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Celebrating Black businesses on Southern's campus

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Currently, #SupportBlackBusiness has 4.5 million tags on Instagram. As an African American myself, I became curious to discover the history and significance of Black-owned businesses.

From a historical standpoint, I discovered that supporting Black businesses would help narrow the generational wealth gap that made acquiring wealth for African Americans exceptionally more difficult. During the Jim Crow era, African Americans were ostracized and given lower paying jobs. Many were unable to purchase homes and acquire social security due to racial discrimination and segregation. This astronomical disadvantage has continued even to this day, where there is still a wealth gap.

“It is not about refusing to support other businesses, but about reminding people that we’re here and trying to build up wealth too,” said Alexia Grosjean, sophomore psychology major.

Black-owned businesses also celebrate their vibrant and influential culture by selling products that are prevalent to their communities’ needs and interests.

So, during Black History Month, I want to celebrate and highlight Black-owned businesses on campus. Although I only had the opportunity to interview two Black-owned small business owners on campus, I want to encourage those who have one or who are in the process of creating a business to never give up and continue to do what they love.

unBEARable – Tenci Reid

Junior journalism – digital broadcast major Tenci Reid’s business, unBEARable, sells tote bags, T-shirts and hoodies with her customized unBEARable logo. Her love for clothes and fashion was her inspiration for creating this business. Reid first launched her business at 423 Night Market last semester. Following that, her mother encouraged her to make the business a long-term hobby and continue creating merchandise.

Her long-term goal for the brand is to have musical artists wear her clothes on tours to promote her work. Reid is currently preparing for her springtime drop, tentatively set for May, where she will be selling new merchandise. Once the new drop releases, you can purchase and check out her merchandise using the link in her Instagram bio: @unbearable_clothes.

By Design – Nina Reno

Junior religious studies major Nina Reno creates vinyl stickers (\$2 to \$6) and tote bags (\$10 to \$20), and she hopes to also create apparel in the future. By Design is a Christian-based business that creates art designs that are inspired by people Reno has met and experiences she has gone through. The name she chose, By Design, is significant because she believes that everything happens for a reason, so it is “by design.”

“God does not make bad things happen, but uses the bad things. He taught you a lesson despite the bad things,” is a quote that Reno holds dear to her heart; it was shared to her by Associate Chaplain Anna Bennett and points to her belief that God is intentional.

Reno had been wanting to create the business but did not feel she had the funds to do it.

Last semester, Bennett sent her the ad from the Lift Off Initiative, a Student Senate initiative that provided funds to student businesses to help them get started. Once Reno interviewed and got accepted, she was able to debut at 423 Night Market last semester.

Reno also values deep meaningful conversations, which she said can sometimes be hard to ignite, so her hope is that these stickers and designs will help start conversations around campus. To purchase her products, DM her business Instagram account @_he.is.intentional.