



# SoulVision

M A G A Z I N E



September 2019



EDITORS NOTE

# BK Fulton



Photo by Derek White

| “We must position our children for their purpose . . . .”

It is important to live our best lives. We become who we become by continuously learning, working and sharing. The notion of “self-made” is incomplete without acknowledgment and thanks to those who have helped us along the way. There is always someone who helped. There is always a seed that is planted, and it must be cared for if it is to grow. Thirty years ago, I was in Cambridge finishing the second summer of a Sloan Fellowship. The experience changed my life. I went from the probation list at Virginia Tech to tutoring statistics and economics at Harvard. I subsequently accepted a full ride to the Milano Graduate School of Management and International Policy before earning my law degree a few years later. The rest is history.

I worked at the National Urban League, AOL, Time Warner, the U.S. Department of Commerce and then Verizon. I retired in 2015 and wrote my first book, *Shauna*, about my youngest sister. I found my soulmate and started and/or chair seven companies. We are working on our seventh feature film and our company owns a digital TV network, and a digital magazine, and will release 7-10 books this year. We mentor and coach 7-25 young leaders each year. We have a scholarship that helps talented youth pay for school. We are blessed and happy. At every turn and every bump in the road, someone helped me as I learned to help myself. I now fully understand the importance and the power of working together to make our world a better place.

Accordingly, we dedicate this issue of SoulVision Magazine to the “makers” who created something out of what seemed to be nothing. They are writers, motivational speakers, choreographers, actors, designers, and iconographers. In their own way, each one is blazing a path forward. In most cases, they worked their way into their dreams and our lives. They inspire us to be better; the best version of ourselves. Pray every day. Be thankful every day. Work smarter every day. God is in the details. Welcome to the September Issue of SoulVision Magazine.

| “There is always someone who helped . . . .”

CELEBRITY

# Richy Jackson Dares to Go Higher



| “Go against the world’s expectations for you.”

Richy Jackson may not be the star you know, but he is the person the stars go to when they want that extra pizzazz. He has worked and continues to work with some of the greatest and most iconic pop acts of the millennium—Lady Gaga, Puff Daddy, Katy Perry, and Nicki Minaj, just to name a few. He works nonstop and lends his creative genius to those with the talent and work ethic to become icons. Richy is also an icon.

## *Richy Jackson Dares to Go Higher (continued)*

He grew up in the culturally and racially mixed city of Fairfield, California, 20 minutes north of San Francisco. Richy lived as most kids do from that area: carefree and endlessly curious. “I was a band geek, so it was all about the band and sports and having a good time with friends,” he says. “It wasn’t a lot of crime in the city. It was a town where everyone could just thrive and grow.” His mother, Debra, and his uncle, Ricky, inspired him to pursue music and dance. “My mother was a cheerleading coach and it was through her coaching that I really started to get into dance,” he says. “I choreographed her cheerleading team when I was 13.” He had a love for dance, but before that point he never choreographed anything. Uncle Ricky was a percussionist. “He used to play the drums in bars and clubs for groups around

town. He was the drummer everyone had to have,” he says. After hearing his uncle play the drums, Richy started to play them too in the fourth grade. “The inspiration for what I do today comes from these two fantastic people that I love.”

Early on in his career, Richy realized he didn’t know everything. “I had to watch and learn and live by experience,” he says. “I was just a dancer who wanted to become a choreographer.” He learned how to work on a video set and what it took to work on tour and at rehearsals. “As a dancer, I had to see what was working for other people and what wasn’t,” he says. “I would watch the choreographers and see what they were taking on and how their relationships were with a client, the director, or the artist.” He watched how choreographers would treat their colleagues, good or bad. “I would say, ‘yeah that’s cool or that wasn’t really nice, the way she was talking to that person.’ I studied and because of that, I knew how to stay successful as a dancer and as a choreographer,” he says.

Even at this stage of his career, he doesn’t feel like he’s made it big yet. “There are so many levels of creativity and new challenges that are unforeseen at this point,” he says. “To me, I’ve done great and I want to continue to do great, but I don’t know if I’ll ever be able to say I made it. I feel like as soon you say that, a notch turns in your brain and you might not create or approach opportunities the same way. So, for me, I’m climbing a never-ending ladder. There is always a new rung to climb up.”

**“I feel like we were able to entertain and still be able to capture the audience at a time where people are easily bored.”**

There is one special moment that wowed Richy and the world—Super Bowl LI with Lady Gaga. It was his first time working on an event like the Super Bowl. “There was a lot going on in my life and in the world, politically,” he says. “I feel like we were able to entertain and still be able



## *Richy Jackson Dares to Go Higher (continued)*

to capture the audience at a time where people are easily bored. The Super Bowl is a great venue and platform to be a part of, but at the same time, you have so many different kinds of people watching you.” Richy is privy to the fact they had the opportunity to reach a diverse group of people: The audience included sports fans that could care less about “shows,” people who just want to see the halftime performance, people who love Lady Gaga, people who hate Lady Gaga, and the people who don’t know who she is. “It was amazing for us to be a part of one of the greatest, most viewed, most well-respected, and I think at this point, still unmatched Super Bowl halftime shows. It was the pinnacle of my career so far.”

