



The ***GILDED ONES***

THE BOLD ONE

**DEBBIE DOUGLAS**

# BORN TO BE BOLD

Some people are born to be bold. They are innately primed to step up, stand out, and make things happen. We met one such person not too long ago. Her name is Debbie Douglas.

No – Debbie is not a famous celebrity (although you definitely get the vibe that she could be). She's not running for Congress (although we might all be well served if she did). From the outside looking in, Debbie looks like many of us – a woman in the world doing her thing.

But her "thing" is doing many things – from working hard as a talent recruiter at Viacom to being a prolific public speaker in her field to volunteering her talents at a number of not-for-profits dedicated to elevating the lives of girls and women of color. On top of that, she is making bold choices. In the middle of a pandemic and subsequent shutdown, and in the face of a massive retreat from metropolitan areas everywhere, Debbie doubled down on city life (literally) and made her second real estate investment – a residential property in Newark, New Jersey. Her first investment property is located in Brooklyn, New York.

Now let's be clear. Being bold doesn't mean an absence of doubt or fear. The bold ones, like Debbie, are as vulnerable as the rest of us. What makes them different is their willingness to bet on themselves time and time again, and their ability to recycle fear and vulnerability into a combustive fuel for positive action that benefits not only themselves, but others too.

So how did we feel after this interview and photoshoot with [Debbie Douglas](#)? In one word – empowered. Debbie's story reminded us that we can all be local neighborhood superheroes and superheroines by loving ourselves a little bit more, making day-to-day choices that are just a little bit bolder, and, most importantly, by giving back to the world just a little bit more than we take out of it. Please meet Debbie Douglas.



# LET'S CHAT!

## **Home. Sweet. Home.**

I was born and raised in Canarsie, Brooklyn, NY. My parents and older sister migrated to New York from Costa Rica. I love Brooklyn and I cherish the memories I have of growing up there. My mom and sister still live in Canarsie. I get nostalgic when I visit my old neighborhood and walk the streets on which I used to ride my bike and play tag.

## **School Daze.**

I received my Bachelor's Degree in Social Work at SUNY- Stonybrook in Long Island, NY. Before I went to college, my plan was to save the world one person at a time. Shortly after graduation, I realized that I am too emotional to work in a field where one can encounter quite a bit of despair. What would I do with a college degree in an area that didn't match my personality? I did some research and found Human Resources! HR offers a me a way to help people in a way that I enjoy. I love what I do so much that I ended up getting my Masters in Human Resources Management at [Milano Graduate School of The New School in New York City](#).

## **The J.O.B.**

I specialize in Talent Acquisition. The essence of my job is to identify and recruit high caliber talent to work at ViacomCBS for such brands as BET, Nickelodeon, VH1, and Comedy Central.

## **Wilding Out.**

A couple of years ago, I was hanging out with a friend at a local restaurant and chatting about what I wanted to do for my upcoming birthday. After tossing about a few ideas, I realized that I just wanted to lie on a beautiful tropical beach. Three days later, we were in St. Martin sharing a birthday cocktail on the beach. When it was time to check out, we just extended the trip! Best decision ever.

## **Daytime Reverie.**

I dream about leaving a legacy. I want to help people who look like me and who are coming up behind me.

## **Sign Language.**

I'm a super proud LEO born on 8/18! Leos love attention and will always be noticed when we enter a room. We are confident, work hard, love hard, and are unflinchingly loyal. Even though I am mostly peaceful, the haters should take note – I too have a fiery Leo side.



# YOU ARE A SENIOR RECRUITER AT VIACOM MEDIA NETWORK.

Tell us more about what you do and how you got to this place in your career.

I've made lots of twists and turns to get where I am today. I started out as an assistant in the Human Resources department at a theatrical management company before taking an HR job with MTV Networks (currently a part of ViacomCBS). After working with MTV for 7 years, I accepted a position as an HR Generalist/Recruiter at a small and scrappy youth media and marketing company.

