

# BLACK

## HISTORY MONTH

### UK EXCLUSIVE

RIGHT ON TIME: EDITOR OF SOCIAL CAUSE ISSUES  
DANIELLA MAISONS EXCLUSIVE U.K. INTERVIEW WITH  
CHANGE-MAKER KIM CARTER.



**IN HER FIRST EVER UK INTERVIEW, THE PIONEERING ACTIVIST SHEDS LIGHT ON HER TRANSFORMATION, THE RACIAL BARRIERS THAT HAVE HELD BLACK WOMEN BACK AND WHAT SHE'S DOING TO CHANGE IT.**



UK EXCLUSIVE

Right On Time: Editor of Social Cause Issues Daniella Maisons exclusive U.K. interview with change-maker Kim Carter.

**The theme of 2023's Black History Month, 'Saluting our Sisters', shines a light on the crucial role that black women have played in shaping history, inspiring change, and building communities and so when I heard about Kim Carter's life, her transformation and trailblazing work, there was no question in my mind about who I wanted to salute this month.**

There are some conversations that reach so far into our hearts that they invigorate our very souls. This was one of them. Kim's is a story that stands as a living testament to the value in life's peaks and troughs and the power of acting on faith.

Kim Carter grew up on 'the wrong side of the tracks'. Her first drink was at 5 years old, and her first hit of crack cocaine was at 17.

She experienced homelessness and prostitution and it wasn't long until she ended up in prison. In 1993, while she was still in prison, she decided it was time for a change.

Every now and then I experience the rare privilege of meeting a powerhouse extraordinaire. Kim bursts into our meeting with an effervescent smile, and speaks with such an authentic and bubbling zeal for helping others, that it's hard not to feel energised.

In this interview, I listened keenly as Kim relayed her transformative story from pain, despair, and low self-worth to overcoming, transformation, and victory.

The pain and despair includes her earlier life as 'Pepcy' which was riddled with drugs, incarceration and homelessness.

The transformation and victory includes her life now as founder and ambassador of Time for Change Foundation, more than 200 accolades (including becoming a CNN Hero) a pardon from the Governor, over 30 legislations she has pushed for and achieved, a successful foundation, and her life story being portrayed in a movie directed by spearhead Taraji P. Henson, "Tell It Like a Woman," where she is played in a heart-rending performance by Oscar winner Jennifer Hudson. And she's only just getting started.

Her memoir, **'Waking Up To My Purpose'**, is a gritty and awe-inspiring account of her transition from 'Pepcy' to Kim and the blessing of a life devoted to giving back .

She doesn't claim to have all the answers, but she sure knows how to give damn good assurance and fight the good fight.

Her memoir is essentially an ode to rising from the ashes which focuses on Recovering, Repairing, Repaying, and Rejoicing and in true Kim Carter style, half of the proceeds of each purchase goes to the community.

'I owe my community for the times I was absent in mind body and spirit, so I know I need to give back and give back in a way that lifts up' .

What we know now is that redlining was catastrophic for the black communities of America. Neighbourhoods were marked as **"definitely declining,"** and **"hazardous,"** which impacted available government-insured financing. Banks, businesses (and white residents) packed up shop and moved on, black communities were left behind and flooded with drugs, zero opportunity, liquor stores on every corner and the prison industrial complex which was essentially the proliferation of mandatory minimum sentences during the height of the so called 'War on Drugs' .

I was a victim of the War on drugs. And so they came in and locked up thousands of thousands of black and brown women for drugs, but for drugs that was brought in by our government.

Because they came in by our government financed by President Ronald Reagan. His wife was saying, **'just say no to drugs'** whilst he was saying 'give me your money to fund this underground war' You know what I'm saying?'

Kim is a living example of the harsh prison terms that were dished out with wild abandon. Redlinings dark footprint on the community can still be seen decades later as the echoes of traumatising sentences snatched parents from babies and destabilised families and communities can still be seen.

Fractured homes became commonplace and left whole generations being raised by the streets. There were fatalities and collateral damage, and Kim was almost one of them.

Almost.

Fast forward to 2023 and Kim is now an Affordable Housing Developer, Strategic Planner, Innovator, Motivational Speaker, and Author. She is the President & CEO of the Center for Housing Advancement and Motivational Projects (CHAMP) and the Ambassador of the Time for Change Foundation.

She also remembers the precise moment she changed her life completely so that she could create change for others.

'I realised out that I was not what had happened to me. And that there was a person in there that still had value and still had worth, and still could have a future regardless of what had happened to her. It was that freeing up of the fearless little girl inside of me that allowed my to blossom in to the woman that I am today.'

She lives a life that is a compelling fusion of ambition and altruism which she explains to me as 'it's not do more for less like, that's out. That's no longer an acceptable conversation in my world. It's, let me do well, let me do good at the same time. And it's interchangeable, but it is not one over the other. I cannot do good if I'm not doing well.'

