

Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

New Enrichment Program for Black Girls Transforms Lives

Baton Rouge Businesswoman Designs TransfHERmation program for Young, Black Girls

By Candace J. Semien
The Drum/NNPA Member

At a time when many messages for young girls seem to be conflicting, Baton Rouge teens are experiencing an influx of organizations and programs designed to show them how amazing and powerful they are in the world. From Black Girls Rock on a national scale to the local Womanhood101 initiative and the TransfHERmation program, the brilliance of teen girls are being magnified and strengthened.

“I believe girls are a special gift from God and they should be nurtured as such,” said Quintina Ricks, founder of TransfHERmation, an enrichment program for girls.

For two years, more than 20 girls have experienced TransfHERmation at T. Simmons and Company in Baton Rouge where they developed businesses, vision and mission statements, brand names, and tag-

lines to reflect their value system. These values were explored during sessions on gratitude, respect, public behavior, and relationships.

The girls created products for their business—most opting for cosmetics—using raw materials and scientific principles to manufacture lipsticks, lip gloss, soap, and candles. During an interactive, real-world stimulation, they took on adult responsibilities and purchased homes, cars, insurance, and childcare services.

As part of their transformation experience, the girls learned strategies to improve and maintain healthy diets, relationships, hygiene, and finances. “Critical to their success and quality of life will be their ability to make healthy lifestyle choices relative to managing stress and friendships,” said Ricks. “We teach young ladies to prioritize their greatest asset which is their health.”

TransfHERmation is Ricks’ brainchild, which she started in 2014 as an



PHOTO COURTESY OF QUINTANA RICKS

Quintina Ricks, is the founder of TransfHERmation, a summer enrichment program for girls.

exhilarating, multi-faceted summer program that she designed to help girls improve their self-awareness, self-love, and self-worth. Ricks is owner of Ten40 Solutions. She said she is an accountant by trade, event designer by passion, and youth developer by purpose. It is within the structure of her TransfHERma-

tion program that Ricks is able to be most creative in reaching the girls. “When we invest in young people, the return on that investment is immeasurable. We build the female leaders of the future,” she said. The Drum talked with Ricks to learn more.

THE DRUM: How was this experience designed to be transformative?

Quintina Ricks: Our goal is to build the female leaders of the future. There’s no

denying that women are making huge contributions all across the globe in all walks of life. It’s also no secret that women face unique challenges relative to crushing stereotypes and breaking through the proverbial glass ceiling. Our desire for these girls is that they embrace their femininity, understand their power, harness their creativity, identify their strengths, and visualize their future.

TD: Why was this age group targeted?

QR: This year’s camp experience was developed specifically for teenage girls. Adolescence is an important time. These young ladies are making critical life decisions that will either serve a setbacks or set ups for long term success. We want to equip these young ladies with the information, tools, resources, and mentors to make solid life decisions.

TD: What life lessons

did you want this experience to teach or be revealed to participants?

QR: Our curriculum is designed to expose these young ladies to lessons that focus on leadership, introduce the concept of entrepreneurship, teach principles of saving/investing, and also highlight STEM careers and women who are thriving in those fields. Self-esteem, self-love, and self-care is emphasized throughout the camp experience. We want these girls to walk away feeling powerful.

TD: How did this year meet or exceed your expectations?

QR: This year exceeded our expectations despite some internal hurdles that we had to cross. Typically when we sponsor these types of programs, we plan over 6-8 months. This year, we pulled the camp together in less than a month. Our businesses were swamped with new clients, which is a good thing, but we didn’t know, if we would have the time or the capacity to host the camp this year. We decided collectively that we had to make it a priority and we were able to pull it off. It was well attended. We worked with an amazing group of girls.

TD: What were the memorable transformative moments?

QR: The responses that we get from the parents are always telling for me. When you get an email celebrating academic or social growth that makes all the hard work and sacrifices well worth it. We had a diverse group of girls in attendance this year. Some were from upper middle

class households, attending high performing schools, taking family vacations, etc. Other camp participants came from extreme poverty. One young lady in particular had not attended school regularly since the flood. Her mother was on the verge of eviction. They had no water or utilities in their apartment. Fortunately the young lady was comfortable enough to tell us what was going on. Our team was able to get her enrolled in school, purchase uniforms, connect her family with job placement assistance, and reconnect their utilities. Were it not for the camp this particular kid would’ve probably dropped out of school and eventually been homeless.

TD: How does this program fit within your company’s work or mission?

QR: Our company is obviously very diversified in terms of its divisions and the products and services that we offer. The common theme across the entire organization is our commitment to giving back to the communities that have contributed to our success. The way we choose to give back is through building human capital. Investing in young people feels good from an individual standpoint, and it’s smart from a business standpoint. The return on investment is so significant that it’s virtually immeasurable.

For more information about TransfHERmation, visit www.transfhermation.com or follow the group on Facebook at www.facebook.com/transfhermation.



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Mexico

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advantaged areas, like the rural south and the heavily indigenous high mountains.

Since this is the case, they reason, data that appears to show race-based inequality in Mexico is actually capturing class, ethnic and regional inequalities.

Although the premise of this argument holds true, the conclusion is incorrect.

Our study accounted for gender, age, region of residence and ethnic origin – and still skin color emerged as a powerful determinant of wealth and education levels.

A second critique of racism in Mexico is that yes, it exists, but it is not as bad as in other places in the region, like Brazil or the United States.

Our study runs contrary to that argument. Among nations surveyed

in the Americas Barometer, Mexico ranks fourth in terms of the negative impact of skin-tone on an individual’s wealth, behind Bolivia, Uruguay and Ecuador.

On the relationship between race and lower levels of education, Mexico moves up one spot to trail only Ecuador and Trinidad and Tobago.

Indeed, the sole place in the Americas where people of color seem to fare worse overall than in Mexico is Ecuador, where Americas Barometer data shows that having dark skin reduces educational achievement by one year more than it does in Mexico.

This is in stark contrast to countries like Chile and Costa Rica, where race appears to have only a minor impact on wealth and education.

Our analysis unambiguously disprove the notion that Mexico is somehow so mixed race – so mestizo – as to be race-blind. Quite to the contrary: Racism is a severe social challenge.