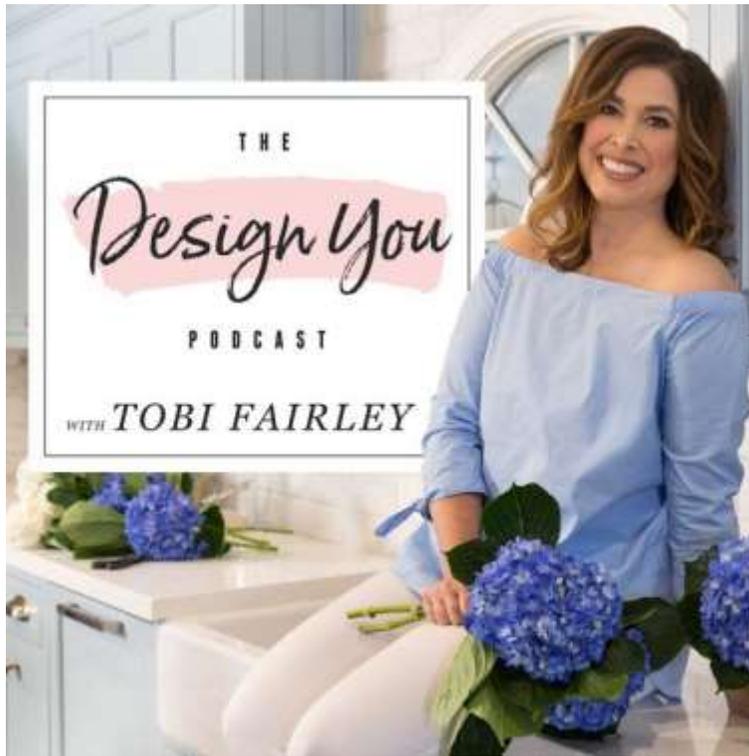


Ep #124: Redefining the Hustle with Alberthe Buabeng (Albie Knows)



Full Episode Transcript

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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to the *Design You* podcast with Tobi Fairley, episode number 124.

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. Okay, today's episode is so inspiring. I haven't been able to quit thinking about it since I recorded it a few days ago. And it is such a beautiful complement to the episode with Dayka Robinson just a couple of weeks ago. So just building on this – I don't know – this overarching message that's in my life right now about finding our truest version of ourselves and showing up in the ways that really matter, and leaning into our values and all those things.

So today my guest is Albie, I just think she should only go by Albie, like Oprah goes by Oprah, for one thing this southern girl is going to mess up her last name. So her first name is actually Albertha and her last name, I think if I say it right, forgive me Albie if I don't, is Buabeng. So regardless, Albie just needs one name, Albie. She is so amazing and she has made such a splash just recently by creating the Share the Mic home edition.

So in all of the response to what was happening in the world with George Floyd and just all of the racial injustice and social justice movements and things that are happening right now, she noticed, she took note of the amazing thing happening on the web called Share the Mic with some of the most amazing, incredible women, celebrities, politicians, and you may have seen that too. And she was watching, I was watching.

And she had the idea and the guts to bring a similar movement, I guess you'd call it, to the design world, the design industry, an industry that is lacking in diversity in a lot of ways, and really for sure inequity among different races in the design and architecture industry. And so, Albie created Share the Mic and I was so fortunate to get to be a part of the original Share the Mic with my friend, Gail Davis, who's also been on the

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podcast. And it was just my opportunity to get to know Albie and I can tell this woman was incredible, was inspiring.

We've communicated a lot since, in direct messages on Instagram, and I could not be more excited than to bring her to the Design You podcast so you can know her too if you don't already. So I think you will love this episode where Albie gives us the permission to be exactly who we are and where we are.

So let me tell you just a little bit about her before you get into the episode. So she is again known pretty much by Albie, and she has a passion for decoding and transforming spaces. She's an interior designer. And she has a passion for decoding and transforming spaces that is the culmination of nearly a decade of work, first in retail visual merchandising and in freelance marketing and interior design. And so currently she has a role as an interior design marketing coordinator for an interior design firm, which she's loving so much.

She's also a digital content creator, a self-published author, the founder of The Design Influence, a podcast dedicated to supporting designpreneurs in the digital space. So this woman is amazing. She's also a wife, she's also a mom, her husband is deployed in the military, so at the moment she's playing that role of single mom and making all of this stuff happen, which blows my mind. So please enjoy this inspiring, amazing episode where Albie literally tells you how to step into a super true version of you, because she's done that work herself.

Tobi: Hey, Albie. Welcome to the *Design You* podcast. I'm really looking forward to this conversation with you today.

Albie: Hey, Tobi, thank you so much for having me. I am excited to just be here with you and your whole audience. So I'm excited for what we're about to talk about.

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Tobi: I know, so good. So tell everybody a little bit about you, if they haven't heard of you, if they haven't seen all of the amazingness you've been stirring up on Instagram these last few months. What do they need to know about you?

Albie: So I am an idea machine.

Tobi: I love it.

Albie: But I am a self-taught interior designer. I am currently the Marketing Coordinator at a Seattle based firm here in Washington. But I am originally a New York City native. I moved here just under four years ago with my husband and baby girl. And my interior design career was really a pivot from visual merchandising, which was a pivot from marketing, which was a pivot from architecture.

Tobi: Awesome.

Albie: So everything's kind of come back full circle. And I feel like as an idea machine I've been able to very uniquely marry all those little pieces of me in a way that is fun, and exciting, and just kind of making my own rules as I go along.

Tobi: I love it so much. And we're going to talk about that a lot today, that's kind of the whole theme of this episode, is making your own rules, because I'm definitely of that mind for sure. So one of the ways that you just totally did that is you were inspired by something that was happening in response to all of the racial unrest and social justice movement and George Floyd and everything that's been happening.

