your name and your brand and being in front of people.

And over time you may have some impact positively from it, but there is no direct line of I did this thing and I got this person, for most of us, I mean it’s rare if that happens.



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**Gail:** Right. And I think for me, it's like when you are spending your marketing dollars you need to be mindful, is this going to work? And it's just like I recently had my website done over and it looks stunning, if I do say so myself.

**Tobi:** It does, yes.

**Gail:** And it has caused a lot more people to sign up and want to get to know me. And that too – I've forgot the gentleman's name I've been listening to on a podcast, really good. He talks about, "Your website is a marketing tool." And I think I was looking at it the wrong way, he was like, "You cannot as a designer build your website for other designers."

**Tobi:** And I say that all of the time, I call it a coffee table book. You try to impress your peers and it's just this like glossy shiny thing that makes you look super expensive, and probably super busy. Or at least not really connected with the audience, your clients, your potential clients aren't reading that and thinking, oh my gosh, she's talking directly to me.

Because we're not even saying anything on there, we're like expensive pretty pictures and an about page of us. It's not converting anybody to anything if you're building that kind of website that your peers will think you're sophisticated, right?

**Gail:** Yes, and it's so funny. So it was literally overnight my website was done by The ID Collective. And then all of a sudden I had people going to my website and signing up and wanting to have consultations, because it went from talking to designers to now talking to my clientele and bringing the right people.

**Tobi:** Yes, that's one of the biggest mistakes we make as designers, and you even can see it from the inception of whom we get ready to do on our site, we're going and looking at other designers that we think are super sophisticated. And in our heads we're thinking if so and so big name designer here were to happen on my site she would think I was something. She'd think I was sophisticated or I had money or I wasn't some little piddly



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podunk maybe business that, you know, and so that's the wrong approach for your website, for sure.

Yeah, and the other part of that I think too is, don't you think that we just – we also think if I build the website and just put it up then it'll automatically start generating clients all by itself. It's like it's just out there and it's sending out vibes and collecting clients. And I'm like, "No, if they have never heard of you, if you're not anywhere else, if you're not doing anything to drive people to your website."

**Gail:** Like it's the North Star or something, and you just put it up and they will see it and they will come.

**Tobi:** They will and they will for sure hire you when they see that site that says nothing about them that they can't relate to, that's a bunch of pretty pictures and then they leave, yeah.

**Gail:** Yeah. It's all vanity, it's all about a life of vanity platform for you and it just talks about you. That's what makes me crack up even with the panels that they have when they have what's new, what's next and all these different panels all over. And you want to hear about the designer's story, but sometimes it's also like it's just a vanity platform.

And I get it, but I'm just like speak to, you know, let's be honest, and let's have real conversations. And let's be generous and nice to each other. Let's not be nasty and bitchy, and let's not try to hold the card so close to the vest, like I can't share that with you. It's like even if I'm in another state or from another town, I'm not taking anything away from you, there's enough for all of us to flourish.

**Tobi:** Right. Well, and I think what you're also saying is yes, we do like to hear people's story and that's interesting, so we can get to know them. But a lot of times, and I've been on those panels too, we have the same people over and over, and we've heard their story. And we're coming there not just to hear someone's story, we can go find that on our – we're coming there, or we're coming to a podcast. Or we're coming to even a book, which you

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don't get that out of design books to say, "What can I learn and put into place in my own business?"

And I think that's what we don't do well at all as a community of creatives, I don't think we do that. Where if you look at a community of online marketers, or self-help gurus, or whatever, they're saying, "I did this, this and this, and if you implement in, just try implementing these things in your life or business." And I think that's what we're talking about, and there's truth in creativity or interior design. I think we're so afraid, like you're saying, of some competition or something of spilling our secrets that we just skim the very top.

And everybody can tell we're not really sharing how to really help other people. We're not really saying, "I did this," or, "I did that and you can do that too." And I mean some people are. I won't say nobody does because there are people who do. And I think that's when I hear that feedback a lot when people are like, "Oh my gosh, you gave so much meat in this presentation." I'm like, "Yeah, because I figured out a long time ago, why are you going to sit there and listen to me if you can't take notes and go try this?"

**Gail:** Yeah, absolutely. It's such, like I said, there's enough for all of us to get ahead. But you get ahead when you're honest and you're truthful. And I'm not saying you have to tell everything, but I'm saying it's good to be able to connect with people and I'm like, "Hey, Toby, I'm thinking about doing this, I'm thinking about pitching that, what do you think?" And you're giving me your honest opinion, and then you're like, "Hey, you didn't think about this, add this layer, add this to it."

**Tobi:** Yeah. I remember a few years ago, I don't know if you remember this, it was probably even as many as 10 years ago now, that Vincent Wolf was talking about essentially the truth, and it blew everybody's mind. But at the same time they were like finally, because he was saying, "This is hard and I'm not making a lot of money right now, and there's a lot of feast to

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famine.” Remember, he just started getting really honest. And I’m like, “Thank you.”

And I think honestly, if we think about it, because again, not just trying to disparage anybody, it’s less, I think, even probably about being afraid to share their secrets and probably more about the ego and that whole...

**Gail:** The façade, keeping it up.

**Tobi:** Yeah, keeping up the façade because we’re all, you know, a lot of times we’re on those panels or things and we’re sitting there kind of with the imposter syndrome going, “If people saw my books right now, or they saw that last week we were in a meeting, we were panicking because we have no business and how are we going to keep the doors open.” And that’s what we don’t want anybody to know, but that’s the truth about being an entrepreneur and running a small business, everybody has that, right?

