

Ep #230: Showing Up Authentically and Making an Impact on the World with Carmeon Hamilton



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Tobi Fairley

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You are listening to *The Design You Podcast* with Tobi Fairley, episode number 230.

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.

Hello, friends, I am so excited about today's episode. It's an interview with my friend, Carmeon Hamilton. And we have been trying to get her on the show for a long time. If you know anything about Carmeon, or have been following her the last couple of years she has been a busy, busy lady, including winning *Design Star: Next Generation* on HGTV. And then recording her own show for HGTV among all the other amazing things she's been doing which she tell us about in this episode.

So, without further ado enjoy this inspiring out of the box sort of thinking about design businesses and how to show up and make an impact on the world with Carmeon Hamilton.

Tobi: Hey, Carmeon, welcome to *The Design You Podcast*. I'm so glad you're here. I feel like this episode is three years in the making or 10 years in the making because we've tried but you are a busy woman. So welcome, welcome.

Carmeon: Thank you, yes, this has been, I know, original conversation started two years ago. And a lot has happened since then but I'm glad we are finally here. I'm very excited to be talking to another Arkansan from home and so I've been a fan of yours, Tobi for a million years.

Tobi: When I was a little girl and you were already a businesswoman, that's what this is like which I don't take personally because I remember when I was in college and then I did a project on Mary Douglas Drysdale and then I met her and became friends with her. And I was like, "Oh my God, you were my college project." And she was like, "Do not say that." So, thank you for that. Well, yes, I think we did start more than two years ago. And

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the interesting thing was you couldn't really tell me what all was going on, I'm sure at the time around Design Star.

But you kept having to go, "Okay, I've got to cancel. Okay, I can't be there." And I was like, "What is going on with this woman?" And then it came out. And I was like, "Oh, this makes so much more sense now." So of course.

Carmeon: I promise I'm not as bad, I promise.

Tobi: Of course, yes. Of course, she has to change, all completely way more important than us recording a podcast any time. So yes, I love that you're here. A lot has happened. Why don't you, for the few people living under a rock that listens to this episode that don't know who you are and don't know about you or if you want to share anything about kind of what has happened in the last two years.

Why don't you kind of bring us up to speed? And then we're going to have a really exciting conversation about something kind of specific today that I can't wait to get into. But first, tell us about you.

Carmeon: Absolutely. So yes, my name is Carmeon Hamilton. I am a Memphis based interior designer and content creator. In 2020, it actually was released in 2021 though, I was the winner of Design Star, HGTV's Design Star: Next Gen, the reboot of one of their most popular shows. And along with winning Design Star I won my own show which was Reno My Rental that premiered September of last year, 2021. And I've been in the TV space quite a bit for the last year and a half.

And with that a lot of career shifts. When it comes to my own design projects. I've done more speaking engagements than I care to mention. But just really living life in the public for the last two years has been pretty transformational. And I'm excited to talk more about all that today.

Tobi: Yeah, that's amazing. So, my daughter and I have loved your show. And she is so funny. She's starting her senior year two days from when we're recording this. And I think this episode I'm actually going to bring in and go live this week just because it's so fun. I don't want it to wait. So

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probably the week that we record it we will run it. But anyway, she's starting her senior year and she's always telling me and has for years of how she doesn't want to be a designer. She does kind of think I want to be a graphic designer.

But she's the one who's always like, "Can we watch design shows? Can we watch design shows?" And she's like, "What about your friend's show? What about your friend, Brian's show? What about your friend, Carmeon's show? Are there new episodes? What's happening?" And so, we've really enjoyed all of the things you've created, so good. So, you have a little 17 year old fan and a 50 year old fan.

Carmeon: I love it.

Tobi: So very good. Well, you mentioned when we were just kind of chatting because I always like to really just take a minute and say what's the purpose of this episode? Where are we going with this? And it never fails that within just a couple of minutes of a conversation with someone we always land on the right topic. And I could tell immediately when I said, "What's up with you?" And you're like, "Well, I don't know if it's", I forgot what word you said or I said.

Carmeon: Exciting.

Tobi: Yeah, you're like, "I don't know if it's exciting but it's a big thing." And you said, "I'm really making a big shift career wise and really working to become way more aligned in a lot of ways." And I think that that should be really what we talk about today because I think that I feel that so much when you say it. I think the world feels that. And I think it's really confusing for people and sometimes hard for people who set out with an expectation of working in a career for a long time and then already.