And tell us about that, because you were inspired by something that was happening on a national level and you jumped right on it and you brought it to the world of interior design. Because that's how you and I really got to know each other, so tell everybody about speaking of ideas, what you did, because it's so exciting. It's still happening, and I think that that, you know, we're not going to spend the whole episode talking about this, but we can't

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not talk about it. You've got to tell everybody how amazing this project has been.

Albie: Well, it originally started, so the original initiative was Share the Mic Now, but it was started by four women, two Black women, two white women who essentially just kind of wanted a way to move the needle forward a little bit more on Instagram. And so they had coordinated, I believe it was a total of a 100 women, so 50 Black women took over the accounts of 50 white women. And these were not just women, they were huge platforms. So you had authors, politicians, actresses, just amazing talent across the board.

I believe that initial campaign spanned about 300 million; I want to say, was the reach, if I'm not mistaken. And I was watching as they were promoting it and then obviously the day came and I watched as it happened. And I was like, "This is genius." And at the same time that's when in the home industry people were posting their black boxes to kind of mute themselves. And the conversation, which is not a new conversation, but the conversation had come back up in terms of just diversity, and inclusion, and representation when it comes to the home industry.

So I'm watching this initiative go down and I'm like, "You know, we could use this in the home industry, so much of this." And I remember thinking, I want to say it was probably the weekend prior I was like, "Someone should do this." And then on Tuesday I was like, "Someone should really do this."

Tobi: Yeah, and that someone is me, I just didn't notice it before this.

Albie: And at the time the actual initiative happened, that was on a Wednesday. I was like, "I don't think anyone's going to do this, I guess. Well, let's just see if I can do it."

Tobi: That's awesome, yeah.

Albie: And other industries had adapted it at that point but just for whatever reason they weren't – I guess they were just keeping it within their local communities. I did look at the hashtag and so it had been adapted to other

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industries and some regionally and locally. So that Thursday I kind of just made a bucket list of people who I would reach out to and started emailing and DMing. And then the next week it happened and then it's gone from there.

Tobi: Yes. I love it so much. And I was there watching the same as you, so we were at the same time doing the same thing. I was like, "Okay, this is so cool, Hillary Clinton's doing this and Glennon Doyle is doing this, and Brené Brown is doing this." And all these people that I follow and that inspire me, and the list was really big, like you said. And I was like, "I've got to watch that." I was trying to remind myself of all the people, I want to follow that, I want to listen to that. And so I was watching it...

Albie: [crosstalk].

Tobi: Yeah, it was amazing. And at the same time what I was also sitting there thinking was even though there were a lot of black boxes in the home industry, it felt remarkably quiet to me. I literally saw maybe three or four designer friends and people I know really stepping up and talking about anything that was going on in the world about any response to George Floyd. And I was saddened by that a little bit. And so, when you reached out to me, I was like, like you, I was like yes, our industry could benefit from this.

And I think it was just so brilliant, the timing was so right and I just – well, I was so honored to be part of the very first wave of it, thank you for that.

Albie: Yeah. And I was seeing, the conversation isn't a new one, but I kept seeing more black boxes from designers, brands, bloggers, I kept seeing those hour roundups and things like that. But then I wasn't seeing anything exciting or anything that could possibly instigate change. And this just seemed like such an amazing way to humanize the black boxes. And also really, almost like a social experiment to see, okay, well, who really means what they're saying under their black box?

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Is it just a trending thing they're doing or are they really about change and just equaling the playing field essentially?

Tobi: Yeah, that's so good, that gives me chills almost, because what we're going to talk about in a second is a lot of stuff that everybody's afraid to talk about and that they're not supposed to be talking about. And this is exactly the same thing, normally nobody, especially in our industry is calling anybody. I was watching the coaching industry and man, people were getting called out left and right. And people were asking to defend themselves and it was crazy.

And then I would turn to my interior design side of my business and I was like, "Cricket." And you're so right, I love that you were like, "This is going to be interesting." No judgment or anything from that initial perspective, but let's just see what happens when we push the envelope, when we do something that no one's necessarily comfortable with and see what happens, right?

Albie: And that's what it was. I wanted to see how many people were willing to be uncomfortable. And as you know, I didn't give any parameters for what anyone had to talk about outside of just pairing people. It was all up to you guys, and it was really interesting to see how the conversations – I mean they were honestly bigger than I expected. And so that was very telling of, okay, these people, particularly on the non-Black side, because I want to say, not every non-Black participant was white. And I had to catch myself, and that was also intentional.

So we had participants who were Black and then just non-Black. But many of those creators, and designers, and influencers, had posted black boxes, so it was really interesting to see how willing they were to challenge themselves and challenge their audiences to have these uncomfortable conversations. Or just to see faces they're not used to seeing. So it was a bit of a social experiment and I think it went well. It went better than I anticipated.

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I honestly went into it thinking, I'll maybe get a total of 20 participants, 10 on each side. And by that weekend, by that Sunday, I had already well into the 40s. And I was, "Okay, wow, this is happening, alright."

Tobi: It's so good, I love it. And honestly it was such a gift to me, I mean I really want to say thank you to you for that, not that I had anything to do with your motivation. But as an additional bonus because I'll just say, being a white person navigating this and feeling so passionate about showing up. You made it so easy, the minute I got your DM, I was like, "Yes, and I have the person and can I have her and can we talk about this?" And you were like, "Absolutely, absolutely, whatever you want."

But it was just, it made it so much easier because it's not an easy thing to do and it is scary to go out to your audience and talk about things that you haven't been talking about, that you should have been talking about that are uncomfortable. And so you gave me the perfect platform to fully step into a piece of really who I should have already been, needed to be, wanted to be and I just, I thank you for that.

Because I mean that was the perfect excuse to say not only are we stepping up to the plate for this. This is an opportunity to start this and keep this going, to not stop again. And that was such a gift, thank you.

Albie: And normalizing those conversations, and that's why I wanted to do it. It was for both sides, for all participants to really walk away feeling empowered to do the next thing. And really just normalizes conversations and if it was an instance where you had your takeover, you had Gail Davis, and let's say you guys spoke and then you turned around and lost 10,000 followers. Then that would have been something for you to look at and say, "Wow, I had 10,000 people who don't even want to talk about this following me."