**Gail:** Absolutely, and you’re right, there’s feast or famine and you learn that in the first couple of years because you’re like, I’m doing good now. So you just focus on all the good you’re doing. And then all of a sudden all those jobs dry up and you’re like, “Oh, I was supposed to be looking for new business.”

**Tobi:** While I was doing all that business, right, yes.

**Gail:** While I was doing that, like keep that going. And it’s so funny because we just keep going, we’re like, okay, I can’t focus on anything else, I can only do this. And then when it comes to a halt then you’re like, “Oh my God, I’ve got to start this, I’ve got to get on the hamster wheel all over again.”

And it’s learning how to be consistent with it. And it’s also making sure it’s not just the client, that you also possibly do have a licensing deal or you are working on other things. But you have to make sure it’s all working together and that you are investing your time in the right areas and not just chasing, you know, doing how a dog chases its tail and just goes around in circles.

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**Tobi:** That is what business feels like in general, in a nutshell. Yeah, and I think that goes back to what you were saying about the Covid stuff, or virtual designer, anything else, because I'm a big fan of creating an online business. But that doesn't mean that you abandon everything you were doing. I mean it might if it's totally broken and not working, if you want to switch business models, a lot of people have broken business models.

But I think what you're saying is we have to be thoughtful and understand, and even understand the math behind, okay, if I'm going to do this thing, how much is it going to make me? How much time is it going to take? Because I see so many people, just like when the eDesign thing came out. And I tried it too and then I was immediately like, ya'll, this is – the math does not work here. I'm doing just as many hours as I did on a full project, but I'm cramming it in a box and slashing the price to \$3,000 instead of something that I would have made 50 on, I don't think so.

But I think we don't use our brains a lot of times and we don't think we're great at finances as creatives or whatever, so we're like, "Everybody's doing eDesign, I think I will. Everybody's doing virtual, I think I will." And I think virtual can be great but have you stopped and mapped out what your virtual would look like, and how you're going to charge, and who you're going to serve, and how many you're going to do? And how it fits together, like you're saying, with the other stuff.

**Gail:** It takes time.

**Tobi:** Yeah, with the other stuff that you – what does it look like as your whole menu of services, not just Covid happened, I dropped all this, I ran over here, which is we're very reactive I feel like.

**Gail:** Yes, it's funny, when you said that, it reminded me of this cartoon where the person went out, like the wife was going out, she's like, "Oh, that's on sale." And there she is about to go over to that corner, everybody flies to that corner, she goes, "Okay, oh, that's on sale." Then she goes to the next corner, that's what interior design feels like, oh, that person's got a

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book coming out. Let's go get the book. This person has a licensing deal with this person, okay, let's go try.

We're just running all over the place like chickens with our heads cut off, and not really stepping back going, "Okay, I'm in business, what really works for me, where is my passion and where do I want this business to be, and which way do I want it to go?" As opposed to trying to throw everything up on the wall to see what will stick and then go from there. Because what you're going to do is one, you're going to burn out. You're going to just be completely tired and depleted. Then, most importantly, you're going to run out of money, and you need money to do stuff.

So those will be like, "You don't need that much money." I'm like, "No, you need money to move," especially in the design industry.

**Tobi:** Let's talk about that because I think that's a great conversation too. And that one I talk about so often with the people I work with, the designers I coach. And I'm like, "One of the biggest problems for businesses like design, even if we want to call it decorating, but a business like ours whichever you call it, is that there's no barrier to entry really, for the most part. You can just get a business license and get a website, or not even, just a Facebook page that's free. You don't even have to have a business card, but you can have one if you want to, you can print your own."

And that's what people think that you have to, and you've been doing some work for a friend and they say you're good at. And all that's valid, there's a lot of great designers that have started that way. But when I see people just constantly still struggling to make money after 5, or 10, or 20 years, and then we talk about it, it's because they've had zero money to build their business on. It's like on a shoestring and we wonder why we can't ever, right. You're, "Look at me, I'm Gail and I have built my business on a shoestring." And I did it, but you have to have money to run businesses.

**Gail:** You do, you do. That's what's so important, when I say, "When you go into business into the design industry, yes, you have to have money. Yes, I've done things on a shoestring budget, that's why whatever clientele

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you are pivoting to, whoever is your clientele.” And here is the other thing that no one really wants to say, you really do have to have a niche. You cannot be everything to everybody, because you will not make any money.

Once you hone in on who your clientele is and who you’re going after now you have a more – your marketing becomes super clear because you know who you are marketing to. But it also, it’s like tunnel vision, you just hone in on those people, you do what you need to do, you go to those events though, because you’ve got to network, which another thing people don’t tell you about. You are exhausted from networking. If you think you are coming at this nine to five and here’s the other thing – and I know I’m all over the place.

**Tobi:** Go, just go.

**Gail:** People think when you are in business for yourself, I shoot the shot and I design my hours. I’m like, “Oh, sweetie, you’re working practically from the time you get up until the time you pass out and go to sleep.” It’s not nine to five Monday through Friday.

**Tobi:** Yeah, I used to say, “I love the freedom of running your own business, you can work whichever 18 hours of the day you want to.”

**Gail:** Yeah, and that’s what it is. I’m always like, you know, like I have a neighbor, funny, she comes up to me, she had a baby. She doesn’t want to go back to work. And she’s like, “I do the odd kitchen so I think I’m going to go into the business. I think I could do design.” I go, “Well, you are your best client.” And she’s like, “What?”

**Tobi:** I love that.

**Gail:** Yeah, “You spending your money is completely different than getting out there and now someone giving you a budget and saying they want Fifth Avenue in New York City, but meantime they can only give you the budget to like” – I don’t know – “The back woods of South Carolina where my family live.”