It hasn't been that long and you're like, "Wait, I'm sort of pivoting. And I'm sort of changing. And I'm sort of making up my own version of this." And I think that's going to be so inspiring for people even if it feels hard at times to hear what that's like because I know it's got to take a lot of courage but

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also a lot of other stuff. So can you take us on that, tell us what that means, take us on this path, let's go there.

Carmeon: Yes. So, I've been in design for almost 15 years now. I've had my own business for eight of those 15. And I've done everything from residential to boutique commercial projects especially here around Memphis. I have worked on project all across the country especially at the beginning of the pandemic I took my business virtual a week before the world shut down. And just so happened that everything went virtual immediately after that. So, my business tripled in a matter of a couple of months.

So, I was available to so many more people. And I loved it. I loved getting to expand my brand and be that much more creative with all of these different personalities. And then of course I go and shoot Design Star. And then I win it and then I get my own show. And before Design Star and my own show my business was essentially just me. It was a team of one, I did everything. And what my own show on Reno My Rental afforded me was a whole design team. So, I got to elevate to more of a creative director role.

I saw the vision and I told them, "This is what I want. I see teal cabinets. I see white quartz countertops, and brass knobs, and farmhouse table." I got to just dream and envision the final look. And then have someone else execute everything, source, check-in, do all of the logistics, and the ordering, and the assembly, and the delivery, and setup. And I get to come in and go, "Yes, this was the vision." Or, "Let's tweak these chairs." And that was the first time I got to be that hands-off but still see my vision executed at the end.

And I immediately knew I will never take on another design project on my own without this because it's the only way to do it without killing yourself ultimately. But of course, in the beginning you have to have a lot of capital to have a team that size, to have someone doing all of those things for you. And I'm like, "Okay, well, let me put everything on hold." Which I put my business and put up a waiting list when I went to do Design Star. All of that

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happened and knew I wasn't immediately ready to take on clients after shooting Design Star because it wore me out.

I had never been so exhausted in my entire life. My body shut down and everything so I said, "Okay, I'll give myself six months." But the show came around and that's when the shift happened, on how I wanted to run my own business. But in that shift came more demand. Everybody saw the show and now I have this swarm of people wanting to work with me. And I was just like, "How do you tackle a waiting list of 173 people?" And that was a year ago. So, I can't even tell you what the number is.

Tobi: Yeah, like a 1,000 people now, yeah, exactly, yes.

Carmeon: And so just it got to a point where it's even too overwhelming. How do you say yes and no? How do I start the discovery calls for this many people while also being a mom, running a business, staying present on social, all of these other things? And so, I kind of just froze and I needed to sit in it and really decide where I wanted to go.

And it just so happened to be a request from a friend here in Memphis, they asked me to be the designer for the historical Clayborn Temple which is the historical site at the beginning of the sanitation march where Dr. Martin Luther King came to Memphis and ultimately was assassinated. So, this church had been abandoned for the last 20 years and it's now been taken over and has been revitalized. And it will be turned into a cultural art center.

And they wanted me to be the designer for it and I'm just like, "This is absolutely something I want to put my energy into. This feels way different from someone's living room. This will have way more impact than someone's powder room. I now want to invest my energy into those things." And so, saying yes to that project is what led me to the realization that I want what I do to have a broader reach. Since I have the platform that I have, I know lots of people want me in their homes. But if I'm going to do work I want more people to be able to experience it.

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So, the cultural art center will absolutely have thousands and thousands of people coming through it every year. A friend of mine opened the first Black owned bar in the Edge District and it is one of my most favorite projects that I've ever done. I said yes to his project because it's culturally relevant. And there are hundreds of people that walk through it every day. And so that's where I've decided to invest my energy. I'm shifting from homes to places that impact the most people that also have a cultural relevance to the city that I love which is Memphis.

Tobi: Yeah, that's so good. So many things are coming to mind now, I even think back when I've heard just other people whose brand start to grow and they go from being a wedding photographer, or an event planner, or something similar to what you're saying and they're like, "I can either help 40 people a year have a wedding or I can help millions of people by bringing my ideas, my intellectual property, maybe a book, or a show, or something that is so much bigger."