His creative relationship with Lady Gaga began in 2007. “I met her at a dance studio in Hollywood. She was fresh out of New York and after seeing her perform a few of her songs, I was amazed.” She is the kind of artist that I always wanted to work with. She just had this conviction about her, that I hadn’t seen from other artists.” He liked how she was different and unique. “It was just this force that I understood,” he says. “I always wanted to be a part of that world and take the road less traveled. When I met her, that was kind of what sparked my creativity.” Their relationship centers around mutual respect for their individual creativity and ideas. “We create these shows, and we bounce ideas off each other, we challenge each other,” he says. “It’s not really about what the industry is doing. Instead, for us it’s about what we can do to create the best art. What kind of show can we do ourselves and how can we top ourselves. It’s not about what everyone else is doing. That’s what I always loved about us and our relationship.”

No matter the background of the artist Richy is working with, the language of choreography is universal. “Whether I’m counting in English and they are from another country, they still understand what 5, 7, 8 means,” he says. However, Richy does notice a difference in the degree of how involved international and American artists expect him to be in the creative process. “I think when it comes



to international artists, they really do look to me to lead the way, like ‘what do you want me to do?’, which is great. I think when you’re working with traditional American artists, the project is more of a collaboration than me just leading the way.”

Over the years, Richy has experienced first hand the changing of the music industry and how pop music’s vitality has fallen by the wayside. “We need a change, a new system. I think pop music, in particular, lends itself to those groundbreaking artists and game-changing routines with elaborate sets, and fantastic tours,” he continues, “but pop music has lost its magic over the last five or six years. It’s time for pop music to get back up. I see that happening within the next 10 years as pop music evolves. Currently,

## *Richy Jackson Dares to Go Higher (continued)*

the music industry is about how little we can spend. *Should we look like this or sound like that?* There is a monotonous approach towards music today and someone needs to break the pattern, create a new system, and bring back the magic of pop music.”

“Figure out who actually has done a professional job. Look at their resume because if you want to learn how to dance, you have to learn it from the professionals.”

Richy advises up and comers that want to be in the industry to watch and study music videos, tours, and live performances. “They really need to do their research. There’s so much content out there that as much as they think they are learning, they’re not learning enough,” he says. “Many of the creators on the internet are false prophets. Having a lot of followers does not necessarily mean there is a lot of talent, so newcomers must investigate. Figure out who actually has done a professional job. Look at their resume because if you want to learn how to dance, you have to learn it from the professionals. When you get on stage, on set, or start to perform live, a professional is the one that is going to help you to become a better dancer and a better performer.”

When he’s not working, Richy loves to watch movies. Mostly because it helps him escape from his busy work schedule. “For me, this business is 24/7. It’s nonstop. There isn’t one artist, one project, one video going,” he says. “Multiple creative projects are happening all the time. So, when it’s time to chill out, I love going to the AMC theater to watch movies. I can shut my phone off and dive into the movie for an hour and a half or two. But as soon as the movie goes off and the credits roll, the phone is back on. People are like, ‘Well, don’t you want to take a vacation.’ and I say, ‘Well I’m always flying and in some hotel.’ So, for me, either watching a movie or doing



absolutely nothing is enough. I love the work I do, and I don’t run from it. Relaxing is just something I add to the mix.”

Richy believes YouTube superstar JoJo Siwa will be the next big phenomenon in pop music. “She’s a 16-year-old from Omaha, Nebraska,” he says. “I met her when she was nine and for the past year, I’ve done five of her music videos. I creative directed and choreographed her “D.R.E.A.M. The Tour.” The response has been incredible. She went from theater dates to arenas and she’s getting more and more dates as we speak. She’s selling out everywhere. I just love working with her. She inspires me. She knows her brand and I know how to turn her brand into something that’s live for the kids to not only love, but for the adults that bring their kids to enjoy as well.”

*To learn more about Richy Jackson, you can follow him on Instagram [@richysquirrel](#) and Twitter [@RICHYSQUIRREL](#) or Facebook [@Richy Jackson Choreography](#).*

CELEBRITY

# Brad Formsma Is Creating a Culture of Generosity



| “A generous life is a life worth living.”

