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Pulse Loft or Skyline Level, all with customized menus to reflect your distinct tastes. Relax with a pre-wedding massage and beauty treatment at The Spa while our professional teams of planners, caterers and events specialists create a day you'll never forget.

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$Table\ of\ Contents$ /Volume 8











First Comes Love:

A Real Proposal

18 Gabriel & Iyobosa New York, New York

Real Engagements

- 22 Arianna & Eron Memphis, Tennessee
- 26 Yemisi & Akin Atlanta, Georgia
- 30 Symone & Shareef Harlem, New York
- 34 Courtney & KeJuan Ellenwood, Georgia
- 38 Tariyana & Treston Monroeville, Alabama

Then Comes Marriage:

Real Weddings

- 90 Lauren & Terrell Dallas, Texas
- 96 Delores & Leamon Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 102 Lo'ren & Solomon Los Angeles, California
- 108 Jasmin & Jordan Houston, Texas
- 114 Sasha & David Waldorf, Maryland
- 120 Quantavia & La'Darious Miami, Florida











In Every Issue

- 5 **Editor's Letter**
- **Our Favorite Things**
- 8 **Social Scene**
- 17 A Real Proposal
- 21 **Real Engagements**
- 89 Real Weddings
- **Our Events** 137

Beauty & Health

- 9 **Head-to-Toe Beauty** Wedding day must-haves for the ultimate glow-up
- 14 **Wedding Day Stress** Avoid it with essential nutrition, yoga and more

Planning

- 42 **Destination Wedding** Planning Dos and Don'ts Five tips to get you started planning your destination wedding
- Wedding Financial Planning 44 How to Budget for Your Wedding
- 46 Next-Level Wedding Decor The Ultimate Wedding Decor Guide for 2020 Brides
- 49 **Styled Shoots** Get inspired by superbly styled bridal photo shoots: Intimate Tropical Romance, Enchanted Garden and Island Flair

Fashion

70

- 62 **New York Bridal Fashion Week** 2020 Trend Report
- 67 **Inspiration Color Boards** Colors: A White Winter, Blue Moon and Ruby Red
- **Fashion Shoot** Lavish, beautiful and bold style inspiration

Glam Curvy Bride

After the Aisle

- 126 Couple's Spotlight Love and life with power couple David and Tamela Mann
- 130 How to Plan for Your **Marriage While Planning Your Wedding** Four reasons why it's healthy
- **132 Intimacy 101** Tools for connecting sexually with your partner
- 134 10 Years on the Road to Forever Wedding Anniversary + Vow Renewal

Bridal Suite

Collection of Fine Vendors Resource Guide

Events

139 **Black Bride Bridal Show** Memories from last year

BRIDE

Volume 8

MARY CHATMAN Editor-in-Chief/Publisher

SCOTT CHATMAN Chief Financial Officer

CANDICE DAVIE Editor

CANDICE L. DAVIS Copy Editor

AMBER SPENCE Sales Manager

Contributors

JOMUELLE ANICET

AUSET PARRIS

TONEKA ROYAL

CHRIS HOLDER

CHEYLAINA FULTZ

HALIMA ADETONA

THEREZ FLEETWOOD

MARQUITA C. RICHARDSON

Bridal Suite Expert Contributors

EVENT LOFT PA (Cover Feature)

JAYNE HEIR WEDDINGS & EVENTS

SCHATZI BORGELLA

LILY V EVENTS

YNOT IMAGES

MBM EVENTS & DESIGN

VALIA ROSE EVENTS

Retoucher NATALI GUREEVA

ARTFULLY MADE DESIGNS, LLC

Design, Art Direction & Production artfullymadedesigns.com

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on the cover



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CREATIVE DIRECTOR:

Mary Chatman blackbride.com

LOCATION:

Waldorf Astoria Atlanta Buckhead waldorfastoriaatlanta.com

> Park Studios parkstudios.co

STYLING TEAM: Tiffany Ricks

Tiffany Lewars vowsofstyle.com MAKEUP ARTIST: Alexandra Butler themuaalex.com

HAIR STYLIST: Fairren Thompson instagram.com/ flawless_hairbyfairren

FLORAL DESIGN: Eilena Mericer-Ehmann eventloftpa.com

> LIGHTING: Rando Lawrence

BTS FOOTAGE: Sade Kay Creates sadekay.com

Love in Motion Wedding Films loveinmotion.us

> SET ASSISTANCE: Candice Davie

STYLING ASSISTANCE: Amber Spence

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Welcome to the winter issue of Black Bride Magazine: The Love Edition! Congratulations on finding love and your upcoming nuptials. If there is one thing that inspires me, it's love. Whether curating our content to inspire you about love and self-care, connecting you with amazing wedding professionals to help you plan your dream wedding or providing tips on making your marriage last (advice in the After the Aisle section), we do it passionately and it's all rooted in love!

This issue delivers on love, inspiration and collaboration. Be inspired by the love stories we share in Real Engagements and Real Weddings. Yes, we are better together, truly together, embracing and respecting each other's talents on all levels. Check out the collaborative work of amazing wedding vendors on the pages of our styled shoots and the planning advice from wedding pros. We've also got you covered as you journey into marriage; in the After the Aisle section, you'll find tips and advice from real-life couples. I sat down with gospel powerhouse Tamela Mann and her ingenious comedian husband, David Mann, to talk about love and life together. The interview was filled with laughter, which is clearly one of the keys to the longevity of the Manns' 30-year marriage!

Beautiful and talented actress Malinda Williams, who we all know and love for her roles in Soul Food, Daddy's Little Girls, Idlewild, The Wood and more, graces this issue's cover. She and her husband, Tariq Walker, went against the grain of convention and decided to create their own traditions with an extremely private celebration of their love. Malinda was adamant about the way she wanted to shoot with us and tell her and Tariq's story, which is engulfed in love, truth and authenticity. We had so much fun shooting with the love birds!

As you flip through the pages of this issue, on behalf of the team here at Black Bride, we hope you are inspired by what we've curated. I hope your life is filled with love, dreams come true, excellent health and abundance in the new year and beyond.

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For more inspiration and wedding vendor information, visit our website at www.BlackBride.com, follow us on Instagram @BlackBrride1998.

Fmail us at hello@blackbride.com and let us know what you think of the winter issue.

Cheers!

Mary Chatman Editor-in-Chief



tor's letter

12 EDITOR'S Top Picks

Here are a few of our favorite things for the season.

TAO Clean Orbital Facial Brush System, \$149; taoclean.com







Fenty Beauty by Rihanna Killawatt Foil Freestyle Highlighter Palette, \$27; sephora.com

4

The ORIGINAL
Hand Stamped
Vintage
Spoons™
by Kelly Galanos,
Mr. & Mrs. HandStamped Spoon,
\$36; etsy.com



Say Yes "Mrs." Pavé Studs, \$58, katespade.com







6

The Mane Choice, Hair Type 4 Leaf Clover Leave-In Conditioner, \$13.99;

themanechoice.com

Drunk Elephant Umbra Sheer Physical Daily Defense Sunscreen, \$34; drunkelephant.com



Versace Bright Crystal Eau de Toilette Spray, \$78; sephora.com



Set of 2 Deco Ribbon **Crystal Bobby** Pins, \$120; ben-amun.com





Bride Clutch Bag, \$60; bodywerkjewels.online





11

Pat McGrath Labs Obsessive Opulence: MatteTrance™ Lipstick Christy, \$40; shopyourway.com



Vitamin C Serum, For Instant Glowing Skin, \$33.99; madhippie.com

THE SOCIAL SCENE

A Year In Review



25,227 LIKES @juliannastrid



21,942 LIKES @travisdanielsphotography



16,120 LIKES @idriselba



21,642 LIKES @crys.chi



18,520 LIKES @riah005



18,617 LIKES @breezeflyy



17,313 LIKES @loveinmotionfilms



16,276 LIKES @sherockjz



16,284 LIKES @stanlophotography



Share your best wedding centric photos with us on Instagram and hashtag #BlackBride1998 to be featured on our page @BlackBride1998.

beauty+health

EXPERT ADVICE FOR THE WEDDING SEASON

2020 Bride HEAD-TO-TOE GO-TO

BEAUTY FINDS

BY AUSET PARRIS

Even in a new decade, some things still haven't changed. Being a bride doesn't start on your wedding day. From the moment you say yes, the preparation for that big day begins. And if you choose to partake in an engagement party, bridal brunch and/or bachelorette party, amongst many other events prior to the wedding, attaining and maintaining your bridal glow is a priority. But fear not. We've got some affordable, tried-and-true products to get you glowing within weeks if not days!

......

SEE THESE AMAZING PRODUCTS ALREADY APPROVED -

PHOTOGRAPHY courtesy of Unsplash



HAIR

Whether you plan to get a weave, wig or braids or style your natural tresses for your wedding and all those prewedding events, the health of your natural hair is integral to how those styles turn out. Here are a few items to bring life to your 'do.

Hot Head Thermal Hair Care:

\$29.95: thermalhaircare.com Hot Head is a posh heat cap filled with flaxseed that you pop in the microwave after putting deep conditioner on your hair. With Hot Head, you can perform salonquality treatments in the comfort of your home. Hot Head works on all hair types and textures, including chemically processed hair. Reversible and reusable, Hot Head dramatically improves the results of your favorite deep conditioner, hair mask or oil. These caps are super stylish, ranging from animal prints to sweet treats and more!



Edge Booster Strong Hold Water-Based Pomade; \$9.49; amazon.com

Made with natural argan oil, which absorbs quickly with no oily residue, this pomade nourishes and hydrates while providing a strong and pliable hold. The unique clean scent will invigorate your senses and freshen your hair even between washes. So whether you want to texturize with a natural finish, hold style without buildup, define curls, control frizz or tame edges, Edge Booster will

Edge Styler; \$15; babytress.com Get those edges on point with this thoughtfully designed Edge Styler. Created with form and function in mind, this 3-in-1 beauty tool features: (1) a comb to separate and smooth, (2) natural boar bristles to swoop and shape and (3) a pointed tip for the finishing details.

Design Essentials Almond & Avocado

Co-Wash: \$12.99: ulta.com Design Essentials® Natural Almond & Avocado Nourishing Co-Wash with Sweet Almond & Avocado Oils gently cleanses the hair and scalp, removing product residue and buildup without stripping hair of natural moisture. This hydrating, detangling, cleansing cream makes curly hair more manageable and nourishes dry, thirsty curls for frizz-free, defined curls. Design Essentials Natural Almond & Avocado Nourishing Co-Wash has a rich blend of natural ingredients to cut the detangling time by 30 minutes. Ideal for all curl types.

ApHogee Balancing Moisturizer;

\$9.95; aphogee.com Balancing Moisturizer contains ApHogee's exclusive Pro-Phytamin Complex, a blend of collagen amino acids, emollients, vitamin derivatives and herbal extracts. Used separately, it helps protect styles in humidity and is recommended as a regimen for processed hair, dryness and the ends of long hair. Apply on clean hair in the shower and rinse to provide and seal in moisture, which is essential for the strength and elasticity of healthy hair.

Moroccanoil Hydrating Conditioner;

\$10; sephora.com

Condition and detangle dehydrated hair with Moroccanoil® Hydrating Conditioner. This gentle, daily-use formula leaves hair smoother, more manageable and easier to style. Infused with antioxidant-rich argan oil, vitamins A and E and moistureattracting red algae for optimal hydration for all hair types-from normal to dry hair. Color-safe. Sulfate-free, phosphatefree and paraben-free.



Cantu Leave-In Conditioning Repair

Cream: \$5.99: target.com

This deep-penetrating conditioning treatment is infused with pure shea butter and other natural oils to stop and mend breakage, repair split ends and add manageability and shine with every application. When used daily, Cantu Leave-In Conditioning Repair Cream helps promote stronger, healthier hair. Great for relaxed, texturized, colored and permed hair.

Carol's Daughter Sacred Tiare

Smoothing Serum; \$14.24; walmart.com Protect your hair from all damage so it can be as frizz-free, full of shine and fortified as you want it to be. For even the most distressed hair, this lightweight miracle oil reverses and prevents damage caused by relaxing, color-treating, heat-styling and sun exposure. Its power comes from strand-strengthening coprah coconut oil, a sacred, protein-rich ingredient, blended with the tiare gardenia flower. This silicone-free oil rebuilds your hair's structure from the inside out with the help of safflower oil and vitamin E for true repair that doesn't wash away or weigh down hair like silicones do. Take your hair to its maximum length—no matter what you do to it.

Shea Moisture Jamaican Black Castor Oil Strengthen and Restore Shampoo;

\$9.99; sheamoisture.com

This sulfate-free, clarifying shampoo removes buildup while infusing hair with nourishing moisture. Perfect for those who regularly color, straighten, perm or heat-style their hair, as well as kinky, curly or wavy natural styles. Formulated with Jamaican black castor oil and certified

organic shea butter to help promote natural growth by strengthening damaged or chemically processed hair and reducing breakage and the resultant shedding. Peppermint oil invigorates the scalp for a tingling experience.



be your favorite styling solution.



SKINCARE

The Bridal Glow begins with treating your skin the way you want to feel on your wedding day, loved, cherished and like a million bucks. Formulating the right skincare routine to achieve this feeling will keep you glowing long after your wedding. Take a quick peek into some products we know to be nothing short of life changing.

\$23; macys.com A skincare must-have, this dermatologistdeveloped exfoliating cream gently brushes away roughness and flakiness, clearing the way for moisturizer and smoother makeup application. The lightweight formula smooths skin, helping to minimize the appearance

Clinique 7 Day

Scrub Cream Rinse-Off Formula:



Lush Rose Jam Shower Gel;

\$8.95 - \$49.95: lush.com This decadent, lemon-rose shower gel is made with a vanilla pod infusion, goii berry juice and nourishing argan oil to leave skin soft, hydrated and sweetly scented. Lovers of our Rose Jam Bubbleroon and Ro's Argan Body Conditioner will recognize its gorgeous fragrance. Double or triple up, and never be without this irresistible scent.



Lush Ro's Argan **Body Conditioner**;

\$35.95 - \$49.95; lush.com Slathering on this juicy, fruity, rose-scented body conditioner has



become a beauty ritual we can't do without. Packed with cocoa, shea and cupuacu butters along with brazil nut, almond and argan oils, this luxurious, self-preserving conditioner deeply moisturizes skin without a greasy feel. After showering or a relaxing bath, massage it all over your body, and then rinse and pat dry for supremely soft, vanillaand-rose-scented skin.

Kiehl's Ultra Facial Cleanser;

\$20; ulta.com

This specially formulated, gentle foaming cleanser helps remove dirt and debris without over-drying or stripping skin. In addition to dissolving excess oil and dirt, this pHbalanced cleanser supports skin's natural balance. Formulated with squalane, apricot kernel oil, vitamin E and avocado oil, this gentle face wash is suitable for all skin types.

Specific Beauty Advanced Dark Spot

Corrector Pads: \$19.99: target.com Revive your skin's sheer radiance and brighten skin tone with this multitasking formula that helps improve the look and feel of skin. Kojic acid, arbutin and bearberry extract help brighten skin for a more even-looking tone. Super antioxidants protect against environmental damage, and botanical extracts help soothe skin for an overall healthy-looking, radiant complexion.

Mario Badescu Facial Spray;

\$7; ulta.com Mario Badescu's classic rejuvenating mist infused with herbal and botanical extracts. Whether spritzed for a hydrating boost or pleasant midday pick-me-up, this cult-favorite spray helps soothe dehydrated skin anytime, anywhere. A blend of aloe vera and extracts of gardenia. rose, bladderwrack and



Thavers Alcohol-Free Witch Hazel **Facial Toner Aloe Vera Formula;**

\$10.95; ulta.com

Thavers Alcohol-Free Witch Hazel Toner is formulated with aloe vera and witch hazel extract to tighten pores and soothe and cleanse the skin. A good addition to your beauty arsenal to reduce blemishes.

Era Organics Complete Natural Moisturizing Face Cream;

\$29.99; eraorganics.com

of fine, dry lines.

This advanced healing and moisturizing lotion is designed for any skin type and nearly every skin condition. Experience immediate and long-term relief with the unique 10-in-1



formula that provides all the vitamins and minerals your skin needs to be healthy.

Skin Tight Vitamin A&E Night Creme;

\$10; skintightinc.com

Contains antioxidants and moisturizers that help eliminate free radicals from the skin, leaving skin soft, supple and glowing. Also restores skin that has been damaged by sunburn.