And not necessarily better, we need people doing more one-on-one things too. But when your heart tugs at you and is like this is aligned. I know that feeling so well. I always have been pulled to something to think bigger, to create bigger impact. So, can you speak to that a little bit for people that are listening, they're like, "How do you even know? How do you even navigate?" What does it feel like kind of in your nervous system and in your brain when you're starting to make this shift?

Because for you, you did have this platform that appeared and probably made it easier. But I think the hardest part is the unlearning, and the letting go, and the letting go of what you thought was going to be to create something that is so much bigger than that. Can you speak to that a little bit?

Carmeon: Yes, absolutely because I always thought I would be a household name. I wanted to be Kelly Wearstler. She's still working on residential projects of course there with gillion dollar budgets. But I wanted to be the premiere designer of the Mid-South and work on these fabulous

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homes and then showcase how the south is more than just traditional or country aesthetics. And so that's what I thought I was going to be doing.

But for me personally it was also part of being heavily ingrained in the online community. Having an audience that I was talking to every day, where I was already giving tips and design education and all of these things on a daily basis knowing that I had that connection to people in that regard. I was able to come to terms with letting go of residential projects and taking on these more culturally relevant projects. Because I knew if I can't physically do your home myself I can at least educate you on how my brain works so you have the power to go and do it on your own.

This is what Carmeon would do. This is how Carmeon thought about it. This is Carmeon's philosophy, let me apply that to my home. Or just me having various conversations online getting people to shift their thinking a little bit to have the confidence to make their own decisions for their home or to say, "This is why interior design or hiring an interior designer is valuable." So, if I can't hire Carmeon, I know what to look for in another designer because I know what hiring a designer could do.

So, I felt like one, after being overwhelmed with how many people wanted to work with me and feeling guilty with not being able to get to everyone, or knowing that I would be saying yes to maybe 2% of the people that are reaching out to me. I just realized, I can do more for free for this larger audience. And also make the income that I want to make while also being fed creatively and doing what I want to do to invest in this city and do what I can to promote places in this city career wise. So, it was easy for me to have my cake and eat it too basically.

Tobi: Yeah. Well, I love a lot of what you're saying because I think what a lot of people fall into the – I don't know if it's a habit or it's almost like tasking of making individual decisions for a client or two. As opposed to what you're talking about which is a lot of what I do which is kind of going up to, instead the two foot level, or five foot level, the 30,000 or 50,000 foot

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level. And saying not what paint am I picking for this one human on this street? But how collectively do I think about paint or color?

Or how collectively do I think about environments and how you feel in them. And how do I teach people to think critically about their own spaces and not get obsessed with is this the right paint color which those are yeah, ultimately pick the paint color. But all of that stems from more of this collective sort of approach and philosophy that you're talking about. And you can teach people how to not only adopt yours but how to think about their own philosophies, right?

Carmeon: Exactly. Absolutely, that is exactly what it is.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that so much. And I love that you also say, "I can help all of these people for free and then also create the lifestyle and the financial wellbeing that I want." Because I think that also is confusing for people. And there's been so much conversation over the last 15 years of HGTV killed interior design or the internet killed interior design. And I think that's such a binary shortsighted understanding of just because I create free content in the world that it's killing the industry.

It's more like times and humans are evolving and things look different than they used to. But it's not to me an either or this binary. It's more like both and, is that how you feel about it as well?

Carmeon: Of course, of course. And I have so many different facets, or so much experience in different areas of interior design that I know, I used to be one of the people that thought HGTV was killing the design industry. Because everything on TV, one, it either looks cookie cutter and the same or it ruins the process of working with a designer. Everybody thinks it happens faster or it can happen on a dime, and all of these other things.

So, it definitely impacted the design business but especially once I became a part of the TV design space, understanding what happens behind the scenes. And also coming from that background and knowing what message I wanted to present on my own show so that I wasn't perpetuating

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the idea that this happens quickly or this can happen very inexpensively, or unrealistic budgets. We made sure that we had real numbers. These are real things that you can do in this amount of time.

But I also know that designers can have careers on TV without being on screen. I worked with a design team with people that went to design school and they did exactly what I do for my own business. They just did it for me for my show. So, it's not just design on TV. There's a whole design team behind the scenes, there are prop people. There's design producers. There's so much more to this industry than just being an interior designer.

