**The Woman Behind the Future of Sales**

**Meet Cherilynn Castleman**

**Helping Black & Brown Women Succeed, One Sale At a Time**

Cherilynn Castleman is a true testament of what hard work can achieve. She went from being “invisible” to immensely successful Sales Executive today, on a mission to help Women of Color in Sales claim the seats they deserve at the tables they want.

Lucky for us, she found some time in her busy schedule to answer some common questions she gets asked every day. So, let’s dive right in.

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**Q: Why selling?**

A: I started selling girl scout cookies when I was 5 or 6. I loved it from the get-go. The thrill of making a sale. Of fulfilling a need and selling a product that made people happy. I guess you could say that’s where my sales career truly began.

**Q: Growing up, did anyone teach you how to sell?**

A: My father owned Castleman Construction, and I grew up watching him build strong relationships with his clients. He would move mountains to bring their visions to life, and it always blew people away. That’s when I first truly learned about client management, relationship building, and – at the heart of it all – selling.

**Q: How long have you been in sales?**

A: …Don’t make me sound old, haha. But I’ve been in sales since before girl scout cookies were 50 cents a box. To put that into perspective, I have over three decades of experience as a Fortune 500 Global Sales Executive. My sales career didn’t actually go a very linear route, though. I studied Psychology in the ‘80s, and my first job was as a social worker.

I couldn’t believe how many women were being charged with “failure to protect”, because the men in their lives had murdered a child. I wanted to help reunite as many families as possible and terminate parental rights where necessary. It was then that I realized I needed to build sales skills to secure program funding, and I got my first job selling debit insurance.

The deeper into the industry I got, the bigger the problems I saw. I mean, I’ve had Women of Color in Sales come to me and tell me they’ve been told by men in the workplace that they’re “being paid enough for a woman”. I mean, what does that even mean? This anger and frustration fueled my fire, and that’s why I have the goals I do today…

**Do You Share Cherilynn’s Vision For Women Of Color?**

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**Q: Why are you specifically focused on Women of Color in Sales?**

A: There are thousands, hundreds of thousands of Black and Brown women out there who are way too good to be ignored. But right now, their future looks bleak. The Fortune 500 list has been published since ’55, and in almost 70 years, only 19 CEOs out of 1800 have been Black, and only one Black women.

It was in 2009 when Ursula Burns became the first Woman of Color CEO of a Fortune 500 company. She led Xerox from 2009 to 2016, and she’s a huge inspiration to Black and Brown women around the world. But her victories aren’t enough. We need to see more Ursulas everywhere.

But making this possible is incredibly difficult when African American Women lack the resources and tools they need to make it to the top of Corporate America. In fact, Fortune even wrote an article about that, talking about “The Black Ceiling”.

I firmly believe that HR won’t get you there. Neither will communications or the arts. The real juice lies with the people who are closest to the product, and, of course, the money. Women of Color in Sales need a gateway to these people and products. That’s how we’ll make our names known in the realm of sales. That’s how we’ll rewrite the narrative for Black and Brown Women in Corporate America. And I’m so excited to be at the forefront of the mission.

I personally know what it’s like to feel invisible. I’ve actually never been in a room with another Black female salesperson. The closest I got was being one of three Black women working the executive floor, but the others were administrative assistants. I was the only one sipping cocktails in business class with the men. I was the only woman generating millions of dollars in revenue and parking my luxury car next to the suits. And even then, these guys would still call me by the names of their sales executive assistants instead. It’s horrific, and something needs to be done.

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**Q: …So, what is your #1 goal and priority moving forward?**

A: It’s simple, really…I want to see a million Women of Color in Sales achieve their dreams by 2030. And I want to help them do that. My goal has always been to train women who are too good to be ignored. I mean, think about it – Black Women make up 70% of the workforce! There needs to be way more seats for us, and we’re ready to dust ‘em off and take what’s ours.

As a mother, I’m beyond proud of what my own daughters have achieved in their professional careers. But nothing fell into their laps – trust me when I say they worked their tail feathers off. I know I probably wasn’t the easiest mother to grow up with, but I truly believe that it’s that tough attitude that encouraged them to think bigger, push further, and never take no for an answer. My oldest daughter, Trier-Lynn Bryant, is a CEO and former U.S. Air Force Combat Officer. And Jálynn Castleman-Smith is a Social Policy Researcher in New York.

These women have infinite potential to be everything they’ve ever dreamed of and then some. They just need a few things – confidence, motivation, financial fluency, and the sheer belief that they deserve not just a seat at the table, but to own the table if they want. Anything is possible for us, and I’m ready to prove it. If I could go from being invisible to being too good to ignore, any woman can.

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**To accept the challenge and join Cherilynn on her mission, click** [**here**](https://bit.ly/3tHMcPv)**!**