

NEXT CHAPTER

Spotlight RENÉE



PRESENTED BY BLACK ODYSSEY MEDIA
INTERVIEWED BY CHARDAI POWELL

Chardai: Hey Renée, I am so excited to do this interview with you! I love your page and the combination of topics on it! I want to start off with asking what is your earliest memory of falling in love with reading?

Renée: I wasn't a reader as a child—I hated it. I loved going to the bookstore just to spend my grandmother's money buying books. It was just fun to buy and collect them. I was so heavily involved in sports that I didn't really have the time to read. My reading journey actually started nine years ago when I started @book_girl_magic.

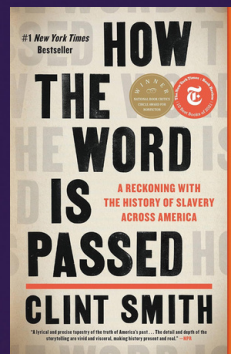
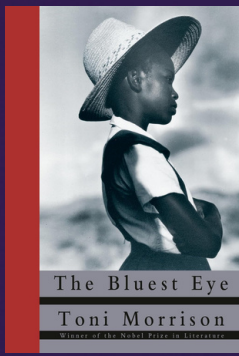
Chardai: I actually love hearing that reading came later in your life. It's really refreshing because you never know when your passions will find you but they always do. How did the name @book_girl_magic come about?

Renée: It actually came to me in my sleep. Something told me to lock down the name, secure the email address, and do all of those things. It became a mission for me to celebrate authors of color, especially Black women authors. I did an episode with Traci from The Stacks, and we were discussing *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. She said something that clicked, and I was like, "Yeah...Black women *are* Book Girl Magic!"

Chardai: You mentioned it's been nine years of @book_girl_magic. What advice do you think Renée today would give to the Renée from nine years ago?



**WHEN I STARTED
THE PLATFORM, I DID
IT FOR MYSELF.
THERE WASN'T EVEN
THE IDEA OF BEING A
CONTENT CREATOR—
THAT WASN'T ON MY
MIND.**



Renée: Honestly, I think younger Renée would influence the Renée today more than anything. When I started the platform, I did it for myself. There wasn't even the idea of being a content creator—that wasn't on my mind. Then after a month I had 100 followers, and a month later it was 1,000. So I'd say continue posting for yourself. Read what you love, post what you love, and just keep your vision.

Chardai: I love that. Even through that vision, what I love about your content is that it's books, but it's also travel, food... it's all the things. When did you realize you wanted to expand? Was blending those parts of your life always the goal, or did it happen naturally?

Renée: It happened naturally because I wanted to post about other things. There were places I was going and trips I was taking because life is more than just books. Growth happens in other areas too—through other cultures and other countries. Yes, it's mostly about books, but I also want to introduce people to the other parts of my life that are important to me.

Chardai: And it definitely comes through on your page. Is there a destination you've visited or hope to visit that was inspired by a book you've read?

Renée: Oh, that's a good one! You know what I'll say? It's not even a fun destination, but *How the Word Is Passed* by Clint Smith. I love history, especially when it comes to our history. In that book, he visits maybe six or seven different locations across the U.S. I was intrigued by all of them. Thomas Jefferson's mansion, Monticello, was one because they highlighted Sally Hemings. That led me to read another book about her

family because I wanted to learn more about her and her brother. So I'd love to go to Virginia to visit Monticello. He also talks about a prison in Louisiana, so I'd want to visit those places and learn more about them.

Chardai: That's a really good one and definitely aligns with your love of history. What is one of your favorite memories with an author? Can you tell us what happened, and what they said to you?

Renée: I have to say Terah Shelton Harris because last year she reached out after seeing how much I loved *One Summer in Savannah*. She told me she wanted to include me in the acknowledgments of her book! Then meeting her in person in February after all of that was one of the coolest experiences ever. I was also the one to break the news that she was going to be on my BRBF panel. She's just become one of my favorite people.

Chardai: Okay, after this interview, I'm running to my bookshelf to look at that acknowledgement! What is one book you think should be required reading?

Renée: For me, it's *The Color Purple*. It's such a classic, and it gives so much insight into our world and what it was. Alice Walker did such a beautiful job writing that book. I could read it over and over again.

Chardai: What is one lesson you've learned from building an online community that you wish more creators understood?



Renée: Success isn't going to come overnight. Also, whatever your mission is, stay true to it. Stick to your brand, and the opportunities you're seeking for your brand will come to you.

Chardai: That's such an important reminder. Who is a creator you'd like to give your flowers to while they can still smell them?

Renée: @JaleesaReads. We actually figured out that we live in the same area and even went to the same high school! I love watching her advocate for Black books and speak on important issues. She's never afraid to put it out there.

Chardai: She was actually my last interview too, so I love that you mentioned her. Lastly, what is one Black Odyssey title that's on your TBR or one you've already read that you'd recommend?

Renée: *The Love Syllabus* by Lauren Lacey. It engrossed me from the very beginning. I think Lauren deserves her flowers too, and not just for BRBF, but for all of her work.

Chardai: I feel like that's the perfect way to wrap it up. Renée, thank you so much! Please, follow Renée @booked_girl_magic.



Chardai Powell is a writer and digital storyteller who believes in the power of Black stories told with care. She is the Social Media Manager at Black Odyssey Media and a former lead bookseller known for uplifting Black indie authors and creating meaningful literary events. She is the founder of Dear Black Love, a community-driven event brand celebrating Black love and creativity, and is committed to using media as a tool for connection, visibility, and joy.



www.blackodyssey.net or www.blackodysseymedia.com

@iamblackodyssey



creativeaffairs@blackodyssey.net