Brad Formsma has made it his life’s mission to spread the message of living generously. Brad is the Founder & President of I Like Giving, and author of the best-selling books *I Like Giving: The Transforming Power of a Generous Life* and *Everyday Generosity: Becoming a Generous Family in a Selfie World*. He inspires people to live a life of generosity through storytelling. I Like Giving has reached and inspired more than 120 million people in 170 countries. Brad has inspired major corporations to change their culture to one that cultivates kindness. Brad spoke to SoulVision Magazine about his humble beginnings in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the inspiration behind I Like Giving, and how he thinks people should practice the “seven ways of generosity” in their lives.

**Where are you from and what was it like growing up there? Did you have any inspirations growing up?**

I was brought up in Grand Rapids, Michigan, a conservative Midwest town. It was a nice place to grow up.

## *Brad Formsma Is Creating a Culture of Generosity (continued)*

I really looked up to my grandpa, Don. My grandpa was a large contract baker. He made croutons and stuffing, the food you would often have at Thanksgiving. He had a test kitchen where he would make 16 loaves of bread every Saturday morning. I would tag along with him and he would teach me a lot about life, including his modeling of the seven ways to live generously.

At first, I thought it would just be Brad and Grandpa enjoying the fresh loaves of bread on a Saturday morning. But they cooled off and we put them in the trunk of the car and off we went to deliver the bread to people around town. He would model the generosity of words by giving them a kind word. He would model the generosity of money by giving them money with the fresh loaves of bread.

He would show me the generosity of thoughts, of words, of money, of influence, of time, of attention, and the way you should share your stuff. It just stuck with me. I looked up to him and followed in his footsteps. I started a business in high school. I ran that business for twenty years and used those seven ways of generosity in the formation of the business and the way I operated the business.

I still do this today by helping companies understand how to have a culture of generosity and how to bring the seven ways of living generously to work. The impact and the culture of the business not only affects the daily temperature of your venture, but it also affects the bottom line positively. I'm just an entrepreneur who loves God and people.

### **What was the most important lesson you learned in the early phases of your career?**

In 2005, I was on a good run. My business was doing great, but I had a series of thoughts. How can we inspire people to live generously? How as a business person and a giver, do I like to be communicated with? What motivates me? I kept coming back to the fact that stories are great motivators and such phenomenal teachers. The average TED talk has 65 percent story content if they're good. So stories, in my opinion, are the best communication tools. I was moved by the vision to start I Like Giving to inspire people to live generously and show generosity in a multitude of ways.



We started using short films as one delivery vehicle. Our short stories will make you laugh, make you cry, and most importantly motivate you. We have great data that says when people watch these films, they get excited about finding new ways to be generous.

### **At what point in your career did you begin to feel you had made it?**

I'm not a typical "I made it, so I'm going to do something good" guy. I sold a service business in Michigan. It wasn't a big liquidity event that compelled me to go do something good. I had put some practice into my business with these seven ways and thought I could take it further and positively influence the world.

Today we have over 120 million people who have watched our short films and we continue to tell these short stories of just ordinary people doing extraordinary things. I feel like I'm still trying to make it. I believe a generous world is a better world for all of us.

What I need is help from people that agree with us. Together we can multiply the giving message. Sharing stories broadly gets that thinking out there.

### **What would you consider to be your greatest achievement?**

I think that for me—I don't want to be overly religious—by God's grace, I have been faithful to my wife and my family in terms of positioning them before the excitement of career, being a known author and having a best-selling book. I think my greatest accomplishment is that I just haven't screwed that up.

## Brad Formsma Is Creating a Culture of Generosity (continued)

### How has your faith influenced and/or guided your work?

Well, there is this idea that says, “It’s better to give than to receive . . .” and I have found that to be true. However, I do have an interesting cut on it. I also like to receive. I like nice things. I like to go to a nice restaurant, play golf and yet, I have found it to be true that when I give in the seven ways [of generosity], it is always better than me getting. When I find truths I pick up in the Bible, I apply them. It’s kind of fun to validate things and way better to give than to get.



### How would you describe a “lifestyle of generosity?”

I think about it in terms of what I do daily, weekly, monthly. It is so important for people to see that they can be generous multiple times, every single day because now they know they are not limited to just giving away money. When you know you have something to offer every day, you can develop a lifestyle of generosity. I don’t think you ever simply arise, it’s a process—and it’s an exciting process. I always say I just want to do better, not out of performance, I just want to try to be a little better every day.

### How should the next generation of leaders apply generosity to their personal brand of leadership?

Be encouraged that you want to be known as generous. Think about this, we have better relationships when we are generous. The way to apply it is to just start. I find it to be contagious. You know, there is a proverb that says, “the world of the generous gets larger and larger” and, drum

roll please “... the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller.” And so I believe it is encouraging to know your world is going to get bigger, you’re going to go places, and do things you didn’t think were possible when you begin to live a lifestyle of generosity.

### How do you relax when you are not working?

I really like to go on 3-5 mile walks. I like to listen to podcasts, golf, and clean my garage. I don’t get a P&L every month saying “Oh, more people are generous. Great, let’s keep going.” We only get the anecdotal feedback that comes to our I Like Giving website. So sometimes you just want to see progress, even if it means in your personal space.