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**Tobi:** That's what I would call you want a Lexus for the price of a Ford or a Rolls for the price of a Ford. But I love what you said, let's talk, I've never heard anybody say that exactly like that, and you are so right. So when we're like, "This was so fun and I'm so good at this and I just spent all this money and I did my amazing house." I've never heard anybody say, "You are your best client." You're so right.

**Gail:** It's true, you're not arguing with yourself, you're like, "Okay, I want this, get it done." Your time and your budget is really not a big deal because you're doing it and you're just happy to be going shopping for yourself.

**Tobi:** Yeah, it's fun, so fun, yeah, that client's not a nightmare, that client's not slashing your budget all the time, that client's not yelling at you because it took an extra three weeks to get that whatever figured out or picked out, or whatever. That's so good, yes.

**Gail:** And the client's not sitting there with their friends over alcohol pointing out what your presentation and then ripping it apart saying, "Well, it's not right." You can sort of go and get it done and I'll say, "It's very different." And I'll say, "And also the way you design for yourself, it's not going to get into a magazine." Let's just throw out what it is. People just, they don't get it, it takes time and it's very different...

**Tobi:** And tell me what you mean by that, what you would design for yourself wouldn't get it, like you have to be super really focused on the kind of the end user if you're going to get something published. It's got to look like...

**Gail:** It has to be super editorial.

**Tobi:** Yeah, that's the word I was looking for, yeah.

**Gail:** Right. And then nine times out of ten what we're doing, okay, I'm going to do all this. You know how to mix the high and low and then you're just like okay, it's enough for you. But if Elle Décor, House Beautiful, Veranda, Departures, any of them come in, they're going to look and be



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like, “No, you missed the mark, we’ve got to do more, we’ve got to add this, we’ve got to add that. Okay, no, this needs to be that.” So it’s not the same thing and once again your budget can fluctuate, you don’t have to be realistic with your budget.

And for some of these people who are DIYers, they are not trying to spend a lot of money.

**Tobi:** Right. Do you mean the client?

**Gail:** Yeah. It’s just funny, it’s – I don’t know, I could go on and on; we could be here for a year talking. It’s just funny, I was watching – since Covid happened, everybody’s on IG Live, and I was watching this one particular designer get on and talk about how she’s a lifestyle designer or lifestyle guru. And it was funny because someone in the comments was laughing and said, “I’ve never heard anyone refer to themselves as a lifestyle.”

**Tobi:** Guru.

**Gail:** And I just thought it was the funniest thing. And the individual was showing things around their house and I was just like, “Yeah, you’ve got some crazy cash, you’ve got some deep pockets.” And so I’m looking, I was like, “Yeah, I would love, love to spend that money, but I’ve got New Jersey taxes I have to pay.”

**Tobi:** Right. Well, I love what you’re saying, I love what you’re saying because this is pushing me, I’ve been thinking so much, just with everything that’s been going on with Covid, and all of the racial things we’ve been experiencing. And it’s been making me look at my teachings, my trainings, which I know are really good. I mean, and I’m confident about them, but it’s making me do exactly what we’re doing right here and kind of call BS on myself sometimes. And be like, okay, that worked for me because.

It’s almost like we need like a little price tag, like you see on House or something like hanging off the corner of what I’m teaching. And be like,

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“Okay, if you have an extra \$50,000 to spend then do this thing. And if you have \$20,000 to spend then do this marketing thing or do your own house or get something photographed. And if you have \$5,000 to spend, do this.” But let’s just be honest, if you only have 5,000, it’s going to take you a heck of a lot longer to grow your business than if you had the 50 or the 100, or could do bigger things.

And so I think that’s what by saying truth in this, it’s not that the things don’t work, that I’m teaching or other people are teaching. Or a designer who’s dropped half a million on their house and they’re like, “Get your own house published because it’s so much easier to get in House Beautiful or Elle Décor.” It’s like, well, it’s easy if you have a budget of x dollars. It’s not just easy just because you’re a designer. And I think we forget that because we’re just saying, “It’s so much easier to do your own because you can do it the way you want to.”

And it’s like if – like they left out the small print, if you also have this kind of house that has this look.

**Gail:** That’s when I’m like, “Wait, good luck mate.”

**Tobi:** Yeah, exactly. But everybody like can’t see, like is listening on audio, Gail’s holding up her glasses like – what was that cartoon when I was a kid? Mr. Magoo or something, he had the really thick glasses, he couldn’t see anything.

**Gail:** Yeah, and he had to read the fine print, he would be like, “Let me look at that fine print, that’s so tiny.” I was like, “Get me get my glasses for that.”

**Tobi:** Yes, I love this. I love what you’re saying. I love this conversation, because it doesn’t mean not to say do this, or do this, or do this. But I think the fine print is what we’re talking about is missing. Yes, this part does work if, but it doesn’t work all the time. And not every job’s going to bring in this amount of money and not every client is going to be like this. There are going to be the outliers and the dreamy clients, and the ones that say yes to everything.

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But the bulk of your business and the bulk of your days are going to look more like this. That would be so helpful if we were having that conversation, right?

**Gail:** Yes, 100. And this cracks me up. I have a designer friend all they get is celebrity clients, very different than me getting a Lululemon wearing housewife, right?

**Tobi:** Yeah, totally.

**Gail:** Very different than me getting the professional husband and wife who that's all they do is work. But each client is very different and each designer is very different. And so I want that to be more realistic. It was just like the webinar that I did for Schumacher where my friend called me on, was like, "These buy-ins are ridiculous." So where a \$10,000 sofa for me may be nothing, but if her client is only at a \$1,000, then there's that. And so you have to be realistic, you have to be realistic.

And I think too often people get up in front and they just once again just charge more or just do this and just do that. And then that's the quick fix. I mean nothing is a quick fix.