After achieving a number of my goals at this company, including creating a diversity program and management training program, I took a new position with BET Networks (also a ViacomCBS company). During my 3 year stint at BET, I created an orientation program for new hires, recruited and hired en masse for BET's digital component, [BET.com](#), and revamped BET's summer fellows program.

I loved my time at BET; however, I was recruited to work at a global PR/Communications firm and decided to take a chance and try out a different industry. I recruited mid-level to C-Suite level executives at various levels of the business. It was great — except that I missed the entertainment and media industry. I called my old boss to see if I could return. She told me that the position she had available was a step down from my position at the PR agency. I wanted it anyway, even though my old boss made me interview for the job and it was a freelance position. A risky bet? Probably, but it was one that I was willing to take in order to go back "home". My position became permanent within a year and I was promoted again shortly thereafter. Some risks are worth taking — especially those where you bet on yourself.

## DESCRIBE YOUR TYPICAL WORKDAY—ESPECIAL- LY NOW THAT WE ARE ALL WORKING FROM

I try to get a 30 minute workout in as many days as possible. Before I start work, I create a slow and peaceful ambience by lighting scented candles, drinking tea and writing in my journal or listening to mellow music. I take it easy in the morning because once I log into my computer, my day moves at lightning speed. On any given day, I am reviewing resumes, posting job announcements, soliciting prospective candidates, conducting interviews, making hiring recommendations, pulling together job offers, negotiating salaries, watching webinars, or sitting in on industry specific panels or conferences. It's a lot.



## YOUR JOB INVOLVES A GREAT DEAL OF PUBLIC SPEAKING.

**1. Did you ever have a fear of public speaking and if so, how did you get over it?** Absolutely! Prior to college, I was relatively shy when it came to speaking in public. Luckily my social work program required many group and solo presentations. Later on, I took a public speaking class to improve my skills.

**2. What do you recommend to improve one's public speaking skills.** (1) Be vocal in meetings; (2) volunteer for opportunities that allow you to speak in public; (3) take a public speaking course – many employers offer them at no cost to the employee; and (4) practice makes perfect. So keep at it.

## YOU ARE KNOWN AS THE “TALENT WHISPERER” AT VIACOM.

**1. How did you get that reputation?** After I made a few high profile hires, a colleague came up with that tag-line and it stuck. It ended up enhancing my personal brand and actually helped people to remember me. Smart and skilled people are everywhere, but not everyone is a “whisperer”.

**2. What attributes does it take to recognize talented people and to place those people in the right position?** To do this job well, one must listen, be objective and have the emotional intelligence necessary to allow the applicant the space in which to show off his/her/their skills (or flaws, as the case may be).





## 2020 WAS A CHALLENGING YEAR IN THE JOB MARKET AND 2021 MAY BE EQUALLY CHALLENGING.

What advice would you give to someone who is:

- 1. Hunting for a job in the middle of a pandemic.** Don't give up! Getting a job is a job in and of itself. It's also a numbers game — the more jobs you apply for, the more likely you will land one. So keep your skills sharp and if you have the time and resources, try to add more skills to your toolbox. Use that pandemic free time to take online courses.
- 2. About to interview for a job.** Do your research! Find out what the company does best and figure out how that aligns with your interests and skills. Interviewing during a pandemic has been quite different for both employers and prospective employees. As a candidate, you have to find even more ways to stand out because of the lack of physical proximity. We know it's just Zoom, but for heaven's sake — dress up!
- 2. Trying to build or maintain a network in the current environment.** Make sure you are branding yourself correctly on LinkedIn, including updating your profile periodically and joining professional groups. Participate in online discussions and create and/or share relevant content within the industry. Have fun while you are at it — maintain your existing network with Zoom cocktails.



## YOU DO A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF VOLUNTEER WORK, INCLUDING MENTORING.

I am a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. We are a global community service-based organization focusing on everything from women's health and wellness to college admissions support. I am a mentor with [Save a Girl, Save a World](#). I also volunteer my time through our Viacom MentorUp program for high school students in the arts. I am an active supporter and donor for a few local Breast Cancer Awareness and Sickle Cell Awareness non-profit organizations such as YMF, Inc (Yvonne McCalla Foundation) and CSCF, Inc (Candice's Sickle Cell Fund). I also speak at non-profit organizations aimed at providing empowerment, education and tangible resources to black and brown youth, such as [Gyrl Wonder](#), [Young Enterprising Sisters](#) and Circle of Change. I've been given many wonderful opportunities and great deal of support in my life. As a result, I feel compelled to give back to my community in kind. I hope that in mentoring young people, I am also inspiring them to give back to their communities and the generations who follow them.