### What’s up next?

We are doing more “Lunch and Learn” workshops in companies. Employers want to give good-hearted inspiration and hope to their employees. There is something powerful about giving employees the experience of an outside voice of inspiration. We’re finding this is super powerful because parents are looking for ways to talk to their kids about their values. This comes through loud and clear at our “Lunch and Learn” events at many great companies across America and beyond.

*If you want to learn more about Brad Formsma, visit his website [bradformsma.com](http://bradformsma.com). To join the I Like Giving movement, visit [ilikegiving.com](http://ilikegiving.com). You can also check out I Live Giving stories on [SoulVision.TV](http://SoulVision.TV)*

## Kevin Williams' Art Radiates with Skill & Beauty



*Photo by Derek Blanks Photography*

### | “Enlighten the world to the beauty of your culture.”

Kevin A. Williams' (also known as WAK) artwork can be seen on the walls of African- American homes around the globe. His work speaks to the shared experience of struggle and resilience that unites the African-American community. His work is provocative, powerful and inspiring. The monicker, WAK, came to Kevin at a time when he was not proud of his output in the art world. The meaning of WAK would later change to wisdom and knowledge and a sense of pride for Kevin. It's the reason his fine art publishing company is named WAKART, LLC. As a “figurative storyteller,” Kevin gives visual currency to the history and life of the experiences of a person of color in America. “My goal is to inspire and enlighten all of humanity to the beauty and strength of my people,” Kevin explains. His piece, titled “Queen,” emotes a

## *Kevin Williams' Art Radiates with Skill & Beauty (continued)*

feeling of freedom, resistance, and rebirth. “She breaks free from the shackles of slavery as she rises up from the cotton fields and restores a crown upon her head,” Kevin says. “The rising sun shines upon her, symbolizing a new day.”

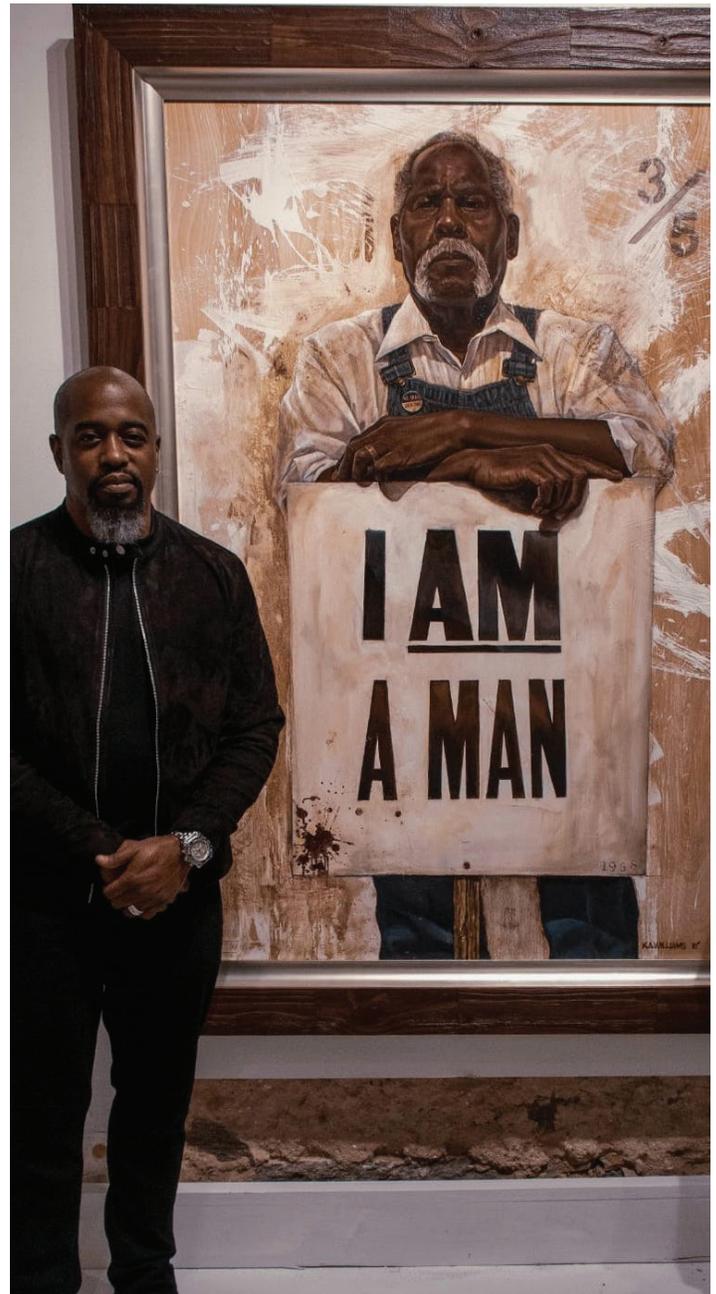
Kevin’s background is a tale of self-reliance. Kevin grew up on the South Side of Chicago. Expressing himself through art came naturally to him at a young age. He was inspired mostly by what was around him at the time: comic books and fashion magazines. At first, Kevin didn’t believe he could make a living as an artist. As a high school student at Chicago Vocational High School, Kevin enrolled in architectural drafting classes. It wasn’t his true passion. He was often bored and failed to pay attention at times. To maintain his attention, his instructor made a

