

## Nakeda Lindsey, Founder



As a female, black entrepreneur, I've seen some stuff in my life so far. You got a minute?...

I've come in contact with people who've assumed the worst of me, having nothing to base it on aside from their own fears and biases. We've all experienced that, right?

I was a skinny girl in a culture where being skinny is not the goal. I reframed that insult and called myself petite. I've learned to use my imagination and brain as my biggest tools and not get worked up when the world around me tries to cut me down or decide my worth.

My mind and soul have been my happy places where I would escape to for strength and confidence. It's funny, but I remember watching ants a lot as a kid in Trotwood, Ohio. As I watched them march together and work so hard, it reminded me just how big this world is and how much room there is for me to fill it with my big personality without fear.

As I watched the ants find their way back together even when I separated them with a stick, I swear to you I heard the voice of God for the first time telling me, "Don't sweat the small stuff." The ants always seemed to work it out no matter what, so that's what I knew I would always strive to do.

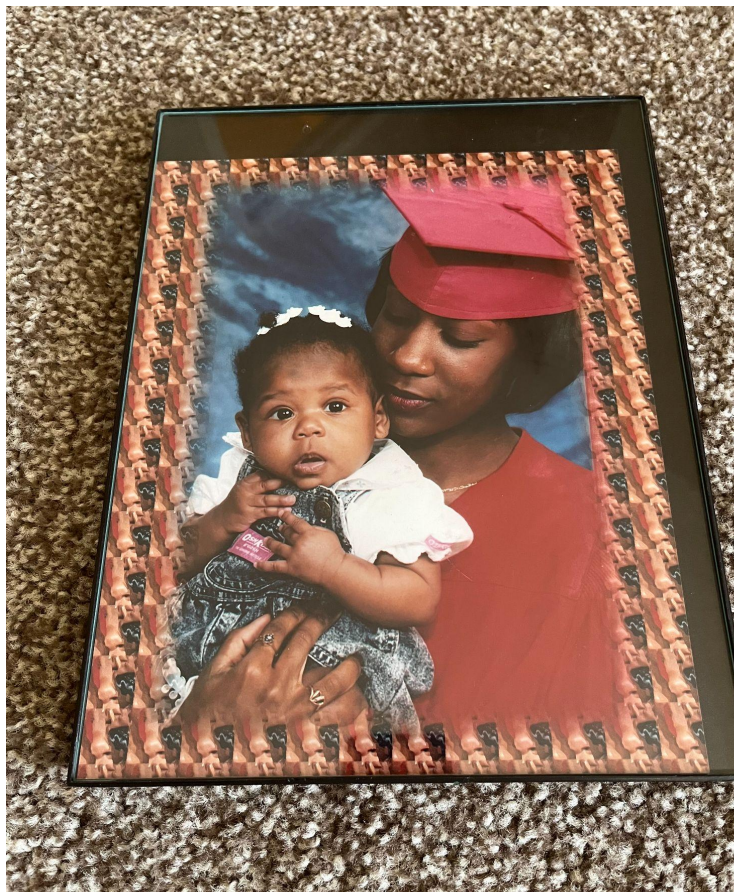
I've been pretty good at following that advice, and like you, I'm sure, I've had plenty of opportunities to put that lesson to use.

I had my first child when I was just 17 years old. The vocational school I was attending had a special class for "teenage pregnancy" to teach us how to live as young parents, as if anything can truly prepare anyone for that hot mess! I was the only one in the class who was black and single. The other young couples were discussing marriage, but that just wasn't an option for me.

While the other students were discussing what flavor wedding cake to have, I was facing my pregnancy without my daughter's dad. He was sentenced to prison for 15-25 years. By the time I graduated, I had a 6-month-old daughter and had overcome more obstacles than most adults.

I look back on those days and don't know how I got through. Actually, I do know how -- I *had* to get through. I had to call on the quiet confidence within me, and like the ants, keep at it, no matter what.

The photographer for my senior photos told me to bring in any item for the photo shoot that meant a lot to me. My classmates brought in sports gear or music instruments--I brought my drooling baby girl because *she* is what I adored most, and like the ants, we were inseparable.



My parents never went to college, so it wasn't a part of our world. What they did bring to the table was a strong work ethic and love of family. I knew I would tap into this and find strength enough to find my place in the world, no matter if the path I was taking wouldn't be a straight, easy road.

I would not be a statistic. I would be a role model for others in my situation and show them life is not over when it gets overwhelming, and the power within us is bigger than any roadblocks.

I quickly got a job as a legal secretary, and after working hard and not getting promoted, I made a solid vow to myself to work my way up somewhere, so no one would have

the power to manage my worth but me. I decided the same energy I would give to someone's company would instead be the energy I would give to *my* vision.