That was something that would make – now you'd have to look at, well, what was I building here? So it was something that I wanted everyone to kind of really walk away from feeling just a little bit better and a little bit more empowered from. And that is a lot of what came from it. And so I

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mean again, it was just this kind of big crazy idea of well, let's just see what happens. Let's see if we can normalize these changes. And so far I mean some things are going back to 'normal'.

But I think it's also opened up a lot of people's eyes to who they were following, the values of the people they were following. Or the values of the people that were following them and so it's been a bit of a social experiment like I say.

Tobi: Well, I love it, I love it, because I think this time for the first time, and of course this whole conversation is not going to be about this, although it's such an important topic. I want to give it the space it needs. But I think for the first time ever, which is so beautiful, we're seeing the moment that I don't think you can hide from this anymore.

And frankly, I did hide from it for years, not because I didn't have a strong opinion. I mean I hid as much from things like, well, if I start talking about this on Facebook, I'm going to offend half of my family – not my immediate family, they all think just like me, my brother and my parents and whatever. But my aunts or uncles, or I might cause havoc for my parents. I might stir up trouble. And of course I've always been known for the person in the family who's outspoken and stirring up trouble, so not that it would have been a problem.

But honestly, I had let things like that, thinking I hate to cause a ruckus for my mom or anybody with this. So I had used that as an excuse to just be quiet. And I loved that we hit, what I think is a tipping point that in my opinion, and whether it's just not my opinion or not, I'm going to keep this as my belief, because I like this, it's my belief of we're in a spot where you no longer can just be quiet. You either have to speak or you are getting lumped in and you will be assumed to be on the other side of the issue, and I love it.

And I've said, I've had this conversation with my parents and with other colleagues and people, they just say, "You know what, business in 2020 and beyond is going to require you to be transparent about your values

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whatever they are.” And I think that’s such a beautiful thing, and we have been able to as white people hide from that for years.

Albie: And that’s the thing, so many of us don’t want to be uncomfortable or we don’t want to make other people uncomfortable. But then are we really living? I know if I just kept watching those takeovers, that idea kept nagging me, and nagging me, and nagging me. If I didn’t do it, I would have, if nothing else, been doing myself a disservice. But obviously seeing the result, doing the industry a disservice, and I think that fear of will this person be uncomfortable? Am I shaking the table too much? Will I lose out on something else?

And that kind of goes back to one of the first things we talked about, just making your own rules. Well, so what if 10,000 people want to unfollow me because I talked about this thing, [inaudible], whatever it is. Then those weren’t my people.

Tobi: Right, right, yes.

Albie: If it makes them uncomfortable then can we have a respectful conversation about why you’re uncomfortable? Maybe I learn something from you, you learn something from me, but if not, that’s okay too. And there’s always that fear of what everyone else is doing, or saying, or thinking. And it’s like that is not the way to live. Rules are good, they exist for a reason, but that’s not life.

Tobi: Yeah, I agree in so, so many ways. It’s so amazing. And I – I mean honestly now, I sit around, because you’re right, I did that work and it didn’t take a second for me to do that work, to be like if a whole bunch of people unfollow me, I’m good with it. This is that important, and it’s that important to me and it’s so aligned with my values.

But what’s interesting is I also knew, and I think those of us who really get in sort of alignment with our true selves. We know that even if 10,000 people leave, 20,000 may come in their place because you’re just further aligning yourself with the people you should have been talking to anyway,

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so that's beautiful. And so now I'm questioning, I was just thinking about it this morning, which we won't get into right here. But I'm working on some big bold ideas of just kind of coming to terms, not just in social justice issues, but religion and all the things we're not supposed to talk about it.

And I'm having this little internal tug to go, "You know what, I might even talk about some of that too." And I'm kind of feeling like I need to. And this morning I was like, "What if I did a whole series, like a week-long podcast series and maybe have guests and maybe we talk about all these topics." And if so, I'll bring you back on. But just playing with that in my head going, "What would happen, can I kill my business this way, can I?" And I was really asking the hard questions.

And it is so, like you said, I mean I wouldn't call it terrifying, it's a little bit unnerving, but like exhilarating and it's at the same time of saying, "Wow, how freeing to kind of do," what I would I think maybe somebody like Glennon Doyle has done and literally that whole concept of Untamed. Take all the shackles off of everything that you've been sort of keeping yourself imprisoned with that was all in the background, and just the freedom of talking about it openly. I don't know, there's something amazing there.

Albie: And then that feeling of, yes, will I destroy my business? Or will you build something better than what was there before from the ashes of the phoenix. I've seen so many people pivot and switch gears in so many different industries and businesses, myself included where it's like you blow up the thing that looks right, that looks acceptable. But the thing that's born out of it, what comes out of it, and I mean that's what's happening in the world right now, everything is a dumpster fire.

Tobi: Yes, burn it down, burn the boats, burn it all. Burn the whole thing.

Albie: And hopefully out of the ashes is something that was better than before and makes you happier than before. And that was really what I hoped for, yeah, you're going to be uncomfortable, yeah, some people might not like it. And that's fine; you're not going to please everyone at the end of the day. And so it's been incredible to see. And on the other side of

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that it's been interesting to see the people that are made so uncomfortable that they couldn't do it, or they still had to control the narrative around it, which has been another interesting result of it, and that's fine too.

But again, that's where you start to understand, okay, this is the kind of person I've been following all along or who's been following me. And it's like, I don't know what else to call it, but also just one big social experiment as well.

Tobi: Yeah, so good. Okay, so I mean honestly, I'm sitting here with chills all over, I'm so inspired, and I knew I would be. I mean you are truly inspiring. So let's talk about some of the things – because I said, of course we just spent what, 23 minutes talking about this amazing thing you did. But I'm like this is not the only reason I'm bringing you over here, although I'm thrilled that we talked about it, because I love getting to have this conversation with you.