deal with him: draw him a picture of his dog and he would give Kevin extra credit. The instructor was so impressed with the drawing, he shared it with the art teacher, artist Robert Johnson.

Johnson encouraged Kevin to pursue commercial art instead of architecture. Kevin wasn’t too enthusiastic. After Johnson shared with Kevin’s parents (his father was a mathematician) that he would be able to get



*Kevin A. Williams perfecting his latest work, “Queen.”*



*“I Am a Man” by Kevin Williams*

## *Kevin Williams' Art Radiates with Skill & Beauty (continued)*

scholarships due to his talents, they encouraged Kevin to keep at it. He won contest after contest and award after award. Some of the most renowned institutions wanted him. He received scholarships from Parsons and The Art Students League of New York. He briefly attended the Art Institute of Chicago and Columbia College but eventually dropped out of both schools. He came to the realization that he could not express his creativity through the constraints of formal education. He wanted to prove, mostly to his father, that he could succeed in his venture as an entrepreneurial artist. It eventually paid off. Kevin is the best-selling artist in the African-American print market. His painting, "Anointed Gift," was commissioned by the late actor and comedian Bernie Mac, as a gift for Oprah Winfrey's 50th birthday. Kevin is also working hard to share his autobiography with the world.

“My goal is to inspire and enlighten all of humanity to the beauty and strength of my people.”

His coffee table book, *The Concrete Miracle* (releasing fall 2020), is an “autobiographical retrospective.” The autobiography tells the story of his rise from the challenges he faced on the South Side of Chicago to becoming an internationally recognized urban legend and fine artist. “This covers my impact over the last 25 years through the lens of creative philosophy, business, and my creative process to create impactful images and artwork,” Kevin says. Out of concrete, a miracle was born. He is an artist with the aptitude to lift everyone to a higher consciousness.

To learn more about Kevin Williams and his artwork, check out his website [artbywak.com](http://artbywak.com) and Instagram [@artbywak](https://www.instagram.com/artbywak).

MOVIES

## Hans Charles: Mastering the Camera Lens



| “Cinematography immerses the audience into your story.”

Born and raised in Stamford, Connecticut, Hans was close to the culture and excitement of New York City. “The Bronx was less than 30 minutes from my house,” he says. “New York City was such a part of my childhood, although I didn’t live in NYC until my 20s.” His film journey began at Howard University, where he met Bradford Young, his adjunct professor in Cinematography.

He and Bradford went on to work on several important black independent films together, including Dee Rees’ *Pariah* and Tina Mabry’s *Mississippi Damned*. Through this work, Hans ended up on the set of Ava DuVernay’s second narrative feature *Middle of Nowhere*. Through this relationship, Hans was given the opportunity to branch out on his own. He worked as one of three cinematographers on *Venus Vs.*, Ava’s documentary about Venus Williams for ESPN’s *Nine for IX* series. He and Ava continued their collaboration with the critically acclaimed and award-winning Netflix documentary *13th*. His work on *13th* cemented Hans as a legitimate cinematographer.

## Hans Charles: Mastering the Camera Lens (continued)



He has since shot more critically acclaimed documentaries. The list includes *Mr. Soul!* (Sam Pollard, Melissa Haizlip), *Contact High* (Melissa Haizlip), *Grass Is Greener* (Fab 5 Freddy), and the Emmy nominated *Wu-Tang Clan: Of Mics and Men* (Sacha Jenkins). His debut feature work includes *Love Dot Com: The Social Experiment* (Charneice Fox) and *I Angry Black Man* (Menelek Lumumba). For *I Angry*, Hans served as director of photography (DP) and producer. The story takes place in the classroom of an African-American literature class at the fictional Frost College, a liberal arts institution in New England. The protagonist is an African-American senior named Mike. Mike is suffering from PTSD but doesn't know it, as he and his classmates discuss the works of writers like James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and August Wilson. The film conveys how their work relates

to society today. The framing becomes tighter and tighter as the tension builds and eventually explodes. It's easily one of the most exciting and provocative films in recent years.

