

## CHARMAINE SHAW



“  
The love that  
floods the  
human heart  
is unstoppable.  
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If you met Charmaine Shaw momentarily in passing, you'd immediately want to connect again to continue the conversation. She's passionate. She's inspirational. In short, you'd definitely want to add her to your Rolodex and professional network of go-getting women.

But you might be hard-pressed to pin one title on this modern-day poet who has always stood out from the pack.

### ABOUT CHARMAINE SHAW

A former actress, restaurateur and chemical plant executive, Shaw is that rarest of writing talents: a self-made poet as comfortable crunching numbers on a 10-key as she is reciting prose on a mic. Raised in the poverty of Kingston, Jamaica, Shaw shunned gang violence, earning the nickname 'foreigner.' At ten, she freed herself by playing hooky in the province's only library. "I devoured anything made of text — maps, books, charts, the dictionary — whatever I could hold in my hands got read. I soaked in my own education and would slip past security guards to sit in labs at the prestigious University of the West Indies ... placing myself in a secret world that filled my thirsty imagination." Shaw never dreamed that one day she would receive an accounting degree at that school and, when she did, was the first in the family to graduate from college.

For the next several years, that same steel determination had Shaw supporting various relatives and both parents. After acquiring an M.B.A. and a few businesses of her own, material wealth wasn't fulfilling enough. With a hole in her heart, Shaw pulled stakes and eventually ended up in Los Angeles.

The move gave her a chance to rekindle a lost love: acting. Growing up, performing was her outlet to inspire. "I was an extroverted little girl who intuitively heard that the rapes, stabbings and oppression going on around me were not as real as what was going on inside. In 2001, even though it had been twenty years, I thought, 'now or never,' and jumped right back in."

Juggling bookkeeping and acting work proved rough. Money was tight and became scarcer still after her marriage dissolved. In 2004, Shaw hit bottom. "I was gripped with career uncertainty, the loneliness of being away from family and the pain of my childhood. A voice within was calling. I felt like my story had to come out." Sitting at her kitchen table in the early morning hours, Shaw began penning intimate, gentle love notes to herself, one at a time, over a period of almost two years. The technique proved transformational.

Shaw's spiritual sonnets were shared with friends in a daily email called "Gem for Today," after little story gems her uncle told her as a girl. The motivators caught on. In late 2007, she created "Gems for Life" an inspirational gift calendar and a new book, "Gems for Life to Soothe the Soul."

What's beating loudest in the poet's heart these days is continuing to develop and define her unique style of writing, a combination of using thoughts and creativity to remind us of life's everyday magic. While marketing the compositions through her publishing arm, Simply-One.net, Shaw intends to grow business by collaborating with artists and creating unique pieces that marry prose with art. Her charitable organization, Project New

Story, receives 20% of Simply One's proceeds to raise money for children living in impoverished communities.

Plans for other projects are in the works. Scripts for reality shows are being shopped; recording sessions for her spoken word CD just wrapped. As well as taking on a new role: foster parent to five children in Haiti and Jamaica.

It may seem that the legacy her neighborhood had bequeathed Shaw was that she was powerless to change her life. Instead, the underlying idea that gives the entrepreneur heft is God. "True wealth and happiness spring not from games of chance but are earned through effort and imagination. I didn't let where I was from dictate where I wanted to go or who I would become. Like the law of attraction, my true identity in God kept calling me, gently pulling me along. And I listened, I listened."

Expressing herself through the written and spoken word is Charmaine Shaw's sweetest joy. Her biggest dream is to open a library.