And the best way to put it, if you have a house, and just like just as it was about to warm up our boiler went, it died. That's not a quick fix, and it's certainly not if Covid's in, we still haven't gotten it fixed because we can't get the people into our house. So, God, it's like summertime, it's warm, it's okay, we can coast for the next couple of months. But I know that I'm still calling, there's no quick fix, there's no quick remedy.

I think in design – and I'll even bring it back to HGTV where they make a scene like their kitchen renovation can be overnight. And if you really do a kitchen renovation we all know it can take up to a year, it can take up to a year and a half. Because there's so many things, that once you crack those walls open, you bring everything down to the studs, oh my God, there's so much that you have to fix before you can get in there. And I think

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everybody just makes a scene like it's overnight, like success is overnight, everything's overnight, it's not.

**Tobi:** Yeah. And as you're talking, it's reminding me too of the inverse relationship, because we keep putting out stuff to the consumer that's lowering the price, dumbing down the price and stripping the profit margin. But to run a business it keeps getting more, and more, and more expensive to do the marketing and all the things. So it's like you're making less money but you need to spend more money.

And how are you going to fund the money and the business to do all the things that you need to do? And that takes some serious work on your finances and understanding your profitability and all kinds of stuff. That doesn't sound fun to us as creatives, I don't want to do that, I just want to do the things, and surely it'll work itself out. And then every month we're looking at – well, I just don't understand why the math doesn't work, yeah.

**Gail:** Just like watching the numbers flashing in red, you're like, "How am I still there?" It's just like I'll never forget, a realtor friend of mine was like, "You really need a storefront, people will take you seriously." I was like, "I've got a mortgage and I have a room in my house, I use the third floor as my office, that's it. I don't need to now go get another expense just so you can feel good, Debbie Decorator coming, you know, Debbie [inaudible] coming to my door only going, "She's got to be doing good, she has a showroom or she...""

**Tobi:** And of course nobody that has showrooms are doing good, they're the ones like most panicked. They're like, "This is not profitable, this is expensive," all of that stuff, yeah, it's so good. I think what it really comes down to, and that's just why everybody's so frustrated, which is why we're doing this show today is it's that chicken and egg thing or whatever. And you can't ever – it's hard to ever get ahead of it. It's hard to get off of the treadmill. It's hard to figure out the problem. It can be done but it is not...

**Gail:** But you've got to put in the work to get it done, and that's the thing. You have to, one, let's be honest, you have to be honest with yourself to

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go, “This is not working, I need to step back. What is broken? Alright, let’s look at what is broken, why is it broken? Why is it not working?” And then once you realize that, like Covid has been amazing for me. I mean I am an extrovert, but I am an introvert I feel like in my head somewhere.

**Tobi:** Me too, me too.

**Gail:** And I am enjoying being at home because from the beginning of this I felt like it was a reset button for me for my business.

**Tobi:** Yeah, totally.

**Gail:** And I was like I’m going to take full advantage of this. I am going to look at everything that does not work. Before if you said, “Niche,” to me I was like, “I don’t want a niche, I want to be for this person, I want to be for that person.” And then when I realized and I took my boot camp class video with Arianne Belizaire, I really honed in to what I needed. And I was like, boom, got it, done, I know exactly where I need to be now. And it’s like...

**Tobi:** Yeah. I love her, by the way.

**Gail:** She’s amazing, I know she really is good. My video sounds so much better now that I’ve worked with her. But I really realized this is where I need to be, hence the new website. And I was like, “Okay, that’s not my expertise.” So I now have Anastasia working on it, I was like, “That’s your thing, that’s not what I do.” And that’s the other thing we have to realize too, if it is not your expertise, hire the people who it is and just step away.

**Tobi:** Yes, and if you can’t afford to hire them yet then you maybe can’t offer that yet. But we get in and we’re offering, we’re like, “Well, I’m in business so I’m supposed to do this and I’m supposed to do this, and we have to do that.”

And that’s what we’re talking about, nobody’s looking at, are those things making you money? Are those things taking hours and hours of time and stress? And for the return on them you truly can’t afford to be doing some of these parts of your business. And nobody wants that, they’re like,

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nobody wants to think, well, I'll just kind of do this part of the design industry until I build up some cash and then I'll do whole houses. No, we go in the first day and we're like, "I want the whole house and I want it to be on the cover of a major national magazine."

My head's up in the sky. And I mean I love dreaming big, but there's a difference in the 10 year plan.

**Gail:** Reality. Reality.

**Tobi:** Yeah, the 10 year plan to maybe get there, but the first few years it's, you know, and even the first nine years and three-quarters of the 10 year, it's not going to look like that, right? Yeah.

**Gail:** It's true. Last year I needed to just step back for a second because I was like I love design, but I was like things were just exploding, and it was just too much for me. And I actually went to work with designer friends of mine.

**Tobi:** I love it, love it.

**Gail:** And they were like, "We need a senior designer, we're just real busy." "Okay, I'll." And they were like, "Wait, you want to?" I was like, "I just need to step back for a minute from my business." And just there was no shame to my game and I went and I worked for them for a month. And then was like, "You know what, listen, we have this new project, we have these other projects going on, can you do it, it's just a basement?"

And working with them I realized, okay, I watched how they worked, and I was like, okay, it made me feel good, because they're really amazing businesswomen, Toledo Geller, by the way.

**Tobi:** Yeah, and I heard your podcast, yeah, with them.

**Gail:** They were amazing, I love them. They're like you to me, but we're always on the phone talking to each other. And what I learned with them and it just like freed me, and it made the insecurity go away. That space that I started on was just the basement. And how people go, "I won't just

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take a room, I need the whole house.” So I went in with them on the basement, they end up getting the whole house. And that’s when I realized...