Hans Charles doesn't describe his artistic identity as just a cinematographer. "My artistic identity is that of a filmmaker. I'm a filmmaker who expresses his art through cinematography. I visualize the vision of a filmmaker so it ends up on screen," he says. From *Mr. Soul!* and *Grass Is Greener* to Showtime's *Wu-Tang: Of Mics and Men*, Hans has been a part of meaningful films and TV shows that positively showcase the history and cultural impact of African Americans. When not on set, Hans is a tenure-track professor of cinematography at George Mason University. He teaches his students to be passionate about their craft in the same way that he was at Howard.

**"My artistic identity is that of a filmmaker. I'm a filmmaker who expresses his art through cinematography. I visualize the vision of a filmmaker so it ends up on screen."**

Hans has his hands in a plethora of upcoming projects. "I am working on a couple of big, exciting cultural docs I can't really talk about," he says. He and Menelek have started developing their next feature. "We go after some big themes facing America today. We're super excited about it."

To learn more about Hans Charles, you can listen to his podcast with Menelek Lumumba, *Back of the Theater* and follow him on Instagram @cineclass.



Hans Charles and Ava DuVernay, 2017 Film Independent Spirit Awards (Amanda Edwards/Getty Images)

MOVIES

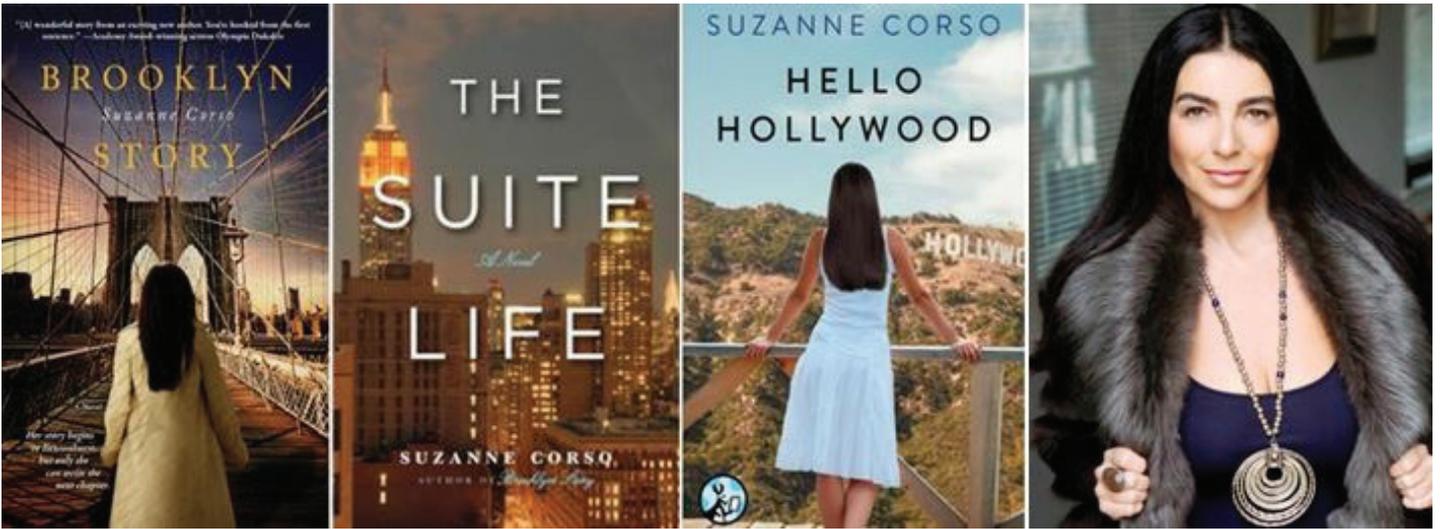
## Suzanne Corso's Big City Dreams



| “Never forget what is important in life.”

Suzanne Corso uses her talent for fiction writing to tell her life story. She grew up on the tough streets of Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. “I’m a Brooklyn girl, plain and simple. Which means I have an edge that no other woman on Earth has,” she says. Because of her upbringing, Suzanne developed plenty of character, intrigue, loyalty, and heart. As a writer, Suzanne turned her experiences into a successful fiction empire. “I write about what I know, and what resonates with me the most, which is my life,” she says. As a child, she lived in a two-bedroom walk-up with her Jewish grandmother, Jewish mother, and as she says, “her deadbeat Sicilian father” who disappeared from their lives. “Through living this life of utter dysfunction, I got through it all because of my faith in God and a strong belief in my own abilities,” Suzanne says.

## Suzanne Corso's Big City Dreams (continued)



“[Brooklyn Story] is a story that has to be told, especially in our current moment in which women are feeling so empowered.”

Her grandmother gave her a secondhand Smith Corona typewriter at 17. She dreamed of leaving her Brooklyn neighborhood to live the life she had always wanted in Manhattan. Like many young girls in Bensonhurst, Suzanne was caught up in the mob life. Her boyfriend was emotionally and physically abusive. He didn't allow her to complete her high school education. She earned her GED behind his back. While living in dysfunction at 17, she started writing her story. It wouldn't be until a couple of decades later that she would return to her manuscript. For now, her writings were stored away in secret. She was under her boyfriend's control for eight years until he was eventually sent to prison. She was now free from his manipulative grasp.