**HOW HAVE YOU BEEN DESCRIBED BY PEOPLE WHO KNOW YOU WELL? DO YOU AGREE WITH THEIR ASSESSMENT?**

Genuine, outgoing, friendly, and loyal. I agree completely!

**WHAT'S YOUR HIDDEN TALENT? WE HEARD THAT YOU WRITE POETRY.**

I used to write poems daily. It was therapy for me. I would write about my family, feelings, music, and life in general. Nowadays, I do more journaling than poetry, but I will get back to it some day.



## WHAT THREE WORDS DESCRIBE YOUR PERSONAL STYLE?

Chic.

Edgy.

Artsy.

## HOW DOES JEWELRY FIT INTO YOUR DAILY WARDROBE?

Jewelry is a key part of my daily wardrobe. I often center my entire outfit around one piece of jewelry. Accessories, jewelry in particular, can make or break an outfit, so why not start there?



## DO YOU TAKE FASHION RISKS? IF SO, WHAT ARE THEY?

I'd rather hide in my closet than dress without some risk and a lot of flair. I think of myself as a "mixologist" who loves color, print and unconventional pairings. I like to mix prints more prints, colors that don't typically go together, dressy items with casual pieces and high fashion designer clothes with street style. I am a big fan of coats and jackets and love mixing leather, fur and shearling. I do not discriminate against any fabric or material!

## WHOSE STYLE DO YOU ADMIRE THE MOST AND WHY?

I love the way Tracee Ellis Ross uses fashion to express herself. It's as if her clothes are her representative. Yet, they don't mute or interfere with her persona. She's so versatile. One day she could be wearing a funky sweatsuit that shows off her casual and down to earth side and the next day she's in a bright tailored velour pantsuit that shows off her Boss Babe attitude.



## WHAT ARE YOUR GO-TO WARDROBE PIECES?

1. My blue mid-length shearling coat. It was a “splurge” gift to myself. It has leather trim, oversized pockets, a huge fluffy collar and a leather belt. It also keeps me super warm in the winter and I get loads of compliments whenever I wear it.

2. A beautiful color block asymmetrical spaghetti strap silk dress I purchased from Asos. It flows beautifully and I feel “Gone with the Wind” fabulous when I wear it.

3. A pair of royal blue jewel embellished satin shoes with heels that are high enough to feel regal and comfortable enough to wear all day.

4. My **Vinnies Styles** army fatigue hoodie with BROOKLYN written across the chest in colorful designer inspired logos we all know and love. It’s perfect for fall/winter, it’s funky, warm and perfect for these times when we aren’t dressing up as much.



## WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT OBSESSIONS?

1. Home décor sites (I just bought a new house).
2. Colorful workout/lounge wear because I have to stay Quarantine Fab.
3. Supporting more black-owned jewelry and clothing designers.
4. Exploring my passions and investing more time and effort in my personal and professional milestones.





# LIGHTNING ROUND! PICK ONE.

**On personal aura:** Mystery or Clarity?

– Clarity.

**On personal style:** Minimalist or Maximalist?

– Maximalist.

**On Interior Design:** Bold color or neutral hues?

– BOLD

**On NYC apartment living:** Huge walk-in closet with seating area or huge laundry room with large sized washer and dryer.

– Have you met me? I need to twirl around in my HUGE walk-in closet!

**On NYC newspapers:** New York Times, New York Daily News or New York Post?

– New York Times during the week and Daily News on the weekends.

**On shopping:** Online or in store?

– Online. I don't have the patience for lines and crowds.