It didn't happen overnight, I can tell you that.

I was a black woman raising a black girl, so there's no way I was going to sit back and let her learn to take the easy way out. I knew I had it in me to keep going and raising that bar of excellence.

I started cosmetology school, and I soon felt this license could be my vehicle to take me to new levels of success. I started working at a high end salon in a mostly white community. I was trained and experienced in ethnic hair, nail, and skin, but I wanted to push myself to learn new things outside of just my culture. I wanted to learn it all and build up my curious mind.



Little did I know I would feel like I was on display every day at work. Being a black woman in an all-white world is the equivalent of being a unicorn dancing in the sky the way they looked at me. I could never just show up and do my job. Every day someone would ask if they could touch my hair since they had never been around a black woman. They would jokingly ask if I could get them drugs.

I do hope they were joking. I'm still not laughing, though.

I was their token "colored" girl as they would sometimes call me. It seems they felt like, "We have one of them here, so we're diverse. No racism here. Nope!" It didn't make me angry. It was just

another thing to make me grow wiser.

I was happy to have the growth of learning in an all-white environment, but I knew I had to take what I learned and do better for my own community who needed me. I could write pages on generational trauma and how I know my community still carries the weight of slavery in our souls. I think about this a lot. It's yet one more thing that nudges me to stay the course and keep putting myself into the world.

I decided to go to barber school, where women hardly ever attend. It's a man's world for sure. I was hungry for leadership and soon found I felt my rhythm being challenged with being the only woman. What might be intimidating for some, makes me come alive.

I was one of the first black women to earn a Barbers license. My ability to serve a wide range of customers was expanding. I knew how to serve everyone, and this knowledge got me excited to see where the journey was going.



There have been days where I've felt I can't put myself out there another day. It's too much. I'm too exhausted. That's when God pokes his head back in my life and says, "No way, woman. You're not done. Keep going."

I now own a salon/spa where all walks of life and cultures come through my door. Men and women who are black, white, brown and everything in between come to me. I am honored to serve them and share my skills, heart and soul with them.

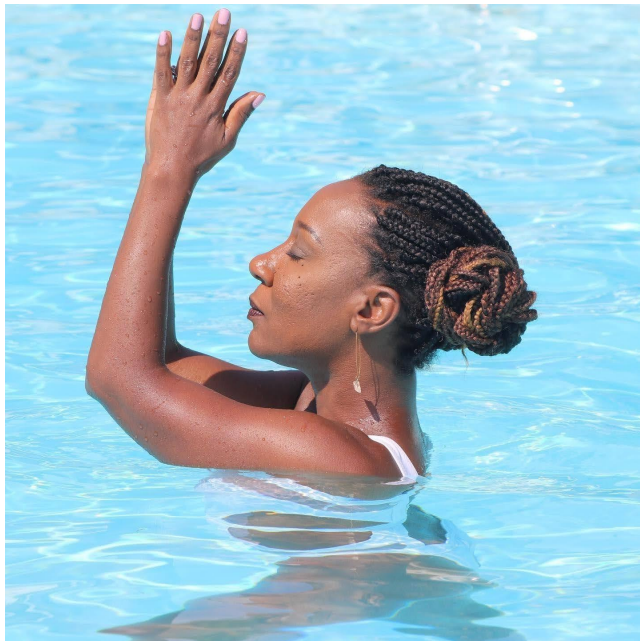
Over the years, if there's one thing I've learned most from my life is that humans are more alike than we are different. As my clients come to me, they all have the same fears inside of them, no matter their skin color or gender.

We all want to be seen. To be loved. To be understood.

We all work tirelessly to reach our goals, and we all feel like giving up when the waves knock us over.

I feel called to combine all my experience and knowledge and care for others in a way that transcends hair and appearances. Happiness and mental health is a holistic package, so I have put together retreats to breathe new life into anyone on any walk in life.

This day matters so much. This moment can lead to greatness. But to see success in our lives, we have to stop sometimes, take the weight off our shoulders and breathe to remember who we are.



We step away from the journey to get back to the journey with more grit and quiet confidence burning in our bellies when we take time to retreat.

My attendees are encouraged to be real and tap into a place they can't access in their busy lives. I tell them to get Naked with Nakeda (not literally, of course!) and take down their walls. I invite them to devote this time to themselves to start making each day count in a more meaningful way.

No matter where you come from or what curveballs life has thrown at you, I welcome you to this space where everyone belongs

and is lifted up. I've seen some stuff, and so have you, friend. Let's put our forces together and turn that into wisdom, power and strength to fuel us forward.

Join us. Be yourself, and see how far you can go.