Dermalogica Charcoal Rescue Masque;

\$49: ulta.com

This all-in-one treatment masque detoxifies. brightens and invigorates normal to oily skin. The fast-acting, easy-to-remove formula rescues tired, lackluster or dull skin. Activated binchotan

charcoal powerfully adsorbs impurities while sulfur promotes skin cell turnover for dramatically brighter skin. Volcanic ash, sea silt, bamboo extract and alpha-hydroxy acids further accelerate skin brightening with dual-action exfoliation. Niacinamide helps reduce congestion and calm the skin while Chilean wild mint helps refine pores.





MAKEUP

For brides who want to save some coin and still have elevated looks for the events prior to your wedding day, here are some essentials that can make your makeup arsenal blissfully bridal.

Urban Decay Perversion Waterproof Fine-Point Eye Pen; \$27; ulta.com

The ultra-fine brush tip retracts after each use to deliver the same blacker-than-black pigment that Urban Decay's Beauty Junkies have obsessed over for years. Perversion lays down semi-matte, and thanks to how much control you have with the pen, the level of drama is in your hands. This mascara dries quickly for all-day wear without smudging, running or feathering (no touch-ups!) and won't quit until you say when.

Urban Decay On the Run Eyeshadow Palette in Highway Queen;

\$25; macys.com Each palette includes eight eyeshadow shades with varying finishes (from



matte to metallic) and a mirror for creating looks on the go. Color-coded with unique packaging so you'll be able to whip out the one you want with a moment's notice. Highway Queen is packed with all those dreamy desert hues, from burnt terracotta to metallic tangerine.

Urban Decay Perversion Waterproof Mascara; \$24; sephora.com

With the perfect combo of soft and hard waxes, Perversion Waterproof Mascara glides on smoothly and quickly, yet it coats each lash and never gets brittle or clumpy. Go big and apply coat after coat! Plus, this nourishing blend of proteins, amino acids and honey extract promotes lash growth and stimulates hair follicles for bigger, blacker, healthier lashes.

Lilly Lashes The Bridal Collection;

\$125; Iillylashes.com
Shop the exclusive limited-edition
collection of the most premium mink
lashes in town. Get all 5 lash styles,
including the Wedding Lash, 24 Carat,
Prenup, Happy Wife, Happy Life and
Always + Forever. A lash applicator and
glue are included to make the final look
pop no matter the occasion.

PRECISER, NO SOUR PENCE &

Benefit Cosmetics Precisely, My Brow Eyebrow Pencil;

\$12; ulta.com

The ultra-fine tip on this eyebrow pencil makes adding definition to brows easy. It lets you draw incredibly natural-looking, hair-like strokes that last up to 12 hours. This rich, waterproof eyebrow pencil is ideal for spot-filling sparse or over-tweezed areas, and the smudge-proof formula is firm enough for precise application. A few strokes of the rich yet blendable color will transform brows from shapeless and undefined to filled and defined.

Benefit Cosmetics POREfessional Face Primer: \$32: ulta.com

Quickly minimize the appearance of pores and fine lines for smoother-than-smooth skin! Apply this silky, lightweight balm alone or under or over makeup. The translucent, oil-free formula complements all skin tones and helps makeup stay put. Contains a vitamin E derivative, known to protect skin from free radicals.





Fenty Beauty by Rihanna Pro Filt'r Instant Retouch Setting Powder;

\$32; fentybeauty.com

This superfine, insanely silky loose powder sets and extends makeup wear, working all day to blur the look of pores, fine lines and imperfections for a hyper-smooth filter that didn't come to play—so bring on the paparazzi.

Fenty Beauty by Rihanna Gloss Bomb Universal Lip Luminizer;

\$18; fentybeauty.com

Fenty Beauty Gloss Bomb is the essential finishing touch to your wedding-day look. In three universal shades—Fenty Glow,

a perfect rose nude, Fu\$\$y, a soft romantic pink, and Diamond Milk, a shimmering wash of milky pearl,—this stop-everything, give-it-to-me lip gloss feels as good as it looks, and looks good on everyone!



Fenty Beauty by Rihanna Pro Filt'r Instant Retouch Concealer;

\$26; fentybeauty.com

In a groundbreaking range of 50 matte shades, this creamy, long-wear, crease-proof liquid concealer delivers light-as-air medium to full coverage. This concealer will give you the perfect photo-ready look and lasts all

day without creasing or settling into fine lines or pores. Plus, its sweat-resistant formula is guaranteed to keep up no matter how late you stay up or wild out on your wedding day.



Iman Cosmetics Luxury Concealing

Foundation; \$15.99; target.com For those who cherish minimal steps and full coverage, this long-wear formula provides a flawless and radiant complexion. Its buildable and versatile coverage makes this the ultimate 2-in-1 foundation.



Mac Powder Blush in Melba;

\$25: ulta.com

A blush that provides fantastic color with ease and consistency. Applies evenly, adheres lightly to skin to achieve a naturallooking application of color for the rosvcheeks look.



NYX Professional Makeup Matte Setting

Spray; \$5.95; ulta.com

Demand perfection! Makeup lovers and professionals alike know that fresh matte makeup looks that last must be set with NYX Professional Makeup Matte Setting Spray. This musthave, lightweight spray has a gorgeous shine-free matte finish that's super comfortable and breathable while working hard to make sure your makeup stays put literally all day and into the night! Just spray on a matte finish, and forget about it. Seriously, if you don't set your look with this amazing matte setting spray, is your makeup even done?





KISS Everlasting French Nails, Wedding Gown; \$4.97; walmart.com

KISS Everlasting French Nail Kit with flex-fit technology for ultimate comfort. Easy to apply, this French manicure lasts longer than a salon manicure, with chip-free wear for up to a week. For the days when you want the bridal look without committing to an acrylic set.



Bridechilla Wedding Day

Emergency Kit; \$27; birdygrev.com The Bridechilla Oh Sh*t Kit is a complete wedding-day emergency pack, filled with helpful items to get you out of any lastminute jams in the bridal suite while you get ready for your big moment. Complete with calming Bridechilla mantras and a delightful bag with two zip compartments for future use, the Bridechilla Oh Sh*t Kit is an ideal gift for Bridezillas. Contains: scissors, band-aids (x4), blister packs (x4), earring backs (x2), bobby pins (x6), safety pins (x6), double-sided tape (x4), comb/hairbrush, sewing kit, body lotion, dental kit, vanity kit (cotton buds, emery board, makeup pad), and 5 Ways to Be a Bridechilla card.

OH, JUST IN CASE

In the journey to bridal bliss, some necessities that may be forgotten along the way could potentially prepare you for the unexpected. Stay ready so you don't have to get ready with these must-haves. We won't let them catch you slipping!

Dr. Scholl's Stylish Step High Heel Relief Insoles;

\$7.99: target.com These insoles are clinically proven to prevent foot pain in high heels. For all-day comfort in heels 2 inches or higher, the ultra-soft gel shifts pressure off the ball of your foot. Necessary for those long days of glam on your feet.



Spanx Suit Your Fancy Plunge Low-Back Mid-Thigh Bodysuit;

\$148; spanx.com

This body suit is the ultimate low-back, low-front solution for getting you glam! Adjustable and convertible straps offer

versatility, while sleek shaping fabric works invisibly "backstage" to ensure your style gets all the applause. The low-back design includes a removable back clasp for total versatility with clear straps and a strap converter. Cling-free shaping fabric offers a lightweight, yet firm hug and Easy Access Gusset™ for ease when nature calls.







etting ready for one of I the most exciting days of your life can be an emotional roller coaster. In the months leading up to your wedding, you'll experience excitement and happiness accompanied by overwhelm and stress. You'll have to juggle planning to ensure things go smoothly, expectations of family and friends and, of course, the added pressure of maintaining an exercise routine and healthy eating plan so you look fit and fab in your wedding gown for the big day! It's no wonder the term "bridezilla" was invented. It's a lot for one woman to handle. That's why having a wedding wellness plan is essential to making it to the big day healthy, happy and looking your best.

Stress can wreak havoc on your body and mind. Mentally, it can lead to anxiety or insomnia, and physically, it can lead to decreased digestion and sex drive. Stress can also increase blood pressure and cortisol levels, not to mention contribute to weight gain. As a woman and bride-to-be, you can do without the negative effects that stress can have, but there are many ways to keep your stress levels down.

Morning Meditation

Starting your day with 10 to 30 minutes of meditation every morning can help you feel more present, relaxed and joyful throughout your wedding journey. Set a timer, close your eyes, connect with your breath and simply observe your thoughts as they come. Allow your thoughts to pass like clouds and then bring your awareness back to your breath.

Photography courtesy of Canva









Enjoyable exercise, with an element of mindfulness, a diet of whole, unprocessed foods and regular journaling, provides relief from the stress of wedding planning.

Journaling

Practice journaling what you're grateful for after each meditation session so you can foster feelings of happiness. You can also journal throughout your day when you experience moments of stress. When this happens, write about how you're feeling and create actionable steps to conquer whatever the problem is.

Yoga

Any of several styles of yoga can help you gently move your body, releasing physical and energetic tension and bringing you back to a state of peace and ease.

Exercise

Physical activity releases endorphins and increases serotonin levels in the brain. Find the type of exercise that makes you feel better when you're in a funk. For some, it's yoga, while for others, it can be a spin class or running.

Proper Nutrition

Eating a diet rich in whole, plant-based foods will ensure you look and feel amazing throughout your wedding planning and on the big day. Try out these tips and tricks:

- 1) Start your day with a glass of warm water with fresh-squeezed lemon. This helps to gently get the digestive system and metabolism revved up. It also assists the immune system through a burst of vitamin C and will help your skin to glow.
- Avoid processed foods. Instead, cook at home or have healthy meals delivered. If you feel tired and sluggish after your meals, then you know it's time to lighten things up.
- Add greens to every meal. Kale, spinach, chard and arugula are just a few leafy greens you can add to each meal to keep you healthy and fit.
- (4) Get your fiber in! Fiber keeps blood sugar levels stable, improves digestive health and will help you to keep your weight down.
- 5 Try to eat balanced meals with a source of lean protein, a healthy fat, like olive oil or avocado, greens and a carbohydrate, like sweet potato.
- 6 Drink lots of water! Half of your body weight in ounces is a good rule of thumb.
- Practice the 80/20 rule. Perfection is too much pressure, especially

when you have to sample menus and cakes! Practice eating clean 80% of the time and allowing yourself the other 20% to enjoy celebrating this exciting time.

As you create your unique healthy wedding plan, make sure to include mindfulness, healthy foods, exercise and a lot of self-love! This balance will ease your worries so you can enjoy this magical time and glow from the inside out on your big day!

Toneka is a certified health advocate from Real Balance Global Wellness. She's also trained in the Wellness Mapping 360 Methodology, which is a holistic approach based on behavioral



change psychology. As a personal trainer and specialist in fitness nutrition, Toneka has more than 15 years of experience in guiding women to optimal wellness while helping them embrace beauty from the inside out. Toneka has joined the team as a wellness contributing writer for Black Bride Magazine. Find out more about Toneka at tonekaroyal.com.









PHOTOGRAPHED BY SANTORINI LION

e met at a video shoot in 2013 and became friends. Fast-forward to July 2017. A friend needed a choreographer for his wedding, and Iyobosa came on board. For the rehearsals, she needed a ride from Brooklyn to the Bronx, and I offered to drive her. On the long journey, we talked about our lives.

On one trip, she requested we stop for a sandwich since I was hungry. She also insisted on paying. (That was really cute.) I asked about her goals and aspirations, and her comfort in speaking to me about them felt special. I also shared my goals with her and offered to help in her career journey. We got closer from that moment. Later that year, we started a relationship.

The Proposal (Her Story)

I left for Santorini as a girlfriend and came back a whole fiancée. I was blown away.

Words can't express how much this means to me. Gabriel is the truly the man of my dreams. When I prayed about my husband, I had no idea how God was going to overbless me, and I thank Him every day for us. The proposal was the best, most memorable event of my life so far.

The Proposal (His Story)

I wanted to do something forever memorable. Greece had always been my dream trip because I studied Greek philosophy, so I suggested we plan a trip to Santorini. I called Iyobosa's older sister, who convinced Iyobosa to get nice dresses for the trip. I found a good photographer, booked a spot for the proposal, and spent three months planning. Iyobosa loves pictures, so a photo shoot was the best way to surprise her. We spent one night in Athens, explored that ancient city, and flew to Santorini the next day.

the proposal story

Behind the Scenes (His Story)

I hid the ring in my luggage. (I felt like a drug dealer carrying contraband!) When my luggage weighed too much at the airport, I had to distract Iyobosa to prevent her from helping me rearrange the contents. The night before the proposal, I woke up every 30 minutes to make sure the ring was still with me.

The shoot was scheduled for 6:00 in the evening. However, I told Iyobosa it was at 4:00 so we could get there on time. Later, the photographer took us to a restaurant and stayed to take more pictures. He went in first to create the vibe with rose petals spread on the floor. Then, Iyobosa stepped inside. The moment I stood in front of her, she had an idea of what was happening. I went down on my knees and popped the question.

What makes your love special?

Truly caring about each other and each of us contributing to the betterment of our beings makes our love special.

Were there any memorable moments during the shoot?

The sunset was a memorable moment during our photo shoot.

Have you started planning your wedding? Yes, we have!

What are you most looking forward to about your wedding?

We look forward to our families and our friends coming together in unity to celebrate our union. 3

Bride:

Iyobosa Iyamu, 27, Data Analyst

Groom:

Gabriel Olokunwolu, 28, Cloud Engineer

Place of Residence:

New York, New York

Proposal Shoot Location:

Santorini, Greece

Wedding Date:

10/04/2020





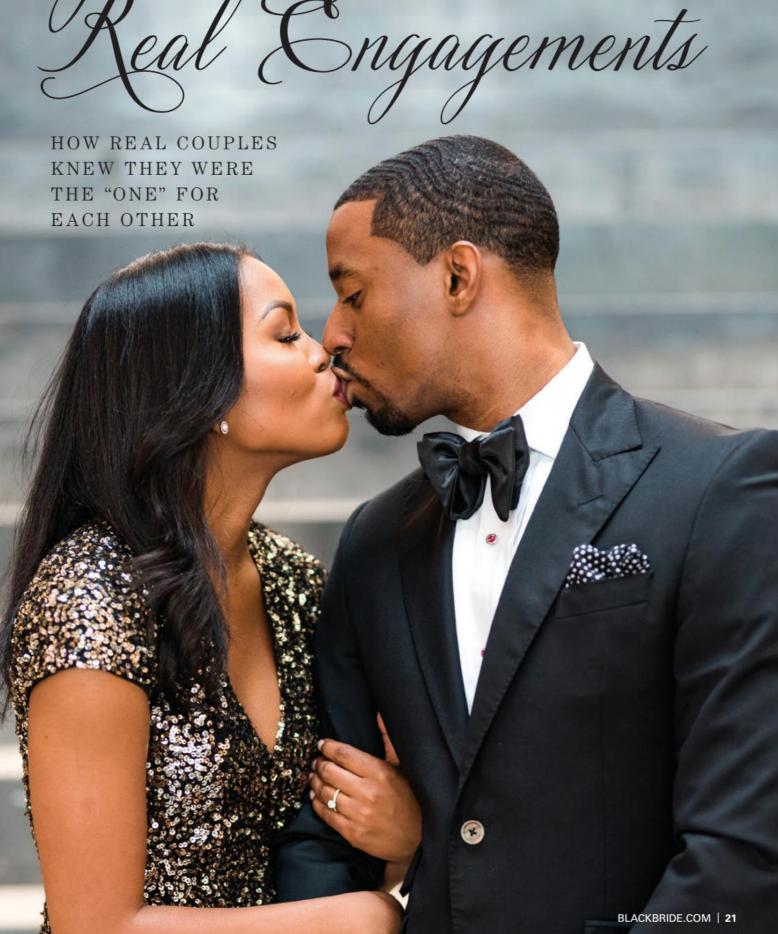








Real Engagements









PHOTOGRAPHED BY CAMILLE LEIGH OF CAMILLE LEIGH PHOTOGRAPHY

Arjanna & Eron

ron went to college with Ariana's (Ari's) older sister, who showed Ari Eron's Instagram profile one day and said, "I can see you with someone like this." It seemed like a random comment, but Ari couldn't stop thinking about that photo. A few days later, she decided to follow Eron on Instagram, and he returned the favor by following back. At the time, they lived in different cities, hours apart, but Ari was planning to visit a friend in Eron's city soon. She reached out to see if he wanted to meet up while she was there, and the pair made an undeniable connection that day. Three years later, they're preparing to spend the rest of their lives together.

