



KEY EVENTS 'N YOUR AREA

Central Arkansas & Beyond!

Rising From The Ashes - How Heaven McKinney, Owner of The Grind Coffee Bistro Keeps 'Grinding'



by Kelly K. Eddings

Special to Today's Communiqué

"We're going to continue our expansion and our growth. One fire didn't stop anything." - Heaven McKinney, Owner The Grind Coffee Bistro

I caught up with The Grind Coffee Bistro, founder and owner, Heaven McKinney recently to learn how she keeps going, despite the odds. McKinney, owner of 2 coffee shops in the capital city saw both shops destroyed by arson in March on the same night. Her west Little Rock location recently reopened to the public.

Who or what inspired and motivated you to become a business owner?

The person who inspired me the most to start The Grind Coffee Bistro was the birth of my son and wanting him not to become a statistic in America. I wanted to be able to give him the life that I was privileged to have as a child.

Aside from your love of coffee, did you decide to venture into any other industries and why was a coffee shop your final decision?

I have been a licensed cosmetologist since 1999 so I have always been my own boss. But, it wasn't until I went back to college and during my senior year at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock that I decided that in order for me to make the changes that I needed to in my community, I needed to find a product on a bigger scale where I could make the money in order to make meaning and lasting changes into our community. The coffee industry was what led me there...



Heaven McKinney, Owner, The Grind Coffee

How do you measure success in operating a small business?

I honestly don't think that there is a certain metric or measurement system that you can say about success for a business. Of course all businesses use profit as a metric, but I also think that it's just hitting that one individual's goal.



Heaven McKinney, owner, The Grind Coffee Bistro



As an African-American female, what challenges and successes with starting and operating your business have you faced?

As an African-American, woman-owned business, I don't see that there were very many challenges that I might not have faced if I was not of any race or sex. Financial capital is always a big problem in starting a business, but I think that I was prepared for the journey and I continue to prepare myself as I scale to be able to handle whatever challenges come my way as a business owner - not really as an African American business owner.

I was born and raised in Germany, I've traveled the world and interacted with various cultures so it makes it a little bit easier for me as an individual to bridge the gap, but I do know a lot of African-American women owned business owners that do go through many struggles.

Finding the right capital, finding the right mentorship and coaching, finding the knowledge is a challenge any business owner has. Regarding successes, I don't think it was based off of my skin color - I just think it's based off of the hard work and the dedication that I put into all communities to where we grow to everybody that comes through our doors.

When fully operational again, do you have plans on further expansion?

When fully operational, we're going to continue the business plan as scheduled. We're going to continue our expansion and our growth. One fire didn't stop anything. It was always the goal of to grow. More specifically, my goal has always been to open up 100 coffee shops. And, I'm going to open up 100 coffee shops.

What sets your coffee shop apart from others?

Little Rock is full of amazing coffee shops and they all have their own niche and feel. I just think that my coffee shop is just a part of me - when you walk in, no matter your race, sex, or social identity, we are just family. You may walk in as a stranger but you will walk out as family.

I paired my love for coffee and food to be able to give a great experience every time people walk into The Grind Coffee Bistro and we're make sure that we keep that same family feel and experience at every Grind Coffee Bistro that you visit.

What advice would you offer young, aspiring, business owners wanting to get their "feet off the ground" and get started?

Some advice that I would give to inspiring new business owners is to do what you love. If you're passionate about it, then you don't have to worry about work. Know that it is hard work and be ready for all the struggles - the ups and downs that come with business.

Keep dreaming, stay on task and at the end of the day, you'll have longevity in everything you do.

**The Grind Coffee Bistro
11525 Cantrell Rd in the Corner
Little Rock, AR 72212**

**Sunday - Monday (closed)
Tuesday - Friday 9am – 4pm
Saturday 10am – 5pm**

Sunday hours coming after Labor Day