



Sisters Working In Purpose!



Celebrating Our Sisters Who Dared to Pursue Their Dream!

Holiday, 2016 (Part 2)

Meet Our Sister Working in Purpose: Vonee Williams, Songwriter

Are you talented in the arts or music and have dreams of taking the plunge in the music industry? Do you know what it takes to get started and the costs involved? Are you ready for the time commitment? Then you are at the right place! I am excited by this interview in particular! We are going to actually speak with a songwriter who shares what it's like to be in a creative space and share the struggles of starting in the business. I really believe that many will be able to resonate with our Guest today and her harrowing health struggles, working full-time and being a good wife and mother as she proceeds in her purpose. In part one, we got to know Vonee and how she followed her purpose. In Part 2, we will learn more about her journey and she will provide tips on getting started in the business.



energetic and had a unique personality that easily drew people to her. I remember even back then she had a pretty creative imagination. Today, married for almost 30 years, she has three adult children and three grandchildren. Vonee is pursuing her purpose as a songwriter who by the way, has an impressive 180 songs in her catalog. She has been gracious enough to share with our readers her experience pursuing her dream, her purpose and the challenges that come with trying to juggle everything.

For all of you aspiring song-writers out there, Vonee offers some real tips and perspective on the business side of things and definite things to ponder if you are considering a career as a songwriter.

Me: There is a quote from Henry Miller on advice that he received "I think someday you're going to be a great writer..." "But first you'll have to suffer a bit...." The thought is that you have to go through pain to gain in a creative field, do you feel like there's any truth to that?

Vonee: There is. It is because a lot of my songs when I first started out were about the pain that I had gone through in life. That's what made music for me were the things that I had gone through. That was a lot of my music at the very beginning. Probably the

To recap on Vonee Williams start into songwriting, she and I grew up together in Indianapolis, IN and were members of the same church. She was always pretty

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first 30-40 songs I did were about life, about what I had gone through, what I was feeling. What I'd seen. If it hadn't been for that I wouldn't have had anything to write about. I wouldn't have had a reason to start to do what I do. So as it started to come out I wasn't afraid, you know what, people don't know what you go through. People only see the outside. They don't know what is going on behind closed doors or what's going on in your mind or how you're feeling. My songs were a way of releasing some of that. And it felt good because it felt like a burden of things that I had inside of me was lifted and it was through my songs when I first started writing stuff, everything was flowing and it felt like a relief to get things out of my system. I felt better.

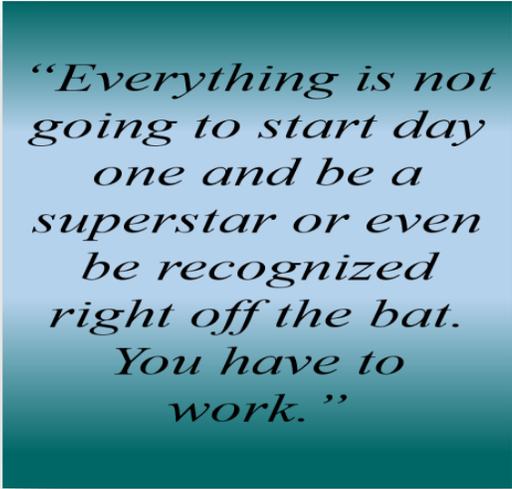
Me: Did you feel exposed to other peoples' opinion due to sharing your deep feelings even though it was a relief to get it off of your chest?

Vonee': That never did happen. Just a couple of people mentioned it to me. They said that they could hear my feelings and they could hear the hurt in my songs and then they would ask me, it was actually my sister-in-law and she would ask if my husband has actually listened to the words of the song. I even told him that I had written a few about him but it didn't seem to connect with him. I felt like now he knows how I feel (because I wrote about it). We've talked about a lot of that and to a certain extent we're okay, but it's been challenging. The things that are pertinent to my career like traveling and networking, he has trouble with. However, I'm very determined to move forward.

Me: Let's talk about what would you tell the young people today regarding pursuing their purpose and what kind of advice would you give them?