But when I said, I'm like, "I don't know, you inspire me, I love that you're gutsy, and you just decide you want something and watching you go after it." And so when I asked you questions about, "What's lighting you up and what do you want to talk about?" You basically sent me back a list of things that are also sort of at least slightly taboo subjects, that things like going from being an entrepreneur to deciding to work for someone again. And maybe because you have to, which we're going to talk about.

Or this whole idea of the hustle and what's wrong with the way we think about the hustle. So let's get into some of this, and it may even take us to some other ideas that are on your mind. But basically what you are saying is like you said, you make your own rules, you take these bold ideas, you take kind of what you believe in your heart and you just do what's right for you and I love it so much.

So you want to start with this concept of from entrepreneur to employee, because I think it's so timely right now with the coronavirus and the economy and people looking at the fact that they may not have business right now, or they're really in a bind. So let's talk about that.

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Albie: So just for some context and this is, you know, obviously this is my story. But hopefully in some way it can translate and be applicable to someone else's. I made that shift actually a year ago, yeah, this time last year. And it was the combination of just not being happy. And so that's what I talk about, sometimes you have to blow things up to do it all over again. So I started my business back in 2016 and that was a result of many other pivots. And I hustled, I hustled hard, I did all the things you're supposed to do as an entrepreneur.

You side hustle, you're working 16 hour days and you're just doing all the things. And by this time last year, I was not feeling it emotionally, physically, nothing felt right, nothing felt good, nothing was lighting me up. My health was taking a toll on me. It was taking a toll on my marriage. It was taking a toll on my daughter. And I had to really sit down and have basically like a come to Jesus moment. Okay, well, why was I doing it in the first place?

And when I think about success or what I want my life to look like in 3, 5, 10, 20 years, does that absolutely have to include having my own business? Do I need to be the show runner? What really lights me up? And I realized I've never needed to be in the spotlight, that's never been my jam. I just want to do the things that make me happy. I want to do the things that I'm good at. I don't need to run the show. And I had that kind of moment myself. I talked about it with my husband.

And it was terrifying because we are in an age where everyone's like, you have to do it for yourself, be your own boss. I've seen the memes where it's like, your paycheck is the bribe you're taking for working on someone else's dream. And that's the thing that if you have a job for someone else, you're like, "Oh my gosh, am I? What is wrong with it?"

Tobi: Right, yeah.

Albie: So even at the start of Covid-19 and the stay at home orders, there were all these memes and graphics about, well, you should get out of this pandemic with a new hobby or a new business. And it was like, but, whoa.

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So going back to last year, I felt like will I look like a failure? Or what will people think of me? And then I was like, I don't even care. It's taking a toll on my life and no one else's life. I wasn't happy. I just want to do the things I'm good at.

So I actually went back to visual merchandizing and it was amazing and I got to actually kind of marry the two because I was merchandizing for a home retailer. So it was like the best of both worlds in the sense of design and merchandizing, which is just something I am naturally good at. And that was last summer. And then at the top of this year I connected with a local interior designer, Seattle based designer. She was growing her team, we hit it off amazingly and now I'm actually the Marketing Coordinator for that firm. And then three weeks later the world shut down.

Tobi: Awesome, yeah.

Albie: So I still work there but I've just been telecommuting. But it's just the timing of everything. And I think to myself, if I had resisted that shift from entrepreneur, because we all have to be the entrepreneur. If I had have resisted that shift, what would my life look like right now? Trying to still be that entrepreneur, trying to still hold on to that while in the middle of a pandemic. I would have been in shambles. And it's something that I believe was just divine timing.

And it took me just kind of saying, "I don't care what everyone else is doing. I don't care what everyone else thinks about it. I have to honor what makes me feel good. I have to protect my peace." And at that moment I didn't need to be the boss. I mean if we're all the boss, who are the employees? We can't all be the boss of things.

Tobi: Well, yeah, but I think what's so fascinating, there's several things here. So for one thing, you tackled that whole fear of failure thing and will I look like a failure and what will people think of me? Which is, you know, it's a fear based decision process. It's an ego driven thing. And you didn't let that get in the way. And the fascinating thing is there are tons and tons of people who are sitting there as entrepreneurs and that's the very thing that

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is literally keeping them broke, or in a bind, or unhealthy, or whatever, which is so unnecessary, because it's not even an either or.

Any time you ever wanted to, you can have a business or not have a business, right? Yeah.

Albie: Yeah, if I decide in another 10 years that you know what, I want to do this again, I can. Starting a business isn't something that has an expiration date.

Tobi: No. I love that.

Albie: I can do it if I want to.

Tobi: Yeah, and I love that honestly also sometimes we get so wrapped up in our identity as the business owner, that whole ego driven place. And the fascinating thing is, look at the impact you just had in the world and in the design world while working for someone else. So, it has zero to do with you owning your own business and everything to do with how you decide to show up, whether you're working for yourself or somebody else.

But we pretend that's not the truth, we're like, well, unless I quit this job, unless I'm not working for that person, unless I'm doing my own thing then I couldn't possibly show up in this way. And I love that you're an example of the exact opposite. You're like, no, I can have my life and make a mark and make a difference and work for someone else, right?

Albie: And that's a very dangerous narrative because as you said, so many people then hold onto a business that's not working or that's mentally killing them, financially bleeding them dry. And so holding onto that, they don't even allow space for something better that can come along.

Tobi: Oh my gosh, yes.

Albie: The potential for the thing that will actually help them show up in the world. I'm almost certain I would not have done the Share the Mic or any of these other things if I was in that constant hustle of entrepreneurship. I wouldn't have even had the brain power.

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Tobi: No, no bandwidth, no brain power, totally drained, burned out. And as you're saying that, I think this all the time. The number of not really – and this is not a criticism, this would be like looking at someone's books financially or the sustainability of their workload or whatever.