**Tobi:** Yeah, it happens all the time, yeah.

**Gail:** Yeah, and so I was like – so here I am thinking I’m going to turn that down because they’re only giving me a room. And also I can be missing a lot of money here, what, take that room because that room will end up being the house. Because you listen to these people who say, “I won’t take a room, I need the whole house, I’m not wasting my time on that.” And it’s not wasting your time, once again, these people have to feel comfortable. Everyone is not going to all of sudden fork over big budgets to you.

They want to see that okay, I’m dealing with a good person, because nine times out of ten, they may have dealt with another designer before and not had a good experience.

**Tobi:** Right. They didn’t show up, didn’t do what they said, took forever, didn’t deliver their stuff, it was a nightmare. Yeah, because let’s be honest, the majority or even – I don’t know – maybe not majority, but a large percentage of us creatives run our business like a train wreck, let’s just be honest. We work when we feel like working, we don’t understand finances, we spend, we put everybody’s money in the same pot, we spend Mr. Smith’s money to buy Mr. Jones’ sofa, and hope that another job.

I mean we’re basically like kiting, kiting money, hoping that – and then if a Covid comes along or something and business stops you’re like, “I’m screwed. I just put all that money in a pot, I didn’t know I needed to have his and his pot and hers and her pot.” And it’s because we’re not stepping up and running our business like a professional. And so, people are having tons of bad experiences with designers and decorates every single day, right? Yeah.

**Gail:** Yeah. And here’s the other thing too, how you run your business and how you shop is also a bid deal. So are you a designer who you’re going to



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HyperMart, you're going to market, you're doing custom stuff, or you have one vendor who do your financial with. Or are you Debbie Decorator who's running to the strip mall, who's running to R.H. Crate & Barrel, Pottery Barn, with all of these all places and do it? So that's also a different way you make your money.

**Tobi:** Business model, it's a different business model, yes, they're totally different, yeah.

**Gail:** So it's not – what works for that mall running person does not work for Gail Davis Designs. And what works for Gail Davis Designs may not work for Tobi Fairley, it's different for everybody and [crosstalk]...

**Tobi:** Because you have to take responsibility for understanding your own business, your own customer and all the pieces, and so many people aren't doing that, yeah, that's so true, so good. So I love this, and again I don't at all mean to disparage because gosh, we all want to get to the aspirational place that we're going. We just need to know what the path really looks like, because you can't get there if it looks just like this bright shiny thing, and all you're doing is what's the truth.

It's kind of like, to me it's like when you see a marriage on Instagram or something and you're so in love and then you're like the next thing you know and you're like, okay, now they're getting a divorce. And you're like, well, because of course it couldn't have looked like that. And so it's like the highlight reel, and so life is messy, business is messy, clients are messy, money is messy. We have so many mindsets that are attached to all of these things, it's messy. It's messy, yeah.

**Gail:** Yes, yes, it's not polished.

**Tobi:** Yeah, it's not, and none of us want to see the total train wreck part. I don't think we want to hear it from the perspective of like victimy and depressed. But we just want to go, "Okay, what worked and what didn't work?" I almost want to see it like a report, like you would read like a clinical trial. When we tried this drug, the tumor shrunk and when we tried

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this one it grew. I kind of want to see business like that. When we do x, y and z, that got us this result. It may be an outlier, it may be typical, kind of the results, these rules aren't typical.

And I think what we're looking at most of the time and what we hear in the highlight reel is all of these results aren't typical. These results aren't typical, yet we're believing they are and we're measuring ourselves against it and we're comparing ourselves to it. That is so hard to keep your spirits up and to keep putting money into something and all of that, if you're like, "I must be doing it wrong because that's not what they had to do." But the truth is they for sure had to do the same, very same thing, and maybe even more.

**Gail:** Yeah. It's horrible to think that people, and I have done it, where you keep throwing money at something thinking it's going to [inaudible], and you're like, "No, that's..."

**Tobi:** Yeah, good money after bad is what I call that, we've got to start throwing our good money after the bad, that thing is broken, that thing needs to be put to an end, that's not working, yeah.

**Gail:** This industry is very much smoking mirrors. I had a friend working for a very well known designer and she was just like, "It's just crazy." And I was like, "What?" She's like one of her clients owes x amount, like a large sum. And she said, "She won't ask her for it because it's been three months since she should have billed her."

**Tobi:** Yeah, happens all the time. I'm embarrassed that we've run her bill up to \$79,000 or \$790,000 and she's going to flip her lid when she sees the bill. And it's my fault because I procrastinated on billing, so now I'm scared to bill her. Yet, I don't know how I'm going to pay my employees or writ next week because I'm afraid to bill what's her name because we – and that's what I mean by running our businesses like a train wreck. Not that our work is not good but we're doing that very stuff right there and that's killing our businesses, day in and day out, yeah.

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**Gail:** And then you leave feeling depleted and like a loser because you're not doing what you're supposed to be doing. You just have to be mindful. It makes me crazy too when people are like, "I'm going to be a designer and I have these business cards." And I had this woman, I mean I was a graphic designer so now I'm going to be a designer. And she's once again at the strip mall buying the furniture and getting help from all the designers that work in that store.

But here's the thing, she doesn't have a stitch of insurance. And I was like, "Something can go left and then a client can sue you. And you're not covered." But it just blows my mind, the amount of people that do not have insurance as well. I said, "You don't have anything?" "No, it's fine, nothing will happen."