**On jewelry:** Delicate or bold?

– BOLD

**On jewelry, pt. 2:** Neck Game, Ear-scape, Arm Candy or Ring Bling?

– Neck Game

**On travel:** Adventure-filled with spartan digs or calm and quiet but supremely luxe?

– Calm and quiet but supremely luxe.

**On travel pt. 2:** Pick your next destination (but only one): Paris, Cape Town, Buenos Aires, Marrakesh, Sydney or Tokyo.

– Marrakesh.

**On people:** Absolute favorite human trait?

– Selflessness.

**On people pt. 2:** Least favorite human trait?

– Passive-aggressive behavior and selfishness.



## WHERE WOULD YOU TELL OUT-OF-TOWNERS TO GO TO GET YOUR NYC EXPERIENCE?

I'm a foodie, so the first place that comes to mind is [Miss Lily's](#), a Jamaican restaurant and bar on Houston Street in Manhattan. The food is authentic, the décor reminds me of restaurants on the beaches in Jamaica, and the music and customer service are on point. If you're looking for the perfect snapshot of New York City, check out the Highline. It's an above ground park with rotating pieces of art. I love going there at night to gaze at the stars.

## WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT GOLD?

Gold evokes the opulence and royalty. It's luxurious and it makes me feel very "extra" when I wear it. Queens wear gold and I'm definitely a Queen!



## WHAT AUVERE PIECES MUST YOU OWN?

The [Golden Apex 24K Ring](#), [Love is Love Medallion & Short Link Chain](#) and [Arthropod Earring Satin](#) are my kind of statement pieces.



## PARTING WORDS?

Fortis Fortuna Aduvat. Fortune favors the bold. So here's to bold choices, fearless self-expression, bright colors and big gold jewelry!

# DEBBIE IS WEARING:

## Cover/Look 1:

**Cream sweater:** Mara Hoffman; **Navy leather skirt:** Rebecca Taylor; **Gray boots:** Charlotte Ronson; and **Jewelry:** **Auvere** (Plexus Earrings; Tack Stud Earrings; Cage Convertible Rope Necklace; Golden Apex 24K Ring; Callen Ring Polished; Callen Ring Satin; Slice Ring Polished; Slice Ring Satin; Floral Eye Signet Ring | 9 Diamonds; and Love is Love Bracelet);

## Look 2:

**Leopard print dress:** Rebecca Taylor; **Yellow coat:** Zara; **Black ankle boots:** Alice & Olivia; and **Jewelry:** **Auvere** (Double Cone Earrings Tall; Love is Love Pendant and Short Link Chain; Indomitable Medallion and Chain; Maze Ring Polished; Slash Ring Polished; and Perigee Bracelet);

## Look 3:

**Green and black print blouse:** Unknown; **Black top:** H&M; **Black leather skirt:** Zara; **Black ankle boots:** Alice & Olivia; and **Jewelry:** **Auvere** (Galactic III Earrings; Galactic II Earrings; Long Link Chain; Linear Maze Pendant and Chain Large/ Polished; Solid Maze Pendant & Chain Large/Polished; Perigee Bracelet; Golden Apex 24K Ring Polished; Xanthe 24K Ring Polished; Callen Ring Polished; and Callen Ring Satin);

## Look 4:

**Pastel sequined top:** Olivia Ruben; **Blue jeans:** Levi's; **Black biker jacket:** Zara; **Black ankle boots:** Alice & Olivia; and **Jewelry:** **Auvere** (Heartbeat Threader Earrings; Heartbeat Stud Earrings; Tack Stud Earrings; Bold Heart Diamond Pendant and Long Link Chain; Double Stick Cuff; and Astra Bangles); and

## Look 5:

**Red ultra-suede biker jacket:** Zara; **Black top:** H&M; **Plaid pants:** Express; **Red pumps:** Sam Edelman; and **Jewelry:** **Auvere** (Flex Earrings Tall; Tack Stud Earrings; Obelisk Convertible Rope Necklace; Perigee Bracelet; Floral Eye Ring | 9 Diamonds; Multifacet Ring; Brutalist 24K Ring; Maze Star Ring; Xanthe 24K Ring Polished; and Byzantium 24K Ruby Ring).