



What's Happening

**Funding, Intellectual Property
affecting Creative Entrepreneurs
says Dahlia Harris**

Actor, Comedian and Cultural Specialist, Dahlia Harris has highlighted the lack of funding and loss of intellectual property rights as two of the main obstacles to the growth of the creative industries. Ms. Harris was speaking at the Business Dialogue Forum: B.O.S.S Lady, an all-female event featuring a panel of Jamaican women entrepreneurs held recently at the UWI Regional Headquarters as part of the Jamaica Business Development Corporation's (JBDC) Global Entrepreneurship Week celebrations (November 14 – 18, 2016).

Ms. Harris argued that there is tangible evidence that the creative and cultural industry makes money but they are not viewed as businesses in Jamaica.

“From my perspective, I see people who have the talent but they can't get it moving because no money is coming in. I was reading over a document about the Orange Economy and they were comparing 30 years of Broadway and the top ten shows made 26 billion dollars. So we have the models that work, we have them everywhere, but there is a resistance in Jamaica to embrace that creative business model and I find that a lot of our businesswomen are involved in creative work. Christmas is coming and if you check the streets, you see doilies 'til you weak! I drive downtown and see uniforms in stalls and that's fashion. But how do we get people to understand that the natural talent that they have can be transferred as women into business and help them to earn? And for people who see them to understand that 'Miss Zella' can sew and if I give her some money to invest in sewing equipment, it's going turn over at the end of the month and create more jobs,” she said.



Actress, Producer & Cultural Expert, Dahlia Harris (2nd left) makes a point during the B.O.S.S. Lady Business Dialogue Forum which was hosted by JBDC as part of our Global Entrepreneurship Week celebrations. Other panelists in the photo are from left, Audrey Hinchcliffe - Managing Director of Manpower & Maintenance Services, Shawna-Kaye Lester, CEO of Memorable Essay and Ethnie Miller Simpson, President of the Womens' Entrepreneur Network of the Caribbean. The session was moderated by Kenia Mattis, CEO of ListenMi Caribbean.

Collaborate to Educate Investors

Urging that there's strength in numbers, Ms. Harris says creative industry entrepreneurs must educate financial institutions to develop a better understanding of their operations in order to inform the decision-making process for loans and investments.

“We have to collectively find a way to approach them to say this is how you finance. This is the discussion I've had with them, that when a creative comes to get a loan, these questions cannot apply to what we do; rather this is what you need to ask. For the most part, some have said come sit with us and explain it because we don't understand it. And I think it needs that kind of research/template for them to understand. As business women, we have to stop accepting that that's the way it is and we have to demand that they now provide the opportunities for us to make what is there for us to make. I realize that they don't respond to individuals, they respond to numbers. They can always tell me how many business people, manufacturers are in Jamaica. When I say how many creative business people they can't tell me.” she said.

Intellectual Property

Continuing, she pointed to the issue of intellectual property rights in which products developed by creative entrepreneurs are adapted by larger entities. “It also raises the issue of when the small ideas don't move and then the larger companies who have access to the financing run with the ideas, what that does to the spirit of the business person. And it happens a lot in the culinary area. I can

name a million things that I have personally seen out of the JCDC amateur competition then finds itself onto the shelves and not just here in Jamaica but overseas as well. We're sitting on a gold mine in Jamaica," she said.

President of the Women Entrepreneurs Network of the Caribbean, Ethnie Miller-Simpson, believes that both parties must be engaged from a psychological standpoint in order to bridge the gap between financier and entrepreneur, as it relates to perception and mindset respectively.

"The perception is that when you have a brick and mortar business – a building, that it is a better business than a creative business. What has happened is the power bases of this world believe that if they have structured the world a certain way, they've really structured it for themselves. And we must change some of those power bases and make them realize that there is power in creativity, there is power in intellectual property, work with persons to say there is pride that you should have in what you're doing and you don't have to have a job, you don't have to be wearing a uniform, you don't have to have a brick and mortar building for what you're doing to be of worth. So from a psychological point of view, there's a lot of change that needs to happen," she said.

Ms. Miller-Simpson also called on angel investors to engage creative entrepreneurs who are able to develop unique products, but are uninterested in executing from an idea to a business so they can benefit from the intellectual property rights.

Global Entrepreneurship Week was observed locally by the JBDC last week under the theme: Empower. Invest. Accelerate. The Business Dialogue was among four events staged throughout the week. GEW began in 2007 and is recognized as the world's largest celebration of innovators and job creators, who launch startups that bring ideas to life, drive economic growth and expand human welfare. The aim is to inspire people everywhere through local, national and global activities designed to help them explore their potential as self-starters and innovators.

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