**Tobi:** Or a contract, or an agreement, or and like anything, yeah.

**Gail:** Oh my God.

**Tobi:** Yeah, nothing. So yes, the point like – and I think we get into it, like we said, no barrier to entry, I'll just start doing the work and then I'll get that stuff together later when I have time or when I have money or whatever. And that day never comes because you keep thinking you need the money for other things.

There's so many designers who don't pay themselves anything, they're paying their employees, they're just running their business. And they're like, "Well, I don't have the money." And I'm like, "But there's not going to come a day when you have an excess of money or an excess of time. You've just got to start paying yourself something now and work your way up." But it's like we believe, I'll do it for fun first, because that's how a lot of us get into it, it's that thing, people say, "What are you passionate about?"

**Gail:** Yeah, this is going to be fun.

**Tobi:** Yeah, that you would do even if you didn't get paid. And I'm always like, "But the other part of that story is but you need to get paid." They're like – it's like this is a 40 year career of working for free because it's fun,

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because you're like free, when you're still working for free you're like this is not fun anymore, this sucks, this is painful, I'm burned out. This is hard, right? Yeah.

**Gail:** Right, yeah. And it's funny, I remember Jennifer Lopez receiving an award and she's like, "Guys, I love this so much, I'd do it for free." And I was like, "Okay."

**Tobi:** As she makes 280 million dollars or whatever, so yeah, or did that year, yeah.

**Gail:** Bless your heart. Bless your heart, [inaudible]. It was like you were doing it for free and you were exhausted but you kept going until someone paid attention and then paid you. It's just, yeah, this is always fun.

**Tobi:** And there is a period of hustle, there is a period of hustle, and you talked about that. But if your hustle is still the hustle after 10 years or 15 years, or 20 years, that's not sustainable at all, it's not sustainable. It's so interesting.

Okay. So before we go let's just briefly talk about – because I think now that we're talking about the hustle, I just want you to say what you told me about – when we were having all this conversation about what's happening right now with regard to race, and I'm learning so much. And you're honestly, my teacher, I should be sending you a monthly retainer.

I swear, I'm like, "Gail, can I do this? Gail, can I say this, Gail?" And of course I don't mean I'm saying anything like super, like neo-Nazi. But I'm just being sensitive and I'm like, "Am I thinking about this right?" And you're like, "Girl, no. No, girl, no, do not, no." But what was really interesting to me is that you said, and I've read this in every book I've read lately about racial injustice and starting even with *White Fragility*. That it's not just a thought, it is truly a fact that if you are a person of color, especially a Black person, you have to work – you have to hustle three times harder.

Or what you said, your mother told you, like you've got, you know, or mentors or people, you've got to be ten times better than everybody else.

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And you've got to hustle three times harder or ten times harder. Talk to me about that a little bit, because we're already talking about – if anybody was even considering a design business before this episode, they're like, "I'm out." Because we've talked about how hard it is.

And then you're saying, and I hear you and believe you, and if you also happen to be Black or another person of color, add a whole bunch else on top of the hardness of working in this industry or any industry, right?

**Gail:** Absolutely. So as a Black person and a person of color, however you want to say it, you will show up in a room, you and I can show up in a room, they will look at you and go, "Oh, she belongs here." I walk into the room and it's like, "What is she doing here? Can I help you? What do you need?"

**Tobi:** "Are you filling up the coffeepot or like taking out the trash or something?" And you're like, "No, I'm a designer."

**Gail:** Exactly, yeah, exactly. Exactly. And so especially when we're talking about design, my white counterpart can do a white room, a beige room, a grey room, and throw like one piece of art that has color, and you're like, "That's so dynamic, that's amazing, oh my God, she is just so, you know."

**Tobi:** She's so good with color, she has such an eye, like it's just amazing.

**Gail:** Yeah. And just it makes me crazy because I'm like, "Well, you have people of color who know how to do design, who are amazing at it." But we have to like dance, do cartwheels, like jump off of a roof, to be invited to the table.

**Tobi:** Yes, it's so frustrating.

**Gail:** Yeah, that's why you have the Black Artist Design Guild, it was formed out of that, that's why you have the Black Interior Design Network. We have to have something for ourselves and also collectively come together to be like, "Hey." Because they're like, "You have all these panels and it's just all these white people." And you're just like, "Well, what, you

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couldn't find anybody of color?" And they're just like, "Oh, well, we didn't know where to look, [inaudible]."

**Tobi:** You're like, "Google."

**Gail:** Yeah, I mean, come on, and even like Sheila Bridges, she's an icon, Joy Moyler, she's an icon. And yeah, like they're Black icons, they're icons, period. But it's like, "Well, we've seen their work." And it's like, "Yeah, but you've also seen Betty Sue's work and she's in every magazine and on every panel and it's the same work and it's like it's just not the same..."

**Tobi:** Yeah, or less, or even not as good, yeah.

**Gail:** Right, not good at all. I had a vendor in my house and I just really kept it together, they were talking, they were going to another designer's house whose over a couple of towns from me. And she's a friend of mine and I was like, "Yeah, she's really great, like she's a sweet person." And they're like, "Oh my God, yeah, she's got the look." And I was like, "The look, yeah, she's blond hair and blue eyes." And I was like nothing about her talent, nothing about her skill but she's got the look and she's going to go far because she has the look.

**Tobi:** But she's a size six with blond hair and blue eyes, yeah.

**Gail:** Yeah. And I was like, well, here...

**Tobi:** And lives in the right part of town or whatever, and runs in the right circles and all of the stuff, yeah.

**Gail:** Yeah, and it just makes me crazy because they can turn from being a cashier, or a school teacher, or a salesperson and all of a sudden it's like they're a great designer. But for the Black person it's like, "Well, what are your credentials, how did you get here?"