I absolutely am one of those people that don't believe in the either or because I've now seen so many different ways that you can have a career in this industry without being in someone's living room telling them what paint color to pick.

Tobi: I love that so much. So, when you're following your heart and you're thinking about this bigger impact, what's the process? I mean I know what the process is like for me, I want to hear yours. I bet we have similarities. But this is another thing where I see a lot of people holding themselves back. So, when I'm like, "What is that dream that when you lay your head on the pillow at night or maybe it's not even fully formed but you feel this tug of something bigger than what you currently know."

But I watch people default back only into what they've seen happen before or what somebody else has already done, not design wise but what businesses can look like. And when you're a trailblazer and when you're reimagining an industry, or your own business, that's a totally different approach that I would love to hear. I think people think some of us are just fearless, or just have a different it factor, or something that they don't have. And I suspect that it's a lot messier and harder than people think for all of us. We just kind of make it look easy.

So, what is that experience like when you're like, "I know there's something bigger now. I know this impact and I know how it feels when I plug in and my heart's like yes, yes, yes." But there's a lot of fear and self-doubt, and

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would it work and what if, and how do I feed my son and how do I, the things. What has that been like for you to lean into the unknown and just follow that nudge or that tug?

Carmeon: I can tell a shift is coming when I am begrudgingly sitting down to do the work. Okay, I know I have to go do this and it's probably only going to take me 20 minutes but it ends up taking me three hours because I procrastinate. And you're not excited about it anymore. And it is literally just head down, work. And I feel myself repeating things like I can't think outside of the box. And I haven't been fed creatively so I don't have anything to produce creatively that gets me excited.

So that's when I can tell that, one, I'm running low on what generally feeds me which is getting out and seeing new projects and experiencing the city or going to an art gallery. I haven't done something to feed me creatively but also there's something else beyond what I'm doing that I could be doing. So that's the beginning. And here lately just watching the world evolve and especially since the pandemic, so many different careers have been created by everyone having to stop and rethink how business works or how even to generate income.

Where it's like the ceiling came off, I can make money doing whatever I want to do. It's a case of what gets me the money that I need but also fuels the excitement that I need to have about what I do on a day-to-day basis. And so it was, okay, one, that educational portion of reaching out to the community that I talk to every day. And I knew that sharing my philosophies, my design experience, what I wholeheartedly believe about design or how I work would get me seen by people that would want me to come and speak at a conference, or want me to teach a class on something.

And I'm like, I now am the income generator. I don't have to physically draw up plans and pick out paint colors and source fabrics or anything. I can make money just by speaking what I know. And okay, if that generates income then I can niche down and focus on the projects that get me

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excited. I can niche down on how many projects I take and spend more time gathering inspiration so that I'm putting that much more creatively into these projects. I'm not this wheel or machine that's churning out 30 projects a year.

I can do five and have them be amazing because I got to take my time and really do what I love for those projects. And so, it is definitely a messy process, you have no idea what you're doing. And sometimes the solution is put in your lap, it's not even something you come up with. You're doing what you do and someone presents this opportunity to you and you're like, "I can make money from that?" And you've now started a new business. And that's ultimately what happened for me.

I've done 14 speaking engagements this year. And I have six in the month of September alone. I'm going to New York twice, Nashville twice and Miami all to speak. And also speaking here in Memphis. And so, I'm just like, "People want to hear what I have to say so I'm going to continue saying what I say online for free." And have people approach me to speak to whatever their needs are for their events.

But also, now I get to say yes or no to these projects that I love. Knowing that they'll have a greater impact on the people that I care about which is the city of Memphis.

Tobi: Yeah, I love that so much. And I can relate in so many ways. And I think although it does feel like a new business in some ways or at least a new revenue stream of now I'm a speaker. I love the way that you understand that this is not the siloed thing over here and the siloed thing over here. But they're more integrated than that and they're all part of this big umbrella brand of what you do and who you are. And I think that's what I notice people struggling with because they're like, "Wait, is she not an interior designer anymore, she's a speaker?"

And I'm like, "Why do you want us to pick?" Interior designers can be speakers, and they can motivate, and they can share, and they can never do another project again in the way you imagine it. And you don't go

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retrieve their design card. They're no longer like I'm going to need to confiscate your design card because you haven't done a project that I would consider the normal type in the last x number of months or whatever.