When she was 27, while walking by the New York Stock Exchange, Suzanne was asked to share a meal by a managing partner of specialist firm at the Exchange. Anthony (her now ex-husband) and Suzanne soon started dating and got married in Bermuda. They lived a great luxurious life until the crash of 2008. They had lost everything in their \$100 million dollar fortune. Suzanne

looks at this moment as the best thing that could have happened to her. It made her realign her priorities and values. She got back to writing her story. She had locked her writing and the pain away for so long. She released her first novel in her 40s. *Brooklyn Story*, *The Suite Life*, and *Hello, Hollywood* tell the story of her life's journey. These were her first three books.

“Through living this life of utter dysfunction, I got through it all because of my faith in God and a strong belief in my own abilities.”

Suzanne is not slowing down her momentum. She is working on another book trilogy which will be published next year. “It's about the diamond industry. Very rare, quite important, and sometimes mystical. I'll combine it all as I see it through my eyes,” she says. Suzanne is ecstatic about the film adaptation of *Brooklyn Story*. She penned the script herself. “We're negotiating right now and we are trying to find the right cast,” she says. “It's a story that has to be told, especially in our current moment where women are feeling so empowered.”

To learn more about Suzanne Corso and her books, visit [www.suzannecorso.com](http://www.suzannecorso.com) and follow her on Facebook @suzannecorsolife, Instagram @suzannecorso, and Twitter @suzannecorso.

## CHEF'S CORNER

# Chef MaMusu



“Have a taste of Nigeria’s most popular bean cake.”

## Akara (Fried Bean Cakes)

**Course:** Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner

**Cuisine:** West African (Nigerian)

**Prep Time:** 10 minutes

**Inactive:** 24 hours

**Cook Time:** 10 minutes

**Total Time:** 24 hours and 20 minutes

**Servings:** 4-6



## Ingredients

- ½ Pound of dry black-eyed peas
- 1 medium each red/yellow/green bell pepper
- 2 medium whole onions
- 2 medium whole fresh tomatoes
- 3 cups of virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon of basil, thyme, and parsley
- ½ teaspoon sea salt

## Preparation

1. Soak black-eyed peas overnight.
2. Next day, drain the peas.
3. In a food processor, blend black eye peas, then pour into a mixing bowl.
4. In a food processor, crush peppers and onions together.
5. Add half of the peppers/onions mixture into the blended black-eyed peas and stir well
6. In a deep frying pan, heat the 3 cups of olive oil.
7. Now, with a tablespoon, scoop the combined mixture or roll in the palm of your hand, drop into the frying oil and fry until golden brown.
8. Remove from the oil and set aside on a plate.

## Dipping Sauce (Optional)

1. Crush your medium whole tomatoes and add them to your remaining peppers/onions, parsley, thyme, basil, and sea salt.
2. In a small saucepan, add ½ cup of olive oil. Heat the oil (medium heat), then add your mixture. Stir for 5 minutes.
3. Remove from heat and put into a small bowl.
4. Serve with the Akara as a dipping sauce.

*Optional: Hot peppers can be added to your pepper mixture to make the sauce hot.*

*Special Notes: Akara is a good source of protein to your diet and can be eaten at any time.*

**Restaurant Information:** When in Richmond, Virginia, stop by *Africanne* on Main located at 200 E. Main Street for a serving of their home-cooked West African cuisine.

COMMUNITY

# ChildFund: Creating A Better World for Our Kids



*Kenya: A community health volunteer makes a house call to a mother and child.*

*Photo credit: Jake Lyell for ChildFund.*

| “Lend a helping hand to the adults of tomorrow.”

Each month we highlight a community program that aligns with the values of SoulVision Magazine. We believe engaging with one’s community is critical to fostering positive change in the world.

For our September issue, we highlight ChildFund. ChildFund (founded in 1938) is a nonprofit based in Richmond, Virginia. The organization has a worldwide reach: working in 24 countries and supporting 10.5 million children across the globe. According to President and CEO Anne Goddard, the mission of ChildFund is to “help children live at their full potential, whatever that looks like for them.” They reach this goal through mostly child sponsorship. “Sponsorship connects caring people to a child who could use their support, whether that child lives in a pastoral community in Kenya, a makeshift house on the outskirts of New Delhi or a lower-income community right here in the U.S.,” Anne says. “And while we also work with governments, corporate partners and other individual donors besides sponsors, that one-to-one relationship between a child and a sponsor is really the fuel for what we do. A sponsor’s friendship and encouragement can inspire a child to dream bigger, reach higher and know their own value. It’s powerful beyond measure,” she says.