And for me, and I will admit, any time I let people know that I interned for Bunny Williams then it's like, "Oh." And especially white women, when they meet me they're like, "Oh, that's cute, you do design, yeah, well, how did

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you get started, sweetie?” “I interned for Bunny Williams.” And it’s like, “Oh, you did, what was she like?”

**Tobi:** Oh my God, amazing, oh, can we have coffee?

**Gail:** Yeah, and then all of a sudden...

**Tobi:** What are you doing this afternoon? Yeah.

**Gail:** Yeah. All of a sudden I am validated and then it’s like, “Oh, and then I, you know, David Kleinberg, I was in his office for three or four months.” And they’re like, “Oh,” so now it’s like, oh, she’s real. I just recently did a show house and there was a woman there who just was not nice, just nasty, just not cool at all, just condescending every chance she got. And so then we had the gala which was a Saturday and then Sunday they’re like, “Okay, Covid’s happened, we can’t open.”

But anyway I get off the elevator and I come out and she’s like, “Oh my God, your room is amazing, it just took my breath away, you just did such a great job.” All of a sudden I’m listening and I’m like, “Oh, you thought that it wasn’t going to be good. Oh, you thought it was going to be like a lot of Africa going on.” Oh, like just like, you just you knew where she was going because she...

**Tobi:** That’s horrible. I’m not laughing because it’s funny, I’m laughing because it’s ridiculous. But it’s true, you’re like, oh yeah, she had you pegged exactly for what it should be. And she was so surprised. It’s like when you hear someone say, “Oh, she’s a well spoken Black lady,” or whatever and you’re like, well...

**Gail:** Yeah, it was just like, where are we going with this Gladys, where are we going?

**Tobi:** She’s so well spoken.

**Gail:** Yes.



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**Tobi:** And like, “What?” Yeah, I don’t know, Lord, yes, we’ve had so many – I mean we are good friends so we’ve had all of these conversations that – we’re not making fun, we have real conversations with each other where we’re like, “Seriously, this person said this,” or whatever. Well, I just wanted you to share that because I think it’s so important. And I think it just helps all of the other designers that are listening that are a Black designer going, “Well, bang, I mean I knew that.”

But at least someone’s acknowledging, it’s not just hard to be an entrepreneur, it’s not just hard to be a woman entrepreneur. It is even harder when you have these other obstacles in front of you and nobody’s really talking about that either. And I just really wanted – you and I have had so many conversations about it and I just wanted you to talk about it.

It reminded me of a friend of mine was saying the other day, reminding me of this and I remember seeing this too. I think it was a video, I don’t remember if it was YouTube or if it was – what it was, I could go find it.

But I saw it a few years and they were like asking, like all these people were lined up on a starting line, have you seen it? And they’re like, “If you have this, take one step forward or back,” or whatever. And it ends up showing the white male is like 50 yards or 200 yards or like whatever up there, and then like these other people are back here. And that’s real, that’s not just somebody, that’s real, it’s real, yeah.

**Gail:** That’s everyday life and that’s something that, you know, when I’m designing for my Black clientele, especially because they are Black. I make sure I put some extra loving in it because I know what I go through, what we go through as a people, so then when they come home that really is a refuge. I mean I do it across the board for all clients because I do have more white clients than Black. But I am excited because when I get a Black client because then I’m like, “Yes, I know exactly how to really make sure it’s a hug from Jesus.”

Because I’m not going to for everybody, but just the daily grind of what you have to go through and the BS, always showing like you belong where you

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do. And you're working hard and you're working harder than the next person but you're still not making the money or getting the accolades that you should, so [crosstalk].

**Tobi:** Yeah, I told you the other day, I was – remember on our call the other day I was almost yelling to you, not yelling at you but talking very like animated, because I was reading part of *Me and White Supremacy*. And I was like, “Oh my gosh, being outspoken and direct is white privilege.”

She didn't say that, that was my epiphany because I was reading and I was like, “Oh my gosh, I am southern, extravert, Enneagram 8.” People consider me a – I mean I definitely fit the – there's plenty of people who would let me into – not even meaning politically, but just like with Hilary or somebody that they're like, “Oh, that lady's a bitch, but she's white.” But even being called that we still get looked at as, oh, but she's a really good businesswoman, or she's a go getter, or she's super aggressive.

And some people don't like it and it turns some people off. But then all of a sudden I was like, “Gail, oh my God.” I would be like – I would be called that. I mean if I was just me exactly like I am but I had black skin I would be the angry Black woman, I would be the troublemaker. I would be labeled with all of these things. And when I realized that the other day, and that I don't have to go around holding my tongue about my opinion for my safety or whatever, that blew my mind. When I understood that, I was like, holy cow, I'd be mad as hell if I had to do that, had to constantly edit.

And we were talking about not only people being tone policed, but how many Black people and women just decide to go ahead and tone police themselves in advance so they don't have to put up with what they would hear, and that blew my mind, yeah.

**Gail:** Because if you work in corporate, here's something, you work in corporate you get written up a lot more. We just get written up, I will tell you, no matter what job I was at, I was always being written up, because it was like...

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**Tobi:** I would have totally been in trouble constantly if it were me, yeah.

**Gail:** You have an attitude, it's like your tone, and especially dealing with my white counterpart, if I didn't agree with something then all of a sudden they felt threatened and they were afraid. When I had worked at Sachs and I was at Off 5th, and I'll never forget, I was having a conversation with a Black co-worker and then something racial had happened.

And I'm walking away from her and as I'm walking down the hall I said, "You know, we've always got to be better, we've always got to watch what we say." I said, "Because with them," and as I turned around a white woman was in her office. I said, "Yeah, because with them," I looked at her, I was like, "We're just out of order." And I was so angry at the time.

