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Friday, June 19, 2015 | 8:09 PM

ESSENCE Network: Randi Gloss Commemorates Black Lives in Style

Christen Johnson

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When it comes to tragedies, especially the ones spotlighting interactions between Black people and law enforcement, some are moved to tears, and others are moved to action. Randi Gloss, founder of GLOSSRAGS, is committed to raising awareness of the social injustices Black men and women face. Check out how she uses her creativity as a way to commemorate the lives of fallen brothers and sisters.

Name: Randi Gloss

Age: 24

Title and company: Founder of GLOSSRAGS

Location: Washington, D.C.

Twitter handle: @RandiGloss

Instagram handle: @RandiGloss

Website: <http://www.glossrags.com/>

The gig: I like to call what I do "wearable activism." As the founder of GLOSSRAGS, I've charged myself with creating critical designs that are sparks for social movements and discourse. GLOSSRAGS represents the contrast of the raw and the refined. With the And Counting Collection in particular, you have the raw—countless Black men and women killed by police and "vigilante justice" violence—a wearable memorial of their lives on a t-shirt. I never take for granted kind words from an e-mail or tweet. On the days when I'm saddened by the news of another death, those words of encouragement and gratitude are just the motivation I need to keep going. The shirts are worn in 46 out of the 50 states and abroad in Spain, New Zealand, Portugal, Canada, the UK, Australia and South Korea.

The inspiration: My friend invited me to make signs with his mentees for the March on Washington's 50th Anniversary. I made a few different ones, but then I wrote: "Emmett & Amadou & Sean & Oscar & Trayvon...More than just Black faces in tragic places," it was like

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someone had hit me in the chest. I was so tired of hearing about my brothers and sisters dying at the hands of police and racists, and I needed to be carrying this sign. So, a couple days later, on the morning of the commemorative march, I did. It seemed as though I couldn't walk five feet without someone staring or stopping me so they could take a picture. I told my mom that I wanted to put the names on a t-shirt and sell them. The sign was only the foundation to what has blossomed into a movement.

The journey: I approached my mentor in February 2014 and said, "I just need \$500 for 100 t-shirts." Then I sent him a proposal which he told me wasn't very good. I did a lot of research to formulate a better proposal and business plan. After a couple drafts, he approved my plan and loaned me the \$500. I got the shirts printed and worked with my friend to create a simple website, logo and spread the word. I want GLOSSRAGS to be known for shirts that make you stop, stare and think. I also want it to become a platform for critical stories that are overlooked by mainstream media.

Entrepreneurship 101: You have to think thoroughly through what you want to do, make sure it's sustainable and then go for it! You have to be committed to working hard, being persistent and hustling. Be confident in your creation and believe in its success before anyone else ever tells you it's successful.

The crowd favorite: The Black And Counting tee with the brothers' names on it is our best-seller. Black is classic (in more ways than one) so it's always been a solid seller. My favorite is a tie between the Fight Amnesia February Limited Edition And Counting tee and the Vol. VII tank in Fiery Fatigue. The "Fight Amnesia" tee was the first time we printed on a white shirt and our fallen brothers and sisters names in red, black and green as an ode to the Black Liberation flag. The other tee has the names stand out in red despite the camouflage backdrop.

Her biggest lesson learned: I once worked with a shady photographer who didn't have his stuff together. His work looked good from Instagram, but that was the only good thing about the experience. He missed deadlines, communicated poorly and even changed the location of the shoot last minute. One of my mistakes was paying him before actually seeing and receiving the photos. I was dissatisfied to say the least. Now, I make sure that the people I work with have solid work, but also are trustworthy and reliable.

Her stress relievers: I love reading books, writing poetry, spending time outside and people-watching in D.C.

Her tech must-haves: I just need a phone that works, takes good pictures and has a good battery life. I love Instagram, and Snapchat keeps me entertained with moments from my friend's lives.

Her beauty bag: Mascara and lipstick. I like to keep it simple.

Her power accessory: My grandpa gave me a silver and gold watch a few years ago before he passed, and I wear it almost every day. It's reliable, matches just about any outfit and keeps me on schedule.

Her theme song: "Liberation" by Outkast featuring Erykah Badu, Cee-Lo Green and Big Rube.

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