Carmeon: Yes, it is definitely important, even if you are strictly working on design projects. It is important to understand that there are pillars of your business, you may be a designer in residential but you charge hourly for your time. And you sell furniture, or you contract out artwork that you may do on the side. It's possible to have an umbrella. And I immediately adopted the umbrella approach a couple years ago because I also create content for brands online as a designer.

And so, you have to understand that it's perfectly okay to have a brand and different pillars under that brand that one, generate income, but two, could be things that are just important to you to be involved in on a day-to-day basis. And that is absolutely how I've structured what is now Hamilton Media Incorporated. I have Nubi Interiors. But Nubi Interiors now falls under Hamilton Media. But Hamilton Media I am now outsourced as talent on a TV show or a speaker to a conference. Or a content creator to a brand for social media.

I needed an umbrella for all these things that I do and that is exactly how I've structured my business and will move forward and fold other things under as I continue to grow.

Tobi: I love that so much. I remember years ago when I started, first blogging, I was one of those early bloggers.

Carmeon: Same.

Tobi: Yes, you are. And then I was coaching and creating courses. And I remember even my grandmother who loved getting attention in her bridge group because of my projects. And so, it annoyed her and she couldn't reconcile the fact that I was now these multifaceted, multi-passionate things. She wanted me to be either or. And I always use her as an example

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because it's even someone in my own family who's almost like, "You need to pick a lane." And I just never was willing to.

And why do we have to pick? We're not a one facet human being. So why is the world forcing me to pick? What if I don't do design projects for five years and then I do 50 one year? That's my prerogative. And yeah, so I love that you're explaining this too because it's been my exact experience. I love everything you're saying. And not that everybody has to have a media company. Not that everybody has to, if you want to study in one lane, absolutely. But I think a lot of people don't because they get confused on the world's message of pick a lane.

And they hear all this niche and specialized and all that's still true. But you can be so much more than just the tasks that you do every day. Yes. Amazing. So, can you speak a little bit about showing up and being real, I mean really real? You do this so well and I'm always looking for ways for me to even be more transparent. A lot of people are like, "Oh my God, Tobi, you're already really honest."

Carmeon: You do it very well, yeah.

Tobi: But there's still a part of me that I always know and not to mean I want to overshare or anything. But there's a part of me that knows that at some level I'm still holding back something. I mean I think we all are. And we've got to make sure it feels safe for us to go forward with some of these ideas. But I'm in a current phase which sounds like we're kind of in a similar orbit of how do I want to even become more me online? And I think you've done this so beautifully.

So, for the people who admire that but are afraid to and think it's only for extraverts or something, can you share a little bit about that feeling of being real? Because it's not like you just are always comfortable I don't think. Isn't it terrifying sometimes to be like, "I'm going to say this?" But I have to say this and I can't not say this, but it's also like wow, I'm about to say this, and what's going to happen?

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Carmeon: Yeah, I do have my moments where I'm like, "Okay, this could lose me a ton of followers but I don't really care. So, number one, I've been a part of the online space starting with blogging 12 years ago, adopting Instagram immediately. I was ready to jump ship from Facebook. I'm like, "Okay, pretty pictures, this is it." So, I've been an early adapter and been in the online space for a very long time. And my blog started with talking about my relationship with my husband.

So, I've been an open book from the beginning. And the personality of my husband wouldn't allow me to be someone else outside of who he saw every day. So, I always had these checks and balances for, would I say this in front of my husband? Would I say this any differently? So that was always a back of mind thing. If he was going to check me on it like, "You don't talk like that. You don't speak like that. That's not something you would normally say."

If I knew he was going to check me on something I knew that wasn't me. So let me just say it the way I would say it in front of him, in front of my family, by myself. So, I always remained as core Carmeon from the beginning because I knew I couldn't come home or have my husband see something and go, "Who's this person you're trying to be online?" I couldn't do it. And so also just being an early adapter of the online space, I could always view my upbringing and my personal philosophies and logic and see how it varied so much from other people.

And so, I took on the early approach to share my perspective and my thoughts on things because I realized apparently I don't think the way everyone else does. So let me give other people something else or a different way to think about these things. And what I boiled it down to is, yes, I can talk about design, I can talk about being married, I can talk about all these other things. But the baseline of everything that I do is wanting people to be good humans to other people.

