

Trailblazing Starbucks Executive Shares Barrier-Breaking Journey in New Memoir, Working Class to Breaking Glass

From humble roots to Starbucks' first senior VP of global communications, a look at race, gender, leadership, and the courage to claim a seat at the table.

SEATTLE, WA, UNITED STATES, June 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- At a time when organizations, leaders, and communities continue to wrestle with questions of representation, opportunity, and who gets to lead, award-winning communications executive [Wanda J. Herndon](#) is bringing a powerful new voice to the conversation.

“

This book isn't just about my career. It's for anyone who has wondered if they belong in the room and for those who know that when they get there, they have a responsibility to make room for others.”

*Wanda J. Herndon, author of
From Working Class to
Breaking Glass*

Raised in Flint, Michigan, in a blue-collar family shaped by the Great Migration and the rise of General Motors, Herndon grew up with a clear directive from her father, a former assembly-line worker who had left the Jim Crow South in search of freedom and opportunity: 'You should get an office job.' That dream became the foundation for a life and career defined by education, self-sufficiency, resilience, and a refusal to accept the limits others might

place on her.

In her memoir, [Working Class to Breaking Glass](#), Herndon traces her journey from Flint to Michigan State University, where she became one of the first in her extended family to attend college through a groundbreaking career in journalism, government, public relations, and corporate communications. With candor, warmth, and humor, she writes about financial uncertainty, imposter syndrome, racism, sexism, workplace politics, personal loss, mentorship, and the invisible weight of being a 'first' and an 'only' in rooms where African American women were rarely seen.

Her professional path ultimately led her to Starbucks Coffee Company, where she became the company's first senior vice president of global communications. During her initial tenure, Herndon helped guide communications as Starbucks expanded from 550 stores to more than

15,000 stores across five continents. She advised leaders, shaped culture, protected reputation, and earned a seat at decision-making tables where demographic representation had historically been absent.

Herndon introduces readers to what she calls her 'Wanda-isms,' a blend of fearlessness, honesty, joy, and hard-earned wisdom that helped her tell difficult truths with grace. She reflects on the role of mentorship, the power of community, and the importance of bringing one's full self into leadership spaces.

Early praise for *Working Class to Breaking Glass* underscores the book's wide appeal across business, leadership, women's empowerment, and personal growth audiences.

"a quintessentially American story." - Howard Schultz, founder and CEO of Starbucks Coffee Company

"an insightful and inspirational story of the power of unapologetically being a stand for yourself." - Christine Day, former CEO of Lululemon Athletica

"a must-read for women aspiring for a seat at the table" - Carolyn House Stewart, Esq., 28th international president of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated®

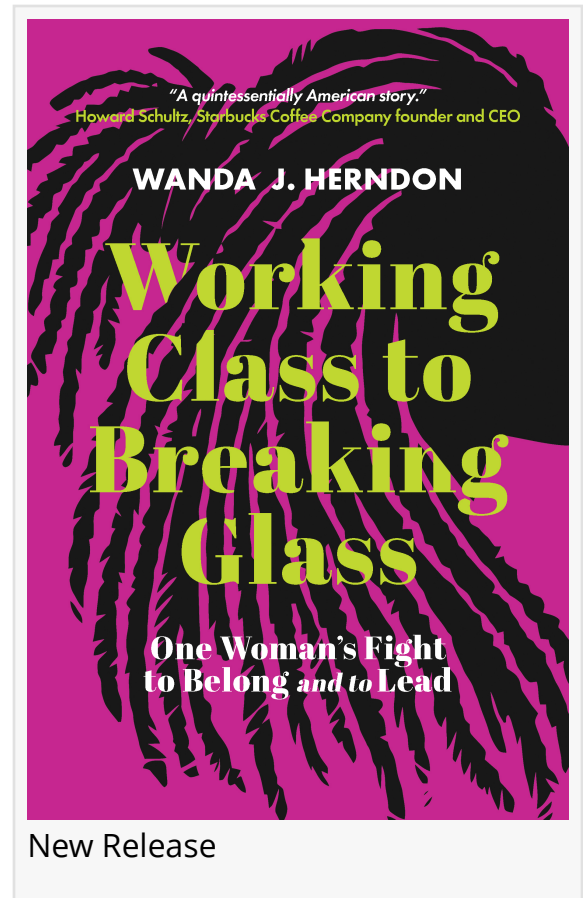
"a masterclass in resilience, vision, and ownership." - Dana Frank, best selling author of *Get Up and Get On It*

Beyond her corporate work, Herndon is the founder of W Communications, a consulting firm providing strategic communications counsel and strategy development. She is also a Broadway producer and investor in award-winning musical theater productions, including *Memphis: The Musical* and *Come From Away*, a published poet, and co-author of the anthology *Writing While Masked: Reflections on 2020 and Beyond*.

Working Class to Breaking Glass is both a personal memoir and a timely leadership story for readers navigating questions of ambition, identity, workplace belonging, and legacy. Herndon's message is clear: breaking barriers is not only about personal advancement; it is about using one's voice, experience, and influence to help others rise.

Working Class to Breaking Glass: One Woman's Fight to Belong and to Lead is available where books are sold.

About the Author



Wanda J. Herndon is an award-winning expert and trailblazer in public relations and corporate communications. She sharpened her communications skills at Dow Chemical and DuPont before becoming the first senior vice president of global communications for Starbucks Coffee Company, serving from 1995 to 2006 and returning to the role in 2008. During her initial tenure, she helped guide communications as Starbucks grew from 550 stores to more than 15,000 stores across five continents.

In 2006, Herndon founded W Communications, a consulting firm providing strategic communications counsel and strategy development and execution. She is also a Broadway producer and investor in award-winning musical theater productions, a published poet, and co-author of the anthology *Writing While Masked: Reflections on 2020 and Beyond*. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in Journalism, and was awarded an honorary doctor of Humanities degree from Michigan State University. She lives in Seattle.

Availability

Wanda is available for interviews and speaking engagements.

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