But the number of not viable businesses that are essentially already broke, that are out in the world right now, that people aren't willing to look at, or change, or give up for a while, like you said, in the name of finding out what the next version of them is, is a really big number, not just in our industry but in every industry, right?

Albie: And we're seeing that come to fruition now where some people have had to close their doors whether they wanted to or not, they just did not have that choice. And the alternative would have been bankruptcy or losing their homes, or something else. And it's been interesting, I'm a numbers person, so any time I watch the news, anything that I can quantify, that's the type of news that I lean towards. So even just watching when the unemployment rate was going up, if people needed loans.

And I remember reading an article that essentially points it out that a vast majority of the people who are filing for unemployment were previously self-employed. And that told me, obviously there were people who were furloughed away from brick and mortar jobs and things like that. But that – I wish I could remember the numbers right now. But that to me was really indicative of how many of those people were entrepreneurs who just didn't want to let go out of fear or shame? And now they had no choice.

Tobi: Right. I mean and in a sense I'm sure it was a relief for some of those people because as I've said so many times to the people I coach through my membership, it's that Covid did not break your business. Your business was already broken. It just was like an x-ray machine or a flashlight on all the things that were already wrong with your business.

And that happened in the last recession too, people that were literally hanging by a thread and then all of a sudden the pipeline dries up quickly because of an economic shift. And they can't keep this hobbling business

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going because literally they were just making it by the skin of their teeth or whatever, hoping that something would come in just in time to barely hobble along. And that's what's happened in both instances, yeah, and it's interesting.

Albie: Yeah, the firm where I work, it's a small firm, but yet in the time that – I started working there right before Covid. Well, here in Washington we had the first case in the United States.

Tobi: Yes, you did, yes.

Albie: So Covid was here when I started working there, but by the time it kind of took over the country I was already working there. And we have since literally doubled in staff, doubled in territory, doubled in office space. And that's because obviously the structure of the business she had created was solid, the foundation was solid. And that isn't to say other people aren't capable of it.

But if this happened and as you said, it's shone that light on what was already wrong, then maybe now is the time that people can hopefully stop and have that same come to Jesus moment that I had. Maybe not necessarily to go become an employee, but either way, what can I do differently?

Tobi: Yeah, I love it.

Albie: But everyone else's opinions aside, what can I do differently to do this better in the next chapter?

Tobi: Yeah, and I love from your perspective of burn it down to build something better. Even to me I loved, the whole time that when Covid started happening and then everything else that has happened since then, we just, in my firm we keep asking ourselves, "What does this make possible? What does this make possible?" And it could be anything from growing to shrinking, to changing, to pivoting, what does this make possible?

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And I think that as long as you're thinking the negative thoughts, and the ego thoughts, and the fear thoughts, and the shame thoughts, you can't even access what does this make possible, right?

Albie: Yeah, because when you look at everything that's happened, how many businesses are now like, "Maybe we will allow more telecommuting. Maybe we will allow more remote work." They didn't know they had that digital capacity until they were forced to do so. Now they're like, "Oh, this is nice, maybe we can cut back on this and improve this." And so it's a time of forced reflection. I just happen to have done mine a year ago. Personally I felt like I was in my own little pandemic.

Tobi: Yeah. I understand. Okay, so as an extension to that, let's talk about the hustle, because it's the same thing too. And I think you've actually stopped the hustle, I did that a few years ago. I've talked a lot about that, I like was in burnout for the second time, I found this book called Essentialism, that's changed my life, because it's really like the essential pursuit of less is what he talks about. But really just asking yourself all those hard questions.

Like you, I was having the same thing, my marriage was suffering, my daughter was suffering, my health was suffering. It's such a predictable story no matter who we are, when we start making those kinds of choices and believing. I told you before we started, I'm like, "You know what, I already was questioning what the world had taught me in a lot of ways." But after this last six months I'm not believing any cultural anything, I'm not believing anything that I've been sort of taught to believe in the world. I'm at least questioning it.

And I think the hustle, you and I questioned ahead of this, but all of a sudden a lot of people just kind of had that choice made for them because they went from the ability to hustle to complete silence and at home. And so many people to me were telling me, even in the month or two after Covid really blew up, so about mid April. So many people were saying, "I'm not going to lie, I'm kind of glad a lot of things were cancelled on my

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schedule, I'm not going to lie, I'm going to try to keep these neighborhood walks and time with my family in my schedule."

And I mean it's so wonderful and almost sad at the same time, bittersweet that we have to literally have a pandemic for a lot of people to listen and make the change that you made, right?

Albie: I think there's that fear that, well, if you slow down, that means you're stopping and that everyone else is going to pass you. And for me one of the things that I had to – aside from looking at, okay, well, what is my actual definition of success, what does it actually look like? But then also I had to remind myself that there is literally room for everyone no matter the framework that you create to get there.

So if me choosing to slow down somehow keeps me from this thing, whatever it is that I'm striving towards, was it really to slow down or was it just me going towards the wrong thing in the first place? Was that even where I should have been going? I think about three years ago now I took a year off of social media. So I was off of Instagram, I was off of Facebook and there was a lot of fear like oh my gosh, what will happen? At the time I had my own business, what will happen and all these things.

And it was a challenge to myself, and it forced me to explore other ways of connecting people, phone, text message, in my business using my blog, using my email list. And guess what, Tobi? The world didn't end.

Tobi: I love that so much.

Albie: Yeah, a lot of people grew during that time. It happened to be that season 2017 to 2018 was when a lot of Instagrams just blew up really big. So I didn't get the benefit of that, fine. But that was okay, I was still able to come back and collaborate with friends and do projects and do exciting things. And it was that realization of slowing down isn't stopping, it's literally just slowing down.

Tobi: Right, right.

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Albie: And it's stopping to take a beat, take a breath and that hustle for me was literally making me sick.

Tobi: Yes, me too.