So, I'm going to show you what a good human looks like and how a good human treats other people. And call out people that are not being good

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humans. And we are all humans so I'm not going to berate you over it. But let me tell you how you could have done this differently, how you could have said this differently to get what you want out of the situation but still not be an awful person about it.

Tobi: Get calmer, yeah.

Carmeon: Exactly. So, introducing boundaries and telling people, the bare minimum that you could do is one, say hello, if you're wanting something from me you could say hello. And say, spell my name correctly. Those are baseline minimal things. Hello, your name, that's it, that's bare minimum. And I think when people start to realize that there are humans on the other side of the phone, or the screen they automatically shift how they approach communication. They think twice about saying negative things.

They internalize these other human elements of other people and that's where the connection, that social media is supposed to be curating, comes from. And so that is why I am as authentic as I am every day because I just want people – if I can show you what humanity looks like, so you adapt it then it's a ripple effect where we can all eventually live in a place where people begin to treat each other and see each other for the humans that we are.

Tobi: That's so good. And I think what's really standing out to me in everything that you're saying and I agree so much is that when people try to create the online persona version of themselves, which is not that authentic person. It becomes more of that binary we were talking about earlier. And people get stuck with why is an interior designer talking about humanity and boundaries? Why is her platform about being a good human?

And what I love so much that you're saying is that it goes back to the conversation we've been having the whole time of wanting to put people in a peg in a hole. And I love that you're just an example of I have a right and also something to say about stuff that's way bigger than how you see me as my occupation. I guess just like when people come to me and they're

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like, “I don’t follow you for your politics. You need to stick to decorating.” And I just laugh to myself and I’m like, “I’m a 360 human.”

Carmeon: A whole human.

Tobi: And decorating is only a tiny bit of what I do. And in fact, on the day-to-day it’s not even that much of what I think about anymore. It’s inherent in how I show up but I love this. And the other thing that really stood out to me, so amazing, and bravo, and that’s so beautiful, and I love that you’re so clear on your why and what you stand for. Because even people getting to their why, I think that’s become so cliched and they don’t understand what that means. And you just in a nutshell, said, my why is to show everyone our humanity and just treat each other like humans.

That’s not what people would think an interior designer’s why is supposed to be. It’s creating beautiful spaces. And you’re like, “No, we’re showing you all we’re all humans.” I love that. And then the other thing that really resonated is when you said, your husband has always been like your litmus test. Because I’m the same way because if I’m trying to do the thing that our brain wants to do, so we’re not rejected. So, we belong and we’re accepted. It’s going to try to create that polished, and perfect, and presentable acceptable version of me.

Well, very little of that is real. And I love what you’re saying because I do the same thing. If my husband’s like, “You’ve cursed me out over this one topic seven times in our house and now you’re going to act like let’s just make this a beautiful not messy conversation.” Or if my mom or mainly my daughter’s the one who calls me out because she knows me so well and we’re similar. And she’s like, “What is this? Because that is not at all how we were having this conversation yesterday in our own household.”

And I’m like, “Touché, sister and I need to backtrack and get more real.” And I love that you said that. And so, for people to understand, it’s not about oversharing or that we’re going to go out and just verbally kind of vomit everything. It’s just tapping in and checking of do the people that know me best, would they recognize this version of me if I put this online?

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Carmeon: Exactly, that is the thing. I never want to be any different than who I am to the people that know me best to the people online. There's one version of me so if you love me you love all of me. You're not loving parts of me that I want you to see. So, if you're here which is also how I run my online space, if you're here you're here for me. And if I'm not for you that's perfectly fine, you can go. So, I'm perfectly fine with losing followers. I'm only talking to the people that are here, the people that chose to stay.

And if you're new here, welcome. Hopefully you stay a little longer but this is who I am and if it's not your cup of tea that's perfectly fine. But you will never get a different version of Carmeon from online, to in person, to my couch, to a boardroom, you get the same. It's how I manage my business, how I manage expectations with clients and brands. I am the same person everywhere so you know exactly what you're getting. And if you're here, you're my people and that's who I talk to on a day-to-day basis.