The Proposal (Her Story)

Eron told me his family was going to the Bass

Pro Pyramid for a special announcement. I thought one of his brothers and his brother's wife were expecting their first baby, and I was so excited! That night, with the gorgeous Memphis skyline as our backdrop, Eron asked me to be his wife. I was even more surprised when I saw my family had flown into town and my friends were there for the engagement party that followed.

The Proposal (His Story)

Ari and her mom are really close, so I knew her mom had to be there when I popped the question. I also reached out to some of Ari's friends who couldn't make it and had them record videos for her. Finally, I planned an engagement party at a lounge in downtown Memphis, where dozens of our family and friends were waiting for us to celebrate.





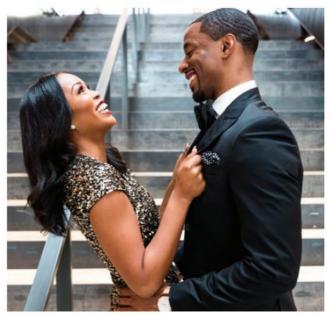












What makes your love special?

What I love about our love is that it was clearly ordained by God. From the way we met to sharing some of the same gifts and passions in life, everything has happened so naturally.

What was the theme of your shoot?

We went for classy yet simple with a touch of glam. We picked downtown Memphis because we spend a lot of our time there and love the area.

Were there any memorable moments during the shoot?

While we were shooting, a hotel clerk asked us if we wanted access to the hotel rooftop, which overlooks the city. Those photos ended up being some of our favorite pictures!

Have you started planning your wedding?

Yes! Planning has been both exciting and stressful, but we're so excited to see our vision come to life!

What are you most looking forward to about your wedding?

We cannot wait to have all our loved ones gathered in one place to celebrate our love. 🚳

Bride:

Arianna Poindexter, 26, TV News Anchor/ Reporter

Groom:

Eron Stephens, 30, Executive Pastor/ Entrepreneur

Place of Residence: Memphis, Tennessee

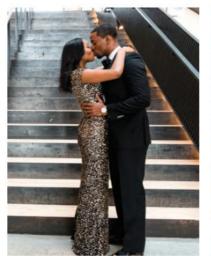
Engagement **Shoot Location:**

Memphis, Tennessee

Wedding Date: 10/26/2019

















PHOTOGRAPHED BY FOTOS BY FOLA

lemisi c

hey say when you know, you know. When Yemisi met Akin, in April of 2017, she was instantly intrigued. During their first date at The Dunlavy in Houston, she felt completely at ease and free to be herself. This lovely couple has been inseparable ever since.

The Proposal (Her Story)

Our very eventful day began at The Westin and included a scenic helicopter ride around Atlanta, Akin had also made dinner reservations for what I assumed would be a romantic dinner for two. It turned out to be a surprise engagement with all of our family and friends from different states and countries present. It was truly a memorable moment.

The Proposal (His Story)

When I was thinking about proposing, I fasted and prayed because I needed confirmation from God about my decision. Once I received it, I secretly invited our loved ones to the engagement, bought the ring and shipped it to a close friend's house. On May 25, 2019, I planned a helicopter ride around the city and arranged for everyone to meet us at the restaurant. When we arrived, the waiter told us our table wasn't ready yet, so we could wait outside in the garden. When we walked back inside, Yemisi saw everyone and immediately cried tears of joy. I got down on one knee and proposed with our family and friends there to witness the moment.

first comes love

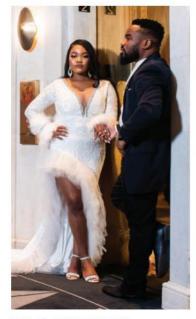
















What makes your love special?

Our foundation is in God, and everything we do is bound by our faith. We always say that "Oluwa is involved," which in our native language means "God is involved."

What was the theme of your shoot?

We wanted a shoot that symbolized royalty and portrayed a young couple who has gained strength after overcoming various trials in life.

Were there any memorable moments during the shoot?

We concluded our shoot outside the hotel in downtown Atlanta and literally stopped traffic. Everyone who walked by us stopped to compliment us, and a group was chanting, "Black love! Black love!" It was amazing!

Have you started planning your wedding?

Most definitely! We're looking forward to seeing our plan become a reality.

What are you most looking forward to about your wedding?

Sharing such a special day with our loved ones and dancing!

Bride:

Yemisi Alli, 27, Healthcare Professional

Groom:

Akin Ladipo, 33, Information Technology Consultant

Place of Residence:

Atlanta, Georgia

Engagement Shoot Location:

The Candler Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia

Wedding Date:

04/04/2020















PHOTOGRAPHED BY KESHSA LAMBERT PHOTOGRAPHY

Tymone & Thare

ymone and Shareef met casually at a karaoke party in summer of 2014. Shareef knew there was something special about her, but it wasn't until weeks later, at the Dear Summer BBQ in Harlem, that Symone confidently told her friend that Shareef was her future husband. They exchanged numbers and have been inseparable since then.

The Proposal (Her Story)

On November 17, 2018, Shareef hosted the Friendsgiving gathering he'd been planning for years. Nothing was out of the ordinary until Shareef wanted us both to make a speech. I was completely oblivious until he said our favorite line, "We always say forever and a day, and it truly is forever and a day, but I no longer want to do it with you as my girlfriend." He pulled it off perfectly!

The Proposal (His Story)

My plan to propose in Paris, London, or Amsterdam changed after Symone's father expressed a desire to witness the proposal. The Friendsgiving dinner I'd always flaked out on hosting was the perfect set-up. After everyone ate, Symone's friend said, "You guys have to give a speech," and my mother slipped the ring into my blazer. I was so nervous! Symone was rushing me to finish, but once she caught on, she teared up. It was a memorable night.

What makes your love special?

Before, we really didn't believe in marriage. Once we found each other, it was just right. There was no pressure, just pure love.

What was the theme of your shoot?

Our wedding is taking place in the fall, and

$first\ comes\ love$

















we captured our love mixed with the beauty of autumn.

Were there any memorable moments during the shoot?

It was freezing outside, so we tried to keep each other warm. Also, Shareef ended up losing his lapel pin! Luckily, he had a backup.

Have you started planning your wedding?

Our wedding will take place in New Jersey, in fall 2020. We have a long way to go, but we're excited about our plans so far!

What are you most looking forward to about your wedding?

We look forward to solidifying our union and having family and friends share in our special day.

Bride:

Symone Marie Campbell, 32, Fashion Account Manager

Groom:

Shareef Jamil Moore, 34, Director of Social Services/Actor

Place of Residence: Harlem, New York

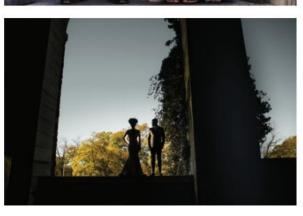
Engagement Shoot Location:

The Met Cloisters, New York, New York

Wedding Date: 10/02/2020















PHOTOGRAPHED BY CHAMPAGNE LOVE STORIES

ourtney of

ourtney and KeJuan met in 2001 when they were in the same high school history class. For the next fifteen years, they remained friends-until KeJuan learned that Courtney planned to move to Texas. He asked to see her again, and their connection was so strong that Courtney stayed in Atlanta to see where it would take them. Now, they're preparing to become husband and wife.

The Proposal (Her Story)

All day, from the moment I woke up, KeJuan surprised me with numbered birthday gifts. One of the gifts was a surprise party filled with all of our closest friends and family. At the party, he had even bigger surprises in store. One of the most memorable gifts was my best friend from high school, who

KeJuan flew in from Seattle just to be a part of that day. I hadn't seen her in ten years, so it was an unforgettable surprise. After that, he read a poem derived from Proverbs 31, "The Virtuous Woman." Then, he got down on one knee and proposed.

The Proposal (His Story)

One year after we started dating, I knew Courtney was going to be my wife. While planning the proposal, we found out we were expecting twins, and I put the plans on hold. Watching what she endured during pregnancy and delivery only confirmed that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her. She'd never had the chance to attend a prom, so for Courtney's birthday, I planned a prom-themed surprise party. Shortly after the king-and-queen dance,

first comes love



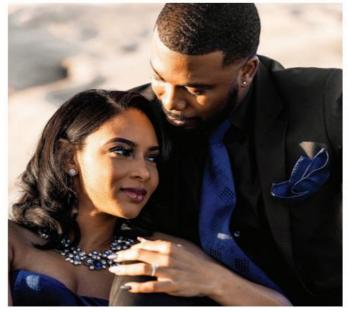














I presented her with her thirty-first gift of the day, her engagement ring. The party was stressful because she's a detective by nature and I didn't want anyone to ruin the surprise. Although she figured out there was a surprise party, the look on her face when she saw the ring and her best friend made all the stress worth it!

What makes your love special?

Our love is special because it's based on more than fifteen years of friendship. We've gained so much respect for each other as we've watched each other mature.

What was the theme of your shoot?

A throwback to where it all began, Stephenson High School.

Were there any memorable moments during the shoot?

It was our first time back at Stephenson since we attended, and it brought back so many memories.

Have you started planning your wedding?

Yes, our wedding planner, Brighter Affairs, is doing all the planning.

What are you most looking forward to about your wedding?

We're ready to have a good time and share our love with our friends and family.

Bride:

Courtney Strickland, 32, Commercial Real Estate Property Manager

Groom:

KeJuan McGee, 32, General Manager, Jared the Galleria of Jewelry

Place of Residence:

Ellenwood, Georgia

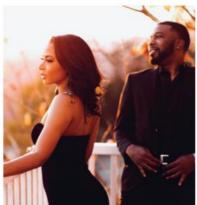
Engagement **Shoot Location:**

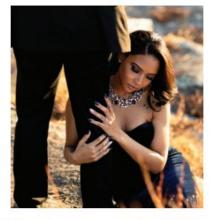
Stephenson High School and Stone Mountain Park, Stone Mountain, Georgia

Wedding Date:

10/04/2020















PHOTOGRAPHED BY YNOT IMAGES

ariyana was walking down the hall of her high school when she recognized a young man standing nearby. She was a majorette, and he was number 78 on the football team. After approaching him and asking for his autograph, Tariyana was surprised to see that Treston had also written his phone number. This lovely couple has been together ever since.

Engagement Story

A few weeks before Mother's Day, I hinted to Treston that I wanted a pair of Nike flip flops. On May 13, 2017, he pulled out a Nike box. I was excited, thinking he'd bought the shoes. After seeing that the box was empty, I playfully tossed it. Next, Treston gave me a card with a handwritten note that said: "You shouldn't want the smaller things in

life, like Nike flip flops. You've been so good to me and our son and you deserve nothing but the bigger things. Stop thinking small and let's go big ... COME HERE, MRS. WILLIAMS TO BE!"

The Proposal (His Story)

When Tariyana asked about the flip flops, she gave me the perfect chance to plan the proposal. I thought it would be funny to give her an empty box, making her think she was getting the shoes. When she read the card and her eyes filled with tears, I gave her the ring. It was the happiest moment.

What makes your love special?

We are truly high school sweethearts, and we're so blessed to have found our forever love so early.





















What was the theme of your shoot?

We wanted our shoot to be romantic, and we think we nailed it.

What are you most looking forward to about your wedding?

We're looking forward to seeing our vision come to life. We had the idea of clearing ten acres of family land to have the wedding on, and Joanna Sheppard with Valia Rose Events agreed to take on the challenge. @



Tariyana Wiggins, 26, Educator

Groom:

Treston Williams, 28, Electrician

Place of Residence:

Monroeville, Alabama

Engagement

Shoot Location:

Birmingham, Alabama

Wedding Date:

05/25/2020





PLANNING



Destination Wedding Planning Dos & Don'ts

By Cheylaina Fultz | Photography by Yelissa Bone

So you've decided you're hopping on a plane or a boat to tie the knot with your love. Yes, nuptials with a side of beach, please! What better way to save on your wedding and honeymoon than by combining the two? Before you choose on which beach you want to say "I do," make sure you don't miss these tips.



Work with a travel agent and hire a wedding planner. If your wedding planner serves both functions, that's icing on the cake. A travel agent will secure group deals for your guests, set up payment plans for their reservations, secure flights and airport transfers and set up tours and activities. Among other tasks, your wedding planner will keep your timeline on schedule, help you with the design of your wedding, keep track of your RSVPs, create a detailed wedding weekend itinerary, liaise with your wedding vendors, be a point of contact for your guests while they're on the resort property, coordinate your wedding rehearsal and rehearsal dinner and, of course, coordinate your wedding day.



DON'T

If your group is traveling during the holidays, don't expect many concessions or any at all. When planning your destination wedding, your travel agent may be able to secure concessions for you, such as a free room after a set number of rooms are booked. However, many resorts have blackout dates. These dates are typically around the Christmas holiday, and the resort may not offer any concessions during that time.



Send out your save-the-dates as soon as you confirm the wedding date and location. Some brides think this step is unnecessary for their destination wedding. They want to keep costs down and focus on the invitations instead. However, when you choose not to send out immediate notice, you don't give your guests ample time to plan and prepare financially for your big day. If you're worried about getting fancy save-the-date cards, don't. You don't have to overthink it. You don't have to have your engagement photos ready to send. You just have to get the word out. This could mean creating a landing page for your wedding website (if it's under construction) with the date on the front page. You could send out an e-card, a fridge magnet or a postcard. Save the creative ideas, like passports, airplane tickets and magazines, for your invitations. The key here is to quickly let your guests know what date they need to mark on their calendars!



DON'T

If it's taking longer than expected to get a response from the resort coordinator or any overseas vendors, don't fret. As Americans, we're programmed to always be on the clock. We want immediate responses, but that's not how things work in some other countries. In the Caribbean, they are on island time. This is why it's so important to work with a destination wedding planner and travel agent, who have the time and energy to stay on top of the vendors. Sometimes there are language barriers, time zone differences, or a lack of manpower. More than likely, the coordinator you're working with is the only one the resort has. If she's coordinating four weddings that day, how can she immediately respond to your message? She can't. So sit back and relax. If by day two you haven't received a response, reach out again.

Choose a resort that can accommodate all your guests. If you plan to have a large guest list, a boutique resort may not have the capacity to house everyone. Unless the resort has sister resorts connected to the property, splitting up your guests among multiple resorts will not be ideal. Also, when choosing a destination location, consider your guests' budgets and pick a reasonably affordable location that doesn't compromise your standard of quality.

Cheylaina Fultz earned a B.S. in journalism and mass communication from North Carolina A&T State University. After planning events in corporate America for a few years, she became a certified wedding planner



and founded Creative Purposes by C. Fultz in 2012. Cheylaina has planned several weddings in the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Puerto Rico. For more info on Cheylaina, visit creativepurposesbycfultz.com.

How to **Save** for a Wedding

By Chris Holder

edding planning is always an exciting time, but it can also be very stressful. Many couples today feel the pressure to make their wedding the biggest event of all time, even if it leaves them with empty bank accounts. As you plan for your wedding, please keep in mind that you have a full life to enjoy after this beautiful day. Focus on preparing for it the right way. My wife and I pulled our wedding together over six months and had a beautiful experience with everything paid in full by the time we left for our honeymoon. Here are some of the money-saving strategies we learned.



DETERMINE YOUR BUDGET

When you two sit down to plan your wedding, it's important to finish that conversation with a dollar amount you both will commit to saving for the wedding. You can get ideas about pricing from friends whose weddings you enjoyed, or you can reach out to wedding planners to get an idea of what you can get for your established budget. Once you set a budget, it becomes easier to focus on what needs to be done. Also, it's important to pay for wedding expenses with a joint account so you both can see the account activity and there's no confusion about where the money is going or how close you are to your savings goal.

NEGOTIATE EVERYTHING

In business, almost everything can be negotiated down in price, or you can always reach some sort of compromise that works for you. At the end of the day, anywhere you go, vendors are looking for your business. Feel free to ask how they can work within your budget. Each vendor you evaluate is competing with other companies in the same area for your money. To get the best rates, you'll need to be flexible, sometimes even to the point of switching the date and time of your wedding. Another option that might help you get better pricing is using some of the venue's preferred-partner businesses, which makes them look good and makes their vendors happy. Either way, every price you can negotiate down can result in big savings for your wedding so your money isn't wasted.