Albie: It was physically and mentally making me sick. And that manifested in my family and just in all the relationships, the way I showed up in the world. No hustle should be self-sacrificing. And that is a very dangerous narrative in my opinion, because it's not a badge of honor. You're not trying to out hustle the world, you can't. You can't, you really can't. And so [inaudible] during Covid were forced to stay put, because how many beautiful home projects have come out of that? People have reconnected in their marriages, some not so much.

Tobi: But kind of like Covid, it was already broken, I don't think Covid broke their marriage. It was already something they should be looking at, right?

Albie: Exactly. They just, they were too busy hustling to see it maybe. But how many people have now finally tackled their homes in amazing ways? They're tackling their health, they're working out. They're spending more time. They're getting more creative about how to spend time with people. They're sleeping. They're drinking water, these little things that we should have been doing all along that we kept hustling past, because we didn't leave any white space in our schedules or in our days.

And that's why I have told people, I think that's why for me the stay at home orders didn't affect me in the way that they affected a lot of people. I already dealt with things - and so seeing the world kind of catch up to where my head space was. And it's like, you guys get it.

Tobi: I felt the exact same way. And I have moved my office some three years ago when I totally had had enough, when I was hitting that same place. And I'm like, "I'm done with all of it, I'm done with the 6,000 square foot big building for my ego, all the physical employees in person." Literally I had stuff happening in my marriage that was really painful. And I was like, "How small can I shrink?" And it was such a beautiful reset.

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Tobi: Yeah, I didn't close my business but it was such a beautiful reset and I agree with you, I've almost been, not ashamed to say, but I haven't been bragging about it because I know people have really suffered. But I've had some of the most beautiful moments with my family during this. I've been so grateful, in some ways I'm like, "Can my daughter just home school forever, and can my husband just be here?" And I love it so much.

And I think what I was thinking about when you were talking, a few things, besides the fact that dang, that's what I meant, you're so gutsy, which I love. That you took a year off social media, that you're – well, I mean it's just actually it shows what an abundant mindset you have, you're not coming from scarcity, because if you're an abundant thinker, you're like it'll either be there when I get back or something else will be in its place.

And I think this hustle energy comes from scarcity. And it's like forcing energy and trying to make stuff happen, instead of allowing stuff to happen. And setting this crazy, like even just the pace that you're talking about that we all put ourselves, we forget we are in charge of the pace we take. It seems like it's outside of us and somebody else is setting the pace and we've got to keep up. And I'm like, it's almost even just maybe even redefining hustle, because we've either glorified it or we've made it a dirty word.

And I almost just want to be like everybody gets to make what their own hustle is.

Albie: Even that pivot going back from entrepreneur to employee, it felt like I don't work hard. I technically have to hustle for work. I have to get the job done. I have to hustle for my family. I have a five year old that I need to chase around. There's no just sitting down and indefinitely watching the birds outside.

Tobi: Right. Hamilton all week, and you and I were texting each other going, "How many times can we watch Hamilton on this weekend that it came out on Disney?"

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Albie: I'm still watching it. I'm still making time for it. But I think that's what it goes down to, you make the time that you need for other things. And that hustle doesn't have to be this joining dirty thing like you said. So for me it's not that I've just stopped hustling. I'm still making things happen. The Share the Mic Now was a type of hustle, but it didn't exhaust me, it didn't drain me. It fed my soul. My job is its own kind of hustle. But I think all of it was what we were looking at outside of ourselves. That scarcity mindset again, well, if I stop someone else gets the thing that I should have got.

Tobi: Yes, there's not enough to go around and either if I don't get it, they'll get it, yeah.

Albie: And the reality is that there is enough for everyone. And if you don't get it, was it for you in the first place? So when I think about going back to that year I took off and I came back and practically all of my friends had anywhere from 5,000 to 10,000 followers all of a sudden. I sat at 700 for the longest, when I got...

Tobi: Not anymore.

Albie: And that's where I'm going with this, I hit that first 1,000 and I was like, "Yeah, whoa." And then that turned into 1500, sat there for the longest. And then one day I woke up to 10,000.

Tobi: Yeah. And how much easier that was than suffering through it and trying to make it, and then all of a sudden. And then you have this other brilliant idea and then all of a sudden I'm sure you got tons from that, right?

Albie: And because it literally happened overnight, I was exaggerating but it was literally...

Tobi: I love that so much, that's the best kind of story, because everybody else is forcing, and suffering, and sweating, and comparing themselves and trying to quit and then starting again. And all the cavorting that we do, and this ego thing, and then you're like, "No, I'm just going to take a year off." And let it be okay to have however many. And then I'm going to just happen to align myself with what's supposed to be for me, which is brilliant

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this idea. And then all of a sudden I wake-up and I have what looks like now as we're recording this, over 12,000 followers, so almost 13, yeah.

Albie: Yeah, it's fun. And I mean the following did happen overnight, I actually had a good friend of mine tell me, the people hitting the follow button was overnight. But getting there did not happen overnight. It [crosstalk] those risks and all those other things, because as you said, so many people are contorting themselves into their – whether it's taking courses on the best Instagram, or buying followers, or whatever it is that people are doing, that they totally were supposed to do.

When I took that year off people looked at me like I was nuts. People were like, "Are you okay? You'll be back in a month." A month turned into six, turned into 12.

Tobi: I love that so much.

Albie: I was fine, and that was three years ago and that was because I got tired of, again, hustling. I was exhausted with social media, comparing myself. I didn't like the way it made me feel. And I also felt like it was its own kind of hustle but it made me lazy. Not using, it gave me the space to reconnect with my blog and my [inaudible]. I pushed myself to get better at Pinterest and better at YouTube. And for anyone who's like, "Albie, that's social media." It's not, it's a search engine.

Tobi: Right. Right. You're right, it's not. And it doesn't – well, I mean I guess if you have – it could be an addictive thing that you spend a lot of time on, but it's not quite the same thing as Instagram and how that can really kind of take over your life if you're not careful.