Tobi: Yeah. And I think what people don't understand is it's not this is who I am and eff you. It's more like you've done the work to really know who you are as a human being. You've done the hard work of knowing who you are and what you stand for, and what you value which is hard and also messy. And because of that you can stand in this space. It's not the screw you kind of almost like elitist or even bullying type of behavior. It's none of that. It's not cancel culture. It's not don't let the door hit you on the way out. It's like I know who I am.

Carmeon: And I know I'm not for everyone. It's okay. It's understanding that humans have a right to choose who they want to impart their energy to and absorb energy from. I am personally, I'm a proponent for doing what's best for you no matter what it is, do you boo, is what I say all the time, do you? And if it's not me, awesome. There is millions of other people out here that you can get advice from, entertainment from, whatever it is. But I know who I am and I am not going to be shifting who I am and what I do to attract more people.

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I'm just going to stay who I am and attract the people that are attracted to me.

Tobi: Yeah. And to make everybody comfortable. The goal, if you're really caring about showing everybody's humanity the goal cannot be to make everybody comfortable that stops by here, right?

Carmeon: That's the first thing you know about humanity, that no one will agree on everything. That's not a thing. If you are for everybody you are no one.

Tobi: Yeah. So, one last question and then anything else you want to share too but one last thing that comes up for me that I think about is it's a bit interesting to watch. And just like so many white women in the online space, obviously 2020 was a shift. The great white awakening happened, a lot of people started showing up in a different way. A lot of people didn't on purpose. And I'm not judging either side of that. But with that process and with me pulling back a lot of the curtain at a higher level.

Because those were some of the things that I was being almost more of a person of myself of at least not being as transparent about things like my political views, or my social justice views or things that had always been there. I had grown up in politics. My dad was a politician and worked for Bill Clinton and worked in DC. And people didn't know that side of me. I had it compartmentalized because the culture...

Carmeon: Right, because it's not design-friendly.

Tobi: Yeah, it's not professional. It's not design friendly. It's not what women are supposed to talk about. Don't talk about what, religion, politics or whatever, money. And so, when I really pulled that curtain back and just started showing up which is the best decision I've ever made and I feel so much more aligned and happy. It's so interesting to still watch the number of people that are so uncomfortable with those conversations, and politics. And even conversations I've heard specific editors of, "I don't think politics should be in design."

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And not that we have to agree but what comes up for you when you think about this part of the conversation? Because it's definitely an extension of that being fully human. But is there anything that you would share? It's not that I'm just out, I don't really share my politics as in what I would trash a lot of republicans in my household, I'm not putting on or not even just republicans, democrats too.

Carmeon: Democratic too, yeah.

Tobi: And independents.

Carmeon: And independents, yeah.

Tobi: Yeah. I'm not putting some of that stuff, I don't know if at some point I would or wouldn't because it's not really who I am. That's just more of how I blow off steam at times or get frustrated. But not skirting issues and being willing to understand that businesses are inherently political, being human is inherently political. And the fact that we are going to park and compartmentalize something like that that is inherent into our own wellbeing and livelihood. I don't see how you separate those things.

So how do you think about that? How do you think about that in your business?

Carmeon: And you absolutely cannot. And like you said, being human is political. And inherently being a Black woman is absolutely political. And being a Black woman of an affluent stature and very public platform, there are certain things that I am not allowed to just keep to myself. I am very serious about if you're a leader you are opening doors for everyone that follows behind you. And if I'm in a position to make something better, if I have a voice that can be heard on a particular platform, I can reach more people that will better the lives of everyone involved then I'm going to do that.

I don't have the luxury of not speaking out about who I am as a human, raising a Black son. I was married to a Black man. There are things in life, especially living in America where I don't have the luxury to remain silent

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about or be apolitical on. And these things affect my family. They affect my best friends and their families. There are things that affect everyone that are inherently close to me whether I was online or not. So, if I have something that I can do or say online because of who I am, then I'm absolutely going to say it.

I'm going to tell people to go vote. I'm going to tell people this particular DA is very horrible for our county or whatever that is. And I'm going to use my platform for those purposes. In being who I am online I'm never separating myself from what I do or how I present myself, that you're going to know what my political views are off the top. You should know what they are just by looking at me as a Black woman. And that should be a good indicator. But there is no separation.

