

Reviving Farish Street: A New Chapter of Economic Development With Aikisha Holly Colon

By Tammy Reese



[Aikisha Holly Colon](#) is committed to showcasing the talents of local artists and vendors through the Farish Forward Festival. This annual event serves as a platform for artists to exhibit their work and vendors to showcase their products. By attracting visitors to the festival, Aikisha aims to bring economic support to Farish Street and raise awareness about the area's rich cultural heritage.

The Farish Forward Festival acts as a catalyst for generating interest, fostering collaborations, and promoting the economic growth of Farish Street. It brings together the community, creating a vibrant atmosphere where local art and products can be celebrated. Through this festival, Aikisha hopes to not only provide a space for artists and vendors to thrive but also to contribute to the revitalization of Farish Street by attracting visitors and promoting its unique cultural identity.

In this article we will explore the efforts of Aikisha Holly Colon in reviving Farish Street, a historic area in Jackson, Mississippi.

We are excited to hear all about your hard work and efforts in improving the Historically Black Neighborhood, the legendary Farish Street in Jackson, MS. What can you share with us?

Aikisha: I'm really excited about the future and the direction that we want to take Farish Street. For my husband and I, our first project is bringing a second location of our bar to the Farish Street Historic District. We have a beer garden in the Bronx, New York, called Bricks and Hops, and we want to create a second location on Farish Street. This is our way of bringing economic development, movement, and foot traffic back to the area. Our motto is "keeping it local". So, that's what we do in the Bronx. We hire locals from the Bronx and bring in beers from local breweries. So, that's what we want to do in Jackson: hire local people because they know the city. Hiring locals is another way to invest in the community. It has been a proven fact that a dollar circulates six times before leaving a community. We want to invest in our community and allow that dollar to travel through. That's what you call economic development. So, we're really excited about bringing a new business to the area, and also, we're excited about the [Farish Forward Festival](#) that I founded this year. We had local artists perform who are not just known locally in the state of Mississippi but nationally across the country. We had vendors from all over Mississippi coming to sell their products, goods, produce, or whatever they had, whatever their talent was, whatever their crafts were. They could return to Farish Street just like they did in the early 1900s to sell and have the community support them. Again, economic development supports the community, and that's what we're doing on Farish Street. I always refer to the Essence Fest because it is one of the largest African-American festivals in the world. That is my goal. I have my eyes set on that. I would love to see something similar in Jackson, Mississippi, where we can have these major companies come in and build these huge stages, bring in the people, and pour into the community of Jackson, Mississippi. That's my goal for next year and the years to come.

As an influential figure, what values and principles do you strive to embody as a wife and parent?

Aikisha: I always want to set the best example. I want to continue to be someone my husband is not just physically attracted to but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually intrigued. I want to be someone that he is forever in love with and that I'm able to arouse his intrigue. I am a servant of God. I am a servant to my husband and my children, but I just want to be the person that they know, without a doubt, will always be there for them and will always have their back. They always have my support. They know they'll never go hungry. I just want to set the best example for them in business. Being a woman and being a Black woman, when my daughter looks at me, she is beyond proud to say that's my mama. My prayer is that she's better than me. I want to teach my children the importance of just being kind and being present and being grateful. You know, my children are definitely growing up differently than my husband and I, and I want them to appreciate that. I also want them to understand the importance of staying rooted and connected in their community and finding ways to bring better change and opportunities.

Please tell us about some more of your latest projects and what you're currently working on.

Aikisha: The latest projects that I'm working on include trying to obtain this building from the Jackson Redevelopment Authority because the buildings on Farish Street, the ones that have not been released or have not yet been sold, are still owned by the Jackson Redevelopment Authority. I'm giving them everything that they need to choose to sell the highly desired building to us, and I feel very confident and comfortable with where that is going. I'm prepared to wait because I know it's a process. Rome wasn't built in a day, and it will take time. We are already planning for the Farish Forward Festival 2024. The excitement it brought to the area, the great turnout and just the all-around support from the community have me ready to go bigger and better for the next one. Also, my husband and I are in the beginning stages of working on a book about our fertility journey and the love story of our journey to parenthood. So, I'm excited about that. At first, I did not think that I had insecurity about sharing because, you know, people think that we're living this amazing life being the wife of an NFL veteran football player. Willie and I really wanted to have children. It wasn't happening as quickly or as easily as we thought it would. At first, I had many insecurities about sharing what Willie and I were going through. We had everything we could possibly want except what we wanted more than anything... Children.

We are in the process of sharing this love and success story of how we became parents and became the family that we are today.

Can you share any memorable experiences or encounters that have profoundly influenced your perspective on life and work?

Aikisha: Having my daughter was a memorable experience. When I was pregnant with her, I just had this motivation, this push, this boost that I can't explain, and I'm hoping, and I know that it will be revealed to me on this journey, but right now, she motivates me in ways that she doesn't even know, and she's only two years old. She challenges me, which drives me to be the best version of myself. She is a mirrored image of me, and I pray that she grows up to be better than me and a true version of herself.

What was your experience like as a cast member of the Belle Collective on OWN (Oprah Winfrey's Network)?

Aikisha: I'm having a great experience being a new cast member of the Belle Collective. When I first got there, it was the second season of the show, but it was my first season. I came in with the best intentions. I was excited about meeting these ladies. I've been away from Jackson, Mississippi, for a while. I left and went to college, returned for a little while to go to grad school at Jackson State University, and left again. Jackson's always home for me. I went just when I was excited about it because I was seeing progression in the city, and then I saw these Black women who were doing extremely well professionally. When I got there, I was ready to jump in and be in a circle of women who I felt would be like-minded and have the same goals. People thought that I was coming in to compete. People thought I was coming in to try to one up. Those are never my intentions. Like I tell people, I don't compete; I set standards. I'm used to a certain standard, and I always try to get to the next level, setting those standards and reaching higher and higher. I've built some genuine relationships with some of the women, and then there are some relationships that, you know, we've got to work on, but I love that I'm a cast member, and I'm excited to go into a new season with the Belles.

As someone who has achieved notable success, what advice would you give to individuals seeking to discover and pursue their passion?

Aikisha: When you write the vision down, you can see the vision, and then you begin to work towards that. Once I write something down, I can look at it and focus on it. Then, I'm not stopping until I achieve whatever goals I aspire to. It doesn't just have to be one goal. Every time I accomplish a goal, I'm ready for the next goal because I'm all about continuing to build, being persistent, and not giving up. I'm one of those people who doesn't always take no for an answer. Because that one "no" is just a small roadblock that you can jump over and then get to the next stage of whatever this goal is you want to achieve. I don't believe in giving up. Never, ever is failure an option for me. That's the mindset I have. If I want it, I'm going to get it. I don't go with the what-ifs. If I want it, I will get it, and that's just it; there's never giving up. I'm one of those people who just can't take no as a final answer.

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