Vonee': Oh wow. I would probably first say do the thing I didn't do and that was to pray early for direction in your life. I have to admit I didn't do a lot of that. I was the kind of take charge (person) and do what I want and this is what I'm about to do and I never looked to God for direction or confirmation which is why I think I didn't find what I found until He allowed me to go through all of that

to say now you are ready for what I have for you or all I allowed you to go through you can write about it. They need to make sure that they continue to pray. Pray early. Pray a lot and ask for help to find direction in whatever it is. Everything is not going to start day one and be a superstar or even be recognized right off the bat. You have to work. You still have to work for it but you have to work for yourself and know your path. They will know it. I went through a lot and tried a lot of things that lasted for a minute but I never felt the same passion culminate the way I feel now doing music. Once they pray and ask God for guidance, make sure they take the necessary step to continue to be educated in it. Network and put God first.



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Me: Now that you've been operating in your purpose these past 5 years is there anything that you wish you would've done differently? Also what are you most proud of that kind of describes your journey.

Vonee': There is nothing that I can think of other than the fact that of praying first. I wouldn't have done anything differently only because it was something that was given to me. It came over me. It's hard to explain because I was just sitting there on the sofa. I never thought it was going anywhere. I never wrote poems other than roses are red, violets are blue sort of stuff I never really did a lot with it.

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So when it came on me, it was like wow this must be the gift. This is a talent. The more I kept going, so no, I wouldn't change anything because I think it came right at the perfect time.

Me: What's the one thing you've accomplished that you feel most proud of; that gets you excited and you're able to look back and say wow, I don't know how I was able to do that?

Vonee: I'm glad that God revealed to me what it was that I was supposed to do and I'm glad that I accepted it. I'm glad that I didn't wait or didn't worry about what other people would think or how they would feel or put this aside for another's sake. I'm proud for not putting it aside and the grace to grab what God had for me.

Me: With my first published book, I actually had people assume that one of the characters were about them, which the answer was no. Did you run into that with your songs?

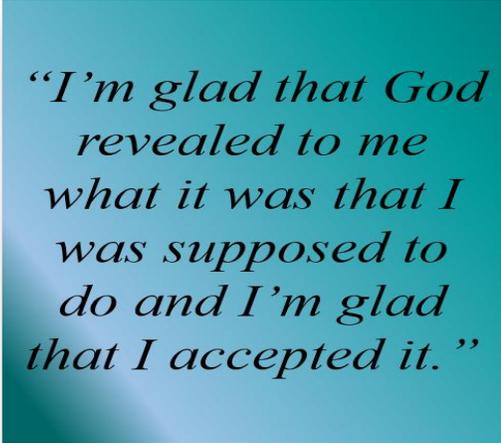
Vonee: I did a lot. Believe it or not, the first 20-30 songs that I wrote were more personal stuff I went through and felt. After that, I think it was a gift. The talent was to look at other people. I even looked at soap operas. I was looking at what was going on with *Bold and the Beautiful* I will never forget. It was Ridge and Brooke and a new song came to mind about what they were going through. So a lot of people after the first few songs, the newer stuff, while nobody approached me, they may have been able to identify with it and associate it with something personal to them. The thing about it is I started getting ideas from other things and I put myself into their position, even by gender. I would consider how as a woman I would do this or as a man doing that, so even though it's not personal it's more relatable to more people. I really love it.

Me: Most people who are pursuing their purpose, go through a time where they run into resistance or disappointment from people who didn't react the way you would've thought. How have you been able to deal with that?

Vonee: It's difficult. Honestly, I struggled with it. However, I realized that it's not meant for them.

You know I just press forward and know that I'm going to be okay. I surround myself with people with the same passion people who are kind of experiencing the same thing who are in the industry so at the end of the day it doesn't bother me because I am determined. I have catered to others for years so now I just press forward. Because I realize that I will never be able to enjoy what God has for me if I put it aside for the sake of someone else. I'm not doing that anymore and I'm not worried about it.

Me: For those people who haven't found their purpose yet or still aspiring what advice do you have for them. There is people in their 60's and 70's who are still struggling. What advice do you give them?



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Vonee: It's kind of for them to take a moment to stop and take a look at their lives and find out what it is that you done in these last 5 to 10 years that had made you happy. It could be that their purpose could be there but they just didn't realize it. For example, you can be someone who provides a service to the elderly or something like that. It could be something where you do it constantly and you can't see yourself not doing it, that just maybe your passion – that just may be your purpose. It could be there all along and they just didn't tap into it.