And I'm also a believer that you don't have to blast all of your political beliefs or your religious beliefs, or whatever it is. It has to be of substance. What are you yelling into the void for? Are you saying anything of value? And that's what being online, especially having a platform with more than your friends and family following you, what value are you providing the world? What value are you providing to this internet space? Are you saying things because this is how you feel personally? Are you saying something that educate people?

You can speak how you feel about certain things without ostracizing others or making other people feel bad. I mean some things are going to make people feel bad and you have to be okay with that. I'm perfectly okay with that. If you believe that white people are better than Black people then yeah, some of the things I'm going to say is going to make you feel bad because I don't believe that. But there's a line where you have to know feelings are not facts. And what you're saying has to be providing some value to the world.

So, if you have something of value to say, say it. If your views or your feelings on this particular day are going to cause world war 3, maybe not speak on this today.

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Tobi: Today, yeah.

Carmeon: Today, take a breath, put it in a way that's beneficial to everyone involved. Because what you don't want to do is be the person that's just yelling into the void and people are like, "Who is this angry person?" And nobody is listening to you, even the people that agree with you. There is a way to put things to where it's beneficial for everybody. If you have a perspective that is different from others, put it in a way that makes others listen to your perspective first instead of trying to get everyone to agree with you. You only want people to think about it.

You're not trying to change minds, just get people to think about something differently. That's how I can openly be who I am, share what I believe and all those things online. I'm not trying to change anyone. I just want you to think about this differently.

Tobi: I love that so much. There was so much gold in everything you just said. I just want to highlight all of it and exclamation point of all of it. And even listening to you say things like, "If you're super angry right now, and emotional maybe don't come out today." But that's not to say that anger's not a valid emotion and we can't have it. It's like figuring out, having enough distance and perspective that you understand how to channel your anger for the biggest impacting good.

And even when you're saying put it in a way that it benefits everybody, benefitting everybody and making everybody comfortable are not necessarily the same thing.

Carmeon: Two different things, absolutely.

Tobi: That's so good. Oh my gosh, that's so, so good. Thank you. You are so wise beyond your years in many, many ways. And I'm so aligned with so much you're saying but you're also helping me to grow, and think, and yeah, I just really appreciate everything that you've shared today. Is there anything else as we wrap up? Have we covered it all? Is there something that you're like, and I just always have to make sure? I know when you sent

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over your head shot and your stuff there was something about really life being short and creating joy, and not waiting for joy.

And we didn't really talk about that but is it that or anything else that's really important for us to say before we go? Because this is cool, yeah.

Carmeon: I mean to wrap up even everything we've talked about and what I sent over. The only thing you have in this life is yourself and your time. And how are you utilizing your time? Are the people that are closest to you, do they know how you feel about them? Are you spreading your values to the people that are around you? Are you making an impact to the people closest to you, whether it's making your home beautiful for your family or being an advocate for those that have less than you?

Whatever that is your life is very short and we only have the time that we have and we only have ourselves. So, are you being the best human you can be? And are you being the best human you can be to those that you have the most impact on? And that is the catalyst and the battery in my bag for every day. That what I want people to know.

Tobi: Thank you so much. I had no doubt that this would be amazing. But I think this is one of those that people are going to need to put in the, come back to this often kind of category because we've covered a lot.

Carmeon: We've covered a lot, yeah.

Tobi: And it's going to bring up a lot for people, everything from shifting into what their heart wants in their business, to not hiding and not creating this persona, all of it. There's so much here. So just as usual, you do always show up as you but I just want to make sure that you understand how grateful I am that you were born, that you're here, that you have a voice, that you gave your time to me and my audience. I'm just really, really grateful for that.

Carmeon: Thank you for being so patient, waiting two years to get me.

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Tobi: It was worth it. We would not have had this conversation two years ago, we would not.

Carmeon: I am a completely different person than I was two years ago so I'm grateful that it happened when it did.

Tobi: Yeah, me too.

Carmeon: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Tobi: Thank you so much.

You all, I loved this episode. I hope you loved it as much as I did. Nothing inspires me more than people who are really willing to do things differently and to go their own way and to make their business exactly what they want it to be. So, I hope that you've been inspired to think differently about your business. I think this is one of those episodes that you're going to want to listen to over and over again. There is so much gold in it. And Carmeon is just the person to inspire us to really lean into creating businesses that are exactly the ones that are meant for us.

Okay friends, I'll see you back here next week, bye for now.

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