

DANIELLE CADET MAY 17, 2019, 2:55 PM

This Woman Is Giving Black Women What They Need In Wellness



Although exercising self care is incredibly important for all women, many Black women feel excluded from the wellness space — which is largely dominated by women who don't share the same cultural traumas, health concerns, body types and more. The [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health states](#) Black women have the highest rates of obesity compared to other groups in the country, and [data show](#) that for Black women, anxiety is more chronic and the symptoms more intense than their white counterparts. Despite an evident need for health and wellness services, Black women feel underrepresented in the spaces that can help them take better care of their minds and bodies. But one woman has set out to change that.

Christina Rice, a publicist turned entrepreneur, created OMNoire to specifically address Black women's wellness needs. She was struck by the lack of Black women in her yoga classes and felt if practicing yoga could help her, it could also help women that look like her.

"OMNoire came from a need to create a safe space, for us by us, so that we can begin the process of healing from the inside out," Rice said. "As a yoga student, trainee and then teacher in 2015, I noticed there were very few women of color in my classes, if any. Yoga and meditation was the main catalyst for my healing from a break up and entrepreneur burnout, and I wanted to share the benefits of its practice with Black women, but also stress the need for us to put more emphasis on our self care."

She was also motivated by the troubling statistics about Black women's health. `

"Right now I feel like it's a state of emergency for us. Nearly 50,000 Black women die annually from heart disease, we have the highest maternal mortality rate, we're more likely to be diagnosed and die from breast cancer, we're more likely to suffer from a mental health illness and so much more. I felt like there weren't any platforms that were really addressing how we can be more proactive with our health and spaces where we could just breathe and look around and see the woman next to us who understands our challenges as black women."

Rice took that goal to the next level, organizing wellness retreats for women of color. The organization hosted a summit at Miraval Resort in Tucson, Arizona, in April. The event, which was presented by Tropicana Essentials Probiotics and supporting sponsor Quaker, supplied attendees with crucial financial, mental and physical wellness resources throughout the weekend.

"I chose Miraval because the resort itself is rooted in wellness and mindfulness and aligned with our mission to Live Life In Balance," Rice said. "It also provides understated luxury in the middle of the Sonoran desert with the Catalina mountains as the backdrop. When we think of five-star luxury resorts, we imagine beaches and cocktails and all this outward opulence. I love that Miraval puts emphasis on sleeping well and eating well, unplugging and relaxation. I wanted our attendees to understand what luxury feels like from the inside out."



COURTESY OF JAZZELLA MCKEEL

The summit's 72 attendees were treated to fireside chats from a diverse group of speakers, vision board workshops and activities including morning meditation, yoga and even tightrope walking. Each activity highlighted the specific experiences Black women have that affect their bodies differently than their peers.

"We have unique challenges in nutrition, fertility, mental health, etc. that are deeply rooted in generational trauma. We've also had a lack of wellness education and access until recently," Rice said. "We need content that not only educates, but provides necessary coping tools that allows us to pass on that education to generations that come after us. For instance, many of us didn't grow up with access to as much nutritional information as we have now. If we know more about gut health — which we spoke about a lot during our retreat through our partnership with Tropicana Essentials

Probiotics — and its effects on blood pressure, digestion, and our reproductive systems, we're more conscious of putting health friendly foods in our diet."

Moving forward, Rice is hoping to increase the number of attendees at future events. And she hopes to continue to offer a variety of resources to women of color.

"For next year's summit, I will likely add a fourth day so we can add more elements of a retreat for a nice balance along with more workshops and outdoor activities. And of course double our attendance!

Whether they're looking for a relaxing weekend to exercise self care, or want to gain insights on their physical, mental and spiritual well-being — they will certainly find it at an OMNoire retreat.