

THE STORY

The birth of NORTHERN BELLE

In August 2011, Marsha Murray had a great idea for the celebration of her birthday: a brunch for ladies only. As Marsha planned her birthday event the more she wanted to add more elements. Soon the brunch became the “Brunch with Ladies.” This unique event required guests to wear a fashionable hat and strategically selected the guest list in an invite-only guideline. The basis of the invitation relied on the discretion of Marsha. She described her choice of guests as women “*who affect change, the risk-takers, doers, and the makers of things.*” She wanted her birthday event to unite brilliant, talented, ambitious, and overall fabulous women from different professions and educational backgrounds.

While in brainstorming mode about the specifics of the brunch Marsha decided she needed a catchy but meaningful name to represent the brunch something beyond the theme of “Brunch with Ladies.” Once this thought sunk in she subsequently began to think about her dream of creating an organization that provides important resources. Marsha started then considered maybe combining the two thoughts: the brunch and the organization. The only thing she needed was a title or phrase that would possibly be the name of an organization and fit the purpose of the event and organization.

After a few days of creating phrases, Marsha decided to share her thoughts with her cousin Renae Lovelace. As the two discussed the details of brunch and how excited they were, Marsha began to describe her idea of a resourceful organization as well as her interest in having something positive for women. The two discussed the importance of having something so positive and different. Soon after Marsha began to read off names for the organization as the two joked and pick up the phone and called Renae’s twin sister Renada Lovelace who relocated to North Carolina. While in conversation Marsha mentions something about Renada being a Southern Belle because she re-located... the three laughed and ended the conversation. Renae then proceeds to leave the room and Marsha shouts that’s it!!! It was a light bulb moment. Renae said: what do you mean? Marsha repeats herself that’s it! The name of the organization and the brunch: Northern Belle. We’re Northern Belle’s! What do you think Renae? I love it. Northern Belle, yeah that’s it!!!

THE EVOLUTION OF THE EXECUTIVE TEAM:

In order to reach the goals of her vision, Marsha knew it was essential to develop a team for Northern Belle. Jeanette Rivera and Mireille Maquis were the first set of directors working on behalf of the business organization prior to the first brunch. After the brunch, Tiffany Benjamin was added to the team of executives along with Renae Lovelace-Earlinton. The executive team includes diverse backgrounds for example business management, educational development, social work, and business finance.

NORTHERN BELLE NOW

Originally, the idea of Northern Belle focused on women with the following mission: uniting, inspiring, and displaying women in a positive light through Educational Workshops, Social Events, Community Outreach, and Business. During the first formation of Northern Belle, the objective catered to the elevation of women. **Today Northern Belle has evolved into a social society; grounded in the connectivity of women of color.** Women who become members of Northern Belle value sisterhood in the forms of being intentional, courageous, and supportive.

THE MISSION: To provide a conveniently safe space for women of color to build connections, share information, and give back.

THE VISION: To game-change, the way women achieve wellness.

OUR CORE VALUES:

- Intentional
- Courageous
- Supportive

OUR EXQUISITE WOMAN UNITE AWARD: Annually Northern Belle, LLC, and The Black Man Can.org recognize an exquisite woman during our signature ladies' hat brunch event. This award specifically honors women who work on generating more positive images in society through Uniting, Nobility, Inspiring, Teaching, and/or Exemplifying.

1. Unity - uniting the community, businesses, and organizations.
2. Nobility – exuding a dignified business organization through our quality of work.
3. Inspire - inspiring youth to develop, achieve and exceed positive goals
4. Teach – providing educational opportunities for individuals to take action toward their goals & interests.
5. Exemplify - providing examples of successful and socially responsible members of society through community involvement.

U.N.I.T.E (Unite, Nobility, Inspire, Teach & Exemplify)