Albie: Yeah, things like Instagram and Facebook, I think are designed to be social. So at the time at least, those other platforms weren't designed to be social, now, I think they've evolved. But doing that forced me to get uncomfortable on YouTube and made a YouTube channel which I've now been able to leverage for different opportunities. It made me email people more. It made me check-in with my friends the old fashioned way.

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Tobi: It's so beautiful, it's so good. Well, I love this so much, and I think of course it doesn't happen by accident. There's so much synergy. But as we're recording this on the day that an episode I recorded with Dayka Robinson is coming out, which is all about getting in alignment with your integrity, showing up as your true self. We're recording this which is the same message.

I recorded another episode earlier today that comes out two weeks after yours, same kind of message, kind of raising yourself and your sort of how you show up to that higher level of consciousness that a lot of us have been stepping into because of what's happening in the world. And I mean it feels to me that this is just such an important message that I'm hearing from literally every book I'm reading, every conversation I'm having. And again that is no accident that the message, yeah, it's loud and clear. Honor your true self and stop worrying what everyone thinks, right?

Albie: Yeah, because – and there's so much of it, which you and I touched on a little bit before we started, where it's almost taboo to talk about, people feel like they're not allowed to say, "I want to close my business." They're not allowed to say, "I'm going to take time off." But now I'm seeing more and more people take a week from social media, a weekend from social media, a lot more people are more willing to get uncomfortable now because it's like, well, what's the alternative?

Obviously if everything we were doing in any industry, if everything we were doing was good, was okay, maybe we wouldn't be where we are now. So while there's still a lot of work to be done on so many fronts on a macro and micro level, now people are forced to literally look at the things that they didn't want to look at.

Tobi: Right. And notice as we've been talking about when we talk about the white supremacy kind of mindset, or narrative, or social construct, or however you describe that, patriarchy, any of the things that we've been socially conditioned to. Not only do we not want to look at our lives, but we also didn't want to look at why we're even showing up in this. Where did

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this belief about the hustle or about how we can't go from entrepreneur to employee, or how we can't show up in this way, where did it come from? Why do I believe that way?

And be willing to look at that, the truth of that and measure yourself against it without self-hate or severe judgment, that doesn't help you. But to be honest and say, "Oh, now I understand."

Albie: And that's a big part of it, for me especially as a Black female there is that feeling of if I don't get this right, what will my peers think of me? What will be left for me at the table? So many times I read stories and articles about serial entrepreneurs, nine times out of ten they're a white man. So which tells me, white men have no problem stopping, starting all over, stopping, starting all over.

Tobi: Right. They're like, "Throw that one away, that one sucks." They do it all the time, but we don't think that as women that we can do that.

Albie: And so there are those layers, why are women so afraid to start over? Why are we always competing with ourselves? And then you add on the layers of just racial inequality, where it's like, well, if I stop as a Black woman, how much harder will it be for me if I want to start over?

Tobi: Yeah. And I'm letting down my entire race and I'm not – you carry that on your shoulders, that.

Albie: And now it's like one less face in the industry, one less from our community that's doing it. And yet, I'm so glad I did that because again, I wouldn't have been able to contribute, so speaking in the context of interior design, the design industry. I would not have been able to contribute in the way that I did last month if I was trying to hustle my own business. I mean I might not have even seen the Share the Mic original [crosstalk].

Tobi: No, you wouldn't have because you'd have been literally trying to keep your head above water, right? Yeah.

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Albie: And because to be fair, most of the women that I follow that put it on my radar, a year ago I wasn't following them. So there's a very strong chance I would have done and not seen it. And the reason I wouldn't have followed them a year ago is because their messaging, their brand wasn't the kind of brand that gave me permission to walk away. It's when I walked away I started curating the type of people I was following, what message are they giving? Do their brand values align with what I see next in my chapter?

So actually I want to say a solid 80% of the women that put that thing on my radar, I wasn't even following them a year ago, because I was following people who glorified hustling.

Tobi: Yeah. Well, and I think that just to kind of bring this home before we wrap up is I think just what's standing out in such a huge way to me is that when we're in that forcing kind of energy, and really a lot of times it comes from, and it's what Dayka said on my podcast as well. She said, "It comes from, we don't really know what to do so we look at somebody else. And we're like, "Well, Tobi's doing that, so I need a business like that." Or somebody else is doing it so I need a business like that.

Albie: That's how I can do it.

Tobi: Yeah, and so...

Albie: [crosstalk].

Tobi: Yeah. And so – but the problem with that is that might not be the place, or the way, or the vehicle, or the avenue that you're supposed to make your market in. And so I love, what I'm getting so much inspiration and an aha moment as you're talking is that when we don't even create enough white space to listen to even the whisper from our soul, or our spirit, or our knowing, or whatever it is. And we're just forcing this other thing because we saw somebody else do it.

The path that is ours to pick up is probably – well, of course it is, it's right there in front of us the whole time. But we can't even see it, we can't hear it

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because we are cramming ourselves into this other person's dream, or idea, or avenue, or path. And I just, I can't even put words to it of how remarkable it is to me that what you're saying is, I believe is so true. That if you had not listened then the thing that is part of your life's work would not have happened, that is just blowing my whole mind. Wow, yeah.

Albie: And it takes time, I don't want any of your listeners to feel like, okay, well let me just go flip my entire life up on its head. That does not always [crosstalk]. But I think where all the pieces come together is taking the time to slow down and be honest with yourself. And even on a personal level, this time last year my husband and I were probably not going to still be married anymore. And then he got deployed and that forced us to take another slowdown and stop.

The same thing with going back to work and all these other things, on a personal and professional level, you have to be willing to embrace the ugly, stop, feel the feels, whatever that looks like and not feel what everyone else feels about it, but whatever it is that you feel about it. And for me it's being able to just shut everyone out and kind of look at, again, what I think about my life 5, 10, 20 years from now, does it actually look the way all these experts are telling me it looks? And I came to that realization that it doesn't.