CONSIDER YOUR TIMELINE

Depending on the kind of wedding you want to have, your timeline can also impact your wedding budget. Lastminute venues and vendors typically come at a premium cost. If you've decided to get married within the next week, you might have to keep the wedding small and head to the courthouse and call it a day. However, if you set a date a year or so out, you might be able to rent a hall or a bigger venue within your budget. Either way, your timeline will determine what will be realistic for you and your partner. Without the correct planning and timeline, you'll likely overspend and risk starting your new life in major debt.







Controlling your spending during this time is easier said than done. As you both shop around and see everything that's available to you, you can start to feel like it's worth it to break your budget. However, this is where the two of you need to remind each other about what's most important to your future together as husband and wife. Perhaps both of you want to avoid being in debt, want to buy a home shortly after the wedding or plan to start a family. Whatever your goal, keep it in focus to avoid making bad decisions. In life, you've already figured out habits and tricks to keep yourself in line and achieve your goals. Put those same habits in place now to protect yourselves from overextending and ruining your future plans.

START A SIDE HUSTLE

Offering paid services for a short period of time is a great way to increase your cash flow fast and hit your savings goal faster. You may have always wanted to try something outside of the norm to make extra money. Well, this is the time to start because many people will understand that you're doing it for the wedding and support you if they can.

As you plan to pay for your wedding, remembers this: Your wedding is your day. It will be fun, but it will happen in the blink of an eye. Continue to put this same energy and focus on your marriage so you can have more beautiful, special days and moments together. @

Chris Holder is a personal finance expert, television and radio personality and the author of numerous books, including the #1 Amazon bestseller Tips to Success. Chris has helped hundreds of families make



healthy financial decisions and turn their financial lives around. He has appeared on national TV programs, including NBC Palm Springs, and has been featured in Business News Daily and CEO Blog Nation. For more info on Chris, visit ceochrisholder.com.







Next-Level Wedding Decor

The Ultimate Wedding Decor Guide for 2020 Brides

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By Halima Adetona

Photography Courtsey of Halima Adetona If I could sum up my prediction for 2020 wedding decor in one phrase, it would be this: The bolder the better. In 2019, we witnessed first dances on a bed of clouds, larger-than-life wedding cakes and dresses straight from the pages of Cinderella. You can be sure 2020 will feature even more fairytale touches, including over-thetop floral centerpieces, ceiling installations and life-sized trees.

No longer are couples concerned with traditional wedding decor.
They're becoming more adventurous and embracing wow-worthy floral designs that reflect their personal style and create a unique experience for their guests. With the rise of Instagram, couples are exposed to different designs from all around the world and

are more open to non-traditional color palettes, flowers and designs.

Here are essential elements to consider when planning over-the-top decor for your big day.

1. Choose the Right Venue

It's extremely important to ensure your venue is flexible and allows your vendors adequate time to set up. A full ball-room transformation will require more time than is included in a standard venue contract. Be sure to negotiate this up front to avoid significant costs down the road. Also remember to consult with your planner, event designer or florist before selecting a venue.

2. Create Focal Points

Instead of stretching your decor bud-









get to include many things, create one or two wow moments. Hanging florals over dining tables or a floral-covered ceiling installation will truly make your wedding unique and impress your guests. Those unusual touches add instant drama and offer great alternatives to the usual table arrangement or centerpiece ideas.

3. Remain True to Your Style

From glam to rustic, there's an overthe-top design that works for every bride. If you love greenery, you can get inspiration from the larger-thanlife floral entrance at Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's wedding. If you are all about modern glam, just look through the photos from Chance the Rapper's wedding for ideas. The most important thing is to choose a design that feels like you.

4. No DIY

Hire a professional florist who is familiar with hang points and rigging to ensure a beautiful and safe design. This is not something you want to DIY or trust to a family friend.

5. Lighting Is Key

To achieve a great overall look, invest in production lighting and pin spots. These help to create a romantic ambience for guests. Additionally, great lighting adds visual interest to all your wedding photos.

6. Leverage Silk Flowers and Non-Traditional Materials

To keep costs under control, leverage high-quality silk flowers, crystals, ribbons, tinsel and other unexpected materials. When using fresh flowers, choose roses or inseason flowers.

Halima Adetona is the founder & CEO at The Floral Guru. The Floral Guru has become synonymous with unique and stylish weddings and events. Their portfolio includes some of the

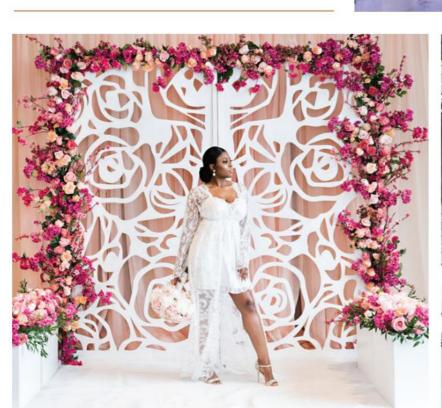


trendiest settings and most luxurious weddings in the DC-metro area and their work has been recognized globally. For more info on Halima, visit thefloralguru.com.



No longer are couples concerned with traditional wedding decor. They're embracing wow-worthy floral designs that reflect their personal style.

- Halima Adetona













PHOTOGRAPHED BY TERRIE IMAGES

ntimate tropical romance bridges the time between a blissful ceremony and the moment when the bride and groom are whisked away together. This scene is graced with wedding decor that embraces the lush, rustic Florida landscape while sprinkling in subtle elements of glamour. The tropical landscape evokes the feeling of an island escape, and a neutral color pallet nestles the design aesthetic comfortably within nature's beauty. White satin drapery brings the element of romance.

Centerpieces

Plentiful Monstera leaves, tree ferns, white lilies, white Dendrobium orchids and white hydrangeas presented on a gold column stand.

Place Settings

Understated gold-beaded chargers, classic white plates, antique gold flatware and gold-rimmed glasses.

Stationery

Antique gold and spruce green envelopes with tropical-inspired liners and invitations along with a vellum overlay, featuring a grommet and wax seals. @

Shoot Location:

SoireEstate, Lutz, Florida

Color Combinations:

Gold, green, white and camel

Favorite Details:

Gold Chiavari chairs interwoven with sheer white linen

planning



























Photography:

Terrie Images terrieimages.com

Venue:

SoireEstate soireestate.com

Bridal Gown:

Jessi Rae Bridal jessiraebridal.com

Bride's Hair:

Schatzi C, schatzic.com

Bride's Makeup: Nicki McPherson nickimacbrides.com

Bride's Brooch Bouquet:

BodyWerk Jewels bodywerkjewels.online

Bridal Party Attire:

Missguided, missguidedus.com

Groom's Tux:

All Brides 2 Be allbrides2be.com

Concept & Co-Planner:

Schatzi C, schatzic.com

Design & Co-Planner: Monique Seraphin instagram.com/the_event_designer

Cake:

Tampa Bay Cake Company tampabaycakecompany.com

Charcuterie:

Simply Fancii simplyfancii.com

Flowers:

Blossom & Thorn blossomandthorn.com

Stationery:

Bliss Creative ATL blisscreativeatl.com

Furniture Rentals & **Drapery Service:**

On The Move Productions otmproductions.com

Mobile Bar:

The Tipsy Trotter thetipsytrotter.com









PHOTOGRAPHED BY HARBOR GRACE PHOTOGRAPHY

Enchanted Garden

e love classic elegance and all things bohemian, so it was only right to do an Enchanted Garden theme with timeless custom gowns. We really wanted to embody the intimacy of a small, quaint bridal shower, and Hannah, at Edges Wild Studios, provided the perfect greenery and florals to help create that feeling. Cher'lon, our baker from Sweet Exprechons, provided exquisitely detailed treats for the sweets table, including everything from cake pops and mini donuts

to strawberries, cakesicles, rice crispy treats, Oreos and more!

Stunning Ethiopian bride, Tsion, wore three gorgeous lace-detailed gowns, by the enormously talented designer Chasity Sereal.

Centerpieces

Small floral arrangements with greenery, mirrored trays and gold accents on the sweets table.

Unique Details

A bohemian-themed sweets table with a variety of stunning treats served as the main attraction for our shoot.

Shoot Location:

The Oak Atelier, Conroe, Texas

Color Combinations:

Cream, rose, gold and blush

Favorite Detail:

The floral crown

planning





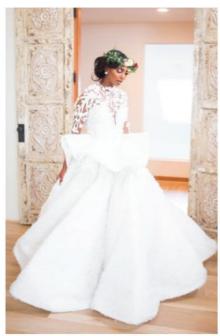


















Photography: Harbor Grace Photography

harborgracephotography.com

Venue:

The Oak Atelier theoakatelier.com

Model:

Tsion Bekele instagram.com/its_tsion

Bridal Gown:

Chasity Sereal chasitysereal.com

Bride's Hair:

Lauren Johnson instagram.com/_ellejayy

Bride's Makeup:

Michelle Cofield changingfacezstudios.com

Desert Table:

Sweet Exprechons, Cher'lon Kelley instagram.com/sweet.exprechons

Flowers:

Edges Wild Studio edgeswildstudio.com









PHOTOGRAPHED BY LEO CREARY

Island Flair

he modern grace of these unconventional gowns, by Bahamian designer Phylicia Ellis, makes a bold and elegant statement, and island-inspired bouquets, with a color story in greens, lavender, yellow and a taste of burgundy, remind brides that you can bring your culture into your wedding and still keep it current. Sophisticated jewelry calls to mind classic pieces but with a modern twist.

Dresses

A Phylicia Ellis bride is far from traditional, and with this collection, the designer experimented with scuba

material mixed with brocades, tulle and ruffles. The results are airy and effortless bridal styles that are also flirtatious and fun.

Jewelry

Unique designs lend an extra touch of sparkle and drama to the modern bride who wants to shine on her day.

Florals

The bouquets hold a gardenstyle medley of roses, French dianthus, dahlias and mini callas accented with lush Ruscus. A whimsical touch of asparagus fern gives a light movement and feminine flare to bouquets finished with a satin ivory-and-white ribbon trim. 3

Shoot Location:

Dumbo, Brooklyn, New York

Shoot Theme: Urban Chic

Color Combinations:

Cream, ivory, nude and silver

Favorite Detail:

Shooting in the boxing ring at Gleason's Gym put female power on full display, juxtaposing beauty and strength in equal measure.

planning













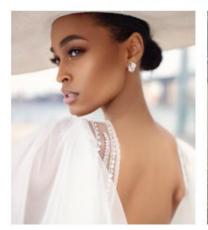
















Photography: Leo Creary, leocreary.com

Photographer Assistant: Keva Creary, legacy.wedding

> Location: Brooklyn, New York

Models:

Loreal Ellis, rednyc.com

Arielle Chambers ariellechambers.com

Bridal Gowns: Phylicia Ellis phyliciaellis.com

Brides' Jewelry: ZAXIE by Stefanie Taylor zaxie.com

Brides' Makeup: Rebels World instagram.com/rebelsworld

> Planner: J Nicole Events eventsbyjnicole.com

Flowers: Alexis Denise Floral Design alexisdeniseflorals.com



IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII STRAIGHT FROM THE RUNWAY, YOUR MUST-HAVE FASHION GUIDE IIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII

NEW YORK BRIDAL FASHION WEEK 7 WEDDING DRESS TRENDS FOR **FALL 2020**

By Candice Davie

Hey, Alexa. Play: "Going to the chapel and we're gonna get married!"

Calling all 2020 brides: You and your love have set a date. Everyone in the bridal party has been notified of their roles, and on top of the million other things on your growing to-do list, you need to find a dress! Shopping for a wedding gown can be super stressful because you need to find a style that reflects you, looks great, and is on trend. After all, how you look in your gown will be one of the most talked about elements of your wedding.

The 2019 Fall New York Bridal Fashion Week took place October 3rd through the 8th. The shows provided dreamy looks and something for everyone. There was no shortage of whimsy or sexy, elegant style on the runway. From dreamy ball gowns to classy suits and jumpsuits, there was truly something for every bride and tons of inspiration for the 2020 bride. Dramatic sleeves and couture gowns, ruffles and bridal suits provided a wide array of options to fit your personal wedding-day style.

MARCHESA

Photography courtesy of Marchesa



LIHI HOD Photography courtesy of Lihi Hod



CAROLINA HERRERA Photography courtesy of Carolina Herrera



PRONOVIAS Photography courtesy of Pronovias

OFF THE SHOULDER

We think some looks are timeless, not trends. This romantic shoulder-baring look fits that bill and isn't going anywhere.

PRETTY IN PINK

VERA WANG Photography courtesy of Vera Wang

One trend not slowing down is the colored wedding dress, especially in shades of pink. Iris Noble's blush pink gown has billowy tulle for an extra feminine touch. A touch of sparkle gives Peter Languer's design the right amount of glamour.



PETER LANGNER Photography courtesy of Peter Langner



IRIS NOBLE Photography courtesy of Iris Noble



THE ATELIER BY JIMMY CHOO Photography courtesy of The Atelier by Jimmy Choo



JUSTIN ALEXANDER Photography courtesy of Justin Alexander

PANT SUITS Although it may have your mother clutching her pearls, just as in last season, bridal suits are gaining popularity on the fashion scene. From the elegant two-piece pant suit draped in silk with an asymmetrical neckline to the sophisticated crepe pantsuit with 3-D floral appliques, a matching walking veil makes these looks even more magical.

BRIDAL

CUSHNIE Photography courtesy of Cushnie





ZUHAIR MURAD Photography courtesy of Thomas-Nutzl/Zuhair Murad

HAYLEY PAIGE Photography courtesy of Hayley Paige



OSCAR DE LA RENTA Photography courtesy of Oscar de la Renta



JUSTIN ALEXANDER Photography courtesy of Justin Alexander

THE LITTLE WHITE DRESS

Shorter dress lengths are perfect for the contemporary bride having a beach wedding or the bride who doesn't mind walking down the aisle ready to party. New on the runway, a fitted, thigh-high number by Justin Alexander is paired with a cropped jacket full of texture. The Oscar de la Renta doesn't need an introduction. His designs thoughtfully accentuate a woman's natural beauty.

> Photography courtesy of Reem Acra





REEM ACRA Photography courtesy of Reem Acra



MIRA ZWILLINGER Photography courtesy of Mira Zwillinger





GALIA LAHAV

of Galia Lahav

SLEEVES Sleeves that make a

JULIE VINO BELLAGIO COLLECTION Photography courtesy of Julie Vino



BERTA BALILTI Photography courtesy of Berta Balilti







PETER LANGNER - SHANGHAI 2020 Photography courtesy of Peter Langner

66 | BLACKBRIDE.COM

is in the details. @



1. Pashmina Scarf, Ivory, etsy.com/shop/threetwo1; 2. Olive + Piper, Avery Earrings, oliveandpiper.com; 3. Invitation Designed by Karidy

Walker, minted.com; 4. Campfire Cocktail, by Jacquelyn Clark, jacquelynclark.com; 5. Cake Designed by Cakes by Kim, cakesbykim.net; 6. Bella Belle, ELSA Ivory Sequin Crystal Designer Wedding Shoes, bellabelleshoes.com; 7. Bouquet Photographed by JM Photography, johnmcaroy.com; 8. Park Chateau Estate, parkchateau.com; 9. Willowby by Watters, Hearst Gown and Belmont Cape, bhldn.com

INSPIRATION BOARD

Blue **MOON**

By Jomuelle Anicet

The stars are out tonight, and they're shining over you and the love of your life. Navy blue is always an oldie but a goodie. Regardless of the season, this color is a great option. Take this look from day to night and dance under the moonlight with your mate-for-life.

















