Filmmaker Roger Suggs Collaborates with Toyota to Share More Untold Stories of Kansas City's Black Community

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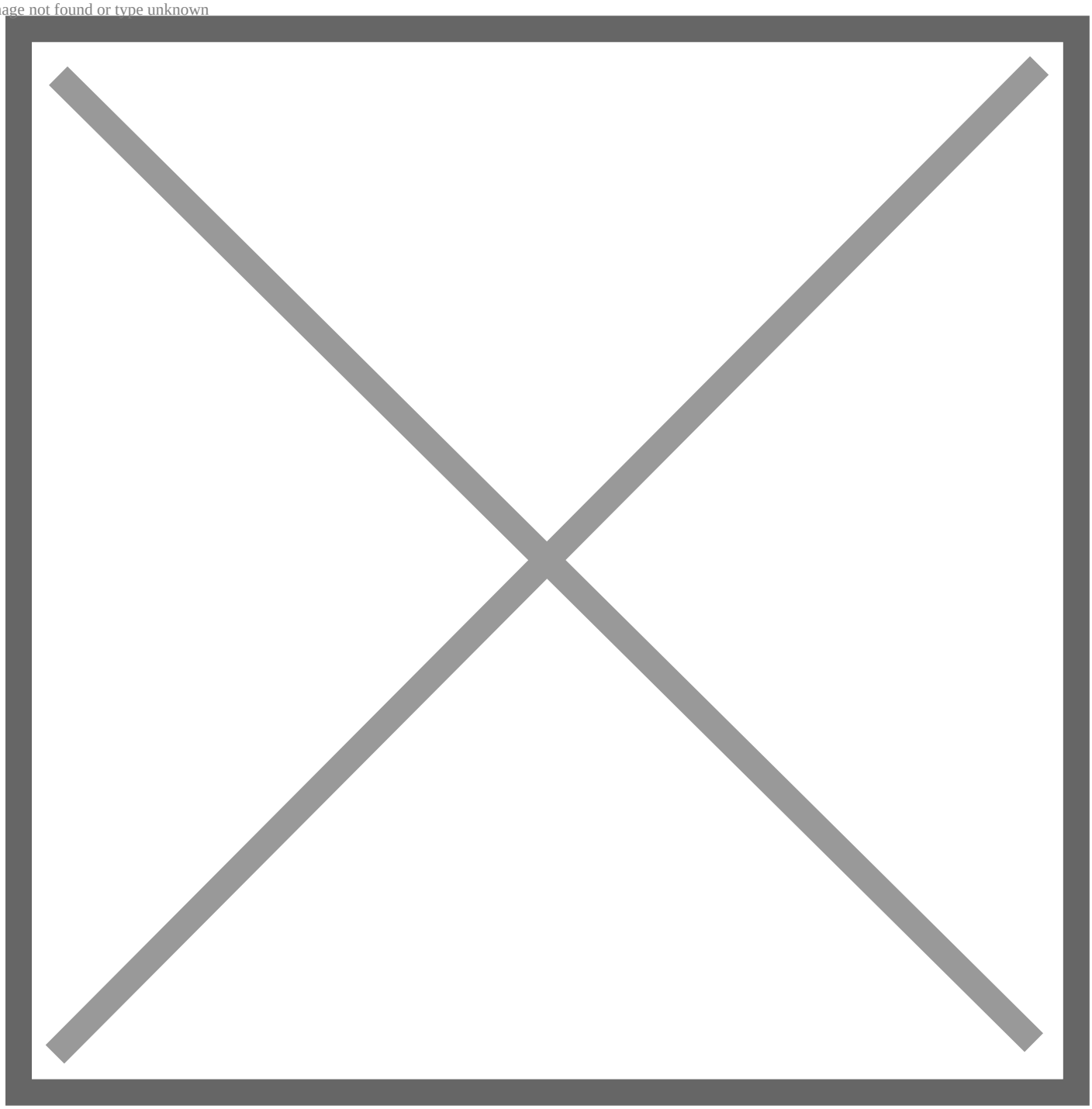

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (Aug. 3, 2021) – Toyota announced today the premiere of the second season of a documentary series developed in partnership with Roger Suggs, also known as the rapper "Vigalantee," that highlights Kansas City's historically Black communities. The second season, titled "Beautiful, Black and Bold: A Mini-Mentary Series," illuminates Black women entrepreneurs and leaders. New episodes will be released weekly throughout August in celebration of Black Business Month, an annual event that elevates Black-owned businesses.

