

CELEBRITY FASHION STYLIST

AYANNA J

Fashion Blogger turned Wardrobe Stylist
How an encounter on social media ignited her career
By Dontaira Terrell

Ayanna J has come a long way since her chaotic days in retail. Her career began on a whim when she saw a tweet from Dwyane Wade's personal stylist, Calyann Barnett saying that she was in need of an assistant. While only having a retail background, Ayanna responded anyway and got the job starting that very same day. Now, the young wardrobe stylist has worked with celebrities such as Usher, Carmelo Anthony, Erica Campbell and many others.

IF YOU HAD A TIME MACHINE, WHICH FASHION ERA WOULD YOU TRAVEL TO?

I would travel back to the 30's and 40's because this was a time when all of your suits and dresses were hand-made. A lot of intricate details and hard work was put into each piece for you to receive good quality clothing.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A COSTUME DESIGNER AND CELEBRITY STYLIST?

Costume designers primarily work on television shows or theatrical performances. You serve as the head stylist of wardrobe on that particular production, whereas being a stylist you can style anybody and can also serve as a personal shopper. They share similar lanes, but have a different system and form of hierarchy that is involved. Costume designing is telling the story through clothing because you're styling for the script/production in wardrobe, not necessarily styling for the specific person.

WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART ABOUT YOUR JOB?

Each styling job has its own unique challenges. Balancing to be creative and a businessperson at the same time is probably the biggest challenge. Anyone can be fashionable, but you can't just be creative. You have to be able to deal with logic and have the business acumen to follow-up. Everything I do is very hands-on and each job requires a different path I have to take to achieve it. You are your own agent when you're starting everything, but the main goal is to stay centered, keep moving forward and grow as a business.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER SOMEONE CONSIDERING THIS CAREER?

First and foremost, always be nice to people you meet and work with. In this business it's all about who you know. Sometimes your next job can happen from a word of mouth recommendation, so it's important to keep your reputation as clean as possible. You don't necessarily have to know every fashion designer, but you do have to know the basics of styling. Study everything from film to fashion, get as much hands on experience as possible, network often, be willing to be flexible and always open to learning. The perfect way to sum it all up, 'You can plan a pretty picnic, but you can't predict the weather.' With styling, everything can change in a moment's notice, but you have to be willing and able to roll with the punches and push through.

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE A CELEBRITY CLOSET TO SHOP IN, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Right now it would definitely have to be Zendaya Coleman because I love her versatility. She's young, hip and likes mixing patterns and textures. She's never afraid to take things a step further.



NAME THE TOP THREE THINGS IN YOUR STYLING KIT THAT ARE MUST-HAVES?

As a stylist you always want to work with the basics and start from the inside out.

MY TOP THREE MUST-HAVES

- APPROPRIATE UNDER GARMENTS
- DARK DENIM JEANS
- BLOUSE OR BUTTON DOWN COLLAR



“ A mix between Rihanna and Erykah Badu.

-Ayanna J on her personal style



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From top (Counter clock-wise) Celebrity Stylist Ayanna J models for editorial has styled actress Teyonah Parris, rapper B.O.B, Mary Mary's Erica Campbell

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