1. Invitation Set Designed by Noted Occasions, notedoccasions.com; 2. OPI, Get Ryd-of-Thym Blues, opi.com; 3. Wedding Decor Photographed by Robert & Kathleen Photographers, robertandkathleen.com; 4. Crystalitzy, Snowflake Brooch, etsy.com/shop/crystalitzy; 5. Loeffler Randall, Rita Dress Pump in Navy Blue, loefflerrandall.com; 6. Wedding Favor Styled by TD Event Planning, facebook.com/tdeventplanningllc; 7. Cake Designed by Crumbs Cakery, crumbs-cakery.com; 8. Bouquet Photographed by Erika Mills Photography, erikamills.com; 9. Iconoclasp, Magdalena Velvet Mermaid Gown, iconoclasp.com

INSPIRATION BOARD

Ruby

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By Jomuelle Anicet

Spending time with family is always a pleasure, and there's even more to celebrate when you're getting married. What a way to bring in some holiday cheer, exchanging your vows in

front of your loved ones! During this winter season, the choices are endless. Celebrate with loved ones indoors, or take it outside on the freshly covered





1.

1. Sequin, Ruby Red Jeweled Tassel Earrings, sequin-nyc.com; 2. Custom Flannels by Little Brownn Suitcase, littlebrownnsuitcase.com; 3. Badgley Mischka, Vogue Pump in Bright Rose Satin, badgleymischka.com; 4. Bouquet Designed by Cain Designs, instagram.com/ caindesignsokc; 5. Wedding Decor Styled by Monica Relyea Events, monicarelyeaevents.com; 6. Pomegranate Ombre Sparkler by Gastro Senses, gastrosenses.com; 7. Invitation Set Designed by My Lady Dye, myladydye.com; 8. Cake Designed by J'aime Cakes, facebook.com/ jaimecakes||cflorida; 9. Jenny Yoo, Logan Velvet Dress in Dark Berry, jennyyoo.com



ccording to a recent study by the International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education, the average American woman wears between size six and size eighteen. This shoot highlights the beauty of plus-size brides of color. Full-figured women and women of color, who aren't often featured in magazines, want to feel beautiful on their wedding day too. They also want to see women who reflect their reality featured in publications that cater to brides of color. Black Bride Magazine is the longest running bridal resource that fills this void and brings this kind of diversity to the wedding industry.

A couple of our BlackBride.com Bridal Suite fine vendors, Valia Rose Events and Photography firm YNOT Images, collaborated with Alabama wedding-industry vendors to create this stunning plus-size glam shoot. @

PHOTOGRAPHY: YNOT Images CREATIVE CONCEPT & DESIGNER: Valia Rose Events LOCATION: 2713 Christopher Glenn, Homewood, Alabama BRIDAL GOWNS: Refined Bridal Boutique & Bella Couture GOWN DESIGNERS: Watters Wtoo Locklin, Maisie & Della MAKEUP ARTIST: P Sanders Makeup HAIR STYLIST: MiRich Hair ACCESSORIES: Ai & Eva Bridal Jewelry FLORIST: Cece Deisgns MODELS: Kimberly Johnson & Kashanti Farmer





fashion





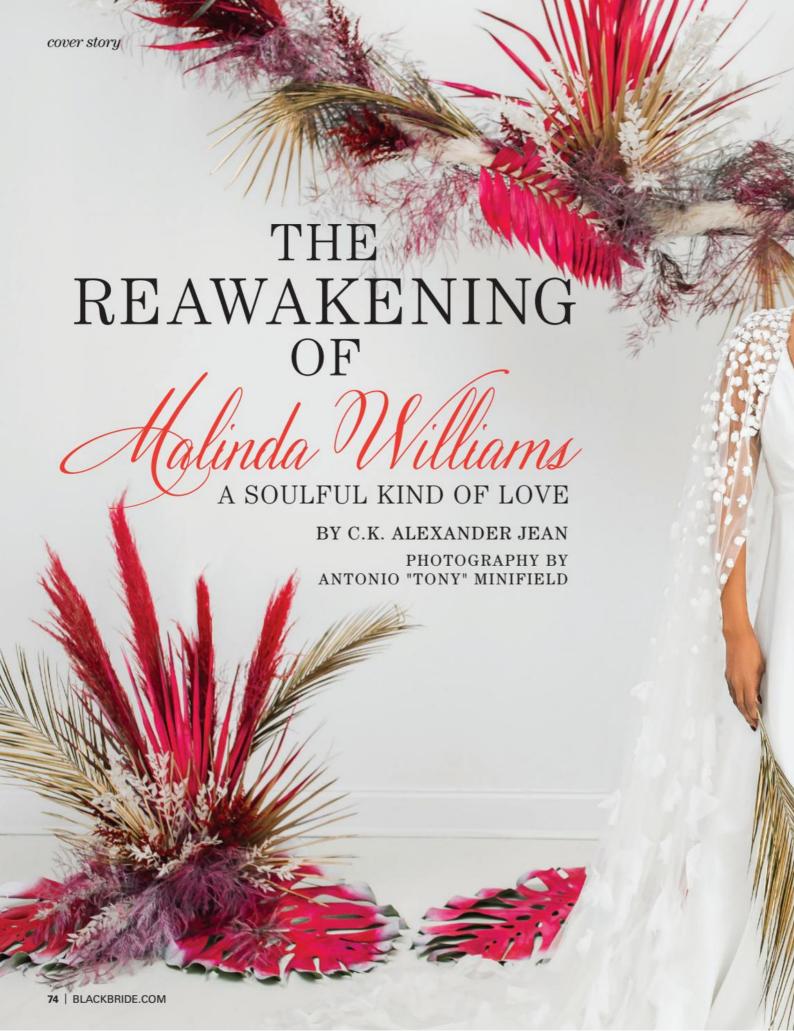
















REAWAKENING moment in my life. It's one of those places where you know you are about to take a leap forward."

-Halinda Williams







he actor, producer and entrepreneur, shares how her new marriage has "brought her color back" and given her a new outlook on love and life.

We fell in love with her as Bird, the youngest Joseph sister in the acclaimed series Soul Food, and as young Alicia in the romantic comedy The Wood. Over her 35 years in the entertainment industry, Malinda Williams has been our Hollywood girlfriend, captivating us with the realness and down-to-earth persona she brilliantly portrays on screen. Much like those characters, Malinda is no stranger to the highs and lows of love.

Although she admits she never gave up on love or finding the one (she was previously married to actor Mekhi Phifer, with whom she shares a son, and later married DJ D-Nice), she had released the idea of a happily-ever-after marriage. "I had just

decided, well, maybe there is a one, but maybe you don't have to necessarily be married to the one," said Malinda. However, fate intervened, and she stumbled upon a new romance and a relationship she refers to as "a soul-level connection."

On March 20, 2019, the 49-year-old star shocked us all when she announced on Instagram that she was engaged to be married to journalist and digital media executive Tariq M. Walker, 48.

The couple, who have been together five years, tied the knot six months after their engagement with three private ceremonies in Los Angeles.

We chatted with the newly married Malinda and Tariq and discussed love on a deeper level, redefining marriage on their own terms and their new business venture, ThisIsLeaving.com, a travel and lifestyle brand with a focus on wellness.

COVER SHOOT TEAM

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Mary Chatman LOCATION: Waldorf Astoria Atlanta Buckhead and Park Studios STYLING TEAM: Tiffany Ricks and Tiffany Lewars MAKEUP ARTIST: Alexandra Butler HAIR STYLIST: Fairren Thompson

FLORAL DESIGN: Eilena Mericer-Ehmann LIGHTING: Rando Lawrence BTS FOOTAGE: Sade Kay Creates and Love in Motion Wedding Films SET ASSISTANCE: Candice Davie STYLING ASSISTANCE: Amber Spence



CK: We know you as this amazing actor with a long and fulfilling career, but who is Malinda Williams now?

MALINDA: Right now, I am in a reawakening moment of my life. I've been here before, and it's one of those places where you know you're about to take a leap forward. What that means to me is trying something new, trying something different. Everything I do is an extension of some part of myself, some part of my personality or some longing to express, ultimately, the gifts I have within.

CK: Within the last year or so, you've gotten engaged and married. Tell me about your new love.

MALINDA: My new relationship is another leap forward. We were ready for this type of relationship. We had both been married. We had learned so much about ourselves and about relationships. We each wanted something different and specific in our lives as it relates to relationships, and we found we'd walked common paths, separately and parallel. Then it was just like, I see you.

CK: Tariq, tell me about your first time meeting Malinda.

TARIQ: We met through a mutual friend. My background was is in content development and creative branded content, editorial and video. Our friend thought there might be an opportunity for us to work together.

MALINDA: I never cross the line between business and personal. That's one of my boundaries, but one day we were set to have a meeting I'd already rescheduled a few times. I wanted to reschedule it again, but I didn't want him to think I was flaky. I showed up, but I said, "I don't really have the capacity right now to talk business. I'm exhausted, and I really just need to have a drink and chill." He said, "Okay. Cool."

TARIQ: That was when we got to know each other on a personal level. Over the course of lunch, we had a three-hour conversation, and I became intrigued about who she was outside of business. That was the start of me considering, wait, there may be something more here.

MALINDA: The first personal question I asked him was: "Where are you from?" I had no idea who he was or where he was from, if he was single or married. I knew nothing because that









wasn't my business. But he told me he was from Philly, and I said, "Oh, I'm from Jersey."

We discovered we'd been in the same circles, in the same rooms, basically, almost since adolescence-in some of the same parties and doing business with some of the same people. It was like one degree of separation. We realized we had so much in common, and we started a friendship. Out of the friendship, grew our relationship.

CK: How did you come to understand this relationship was different and you'd both found something special?

MALINDA: First, I had to understand what I needed from him in a relationship and what kind of person I was willing to be. I had gone through that period of self-examination to get clear about what I wanted and didn't want.

CK: It sounds like you did a lot of self-work. What role did self-love play in assessing what you wanted out of this relationship?

MALINDA: Self-love is everything. Tariq honors me the way I honor myself. He loves me the way I've been loving myself, and, quite frankly, the way I'd loved others. I recognized, in the way Tariq showed up and loved me, the way I'd been putting love out, and I was so thankful. I was so grateful. He was sent into my life to return to me all the love I was putting out in different places, seeking it from those same places.

TARIQ: As I got to know Malinda, she continued to check the boxes of the sort of person I wanted in my life, someone I felt I could be good for too. That understanding came because I'd done the work to know who I wanted to be and who I wanted. At every turn, Malinda consistently proved to be the sort of person I wanted in my life.

CK: What are some of the things that forged your deep connection with each other?

TARIQ: I appreciate intelligence. I need you to know Malinda is a very intelligent woman, one of the smartest people I've met. I wanted someone I could learn from and teach so we can learn and grow together. There's also spirituality and having a spiritual connection to humanity and the universe that's not bound by a specific approach to religion. We have very similar outlooks in that regard. We're also from the same region and of the same era. In many cases, we just got each other.

MALINDA: I found Tariq to be very intelligent, very kind and compassionate. He had a connection to spirit and to humanity. He treated everyone with kindness and respect. How someone treats anyone is how they'll treat everyone. I really appreciated his demonstration of kindness and compassion. He was also unafraid to express himself and his feelings. Who he was and how he felt always seemed to be very honest.

CK: What is the biggest lesson you've learned from your past that has served you in your new marriage?

MALINDA: You really have to be patient with people and with yourself. It's a process of learning and growing. Every day, you're making a choice. You have to communicate with that person. Because someone feels a certain way on Tuesday, doesn't mean they'll feel that way on Thursday. Check back on Thursday and ask, "Are you still with me? If not, what's going on and why?"

I highly recommend and would put therapy at the top of my list. We advocate for couple's counseling. We started seeing a couple's therapist while we were still dating. We had zero problems, but we recognized we'd been in other relationships and things lying dormant could rear their ugly heads when it wasn't quite as convenient.

CK: Did counseling prepare you for the marriage you have now and to deal with conflict resolution and anything else that comes up?

MALINDA: A thousand percent. Our therapist has given us tools and strategies to resolve and avert conflicts. We communicate in ways we probably wouldn't have prior to therapy. Tariq and I recognized and said early on: you're getting the best me. You are getting the best version of me based on all the information I've brought into this relationship. Counseling also gave us strategies to discuss things we like and enjoy. Because a lot of times people don't tell each other what we like or love about one another.

CK: What finally led to talks about marriage?

TARIQ: We'd both been in relationships, and I think—not that we swore off marriage because that wasn't the situation-but we both decided we didn't need to get married again. We met there at that place, but we were still open to long-term relationships, and certainly you know when you enjoy being with someone.

CK: How did you pop the question?

TARIQ: Over the years we've been together. I began to feel like I wanted to marry her. Not that I wanted to be married again, but I wanted to share and express the commitment I felt toward her in the most significant way possible. I had known that for a good year before actually proposing. In fact, I would tell Malinda, "I want you to be my wife," my way of telling her how I felt about her. When I proposed, I didn't want to go into another year without expressing how deep my commitment was to her.

I designed a ring with a friend, and then on a regular Tuesday, I proposed. I wanted it to be special but not over the top, so I proposed at home. We'd just finished eating breakfast, and I pulled out the ring and gave her a card.

MALINDA: The proposal was a complete surprise. There wasn't any pomp and circumstance. It was the purest moment. You can find pomp and circumstance, all of that production, anywhere. What you cannot find anywhere is a soul-level connection.

CK: So what happened after the proposal? Did you start planning your wedding?

TARIQ: Once Malinda said yes, for all intents and purposes for me, we were married right then and there. As for the ceremony, we said we'd get married in six months.

MALINDA: You know in your heart when you're married. I don't need the piece of paper or the person on the outside to sanction it. You know in your heart when it's done, so that was part of it. I wanted to be open, and we didn't want a big wedding. We wanted something very small and intimate and private.

I didn't know where we'd be because we travel a lot, but I knew we'd get married in six months. We were open to a different kind of experience. We had a conversation on Friday, and then on Monday, we woke up and said, "Let's do it today." It was very spontaneous. I didn't know what he was doing when he was getting dressed, and he didn't know what I was doing in my closet, but when we met in the middle, we matched. We were in alignment.

CK: Tell me about your three wedding ceremonies? How did you decide to make it official?











GOWN: Ann
Barge, "Emory"
Steel Blue
HEADPIECE:
Elite Pour La Vie
ACCESSORIES:
Appetite of a
Millionaire
GROOM: Miguel
Wilson Collection

BRIDE.COM | 85





MALINDA: We don't call our "vows" vows. We call them promises. They weren't to one another as much as they were to ourselves. When I'm writing a promise, I'm not writing the promise to Tariq. I'm writing the promise to Malinda because I know myself, and I'm promising this will be my behavior. This is how I'll show up in this relationship. I'm less likely to break a promise to myself, and that's honoring myself.

We did a ceremony by the ocean and one in a botanical garden. The flower garden represented light and color and growth and regeneration and budding and flowering. The ocean is life giving and replenishing, regenerating and vast. Then, we went to the justice of the peace to make it legal.

CK: What inspired you to celebrate your union in this way?

TARIQ: What's important isn't the wedding. It's the marriage, the union. And that bond is only between Malinda and me, so it was important for us to start our marriage in the way we wanted it to continue, a meeting of the minds between us, about us. We decided there was no outside influence on when, how, where or what our wedding was going to be.

CK: Tell me a little bit about collaborating on This Is Leaving.

MALINDA: Our careers have us traveling a lot, and we wanted a foundation that was fortifying, not just for us as individuals, but for us as a couple. We weren't trying to exchange our careers for This Is Leaving, but if one of us traveled for work, we built a little vacation around it and wrote a story about it. It was important for us, our family members and even our community to know the importance of travel and how it can

awaken things in you that staying in your comfort zone doesn't.

Travel accelerated our relationship and enhanced our communication and our living experience. We came home and tried new recipes. We went to different restaurants. Our desire to share it with the world grew. We thought, "This could be helpful to others in their relationships as well. So let's share the value of travel with people. Let's inspire people to travel more." If you travel outside of your city, you're going to learn things. Then you travel outside of your state and, ultimately, outside of the country and to other continents. You learn so much about the world, and in doing so, it's reflected back to you. You learn a lot about yourself.

That's how This Is Leaving began to grow. Then, we naturally added extensions of travel, which are fashion, wellness and beauty, that you can't help but share because traveling isn't just about a destination. It's about what you learn in the destination.

CK: What do you want your legacy to be as husband and wife?

TARIQ: If we can inspire other folks with how we handle ourselves, how we communicate, how we love one another, for me, that's a wonderful legacy to have.

MALINDA: We want to make sure the people understand that love is really, truly the most important thing and that love is in need of love, to never give up on love because love never gave up on you. That's how we got here. Love expands you. We don't even understand our capacity to love until we understand how to give that love unconditionally. It grows your heart in a way I never fully understood until now.