A born again Christian, Kim's achievements haven't taken her feet off the ground and she has the heart and humility of a servant of God. 'When you have the heart of a servant, you don't really seek things for self because you're doing for others. But because you are giving that heart by the Lord, He makes sure you have everything that you need.'

In 2022, Kim and her Time for Change Foundation broke ground on a 10,350-square-foot structure, the BBOP (Black and Brown Opportunities for Profit) Center in San Bernardino. The BBOP Center is the first economic HUB of its kind in the Inland Empire.

In this exclusive U.K. interview, Kim reflects on what first led her to become an activist and what she thinks needs to be done for the movement to evolve and engage more with marginalised and oppressed people, particularly ethnic minorities. 'I'm

friendly, but people don't think I'm friendly, because they find me intimidating.' Kim says to me with a smile and I am surprised because just minutes in to our conversation she has exuded an abundance of warmth, wisdom, elegance, and compassion. Still, I have no doubt that for Kim to have moved the gargantuan mountains that she has moved, took gusto and tenacity.

At a time when we need stories of hope, it was truly a privilege to sit and talk to a woman who embodies the spirit of what it means to be a phoenix rising. Here are the highlights from the interview:

**I was in America last month and I was reading that in Los Angeles county alone, Black women represent 9% of the women living in that county and yet 30% of the women who die homeless are Black.**

**That's just one state. Time for Change Foundation does crucial work in that arena, tell me about what it took to make a difference in your area.**

What you'll find is anything that is good, we're lagging in. Anything bad, we're high in. That's just pretty much the nature of systemic racism perpetuated over 400 years of oppression.

What I'm really focusing on, for myself at this age and making sure that the legacy is left behind for the community, is that we are owning our own assets. We are tapping into building that generational wealth.

And we will not sit here and go another 30 or 40 years, still all talking about housing. No. We're gonna start building our own affordable housing. So, I built a Phoenix Square affordable housing complex.

And I did that because I got off because I was there because it was an eight year waiting list for the building. I'm like, what am my women waiting on in eight years? Their kids will be ready for college.

We keep asking the system who does not care that we're announced to houses. So it's like, Lord, if He can tell Noah to build an arc, he can show me how to build a building. That's how I went in there, because I chose to step my foot in there and start building.

**Amen. It's a huge achievement because it is not only that the system doesn't care, the system invented it. Right. With, with things like redlining, with taking away the mortgages, taking away the business, pushing drugs into the communities.**

**So what you are up against is such a giant, it's not just, it's not just they don't care. It's that when you create positive action, you are, you are trampling on their hard work.**

Therein lies all the hate mail that I get!

So now we've got the center it's called the BBOP. During the pandemic, we had a lot of seclusion isolation, a lot of time to reflect and think and then came the uprising around George Floyd, the social unrest, the discord. I asked God to give me a sign. And He gave me the vision that we need to recreate the Black Wall Street.

I was able to look and see that we had banks and our banks money was robbed and the FDIC didn't show up to secure our assets and holding. And so every time you see us trying to build ourselves, it was always met with some type of sinister act of defiance.

So when God gave me the victory to recreate that, I was able to speak about the vision and it manifested \$7 million.

I was able to take something and old, knock it down, redo, redo a whole building. So we have a 10,000 square foot state of the art entrepreneurial hub that serves black and brown women entrepreneurs. When I tell you that it's so beautiful, it's so vibrant. I have Cleopatra, I have Nefertiti, I have Queen Isis.

And you see all the black queens and all the windows right on the inside coming down the corridor. And then on the outside, up and down the street, we've got holograms of Madam CJ Walker, you know, Oprah Winfrey. Black women pioneers who have paved the way here in America.

So when women walk in here, they feel a sense of pride and belonging because it is called the black and brown opportunities for profit center. Meaning you come, this is for you.

### **What is your message to black women across the world?**

I think for the black woman, I would say, stand up! You are here, you are worthy, and you deserve love. You deserve a hug.

You know, and ironically, we're so fierce. We're so bad. We're so amazing that there's all type of things that attack or try to attract us, to get us diverted from our true purpose and power.

Because really we are that great, our synergy together, we can do anything. For one, we have such brilliant minds. No matter what you throw at us, we gonna be able to overcome that and go ahead to the bitter end.

One of the things that I see most about the black woman and being a shero, this cape, having to go on to the bitter end, have to do it out for others, and we taking on this internal mental superhero type of thing where we don't do self-care.

And so one of the things that I do as a black woman for my sisters is we lift each other up and we empower one another to be our better selves. And how do we do that? We gotta get in touch with the mind and body and the spirit.

### **A topic that's too often ignored is mass incarceration as a system of racialized social control.**

**This has, again, disproportionately affected black women. And there's a double disadvantage that stops them from getting the support they need both within the system, system and then when they try to rebuild their lives outside of the system. So tell me about the work you do in that field.**

So being a social justice advocate, I actually create housing every entry program for women coming home from incarceration. And we actually take them on a journey to self-sufficiency.