## ChildFund: Creating A Better World for Our Kids (continued)



*Philippines: Anne at a ChildFund-supported teen center at a high school, where she met with youth leaders, teachers, and counselors. Photo courtesy of ChildFund.*

In recent years, ChildFund has made a huge push to protect children from violence. According to the CDC, over 1 billion children experience some sort of violence every year. “It has a tremendously negative impact on brain development that science is only now beginning to fully measure and understand,” Anne says. In India, ChildFund is helping girls avoid child marriage through the empowering force of soccer. In Kenya and Zambia, they are encouraging the concept of responsive parenting. “Caregivers learn about nonviolent discipline and build healthier relationships with their children,” Anne says. In Honduras, ChildFund worked with parents and teachers alike in violence prevention training. Their efforts led to a 56 percent reduction in violent incidents at school. In 2018, Anne traveled to Colombo, Sri Lanka, to attend the launch of the ChildFund-supported Alliance of Youth to End Violence Against Children. There, hundreds of youth came from around the country to protest violence against children and demand better laws that would protect them. In the States, ChildFund recently worked with legislators to draft and introduce a congressional resolution to end violence against children. This laid the path for the government to make the issue of violence against children a priority.

Anne emphasizes that violence against children negates the other work organizations like ChildFund do to make their lives better. “Nutritious food can only go so far in a stomach twisted by terror,” she says. “It’s hard to concentrate on getting an education when you’re being sexually harassed or bullied at school. A child might have a roof over their head, but if their caregivers neglect or abuse them, it’s not a home.” In ChildFund’s *Small Voices, Big Dreams* survey—a survey that gives voice to the concerns of children around the world—children were asked: “How can adults protect children better?” The answer: “Love children more.” “That spoke so deeply to me. To paraphrase Nelson Mandela, if we don’t treat our children with the love they need and deserve, what does that say about our society’s soul?” Anne says.



*Sri Lanka: The Alliance of Youth to End Violence Against Children marches in Colombo. Photos courtesy of ChildFund.*

## *ChildFund: Creating A Better World for Our Kids (continued)*

“We’re really embracing our roots as a force of connection, heart to heart,” she says. “At a time when the world seems to be fixated on our differences, the work of helping people see each other’s full humanity has become more urgent than ever. When we connect people, we open the way for them to become part of each other’s stories. Those little connections can be more powerful than our differences, and that’s exactly what ChildFund does,” she says. “I’m a firm believer that social change of any kind, in our communities or in the world, starts with children and young people. Most people don’t believe they can change the world, but they do believe in their ability to change one child’s life. That’s within reach and necessary, in my opinion, for every one of us.”

*To find out how you can give your support to ChildFund, visit their website [www.childfund.org](http://www.childfund.org) and follow them on Instagram @childfund or Facebook @ChildFundInternational and Twitter @ChildFund.*

LIVING LEGENDS

# April Walker



*Kevin A. Williams perfecting his latest work, "Queen."*

At a young age, April Walker showed signs of an entrepreneurial spirit. When April was a teenager she taught gymnastics and sold T-shirts to make a little change for herself. But it wasn't until she set foot in Dapper Dan's boutique custom shop that her entrepreneurial spirit translated into fashion. At the age of 21, Walker created her own custom tailor shop. She named the shop Fashion In Effect. Early customers included influential hip hop duo Audio Two (Milk & Giz) and Grammy-winning, reggae singer Shaggy. Fashion In Effect laid the groundwork for her brand, Walker Wear.

## *April Walker (continued)*



*Photo by Kelvin Bullock*

Artists and entertainers of the era—Tupac, Notorious BIG, and Queen Latifah—were some of the early supporters of April and her brand. April was in a zone. Hip hop culture was gaining national attention around the same time Walker Wear was gaining momentum. Hip hop was no longer seen as a fad. A quick search through the blogging platform, Tumblr shows the impact April’s brand had and continues to have on pop culture. In the blog, you will find a GIF of Treach from Naughty by Nature rocking a Walker Wear jacket on Yo! MTV Raps. If you go deeper, you’ll find a scan of Run DMC sporting Walker Wear hats and jackets on the cover of L’Affiche in 1993.

The name ‘Walker Wear’ pays homage to WilliWear, the fashion label of the late, great fashion designer Willie Smith. Just like Willie, April set out to create clothes for the common people. Today, the fashion world looks to hip hop for inspiration. But without April Walker—who was a major pioneer in urban wear—this genre would not exist. It doesn’t matter what didn’t exist before you. What matters is that you use your time on earth to carve out a path that is right for you today.

“Negative thoughts can kill dreams, while positive thoughts will ignite your tomorrows. What you place in your mind will become your reality. The most important story you’ll ever tell is your own. What kind of story are you telling yourself? Make sure it’s a good one because you are listening.” –April Walker