MEET NIKKI FRELIER ANDREWS

WE WERE LUCKY TO CATCH UP WITH NIKKI FRELIER ANDREWS RECENTLY AND HAVE SHARED OUR CONVERSATION BELOW.

Hi Nikki, so happy you were able to devote some time to sharing your thoughts and wisdom with our community. So, we've always admired how you have seemingly never let nay-sayers or haters keep you down. Can you talk to us about how to persist despite the negative energy that so often is thrown at folks trying to do something special with their lives?

One of the things that my husband always says to me when I question what I am doing is, "One of the things I love the most about you, is when someone tells you "No!", you get fired up and prove them wrong". I think most of the population suffers from imposter syndrome. I am a 46 year old wife and mother, a practicing artist, trying to make it, in yes, a subculture which I grew up and participated in, but what is my relevance now?

I persist because of the people around me, who support and cheer me on. If not for that, I would have quit a long time ago. It's not that I need accolades or a fan base, rather that people see the good in what I am trying to pursue. It's when a 60 yr old retired skater hears about my story and gives me a hug at the Exposure Skate Expo in 2022, in Encinitas and says to me, "Thank you for what you are doing for the community, please don't stop!". It's when my kids show they are proud of me and say, "My Mom designs skateboards, and part of the reason is because of me!".

It's when I help fun skateboarding and snowboarding scholarships for under resourced youth, and I am able to witness their enthusiasm and gratitude. That is what makes me persist.

Thanks, so before we move on maybe you can share a bit more about yourself?

NFA Boards empowers youth through skateboarding while building confidence, encouraging physical activity and breaking down stereotypes. Proceeds from NFA Board sales go to fund skate empowered programs & clinics for youth of all demographics including under-resourced youth. We are dedicated to providing greater accessibility and inclusion in skateboarding and supporting kids in all aspects of their lives. The past couple of years, I have been partnering with Big Sky Youth Empowerment (BYEP), in Bozeman, Montana. NFA Boards have funded snowboarding scholarships for under resourced / under represented youth during the winter months.

This past summer, NFA Boards & BYEP, partnered with SAM (Skateboarding Alliance of Montana) and we launched a skate pilot for their summer programming this summer (2023). It was very successful and well received!

NFA Boards also donated skateboards, gip tape, some product from our new clothing line and also funded the rest of the hardware needed for the skateboards and set up the boards for the center. I give a big shoutout to Alex White from Krux, who donated trucks for the program. Another proud philanthropic cause that I am very proud of, is that It was our second year as a sponsor of the Exposure Skate Competition, in Encinitas, CA. The proceeds from Competition, go towards helping women and families who are survivors of domestic abuse. It was an amazing annual event and I cannot tell you how much amazing young talent there always is at that competition. So many up and coming female & non-binary skaters, of all ages, I am continuously blown away.

If you had to pick three qualities that are most important to develop, which three would you say matter most?

Networking / connections: I have really been blown away by how many people I have met, who have then referred e to someone they know, then refer me to someone they know, and so on. I have never felt so munch support and mentorship as I do now as an Entrepreneur. While it is still a bit harder breaking back into the skate community after all these years (it is a tight nit community and very protective of the sport and how it is portrayed and rightly so) once they see that I am serious and believe in my brand and how people are receiving my brand, then new relationships develop and I gain their respect and support.

Brand Management:

Knowing your product, its audience and how to communicate the brand is key! Your Mission, why did you creat this and what is its need in the market?

Brand Differentiators or Brand Pillars, What makes you stand out from the rest? Brand Character, how do you want your brand to be know? Tone of Voice, what you say to your audience and how you say it. Tagline, try to summarize your mission to the consumer with your established tone and differentiation in one line. Brand Story, what is your consumer facing narrative that explains what you do, why you do it, and how you do it.

Taking Risks:

Just putting your self out there is a risk. If you believe in your product, others will too, I was as a point in my life where I had the luxury of being able to become an Entrepreneur. Technically, as practicing artist and designer, I was already doing that but on a smaller scale and with less overhead and monetary risk. I think starting off on a smaller scale and testing out our consumer audience helps. Put some, not all, of your product designs / ideas out there and see what sells. When see what your product need is, then you can produce more. Remember, failure is also part of the road to success. "It's only when you risk failure that you discover things. When you play it safe, you're not expressing the utmost of your human experience." – Luptia Nyong'o

What was the most impactful thing your parents did for you?

I come from a very creative and athletic family. My Father was a league rugby player, internationally. I grew up going to local team games and reunions. He always told me, girls can play too. He passed on that mentality through all aspects of my life. He helped push me to do things that others thought I could not do.

My Mother is an excellent seamstress, I grew up watching her sew us clothing and costumes, appliqué and quilt. It was something that found interesting and exciting. To be able to create something beautiful and functional was fascinating to me. Once my Mother saw how interested I was in making clothing for my dolls, she signed me up for sewing lessons as a Christmas gift when I was 10 years of age.

When I knew that I wanted to major in art, my parents were nothing but supportive. They told me that it only matters if you are happy and also have a degree. They also told me that you need to take risks as an artist. Father always said to me, "Potentially, only about 10% of the population will apply for that grant, scholarship, or submit for that call for artists. You won't know until you try. That also applied to other aspects of my work life. I landed some pretty fun and amazing jobs and got them. People would ask me, "How were you able to get that job?", I would say that I walked in off the street and asked if they were hiring. What did I have to loose if someone told me "No"? I'd just go to the next business I thought would be fun to work for. Going back to imposter syndrome, it runs deep. We spend our whole lives trying to overcome it. Just believe in yourself, have a great support network and steer clear of Gaslighters.

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