And we allow them to get the therapeutic services they need so they can understand what happened to them is not them. Because a lot of us, believe it or not, in that system, we have some several similarities.

Single family home, not having a dad, being in domestic violence relationships. You know what I'm saying? Drugs were just the after effect of what really had happened from us being seven and eight and nine years old.

### **Self-medicating the trauma...**

Right. And so we heal from that. And we also establish a sense of self worth and identity. Because when you've been oppressed for a long time, you don't feel that you can actually reach for the stars.

You don't feel you can actually go there because you haven't seen it in prior generations. You haven't seen it in your family. And we disconnect them from that. And we put them in a place where they're surrounded by success.

They're, they're surrounded by people who envision and manifest and make things happen. And then we let them stay on their own two feet. At the end of the day, we work with them, not for them. Right. And so that's the journey of becoming self-realized and understanding you have a voice.

Teach women how to take an idea, how to engage a policy maker, how to take it to Sacramento, how to get the bill passed, how to celebrate the victory, and how to have their voices heard as the city councilmen.

We're not sitting in this community invisible. We're hear, we're not going nowhere. Our kids are in those schools. We gonna speak up at the board, we've got things to say when we go to a parent-teacher conference.

So just empowering them to know that we are the people who supposed to control the government. And in that knowledge, they come up with ideas and innovation that they too can make a difference. We're all pushing it to make the world spin in the right direction for us.

### **If we were to place the spotlight on a social injustice happening right now in your immediate community, what would it be?**

I would place it on economic injustice. I'm sitting right here in the inland empire and we have over a billion square foot of warehouse space that's been built over the last 5 or 6 feet.

They've got warehouses next to houses, next to schools, we're surrounded by big concrete boxes. When I think about a big concrete box, I think about a prison. Working people go in early enough that it's dark and leave late enough that it's dark again.

So they haven't seen the sunshine all day long and yet the money they make from being in that concrete box all day long will not afford you the opportunity to pay your whole rent at one time, your electric bill and pay for your family to eat. That's a social injustice.

And to know that these were built when we needed to be building affordable housing and recreational centres for our youth to have somewhere to go and be mentored and coached and be in a safe environment and they say there's not enough money. Yet there was money to build these concrete boxes.

### **You are an inspiration to so many people. I want to know what inspires you?**

I'm inspired by seeing the people I have helped. My organisation helped over with 327 children in foster care come back and reunite with their mothers.

Children who would've been lost in that world forever in the day had we not intervened with some services, had we not intervened with some housing and given people a place to bring their kids back. Also, by my transformation to know that I was zero. Zero.

Absent in mind, body and spirit, I had no value. I had no life. I had no thought. My biggest dream was to get a motel room with a bathroom.

That's how far gone I was. I never had a dream about a house You see what I'm saying?

And to come back from that and to know that I could go to sleep tonight and have an idea and wake up in the morning and see

how it manifested, that's new for me. So that excites me. It excites me that I can think! Especially having been on crack cocaine, that I can still think, still plan, I can still stand.

**'The road was bumpy and it was filled with curves'. How did you get through your worst times?**

The little girl inside of me was not going to give up. The adult was done. The little girl was like, 'Uh uh. We ain't doing that.' And so something about just not wanting to die just kept me alive. Kept me alive long enough till I could get some help because I couldn't see a way forward. I couldn't see a way out. I was in a big old black hole and I could not get myself out.

I couldn't even see a ladder to get out. And there was nobody who shone a light down in that black hole. All of us lights, we were all in the hole. And it's not until I received that one little bit of therapeutic service that helped me see that I was not what happened to me.

That the light in me was able to even start shining. Because I couldn't even see that. And then I look around, I see some of my sisters out here doing the amazing work, and we all come from that black hole. God is everything. I'm formerly incarcerated.

I have been homeless, but I'm here today in my right mind. I'm here to make a difference and here's what I'm gonna do. So either help me or get out the way. That's just where I wind up at every time. So I look at it as a blessing from God.

**Whenever I meet someone who is accomplished, which I consider you to be. I have to ask: what are your success habits?**

I read a lot. I question a lot and I move forward a lot. I have no ego. There's many things I've tried that didn't work, but if three out of ten things work, everyone tells me I'm successful, but I really tried ten things! I just try to make sure that while I'm sitting here in this skin on this earth, that when it's all said and done, I know I gave it my all.

**So what is your motto as a community activist?**

My motto is: A lit candle loses nothing with like another. You can help people you're going to still be okay. You can share what you've learned about this business development, how to get a grant, how to get money and ain't take it from you. You can introduce people to funders. So, we can all leave the mindset of scarcity, and get into the mindset of abundance.

**Buy Kim's memoir 'Waking Up To my Purpose' here: <https://www.timeforchangefoundation.org/waking-up-to-my-purpose/>**

Black Wall St. Media Contributor