

Akua Gyamfi

The founder of The British Blacklist, the award winning media outlet for BAME professionals in entertainment. Akua was also a renowned hairstylist, working for high profile magazines such as Vogue. She's won multiple awards herself (The Mercury Studios Business Award in 2022 from Women in Film and TV Awards, UK and the Diversity Badge of Honour in 2023 from the Girls on Film Awards).



How did you get from hairstyling to scriptwriting to journalism?

So my journey started in a hairdressers, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do for a full time career but I was always good at doing my friends' hair in school so I thought that would be the easiest thing to do. I left school without a clue. Went to college without a clue. Ended up working in my Aunties hair salon for a bit, then went back to college. But when I left again I was unsure as to what to do, so I ended up working in a hairdressers. Then I had my daughter so decided to change careers and did a media course, as part of the course requirements you had to apply for University, so I chose to do a Journalism degree. After graduating I worked at a music channel, then the BBC. Alongside this journey I'd help my friend who was a filmmaker to edit his scripts, and in doing that I became a script consultant. (I wrote a few scripts for myself, but I mainly helped him and others 'fix' their scripts) I made one short film with a friend who worked with me at the BBC, it was an anti knife crime film called *After Effects*.

Why did you stop your successful hairstyling career? Where do you think you'd be if you didn't?

I stopped my hairdressing career because I got pregnant and thought that I wouldn't be able to continue doing fashion shows and music videos that required long hours if I had a baby, so I made the decision to change careers. However I didn't stop doing hair during my re-education, or when I was working at the BBC. I still did fashion shows, I had personal celebrity clients as well. I just stopped working in an actual hairdressers. I actually stopped doing hair on the side when The British Blacklist became too big to juggle everything.

What's your favourite medium in the entertainment industry to work in? What's been your favourite job?

I really enjoy interviewing and getting to know talented people, so my happy place is interviewing. However, I really miss the hustle and bustle of doing hair on a fashion show. When there's 30 - 40 sometimes 50 - 100 models and they all need their hair done, and there's no time and it's always panic stations. I love the intensity of that.

How do you manage everything?

Managing The British Blacklist, S.O.U.L Fest, Your Aunties Could Never and also panel discussions?

I have to have a very organised diary. That's really it. Because I'm living all my dreams at once I have no choice to just do everything I can. So, a tight diary is necessary.

How has the landscape changed for Black women over the years? Do you think there are more opportunities for us?

There are definitely more opportunities. It's a hard one for me to answer because I've not really met any obstacles that I can say happened because I'm a black woman. I've always had the mindset that I'm just going to do it anyway. But in general, there are definitely more opportunities, but it would depend on the industry that you're attempting to work in. Some industries are more welcoming to women, and people of colour than others. In the arts there are more opportunities for sure, but there are also issues with seniority. Across the board the higher up you go in the arts the less people of colour there are. That's still an ongoing battle, but every so often someone makes a change so it is happening.

If you could say anything to any aspiring Black women out there, what would you say?

"Believe in yourself. Don't put your gender, or your race ahead of what it is you want to do. It does not matter that you're a black woman. It matters because you ARE a Black Woman. Your blackness, your woman-ness makes you important. Not less than, not unworthy. Remember that we're the most powerful, and powerful does not mean that you never cry, you're never vulnerable or insecure, it does not mean that sometimes you need help, or sometimes you need a break, or sometimes you're a very nice person. All of that is you being you, a beautiful human being."