PHOTOGRAPHED BY KAYLA COLEMAN

Lauren & Terret

errell and Lauren first met in November of 2014 at a UNC-Chapel Hill homecoming tailgate. As fate would have it, they reconnected through social media a year and a half later. At the time, Terrell lived in New York and Lauren was in Houston, but even distance couldn't stop sparks from flying. After only a couple of days of texting back and forth, Terrell surprised Lauren with a beautiful bouquet and they planned the next time they'd see each other. After their first date and weekend in New York, they knew they were about to build a beautiful relationship.

What makes your love special?

During the long-distance part of our relationship, we saw each other every other weekend and FaceTimed for hours. It took a lot of time, money and investment, but we never lost sight of our plans. After about six months of dating, Terrell seized an opportunity to move to Texas! I was elated to have him closer and realized even more that what we were building was strong.

The Proposal

In the winter of 2017, Terrell and I planned a ski trip to Colorado with my brother, Tyler, and sister-in-law, Erika. When we got to Vail, Erika told me we'd been given a huge rental upgrade! Little did I know that Terrell and my mom had picked out this property well in advance. Terrell told me to come out on the balcony, and after looking at the stunning view, I was shocked to see him on one knee with my mom and dad and his mom, sister and brother all standing around us! It was the perfect proposal and a feeling I'll never forget.

$then\ comes\ marriage$

















The Wedding (Her Story)

Our wedding experience was amazing! Since I was out of state during the wedding planning, my mom and our planner, Nishaka, took care of most of the details. The wedding ceremony and reception had the most beautiful decor I'd ever seen. Knowing I was about to marry the man of my dreams, while surrounded by all our loved ones, almost felt surreal.

The Wedding (His Story)

Our wedding was amazing because there were so many genuine loved ones around us. I started the morning in my suite with all my groomsmen and my father-in-law, laughing and sharing memories of each other. Later, Lauren and I did a first look to share our vows, and I was sure it would allow me to get all my emotions out. However, the moment those doors opened, a tear rolled down my face. When I saw my wife, I was filled with an overwhelming joy.

Memorable Moments

Our favorite memory was our first dance. It felt like we were the only people in the room as we danced and sang to each other.

Wedding Song

Our wedding song was "Best Part," by Daniel Caesar and H.E.R. It was the best representation of our feelings for each other: compatibility, substance, fullness, support and true love.

Favorite Wedding Details

It's tough to pick just one, but we must go with our 360-degree photo booth. We had the best time taking funny videos and pictures.

Looking Ahead

I look forward to continuing to grow in love and faith. I recognize that we aren't perfect and life isn't always perfect, but knowing that I have my best friend to do life with makes every future season, good or bad, something to look forward to.

Wedding Day Advice for a Bride and Groom

Don't sweat the small stuff! Always remember God's role in your marriage and wedding. Don't forget to dance (and eat). Enjoy every moment of your day and take time to let it sink in. Finally, don't go on your honeymoon the next day. You'll need at least a day of rest after the wedding.





Bride:

Lauren Caldwell Lea, 27, Corporate Sales Manager

Groom:

Terrell Lea, 30, Corporate Project Manager

Place of Residence:

Dallas, Texas

Wedding Date:

06/01/2019

Wedding Location:

United Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church and The Graylyn Estate, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Wedding Theme:

Botanical Garden

Honeymoon Location:

Bora Bora and Mo'orea, French Polynesia



Photography: Kayla Coleman

kaylacolemanphotography.com

Wedding Location:

United Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church

Reception Location:

The Graylyn Estate, graylyn.com

Bridal Gown:

Galia Lahav, Stanley Korshak Bridal galialahav.com

Bride's Hair:

Tia Hastye, tmariehastye.com

Bride's Makeup:

Ellta Sequar, illybeauty.com

Bridal Party Attire:

White Runway, whiterunway.com

Bridal Party Makeup:

Teah Chinn

instagram.com/teahchinnmua

Groom's Tux:

Suit Supply & Hugo Boss us.suitsupply.com

Groomsmen's Suits: Cahill & Swain, cahillswain.com

712 Fil. 22

Wedding Planner: Nishaka Proctor,

eventsbynishaka.com

Caterer:

The Graylyn Estate

Cake:

The Art of Cake theartofcake@gmail.com

Favors:

Bojangles', bojangles.com

Flowers:

Bostic Florist, bosticfloristnc.com

Music:

Infinity Show Band klfproentertainment.com

DJ Paradime at Cool Receptions coolreceptions.com

Stationery:

Brown Fox Creative brownfoxcreative.com























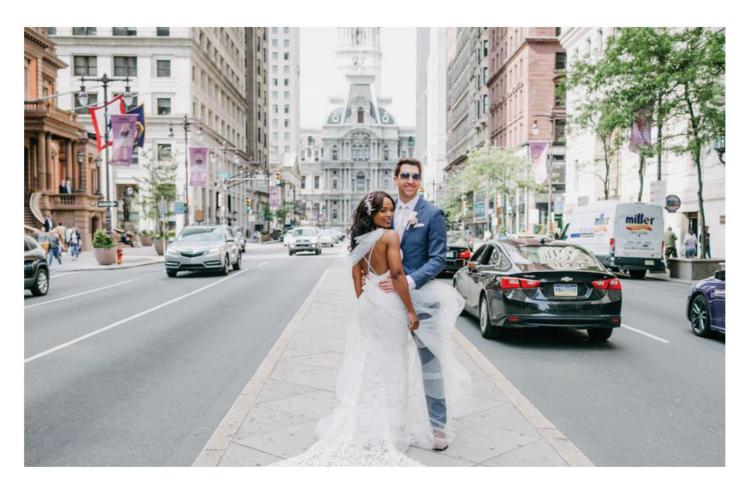












PHOTOGRAPHED BY LOVE ME DO PHOTOGRAPHY

Pelores & Leamon

n her search for a change of scenery, Delores decided to head down to Arizona for some much-needed alone time. When she bumped into Leamon there, she knew it was destiny. The pair spent the entire evening talking and laughing, as if they had known each other for years. Ever since that magical night, they've been inseparable.

What makes your love special?

We share a never-ending desire to ensure that the other is happy. We will do everything in our power to protect each other.

The Proposal

It was Christmas, and little did I know that Leamon had already planned the day with my family. We all gathered for a gift

exchange, and he handed me a little wrapped box. Once I opened it, he dropped down on one knee and asked me to marry him. I was so ecstatic that I couldn't stop crying!

The Wedding {Her Story}

I was so excited on our wedding day that I couldn't contain myself. I was so happy to be marrying my best friend and soulmate. All my expectations were exceeded.

The Wedding {His Story}

She was breathtaking, and I couldn't wait to call her my wife. Our family and friends travelled from far and wide to celebrate with us. It was the very best day of my life.

Memorable Moments

Our vows. I don't usually cry, but walking

then comes marriage





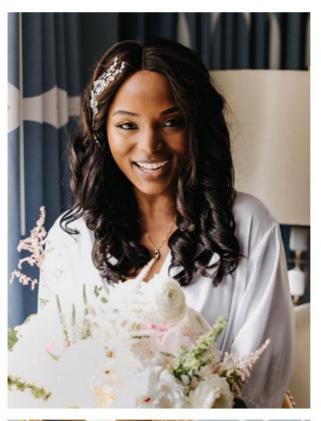
















down the aisle to meet my soulmate, the words of commitment the officiant preached, hearing Leamon vow to be mine forever and committing myself to him created just the most precious moment for us.

Wedding Song

"Share My Life," by Kem.

Looking Ahead

We look forward to being a family and building on our foundation as husband and wife.

Wedding Day Advice for a Bride and Groom

Invest in quality vendors. We were very picky with our choices and it paid off. Our vendors went above and beyond for us.

Bride:

Delores Cooke, 29, Clinical Trial Manager

Groom:

Leamon Cooke, 30, Project Manager

Place of Residence:

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Wedding Date:

05/25/2019

Wedding Location:

Tendenza, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Wedding Theme:

Industrial Chic Glam

Honeymoon Location:

Indonesia















Photography: Love Me Do Photography lovemedophotography.com

Videography: Will Ngo themotivation.myportfolio.com

Ceremony & Reception Location:

Tendenza weddings.cescaphe.com

> Bride's Gown: Berta Bridal berta.com

Wedding Planner: Lily V Events

lilyvevents.com

Flowers: Lily V Events

Music: Zimo Productions djzimoweddings.com









































PHOTOGRAPHED BY MOOD PHOTO & VIDEO

E Tolomon

o'ren and Solomon's love story began in 2007 when they were just teenagers. Solomon got Lo'ren's AOL Instant Messenger name from her best friend and reached out to her. Since then, the two have watched their relationship blossom from puppy love into something much more. Twelve years later, they became Mr. and Mrs. Hill in a romantic celebration of their love.

What makes your love special?

Our love is resilient! Being high school sweethearts and best friends, we've gone through a lot together. On the other side of adversity, we always come out stronger.

The Proposal

We got engaged at Shade Hotel in Manhattan Beach. I was getting ready to go on a girls' trip to Mexico, and before I left for the airport,

Solomon, our daughter and his mom were headed to brunch (so I thought). As I walked to the top of the stairs, I saw my best friends and our family on the rooftop. Our really close friend, who's like a brother, is a photographer and took pictures as Solomon proposed.

The Wedding {Her Story}

While I was getting ready, I was very nervous, but once I saw Solomon during our first look, all the nerves went away. I tried to walk as slowly as possible down the aisle to take it all in and enjoy the moment.

The Wedding {His Story}

I was nervous about things possibly going wrong and Lo'ren being upset about it. Most brides get caught up in wanting everything to be perfect, and I didn't want her to forget what the day was truly about. Fortunately, she held her composure and remained calm.

$then\ comes\ marriage$





















Memorable Moment

Our first dance was the moment when I focused on him, and it was as if no one else was in the room. We laughed, kissed, talked and laughed some more. Also, I loved the stunning reception decor!

Wedding Song

I loved that Solomon picked "Heaven," by Jamie Foxx, for me to walk down the aisle to. Our first dance was to "Best Part," by Daniel Caesar, featuring H.E.R. It's a very romantic song, and we relate to the story it tells.

Favorite Wedding Detail

Hands down, the decor was our favorite wedding detail. Our wedding planner, Sara, did a great job! The towering candles throughout the venue made everything so romantic.

Looking Ahead

We look forward to making more memories, adding to our family and enjoying each other's company while still learning about one another.

Wedding Day Advice for a Bride and Groom

Be sure to find a moment to focus your attention on your spouse. Walk slowly down the aisle and, most importantly, enjoy yourself. It's your day!

Remember this quote from the character Randall on This is Us. He says, "I have won the lotto when it comes to my wife." Love is amazing. We're so lucky to have found someone to spend the rest of our lives with.

Bride:

Lo'ren Hill, 27

Groom:

Solomon Hill, 28, Pro Basketball Player, Memphis Grizzlies

Place of Residence:

Los Angeles, California

Wedding Date:

07/29/2019

Wedding Location:

Montage, Laguna Beach, California

Honeymoon Location:

Greece and Italy











Photography: Mood Photo & Video moodpv.com

Wedding & **Reception Location:** Montage Laguna Beach montagehotels.com

Bridal Gown: Pallas Couture, Kinsley James Bridal kinsleyjames.com

Bride's Hair: Nicki Anderson instagram.com/nickibanderson

> Bride's Makeup: Marine Muradyan marinemuradyan.com

Bridal Party Attire: Atria Couture Bridal 213.747.7090

Groom's Tux: Custom Tux by Dixie Toledo 310.999.4922

Wedding Planner: Sara Besharati instagram.com/besharatigroup

Production Company: Amber Event Production ambereventproduction.com

Caterer: Montage Laguna Beach

Cake: Montage Laguna Beach

Music: DJ AI, instagram.com/deejayal

> Flowers: Avant Garden avantgardenla.com

Stationery: Luxe Marie Stationery luxemarie.com

































PHOTOGRAPHED BY PHARRIS PHOTOS + PHILMS

asmin &

asmin and Jordan's story began at Dartmouth College in February 2014. A mutual friend introduced them during Winter Carnival when Jasmin visited her sorority sisters of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. Jasmin and Jordan realized their outfits matched completely with tan-and-black striped shirts, blue jeans and black boots! Jasmin returned to Northeastern University, but she and Jordan spoke every day. The two formed a great friendship, and the rest is history!

What makes your love special?

Our love for each other came naturally. We're so much alike and truly reflect the best in each other.

The Proposal

The pair always wanted to visit Europe, so Jordan planned a trip there to celebrate Jasmin's graduation from NYU, and he put

together a surprise proposal. On Sunday, May 20, 2019, the couple woke up at dawn to get ready for what Jasmin thought would be an ordinary couple's photoshoot at the Eiffel Tower. After hopping out of the Uber, Jordan realized they were at the wrong location. The couple showed up to their photoshoot half an hour late, but Jordan assured Jasmin that all was well.

After a few candid shots, a violinist appeared, playing "So Beautiful," by Musiq Soulchild. Then, Jordan got down on one knee and popped the question. It was a moment filled with tears and joy!

The Wedding {Her Story}

We planned our wedding day for over a year, and I was still worried about how it would all turn out. I arrived at Chateau Cocomar with my bridesmaids for hair and makeup, and then before I knew it, it was time to walk down the aisle. The morning went by

then comes marriage

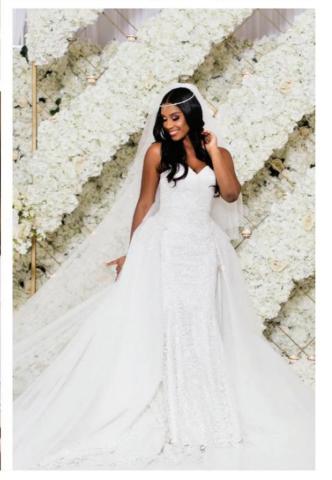












so quickly, but when I saw my husband, nothing else mattered. Once we jumped the broom and walked down the aisle, I was ready to enjoy the night with our friends and family. It was the most special day.

The Wedding (His Story)

On the day of the wedding, I wanted to focus on the excitement of spending the rest of my life with my wife-to-be. Luckily, I had the best groomsmen! They ran errands, shared stories and helped me get hype for the big day. I also thought about my late mother watching over us during this celebration. She was an extremely special woman and loved my wife.

Memorable Moment (Her Story)

Walking down the aisle to my future husband was more than I could have ever imagined. As the pianist and singers performed "The Anthem," by Todd Dulaney, I was overwhelmed with emotion. My heart was full of love and gratitude as I stood there and thanked God for blessing me with such a good man.

Memorable Moment (His Story)

Seeing my beautiful bride walking down the aisle in her stunning wedding dress was remarkable. At that moment, it was just her and me. Proclaiming my love for her was a once-in-a-lifetime feeling.

Wedding Song

"Best Part," by Daniel Caesar and H.E.R.

Favorite Wedding Detail

We loved our all-white flower wall! It added the perfect touch of fairy-tale glam. Also, riding off in an all-white Porsche, as our friends and family sent us off with sparklers, was a perfect end to the day.

Looking Ahead

We're looking forward to just spending our lives together, going on more adventures together, traveling and supporting each other in every way.

Wedding Day Advice for a Bride and Groom

When you walk down the aisle to your future spouse, none of those small details you stressed about will matter. The only thing that truly matters is your love for each other and the support from your family and friends.