And she ran back and told my boss that I looked at her and I was saying all these mean things, when I was having a conversation with a woman. And she said, "I felt so threatened. I felt like she could have killed me in that moment. I felt so uncomfortable, I wanted to lock my door because I'd never seen, it was like her soul just left." I was there to hear that and I was like, "Wow, you got all of that [crosstalk]."

**Tobi:** You got all of that from that look I gave you while I was walking by like two miles an hour. I couldn't have been in front of your door for more than a second and a half and you got that whole like thing, yeah.

**Gail:** And she was like, "I just felt so afraid, like I've never seen anything like that." And I was like, "Wow." But this is the MO, and if you go back to where Amy Cooper was in Central Park, this is something that is systemic and that Black people have had to deal with and we still deal with to this day. And it's always like the tone police, we can't say it a certain way, we can look a certain way. It's like it could come from you and it's like, "That's just Tobi, she speaks her mind," where it's like, "Oh."

**Tobi:** Exactly, she's very outspoken and confident; she's so confident, yes.

**Gail:** Yes, yes, yes, all the time, all the time.

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**Tobi:** Yes, and a thought leader, she's a thought leader and she's a, yeah, totally, yeah.

**Gail:** I'm always being called aggressive, it always seems like I'm angry, I need to loosen up. And I've been told, "Well, we're both alike," the boss is trying to be like, "We're both alike, people don't always get us." I was like, "Yeah, people get you, you're white, it's easy. But when Black girl Gail says it, then all of a sudden it's like, oh." Yeah.

**Tobi:** Yes. Well, I just – I had such an epiphany about that and of course I love it because I can have any conversation with you and you do not judge me and I don't judge you, and we can talk real. But I just kind of wanted to say that because I know people are struggling with this right now and I know people, like when we're white we can't, we can only see through our white lens. And I'm not judging anybody, I'm not judging even anybody white that doesn't understand or believe this shit. I'm just sharing my own kind of epiphany.

When I started realizing just the privilege, just this one, and there's so many, but just the one that I don't have to consistently day after day, after day, edit myself, tone police constantly. Not say what I feel like, not get really passionate about something. I mean anybody that's listening to this podcast has heard me be so passionate about topics and everything. And when it's sunk in that I go through all my days and that never enters my mind that I might not, should, on a normal day.

I mean of course we all have to make sure we're not saying things insensitive, of course, that kind of thing. But I'm just like in a day-to-day life, a day-to-day at work, I don't have to constantly say, "How's this going to land? Who's going to judge me about this? Is this going to get me in trouble? Is this going to get me labeled?" That blew my mind, it blew my mind.

**Gail:** Well, think about it, because I can be spoken to like a child, but the moment I respond and clap back, and make you understand that I'm a grown-ass woman in front of you, then it's the tone police. It's stop the

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attitude, it's, you know, you can speak to me like I don't have God's good sense. But then when I let you know I do then it's, yeah, you go through it every day. You're just like, "Oh my God. Oh my God." It's exhausting.

**Tobi:** Yeah, totally. Totally. Well, I thank you for having that conversation and this whole conversation has been fab. We just wanted to tell the – we just wanted to have a good old girl talk about telling the truth. And I think a lot of people will relate to so much of this. And even the parts that you don't relate to or that make you uncomfortable or whatever, just use that as an opportunity to just dig deeper and consider it.

Because I just think sharing other perspectives, sharing the perspective of maybe the up and coming designer compared to the people that have already arrived, sharing a perspective of someone who is a white designer, versus a Black designer. We aren't really thinking about the differences, and it's really important that we do, I think, it really sheds so much light. And it actually will help us in so many ways to just really be understanding that like, what's really going on as we try to build businesses, and why it is hard.

And be like, yeah, hell, yeah, it is hard. But it can still be done, let's just tell the truth about what we're up against so we can start to make good decisions, right?

**Gail:** True, true. Amen, sister, amen.

**Tobi:** So fun, I knew we would laugh ourselves to death. It was so fun to have you here. And they don't get to see your face, but I get to see your face, which I love. Love, love, love. Well, thank you so much for being here.

**Gail:** Thank you for having me, thank you for having me, this was fun.

**Tobi:** You're welcome, we'll do it again really soon. And you know, like even though they don't get to hear it, I'll be calling you tomorrow probably, going, "Do you want to have coffee with me on Saturday?" Yeah, alright, friend, see you soon.

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**Gail:** See you soon.

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Okay. So I hope you got lots of nuggets from this. I hope you smiled a lot and laughed with us. It was just such a delight to have Gail here on the show. And if you want to know more about her, go check her out at [gaildavisdesignsllc.com](http://gaildavisdesignsllc.com). So, Gail Davis Designs, she has a beautiful website. And then also check her out on Instagram, one of the favorite places for she and I to communicate is in our DMs in Instagram.

And just a few days ago, if you're listening to this episode when it comes out, Gail just took over my Instagram for the Share the Mic campaign or initiative, which was super fun. And we did a really, really great Instagram Live. So you can find that on my IGTV of my @Toby Fairley Instagram where we really dig into a lot more about antiracism and just the design community, and the inequity in it and what we think about it. And so if you want a whole lot more Tobi and Gail, go check it out on my IGTV.

But either way I thank you so much for listening to this episode and I'll see you again here with another amazing episode and another good friend next week on the *Design You* podcast. Bye for now.

Thank you so much for listening to the *Design You* podcast, and if you are ready to dig deep and do the important work we talk about here on the podcast of transforming your mindset and creating a scalable online business model, there has never been a more important time than right now. So join me and the incredible creative entrepreneurs in my *Design You* coaching program today. You can get all the details at [TobiFairley.com](http://TobiFairley.com).