Me: Let me ask you about the art. I know this question is somewhat controversial in terms of people associating some music as borderline

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demonic or straight up demonic. So how do you make yourself appeal to a world that seemingly anything goes? How do you set yourself apart from that? What kind of advice do you have for someone young in terms of them combatting that part of the business?

Vonee': I would tell them to stick with their heart because some people want to follow what's out there because their goal is to be an artist or ghostwriter for someone so if you're doing that you pretty much have to follow the pattern. For me, I write what I feel and that's it; whether it goes anywhere or not. I'm not going to tailor to the world because that's what's selling because there are still people who love good old R&B and good old hip-hop and b-bombs and the f-bombs they don't like. There are still people who love neo-soul, like Jill Scott, Ledisi so you don't have to necessarily follow that path unless that's what your goal is. If that is what your goal is, you will have to learn how to write like a certain artist. I actually wrote a song someone asked me to write for an artist in her style. Her style was a bunch of cussing and a bunch of sexual innuendo and believe it or not, I tested myself to see if I could write those words and could demo that song. There was something that wasn't right about that song and you will know. I was like I can't write for this person because that is just not me.

"I was blessed with the whole thing and how I knew this was for me is that someone reached out to me on Facebook that I didn't know."

Me: So many people are sensationalized with the façade of the business that people are super-duper successful, and making a bunch of money super-duper fast. How does someone that may have the opportunity with their purpose driving them, how do they say no? What sort of thing can they say to stay away from that part of it or do they sell their soul for their purpose?

Vonee': That is a personal choice they will have to make because they are going to have to deal with what comes with that, a lot of people. It depends on what their goal is and if they want to write for a certain kind of artist. If they want to do that, then they will basically have to pretty much sell their soul to do that and that's a personal choice. That's not something that I'm willing to do and again it's a personal choice. It's hard to get out there. You pretty much have to know someone to get into the door somewhere. It's a lot of work, it's not like you're going to be making money as soon as you start writing stuff. I've been in for 5 years and I have yet to see anything come from it other than the few little support I have that like my music. I don't write for cd's. I actually write for movies, film or commercials that's where a lot of my music should go. A lot of my music is not for sale. If an artist out there listens to something that's mine and say I want to sing that or I want that song on my album then yes, it's available for that, but that honestly was never my number one goal. So if it happens it's a bonus. I've already checked the boxes for what I wanted to do with my music. Everything else that may come out of it is just a bonus.

Me: What's next for you and how can people contact you?

Vonee': I can be contacted via my sound cloud at www.soundcloud.com/songsbyVonee' or my website which is www.songsbyVonee'.com. I also have a crowd-funding currently going through Crowdwise (<https://www.crowdrise.com/whose-got-a-song/fundraiser/Vonee'williams>). I started that to try to aid my dream because this business can be

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very expensive. That's another thing too, it's a lot of money that you put out. People think that if you can just write that is all you have to do. Nope, it's a lot of finances involved. I've put out more than \$10k already. The money I am trying to raise will support the cost of traveling for the music workshops, networking, getting demos done and things like that. That is actually where a lot of the money goes as far as writing. I'm not an artist/songwriter. I'm just a writer so I have to pay people to find the right voices to reference for my songs and that costs between \$100 to \$150 (per song) and then you can imagine (where the costs may go from there). There's also the cost of copywriting which is \$35 per song or \$55 if there's more than one. Another expense is mixing and mastering the music once the artist is done. The cost to get it filled and mastered runs about \$100 to \$150.

Me: OMG, they are nickeling and diming you!

Vonee': All of this is before it even goes out of the door. You're hoping that once you've paid for all of this and you have a decent song, it can be placed somewhere an artist want it so you can see some money coming in. However, it's not that cut and dry. I've been in for 5 years. My songs are out there, I've not had one placement yet. I've had 3 people like a couple of songs and they're in the process of seeing how it fits in their movie, which is good. Even then we have to pay for opportunities to submit and it can run anywhere from \$10 to \$40 per submission per song.