Bride:

Jasmin Matos-Aré, 26, Consulting Analyst at Accenture

Groom:

Jordan Aré, 27, Associate at Morgan Stanley

Place of Residence:

Houston, Texas

Wedding Date:

07/27/2019

Wedding Location:

Chateau Cocomar, Houston, Texas

Wedding Theme:

Modern Fairytale Glam

Honeymoon Location:

Dubai and The Maldives



Photography:

Pharris Photos + Philms pharrisphotos.com

Wedding & Reception Location:

Chateau Cocomar chateaucocomar.com

Bridal Gown:

Pnina Tornai, Kleinfeld Bridal kleinfeldbridal.com

Bride's Hair:

Worldwide Whitney instagram.com/worldwidewhitney_

Bride's Makeup:

Denise Wedderburn instagram.com/iriejadebeauty

Bridal Party Attire:

White by Vera Wang, David's Bridal davidsbridal.com

Groom's Tux:

JPR Styling, Phil Adesulu philipadesulu.jpr@gmail.com

Wedding Planner:

Decor 2 Remember decor2remember.com

Kashmere Productions kashmereproductions.com

Caterer:

Churrascos Catering churrascoscatering.com

Cake:

Wedding Cakes by Tammy Allen weddingcakesbytammyallen.com

Flowers:

Keisha's Kreations keishaskreations.com

Music:

DJ Eclipze instagram.com/djeclipze

> Saxophone Darrel Materum

Singers Wayne Daniels Joseph Polk instagram.com/joellovemusic

Pianist

Kenné Smith

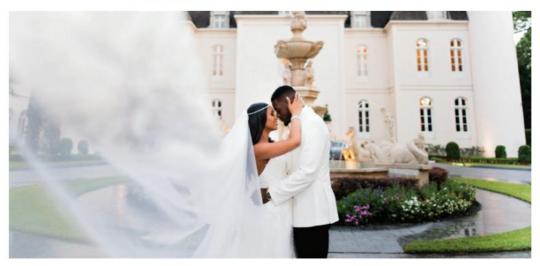








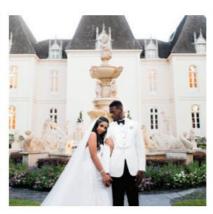








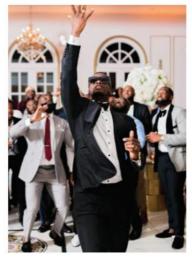


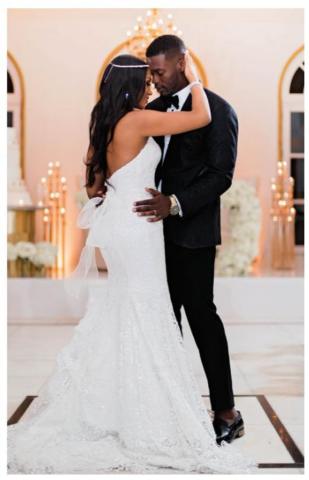




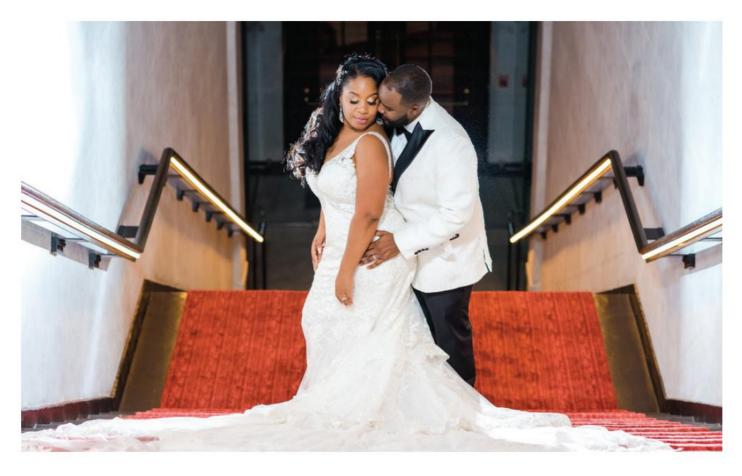












PHOTOGRAPHED BY TERRI BASKIN PHOTOGRAPHY

Tasha & David

💙 asha and David's love story began in the winter of 2015, when they each decided to try their luck by signing up for a 30-day trial on a popular dating site. With the click of a mouse, they made a connection that would blossom into a deep love and friendship. After four years together, the lovely couple took the next step by committing to love each other for a lifetime.

What makes your love special?

When I saw how devoted David is to his family. I knew he would have that same level of dedication to our love and our relationship. We're best friends, and living our lives together is the epitome of happiness.

The Proposal

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday, and the day before, David came up with the idea to cook an 18-pound turkey. Well, let's just say I was stuck doing the cooking. Thanksgiving morning, while I was covered in sweat, David called me into the living room because he had another request. He asked me to make him the luckiest man alive and be his wife.

The Wedding {Her Story}

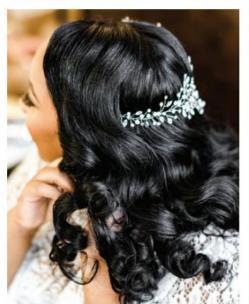
Everything felt right in the world on that day! I can still hear the light laughter of my bridesmaids as we were all getting ready. I can smell the crisp air coming off the pier as David recited his vows to me. I can feel the

$then\ comes\ marriage$



















bass from the soca music as we danced the night away. It was absolutely magical!

The Wedding {His Story}

It was a night to remember. As Sasha walked toward me, I realized I'd found my partner and this life was meant for two.

Memorable Moment

The most memorable moment was our first look. When David turned around and I saw how clean his tux looked, I was speechless!

Wedding Song

Our wedding song was "Love of My Life," by Brian McKnight. David picked this song because, when he heard the words, he thought it described our love.

Favorite Wedding Detail

My favorite wedding detail was my 12-yearold brother playing Stevie Wonder's "Ribbon in the Sky" on the piano. That moment almost didn't happen because of how cold it was outside, but I knew how hard he'd practiced in the months leading up to the wedding, and he did not disappoint.

Looking Ahead

Currently, I'm trying to convince David that we need to expand our family and get a dog.

Wedding Day Advice for a Bride and Groom

This is the first day of your love story as husband and wife. Take a deep breath and take it all in!

Bride:

Sasha Tiffany Phillips Cunningham, Audiologist

Groom:

David John Frank Cunningham, **Building Permit Expeditor**

Place of Residence:

Waldorf, Maryland

Wedding Date:

11/16/2018

Wedding Location:

Sagamore Pendry Baltimore, Baltimore, Maryland

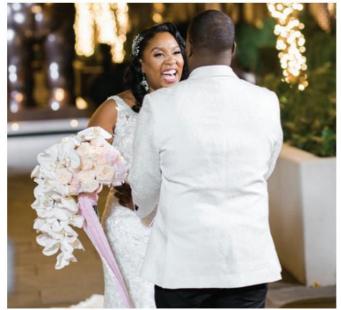
Wedding Theme:

Romantic and Classic

Honeymoon Location:

Montego Bay, Jamaica









Photography: Terri Baskin Photography terribaskin.com

Videographer: Yanair Media yanairphotography.com

Ceremony & Reception Location:

Sagamore Pendry Baltimore pendry.com

Bridal Gown:

Cherry Blossom Bridal cherryblossombridal.com

Bride's Hair: Serena Hampton of Tress Art tressarthair.com

Bride's Makeup:

Marquia James of Glam Qui glamqui.squarespace.com

Bridal Party Attire: Katie May, Bella Bridesmaids

bellabridesmaids.com

Wedding Planner:

Jamésa Adams jayneheir.com

Music:

DJ Right Touch djrighttouch.com

Flowers:

Veronica Epps, Pretty Petals Floral and Event Design prettypetalsfloraldesigns.com

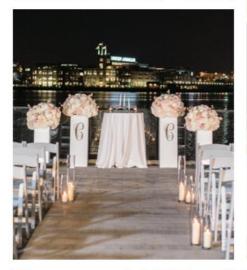
Stationery:

Wilori Lane





































PHOTOGRAPHED BY TRAVIS DANIELS PHOTOGRAPHY

Quantavia & La

uantavia and La'Darious met in 2016 and dated for just a few months before making their relationship official. After living together for a year, they became engaged. Next came a move to California for work before they entered their next chapter as Mr. and Mrs. Styles.

What makes your love special?

Today, some people believe that the ring means more than the foundation of marriage. When La'Darious proposed, he got down on one knee in front of everyone without a ring. I was surprised, but at that moment, nothing else mattered. I couldn't imagine my life without him, so the lack of a ring wasn't going to stop our show.

The Proposal

We had a going-away party for our upcoming move to California. As the night came to an end, La'Darious and his dad gathered everyone in a circle for what I thought was going to be a "thank you for coming" speech. I thought nothing of it until his dad made mention of big lifetime decisions. I said to myself, "No, it can't be. He didn't plan for this!" Sure enough, La'Darious took the mic and proposed.

The Wedding {Her Story}

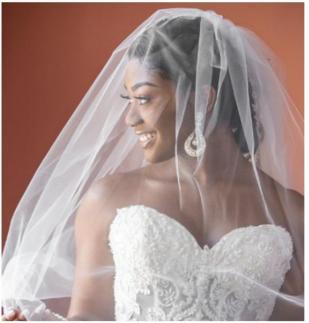
My wedding experience was very special. I knew everything would come together, but to actually witness the fruit of our labor was magical.

$then\ comes\ marriage$













The Wedding (His Story)

My wedding experience was everything I could have imagined and more. I felt a great deal of confidence with no regret.

Memorable Moment

My most memorable moment was watching my wife walk down the aisle. Her beauty brought me to tears.

Favorite Wedding Detail

The simplicity of the orchids and greenery in the arbor of flowers complemented our style very well.

Looking Ahead

We're looking forward to enjoying married life and helping our generation to appreciate the importance of a healthy relationship. We also want to cross some things off our bucket list as we continue this new journey together.

Wedding Day Advice for a Bride and Groom

If you can get a wedding planner, invest in the best. A planner will take a lot of extra stress off your plate. Also, during the planning process you will have disagreements with each other, lose friends and change your perspective on family, but just remember that the wedding is about your union!



Bride:

Quantavia Love, 27, Registered Respiratory Therapist

La'Darious Styles, 26, Registered Nurse

Place of Residence:

Miami, Florida

Wedding Date:

10/05/2019

Wedding Location:

The Heitman House, Fort Myers, Florida

Wedding Theme:

Lush Garden, Modern and Romance

Honeymoon Location:

Bali, Indonesia







Photography:

Travis Daniels Photography travisdanielsphotography.com

Videographer:

Yanair Media yanairphotography.com

Ceremony & Reception Location:

The Heitman House heitmanhouse.com

Bridal Gown:

Brides of America Miami bridesofamerica.com

Bride's Hair:

Courtney Dordoye instagram.com/a_dorcoco

Her Hair instagram.com/hailtheb

Bride's Makeup:

Lindsey Zoneé instagram.com/lindseyzoneebeauty

Bridal Party Attire:

Brides of America Miami

Groom's Tux:

Miguel Wilson Collection miguelwilson.com

Wedding Planner:

MBM Events & Design mbmeventsdesign.com

Caterer:

The Heitman House

Cake:

Elegant Temptations Cakes etcakes.com

Music:

Jasmin Hercules

Saxophonist:

Melton Mustafa Jr. instagram.com/mustafaonsax

Flowers:

W & W Flowers and Events wandwflowers.com

Stationery:

Boxed Wedding Invitations boxedweddinginvitations.com

































AFTER THE AISLE



Us Against the World:

Our Thoughts on Love, Marriage and Family

By Mary Chatman

Photography courtesy of Tamela and David Mann

Power couple David and Tamela Mann are best known for bringing laughter and family values to the screen. With a love story spanning more than 30 years, they're happier in love than ever. In their new book, Us Against the World: Our Secrets to Love, Marriage and Family, the superstar couple, who have delighted and inspired audiences through music, plays and movies and on television in *Meet the* Browns, The Manns and Mann & Wife, candidly share an inspiring, funny and up-close look at their lives.

Their story offers hope and practical advice on intimacy, communication, forgiveness, finances and faith. The memoir reveals surprising details about the challenges of fame and the growing pains of working with their adult children in the family business. Tamela has also launched a line of athletic wear at tamelamann.com.

As they prepare for their book tour and the release of their joint album, The Love Project, the Manns share what works for their success in life, love and business with our Editorin-Chief, Mary Chatman.

MARY: I love you guys so much. You lived in Atlanta. What took you to Dallas?

DAVID: Dallas has always been our home. We shot the show in Atlanta, but we're never moving from Texas.

MARY: How did you meet?

TAMELA: David, Kirk Franklin and another friend of ours, our current pastor, Darryl Blair, had a group called Coupled Hearts. My best friend, Nicole, brought me to their high school to sing for them.

DAVID: We wanted to see this lady she was bragging on.

TAMELA: I sang at a musical that evening and invited them to come. David and Darryl came, and that weekend, we kept running into each other.

DAVID: After we met, we saw each other everywhere. That's when she fell in love.

TAMELA: Oh, my Lord!

(laughter)

MARY: Was it fate?

TAMELA: I thought it was strange.

DAVID: Everything happened in order.

I wasn't supposed to go to that school, but God said, "I'm not setting you up for now. I'm setting you up for thirtyone years later."

TAMELA: I was living in the moment.

DAVID: So you never looked at me and thought, "I wouldn't mind getting with

TAMELA: No, not the first weekend— (laughter)

MARY: How long after that did you two start dating?

TAMELA: A year.

MARY: How long did you date before marriage?

TAMELA: About a year. We got married three to four years after we met.

DAVID: We were friends with benefits. Nobody knew.

MARY: Why did you keep it undercover?

TAMELA: We weren't sure.

DAVID: And then she had a fiancé. I mean a boyfriend.

TAMELA: No, I didn't have a boyfriend at first. I didn't.

MARY: What was your attraction to each other?

TAMELA: Music was the base of it because the guys asked me to sing with them.

DAVID: It was based on friendship, not sexual attraction. It morphed into a relationship. She was at the hospital, as a friend, when my first child was

MARY: That was about a year before you started dating.

DAVID: We were just friends, but we hung out so much. By the time we were 20, we started to sever ties with everybody else.

MARY: What were the highs and lows while you dated?

TAMELA: We didn't really have any lows. I mean-

DAVID: We did have lows. We were as broke as broke and break.

TAMELA: Yeah, we had some broke days.

DAVID: I couldn't afford a proper engagement. I borrowed the ring from my mom. We couldn't afford to do some things we wanted to do.

TAMELA: We spent most of our days together. That was the high.

DAVID: We really didn't argue. Of course, things changed when she got pregnant. She turned into the devil.

TAMELA: (laughing)

MARY: How did you each know you'd found the one?

TAMELA: I'd written down what I wanted in a man, someone who liked what I liked. I was into music and in the church. I didn't want anyone who smoked or drank, and David didn't. He made me laugh. I was content to get a burger and hang out at his house. After a few months, I really liked him, but he was dating other people.

DAVID: Why didn't you just tell me?

TAMELA: I was raised to let the guy pursue you.

MARY: And David, how did you know Tamela was the one for you?

DAVID: In times of war or turmoil, she was the peaceful vibe in the room. Even now, I think she's the reason why I didn't kill anybody.

TAMELA: Oh, boy!

DAVID: (laughing) She calms me. Also, I had a child, so I came as a package. She made the package her own, and my daughter took to her.

MARY: What values are most important to you as a couple?

TAMELA: First, we're faithful to God, and then I make sure I take care of him, and then our kids.

DAVID: Respect and love each other wholeheartedly. Don't allow one to

outshine the other in doing for each other.

TAMELA: A lot of relationships mess up because one person gets everything they want, but their spouse doesn't. David's the head, but he's also the utility man because he's hands on. People see me out front with singing, but he's the mastermind helping me get there with the Lord's help.

DAVID: "Protect the queen at all costs, even if it's against yourself." Even if we had to go our separate ways—you have to protect your queen at all costs. I have things in place where, God forbid, if I go off the deep end, she's protected.

TAMELA: We have to trust each other.

DAVID: Your woman should make sure you never question whether God favored you. I know the Lord favored me because He gave me her. Surround yourself with people who can give you sound, biblical advice, godly counsel.

MARY: How many children do you have together?

TAMELA: Five.

DAVID: Two from previous relationships, two together, and we adopted my niece.

MARY: How can people make blended families work?

DAVID: We're a super blended family. In our book, we say people should see your blended family is rooted in love. It causes turmoil when kids don't feel loved.

TAMELA: I wanted his girls to feel like I'm their mama. I didn't demand they call me Mama, but I nurtured and guided them. I knew how it felt to be a stepchild. When you step, you step on things.

DAVID: The Bible talks about love, and one of the best ways to show unconditional love is parenting, especially a non-biological child. Your family should blend so seamlessly no one can see the blend.

TAMELA: Early in our marriage, I introduced Porsha as my stepdaughter. Later, she said, "Mama, don't introduce me as your stepdaughter. Just introduce me as your daughter." That broke my heart.

MARY: Do you love birds have date night?

DAVID: Our whole life has been a date night. We've travelled the world and experienced stuff we never dreamed. Once, we got in the car and drove for ten days. We enjoy each other.