Viewers are also invited to support Safe House, a grassroots community program that provides emergency housing for youth and students, a high-quality shared workspace for entrepreneurs with computers, professional printing equipment and screen printers and a community gathering space for guest speakers, workshops and networking events.

"Creating both seasons of this docuseries has been a labor of love for my Kansas City community, neighbors and fellow entrepreneurs," Suggs said. "It's an honor to shine a light on the remarkable women featured in season two while supporting Safe House and a vision for a trusted community space that helps youth fulfill their full potential."

Suggs, who is the coordinator of student activities at Kansas City Kansas Community College (KCKCC), brings his unique approach to storytelling and overall creative direction to the series. Toyota offered financial support for filming and editing and loaned 2021 Toyota vehicles that were incorporated into the episodes. The first episode is available at TruthTheReason.com.

"After seeing the results of season one and Roger's passion and heart for storytelling, we knew we would support another season of this project," said Curt McAllister, Midwest public relations manager for Toyota Motor North America. "People will walk away from this series inspired and uplifted by the stories featured, and I hope our partnership helps people find their entrepreneurial spirit."

A list and description of all episodes follows:

1. "Sweet Redemption: The Keisha Kandi Apples Story." All it takes is one step to cross the line into the spectacular, as Keisha Kay learned following the viral success of her sweets company, Keisha Kandi Apples. From selling simple candy apples at her job, to massive and complex custom orders, Keisha has battled opposition from within her own community and from the racism of society. Despite the strain of sleepless nights and tight deadlines, showing her daughter anything can be achievable keeps her going strong and onto the next frontier of her business: the storefront.

2. "A Woman's Will: The Celisha Towers Story." It is said that only those that have seen a system inside and out can ever hope to actually change it, as was the case with Celisha Towers and the foster care system she grew up in. After an ongoing and accomplished career in law enforcement, Celisha determined she would change the system for the better, not just for the children who will walk the path she walked, but for her entire community ailing under the systemic racism that plagues it.

3. "Perfect Imperfections: The Latanya Skillern Story." Any ex-felon can say no matter the steps one took to be better, one great threat always looms for the rest of their lives: recidivism. After a four-year stint in prison, Latanya Skillern knew employment for returning citizens like her was extremely difficult to find, which prompted her to use her extensive skills in painting and home renovation to create one of Kansas City's best home/commercial repair companies: Pretty N' Paint N' Things. Despite the naysayers brushing her off for not just the name, but for being a woman in a male-led industry, Latanya's enterprise continues to grow. And she will soon use it to help citizens like her not only by employing them, but by housing them and aiding them in re-entering the world as she once did.

4. “Belief Beyond Belief: The Tameca Lash Story.” Every business has a pioneer who paved the way for those who came afterward, and for the sweets business, that pioneer is Tameca Lash. As her regular 9-5 job stopped being enough to provide for her family, she revisited her childhood interest of experimenting with candies and flavors to create what is now Sugah Rush Berries. What sets her apart from other enterprises is her tendency to coach and advise other up-and-coming “sugar artists,” as she calls them, which in her native Wyandotte County is an extremely rare trait. In her mind, there’s enough space and clientele for everybody.

5. “Soulful Revival: The Shalenda Gunnels Story.” Greatness can show up at the most unexpected times and during our lowest moments. Following a well-publicized altercation and mounting debts, Shalenda Gunnels saw the punches just keep on coming; yet in her darkest hour, a miracle manifested in the form of a good Samaritan who not only helped her get her finances in order, but indirectly helped Shalenda reconnect with a life-long passion for baking. As friends, co-workers and strangers alike began to notice and taste her wonderful, homemade work, a simple hobby became a rising enterprise in the form of Soul Sweets By The Cake Lady. Now, she uses her baking and complex custom work not only to give her the income she needs, but to help herself and others find the light in a harsh world.