Me: You are sharing so much information that a lot of people have absolutely no idea. A lot of people are interested in just the creative side and think people are just going to break down the door.

Vonee': No it's so far from that. Unless you are one of those lucky ones who happen to know someone in the business where you can get your foot in. Otherwise people like me that have the talent and ability (there's a lot of people with talent) it's hard we have to put in a lot of money and we drop a lot of lines in the water hoping for a bite. That's kind of how it works for regular people. So you can imagine how much money I've put out and I've not seen

anything come back yet. But I'm not really worried about that. (Now my husband is of course).

Me: You know that's just a seed and it takes time for the seed to grow. There has to be fertilizer and water to grow.

Vonee': Yes and that's where I am. I said if I never get a placement, I'm still happy and so proud of myself for doing what I do because I'm fulfilled by it and I can't think of anything else to do. I wish I was at a place where I could retire and just write all day. I wish I could but I have bills. Once I start getting placements hopefully one of these days, I'm still praying for it and money start coming in, maybe I'll be able to do part-time.

Me: One thing I can tell you is that there are a lot of different people in a lot of different industries who will read this so you never know. I'm praying that there is someone that already has an opportunity that you answer a call that they needed answered.

Vonee': Or some corporation looking for a jingle for some movie or e-book that they need music for.

Me: In the small business community, how can a small business owner contact you? That may be an avenue that they may have never thought of that they could do.

Vonee': I'm registered with ASCAP and they can actually go into ASCAP and request me. They can contact me directly and let me know what they are looking for and I can reply to them on a one on one basis. Another option is a new website that I just joined recently that they can pay for the licensing if they find a song that they are interested in, or they can contact me directly, I can look through my catalog to see if the song is a fit and ask if that would work and if it does they can just go through ASCAP.

Me: Writing groups; if people are trying to market a book or do different things with pairing music with their book, I can attest that I'll be able to use you from that perspective. There are lots of opportunities where small businesses may be able to

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use your music maybe even for a theme song for their business.

Vonee': People who have (written) plays. It's on my to-do list to finish my e-book on my life and an audio book. So there are a lot of things up the pike.

Me: One thing that would be really helpful, you could do a course or e-book on how someone can get started just like you.

Vonee': I was blessed with the whole thing and how I knew this was for me is that someone reached out to me on Facebook that I didn't know. She's actually my partner right now and she reached out; didn't know me from Adam. She gave me all of her contacts, all of her resources everyone she knew that did different things. People usually hoard information. She offered all of that from day one and she has been with me from day one. We've become really close. We stay connected and I didn't realize until later that her brother used to dance for MC Hammer. She's got a history of music and the business as well. We put our heads together and we share information all day every day – whatever we find that can help us. That was a confirmation for me that this had to be for me because I'm getting resources and information coming out of the woodwork that I had no idea on what to do. Everything fell into place. Then I have a cousin who has performed for the past 15 years in Las Vegas. He writes, sings, knows how to make beats and everything. Everything seemed to blossom so fast that my head was spinning when I first started writing. I had strangers reaching out to me, then I realized I had family in the industry that could also help me. Then a friend's son who is a producer who makes beats and produce my first single. When I first started I wanted to write a song and go to a studio and record it on cd. That was the original goal, now here it is five years later, 180 songs later, new contacts, I've got a team of writers and producers and I'm getting free beats. I'm telling you blessing after blessing have been coming. That's how I knew that this is it.

Me: What can we do to help you?

Vonee': Just pray. Your prayers for breakthrough would be awesome and you doing this newsletter will hopefully touch somebody – that there may be someone out there thinking she's doing music, maybe I can contact her. Maybe this can draw people.

Me: Absolutely! Thank you so much for doing this interview. I know that you will touch so many



people.

I am truly inspired by Vonee's story and her determination to keep at her purpose even when it seems as if it's a distant dream. For more information about Vonee' or how you can take advantage of her music and experience you can contact her via sound cloud at www.soundcloud.com/songsbyVonee' or her website www.songsbyVonee'.com. Or support her in her dream via her Crowdfunder fundraising effort at (<https://www.crowdfunder.com/whose-got-a-song/fundraiser/Vonee'williams>).