TAMELA: We make it a night, if we want to shed—

DAVID: (laughing) Girl, what did you say?

TAMELA: Shedding is us getting together. Making love and stuff.

DAVID: Bands called it shed when they get together and play and just vibe.

TAMELA: When you've been together 31 years, you have to switch it up. Keep it hot and fresh.

DAVID: I go to bed, she's a blonde. I wake up, she's a redhead.

TAMELA: I want to keep his eyes on me.

DAVID: People do it when they're dating. Then they get married, and that effort fades.

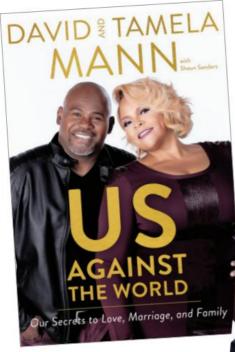
MARY: Tamela, you give him something different, but it's all you.

DAVID: I might be cheating her because all she gets is the fat, black, bald-head dude.

(laughter)

MARY: David, what do you love most about Tamela?

DAVID: Everything. She's everything to me. Also, our friendship helped us





survive a lot. And her anointing. I should say her anointing first.

TAMELA: His patience and, of course, his lovemaking. Whatever I need, he becomes. He's the man for me.

MARY: Wow! Have you ever said that before?

TAMELA: No, but we've been talking more. This book is helping me become

DAVID: We wrote Us Against the World for other people, but it also helped us.

TAMELA: It made me think about patience. The Bible says you must be long suffering. I must be patient and encouraging with him. It's important to me that he's happy.

DAVID: Well, I'm happy.

TAMELA: Mary, we might have to get off this call to go make each other happy.

(laughter)

MARY: How have you kept the home fires burning?

TAMELA: We go back to our vows. With my recent surgery, David has been the most nurturing person. He said, "I can't wait to serve you."

DAVID: She said, "Go back to work. I can get someone to take care of me." No one can take better care of her than I can. It's an honor for a man to serve his wife this way.

TAMELA: It was amazing for him to nurse me through the pain.

MARY: I commend you both. So tell us about the new album and the book tour.

TAMELA: I've tried to get David in the studio for years. The Love Project is all about our love for each other. In "Still Do," David says he'd ask me to marry him again after 31 years. I'm blessed to have him and to show people they can have this too.

DAVID: One of the songs is called "I Love You."

MARY: Is that your favorite, David?

DAVID: One of my favorites. It's from a chapter in the book called "The Knock at the Door." Five years into our marriage, I found out I had another child from a previous relationship. Our



friendship got us through. In another favorite, Tamela shares how she didn't know if she'd ever find someone who loved her enough.

TAMELA: The song says, "I finally found love I can cherish." I want other girls to know, especially as a big girl, you don't have to give your body away. Allow God to help the right man find you.

MARY: What do you want our readers to take away from this interview?

DAVID: Celebrate, don't just tolerate, each other. After 31 years, we enjoy each other more than ever.

TAMELA: Always try to outdo each other so no one is left wanting.

MARY: I'm so thankful for this time to talk with you. It's been so good.

TAMELA: Thank you so much for having us!

When Tamela and David aren't on set, on stage or touring the country playing to sold-out crowds, they enjoy the company of their fun-loving blended family of five grown children and ten grandchildren.

Get the latest updates on Tamela and David Mann: Website: tillymannmusic.com Facebook: facebook.com/davidtamelamann Instagram: instagram.com/DavidandTamela Twitter: twitter.com/DavidandTamela



How to Plan for Your Marriage While Planning Your Wedding

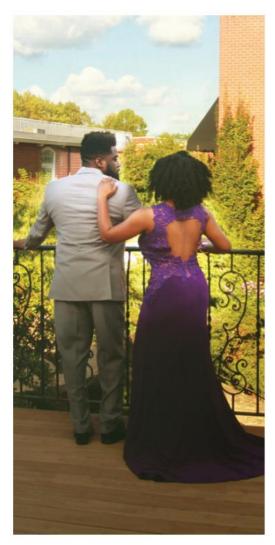
By Marquita C. Richardson | Photographed by Still Shots Photography



lanning a wedding is no easy feat. It's a big and often stressful job that includes meeting with vendors, creating a seating chart, picking floral arrangements, staying within budget and a host of other tasks. The planning process can take up to a year or more, all for one special day of fun. A great wedding planner with a good team of assistants can ease the load and make everything less daunting, but you'll still need to be involved. While you do all that planning, be sure to plan for your marriage by addressing a few important areas. After all, we all hope our marriages last a lifetime, and planning makes that more likely to happen.

▶ COUNSELING

Premarital counseling is vital. This work sets the tone and builds the foundation of your marriage. In counseling, while you're learning about your partner, you often learn about yourself too. Perhaps you thought you were patient, but after some time in counseling, you realize you can make improvements in that area. You'll both gain a better understanding about what makes you happy and what annoys you in your relationship, and you can work on how you respond to those things and how to effectively deal with conflict. You may uncover past experiences that have positively or negatively impacted your lives, and you can determine how to navigate those waters. Good premarital counseling will have you feeling empowered and confident that you and your spouse are starting on the right track. Marriage counseling, after you say, "I do," can help you stay there.





VALUES, MORALS AND FAITH

When it comes to marriage, it's important that you and your spouse have similar, if not the same, values and morals. Some people don't think about these things in the early dating stage because everything feels so new and fun. However, in order for your marriage to be on a good path, you must be equally yoked. Also, finding a church home where you can worship together and support each other's spiritual walk is essential.

NOME LIFE

There are many issues to consider when it comes to home life. Where you will live and your roles in the home are great topics to discuss when planning your marriage. Additionally, whether you both want children or not and when to start a family or how you will blend families should all be addressed before you walk down the aisle.

▶ FINANCES AND HEALTH

Discussing finances is a must! Many people are nervous to talk about money for various reasons, but you must talk about it when planning your marriage. You should know your partner's salary, decide who will pay what bills, know how much debt each person has, open a joint account and check credit scores if necessary. Meet with a financial advisor to start on the best financial footing possible.

In addition, go ahead and make those doctor's appointments. Getting the proper health screening sets you up for a long, healthy life together and can save you money in the long run. 🚳

Marquita Casterlow Richardson is a native of Greensboro, North Carolina. She began blogging in 2013 and is the creator of Meet Marquita, a life and style blog, where she writes travel, style, wedding, beauty and lifestyle content. Find out more at meetmarquita.com



INTIMACY 101: Tools for Connecting Sexually with Your Partner | By Therez Fleetwood

AS A ROMANCE CONCIERGE, I create date nights that allow couples to play, explore and intimately engage with each other. These experiences are designed to encourage couples to slow down, reconnect and share erotic fantasies. The three things I've found most couples need to connect sexually with each other are: authentic communication, physical touch and fantasy play.

Authentic Communication | We live in a society where real, authentic communication is underrated, but it's the most important thing couples must have to connect sexually with each other. What I've discovered as a romance concierge is that couples sometimes find it challenging to communicate their wants, their needs and their desires. Let's face it; talking honestly is one of the hardest things we'll ever do, and we've been socially conditioned not to talk about sex and intimacy.

Authentic communication can only happen when both of you agree to get out of your comfort zones and express what you want to create and experience with each other. There's no denying that strong marriages are built on strong communication, especially when it comes to romance and intimacy. Communicating your sexual needs creates an intimate bond between the two of you and gets you in the mood for great sex.

Physical Touch | Touching is one of the most intimate ways couples can connect with each other. The human body craves touch. It's in our nature to want to be held, just for the sake of feeling close. Massaging, caressing, cuddling, hugging and kissing get the endorphins flowing, which creates a sense of caring and sensual pleasure.

Take the time to explore each other's bodies and discover different areas that turn each other on. Massage each other with the intention of finding pleasure zones. Hug your partner for three minutes and discuss the feelings and emotions that come up as you melt into each other's arms. Kiss each other in different places: on the forehead, the back of the neck and even the earlobes. Find those sweet spots that enhance your partner's pleasure.

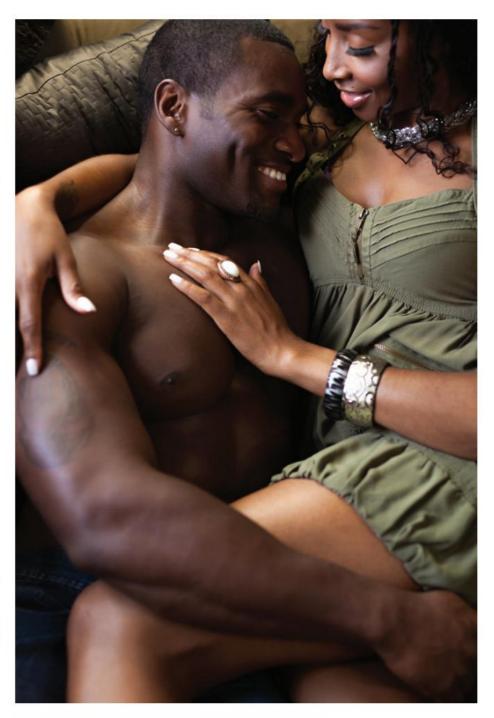
Fantasy Play | Sex should be fun, erotic and adventurous! So don't take it so seriously. Be playful and try new things in the bedroom. Explore each other and create novelty in your sex life. Tease each other and flirt with each other. Walk around naked even if your naked strolls are confined to your bedroom. Don't worry about your rolls, the extra weight, your cellulite or your love handles. Just get comfortable in your own skin.

Don't take it so seriously-be playful and try new things in the bedroom.

Play with each other's minds by talking dirty. Be a tease, share your fantasies and role-play. Take turns blindfolding each other and give your partner sensual treats as you indulge all his senses. Draw a feather across his naked body as he experiences the pleasure of erotic touch. Feed him strawberries or other aphrodisiac foods and let him feel the different textures and taste different flavors on his tongue. Burn a candle or aromatherapy oils to seduce his sense of smell. Touch and kiss his body in different places as you leave him anticipating what part you'll tantalize next. Invite your husband to do all the same for you.

Connecting sexually isn't something that just happens; it's a choice you make together. It requires purposely creating a life of sexual intimacy, openness, vulnerability, exploring all aspects of each other and having fun together. All couples have the capability to create an extraordinary sex life. You have to choose to make it a priority in your marriage and commit to the process.

Photography by Chris Edwards, Clearly Focused Media



Thérèz Fleetwood, the founder of Luxury Romance Concierge™, has been working with couples for 20+ years as an event coordinator, adult toy educator and romance concierge. She is the author of "Men and Intimacy, Real Talk. Real Answers." and the creator of the INTO-ME-SEE Game Cards™. Thérèz has worked as a

life coach and is the former owner of Thérèz's Playhouse, an adult game and toy company. She has a passion for helping couples keep the spark alive and enhance their bond. Find out more at luxuryromanceconcierge.com







PHOTOGRAPHED BY ALAKIJA STUDIOS

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e met in 2004 at CAMSA (Cameroonian Student Association) in Maryland. I was a college student, living in Dallas, Texas, and Michael lived in Maryland. We became friends, and later, fate led us to become soulmates.

What makes your love special?

We've each got the other's back no matter the circumstances. We are always ready to listen, communicate, compromise and forgive each other. We love each other unconditionally, until death do us part. We sacrifice, overlook flaws and try not to bring back old discords. We promised each other to let love, peace and God reign in our home when we got married 10 years ago.

Vowel Renewal (Her Story)

Renewing our vows was a very special moment

for me. Michael's vows were so powerful I couldn't resist crying. We've had three kids since I first said "I do" in July of 2009. This felt like getting married for the second time with a complete family, and it felt so good. It made me realize our journey ahead is still long, but we will make it to the finish line.

Vowel Renewal (His Story)

My wife planned the entire event, and it was phenomenal. I loved her 10 years ago, and I love her even more now. I am ready for the long haul with Linda.

Memorable Moment

Those moments were: when we read our vows, especially Michael reading his, when we danced to "Coller la Petite," our first dance and when I knelt to appreciate my husband and mother.



Photography: Jide Alakija alakija.photos

Cinematographer: Henry Adewale henryadewalefilms.com

Ceremony & Reception Location: Foxchase Manor galacuisine.com

Bridal Gown: Ryan & Walter ryanandwalter.com

Bride's Hair: Nneka instagram.com/dolledbynueye

Bride's Makeup:
Alaina
instagram.com/colordujour
Bridal Party Attire:
Atria Couture Bridal
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Groom's Tux: Stanlion Clothing stanlion.com

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Lady-in-Waiting: Barbara instagram.com/ladyb_stylist

Caterer: TruDelites by KC instagram.com/trudelitesbykc

Cake: Mon Délice instagram.com/mon_delice

> Music: DJ Narcise

MC: Ton Behyia, instagram.com/Behyia

Flowers: Lily V Events lilyvevents.com

> Stationery: Parchment by Dami parchmentbydami.com

Lighting & Rentals: The Light Source Company instagram.com/ thelightsourcecompany

Vowel Renewal Song

We chose Maurette Brown Clark's "The One He Kept for Me" because Michael is truly the one God kept and chose for me in this lifetime.

Marriage Advice for a Couple

Be each other's best friend, confidant and soul mate. Marriage has taught us to love more and forgive quickly. No two marriages are or will ever be the same, so stay in your own lane and be happy in it. Mind your marital business and respect each other! The power of love and God in a good marriage surpasses everything.



Linda, 36, Registered Nurse

Groom:

Michael, 40, Registered Nurse

Place of Residence:

Columbia, Maryland

Vowel Renewal Date: 07/26/2019

Vowel Renewal Location:

Foxchase Manor, Manassas, Virginia

Vowel Renewal Theme:

White and Gold

Second Honeymoon Location:

Cancun, Mexico





















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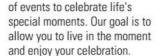


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Riverside EpiCenter | Atlanta, Georgia | March 14, 2019

On a beautiful Sunday afternoon, brides hit the dance floor upon entering the grand ballroom at The Riverside EpiCenter with our emcee, Lakia "LB" Brandenburg, aka The Wife Coach, and DJ Ever on the ones and twos. The enthusiastic crowd was ushered through the ballroom to meet premier vendors at the boutique-style bridal showcase. Eye-catching ice sculptures, a tech-centric photography display, the beauty lounge, an out-of-this-world fashion segment, elegant and inspirational tablescapes and more ignited their imaginations as they mingled and sipped gournet coffee provided by Caribou Coffee. Our exclusive bridal events are fun, informative and interactive and feature the best wedding professionals in the industry from around the United States.





















Thank you to our premier sponsors, The Riverside EpiCenter and PONDS Skin Care, and to all our amazing sponsors, partners, vendors, models, brides, grooms and quests, for being instrumental in the success of the 6th Anniversary Black Bride Bridal Show!

VENUE: Riverside EpiCenter/ EVENT PLANNING: Hinesmark Affairs/ PHOTOGRAPHY: Michelle Davina Photography, LaJoy Photography/ FLORAL DESIGN: Righteous Oaks Floral/ STAGE & THEATER ENTRY DECOR: CM Productions Atlanta, Fabulous Fox Event Design/ COFFEE: Caribou Coffee/ PHOTO BOOTH: Flash Studio Booth/ FASHION SEGMENT COORDINATOR: THE LOOK by Christian Daniele/ BRIDAL GOWNS: Winnie Couture, Vainglorious Brides, D. Auxilly, Bel Fiore Bridal, Connaisseur Paris, Gown Collective, Eclectic Eventz/ JEWELRY: Appetite of a Millionaire/ HAIR: Jaels Beauty/ MAKEUP ARTISTS: Mrs. Bridal Beauty, Cierra Elise Bridal/ GRAPHIC DESIGNER: Hannah Aryee, Love in Motion Films/ CATERING: PAC Events Catering, After Taste Catering/ RENTALS & DECOR: We Rent Atlanta/ DJ: DJ Ever/ BLACK BRIDE MEDIA LOUNGE: Irene Tyndale Events/ SPECIALTY: Spa Rinna Esthetics & Wellness, Luxury Bar Artist, Balloons by Sharon J, Therez Fleetwood, Natalie Fikes of The Total Package Consulting Group/ PRIZES & GIFTS: Elise Luxury Travel, Pure Beauty Skin Bar, Zola Gift Registry, Stellar Images Atlanta Photography/ MEDIA PARTNERS: 0h! Nikka, WAOK, V-103



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