Okay, great, it doesn't, how do I get there? These are the things that get me there, not these other things that I was doing, and not because they were wrong, but because I wasn't listening to myself. And so I think, if no one takes anything else away from this, that I mean right now we have nothing but time because of Covid. For people to really take the time because what I've also seen happening is now people are kind of out-quarantining one another. Who can do the most home projects?

Tobi: Right, right, we can turn anything into how do we show out on Instagram or become the perfect Pinterest mom or make something from scratch or whatever, yes.

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Albie: I'm seeing a lot of that happen too, which means some people quite haven't learned their lessons. I think this is the time, if it's your business that seems a little funky, maybe you start over, maybe you reset, maybe it's okay to go work for a firm for a bit or find another route or whatever that looks like. What is this other passion you are leaning into? I have a very good designer friend of mine who absolutely is phenomenal as an interior designer. But right now, do you know what she's rocking it as, Tobi? An art curator.

Tobi: Cool.

Albie: And she has an exhibit coming up. And it's because she took the time to just stop listening to all the, "You have to do design the traditional way," and all of that. And now it's opened up this amazing opportunity for her. And so I think people have to stop the hustle competition, trying to out hustle one another, listen to themselves, not everyone else. And if that means unplugging for a week, a month, a year, whatever, then you'll come back better for it.

Tobi: Yes, you will, I mean honestly, Gail told me the same thing, when I was really getting to know her more, we've known each other kind of some for years. But we've really gotten close over these last several months. And she went to work for someone else, I think last year some time for six or eight months. Because she was like, "I'm tired of this. I'm tired of having to do all the things. I'm just going to work for someone else."

And she said it was such an amazing experience. And I think it was six or eight months or whatever, it wasn't forever for her. But it was like such a needed just kind of rest to just show up and get clarity in a different way. And I just, gosh, it's so smart and I just, I love it, I love that you are taking the stigma away.

Albie: It's not a bad thing.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that you're taking the stigma away of these things and giving people – every moment that we as women, as all the roles we play,

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can give other people permission that it's okay to listen to your heart and to the information that – your internal GPS and tune into it and listen. If we can just keep giving people permission to do that we really are going to see a different world.

Albie: Absolutely. We know ourselves better than anyone else. So the idea that – and I'm guilty of this as well, the idea that we're getting constant how to from everyone else, is actually kind of crazy.

Tobi: It is, it is, it's like consistently telling ourselves that we don't trust ourselves. Somebody else, no matter who it is, if they have a podcast like this one, a blog, a business or anything, and not that there isn't a time and place for all of those things. Business coaches, we can all benefit, but if we are literally going from one source, to the next, to the next, to the next outside of us believing that the answers are outside of us, we will never ever find the answers, right?

Albie: Yeah, we'll never get to that place, whatever it is that we're trying to get to. So yeah, it's its own form of self-gaslighting. And that's where I hope that during this time, as ugly as things may be on all fronts; my hope is that people walk away from this trusting themselves a lot more, betting uncomfortable and seeing what comes from it.

Tobi: It's so beautiful, you even did a post on that a few weeks ago and I responded to you, because you did this whole post on self-gaslighting. And I was like, "Whoa, that is so profound." Literally, everybody needs to go find it on your Instagram. Was it in a story or is it still in your Instagram if they looked back for it?

Albie: It was on my feed, it was on my feed.

Tobi: Okay. So I mean when I saw that come through, I was like I responded, and I don't remember what I said, but I was like, "Oh my gosh." And yeah, and every way that we're doing that to ourselves constantly, so much more than it's happening from people outside of us, honestly.

Albie: Yeah.

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Tobi: Wow, wow, okay, well you are amazing, I knew you would be. I could literally talk to you for the next five hours. So we will definitely have some more conversations, I'm sure. But I just appreciate you so much and thank you for inspiring me, thank you for giving me opportunities to show up in a new way. Thank you for just your openness and your honesty, I just am so super grateful to you.

Albie: And thank you for being willing to be uncomfortable because that's the first part. And I mean you've done the work yourself just internally as we've talked about. But I really appreciate the fact that you saw something that was like, I don't like the way this feels, how can I do something about it? And it just lined up, so thank you as well.

Tobi: That's so kind. I mean you're welcome, but gosh, it's a lot to learn, it's a lifelong process, and yeah.

Albie: And that's key, I don't want anyone to think that once you unlock it that aha moment, it's like, "Well, the work is done."

Tobi: No, no. Honestly showing up in this way, showing up in this – I mean which is so beautiful and free, it is, but it's also like it's vulnerable and at any moment you can screw it up. But the beautiful thing, I was listening to, I think, one of Rachel Rodgers podcasts yesterday and she was talking about messing up. And she was like, "That's the thing you all." She's like, "As many people as I've called out on the way they were showing up, which felt scary to them." She's like, "That's the thing, you actually, unlike what you hear from the world, you actually can mess up and get back up again."

You're not like one and done, you can make a mistake and you can rise from it and you can take responsibility, and you can get right back in the arena and...

Albie: And do it again.

Tobi: Yeah, totally.

Albie: And hopefully better.

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Tobi: Yes, yes. Well, thank you so much, this was beautiful and I just – gosh, I can't say enough how thankful I am.

Albie: Thank you, Tobi.

Okay, inspiring is an understatement, right? I just, I can't wait to have Albie back. I want to work with her in so many ways. I'm like, how can I collaborate? Every day I feel like I'm in her inbox, in her DMs going, "Sign me up for something else, I want to work with you. I just want to be around you." And this woman is so young. I mean how she's that wise at such a young age in her 30s, just blows my mind. She is just, wow, just a firecracker. And I loved this conversation so much, I hope you did too.

So we will put all the ways you can find Albie in the show notes, you can find her out on Instagram at albieknows, that's a.l.b.i.e.k.n.o.w.s and she is just as inspiring to follow there as she was to listen to on this podcast. So thank you for listening, I can't wait to hear what you think about this episode.

And I'll see you again next week with another great episode of *The Design You Podcast*. Bye for now friends.

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