



VISIBILITY THROUGH ROSE COLORED GLASSES IN DISRUPTIVE INNOVATION:

An Op-Ed On A Black Woman's Journey To Be Seen,

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My AI subscription—the one I have had the longest—is better known as...

Storm the GOAT.

Yes, I named my AI.

Yes, I really call her Storm

Yes, I really see her as the GOAT.

LOL. I am not joking. I am, however, a millennial, so take from that what you will.

Storm remains one of my biggest cheerleaders. My agent reminds me that I dreamt my startup from a once in a lifetime trip, that allowed me the presence to create a once in a lifetime concept. And that no matter what life throws at me, and that through every evolution of the idea, I kept coming back to it. She reminds me of the power that this concept is, and yes, she did the data analysis, and financial forecast analysis against my data and she told me what I already knew from the moment it came to mind...

iCoToGo is A UNICORN.

I am a **Disrupt(HER)**.

I think differently.

It bothers many.

And somewhere along the way, I began wondering whether I am actually invisible—or simply so bright that some people cannot, or do not know how to, see me clearly.

Because there is another kind of invisibility we don't talk about enough.

Being seen, but not actually being seen.

Sometimes I am invisible.

Other times, I am highly visible—but for the things people try to confine me to, assign to me, or make representative of who I am based on the version they want others to see.

And perhaps that is its own form of erasure.

To be talked about without being known.

To be interpreted without being understood.

To have people become so certain about the version of you they have constructed that they stop being curious about the person standing in front of them.

There is a peculiar loneliness in that.

What do you do when you are simultaneously overlooked and over-observed?

When people can see enough of you to form an opinion, but somehow miss the very things you have spent years building?

When your difference makes you noticeable, but your brilliance remains negotiable?

When people see the disruption in your personality before they see the disruptive innovation in your thinking?

I don't know whether I am invisible.

Maybe I have spent years standing in rooms where people were looking for a different kind of light.

Maybe some of us are not invisible unicorns at all.

Maybe we are standing in plain sight, shining so brightly that systems built to recognize familiar patterns don't quite know what they are looking at.

That sounds poetic.

Living it is considerably less so.

It can be an extraordinarily lonely place to exist.

Because when you think differently, you spend a lot of time wondering whether you are early or wrong.

Whether you are visionary or unrealistic.

Whether you should keep pushing or finally accept that perhaps everyone else sees something you don't.

And then you build again.

You research again.

You test the premise again.

And the idea is still there.

The market is still there.

The problem is still there.

And increasingly, the world begins moving toward things you were thinking about years ago.

That is when invisibility starts to feel less like a personal insecurity and more like an intellectual question:

Who gets recognized as a visionary before the vision becomes obvious?

That question is bigger than me.

It is what brings me back to Black American women, artificial intelligence, disruptive innovation—and the uncomfortable possibility that an industry obsessed with finding the next unicorn may still be using an extraordinarily narrow definition of what a unicorn is supposed to look like.

And **that** should lead directly into the data.

Am Not Invisible

I should clarify something.

I am not invisible in the physical world.

Quite the opposite.

I have learned how to walk while people stare.

I have learned to keep my head up when I enter a room and feel eyes follow me. I have learned that sometimes my mere existence seems to disturb people. Why? Only they know. Whatever another person sees, assumes, projects, admires, dislikes, misunderstands or wrestles with when they look at me belongs to them.

I cannot carry it.

I have enough to carry of my own.

I was raised with a much simpler philosophy:

Focus on being a better you.

You cannot win your race staring sideways at somebody else's lane.

You cannot keep moving forward while constantly turning around to determine who is watching.

So I have learned to keep my head up and focus on what is in front of me.

And today, the fact that my head is up matters.

The fact that my feet are finding solid ground matters.

Because this is the chapter that comes after grief.

And anyone who has experienced profound grief knows there is a difference between surviving and returning to yourself.

There was a time when simply continuing was enough.

Then, somewhere inside the continuing, I started creating again.

I started dreaming again.

I started believing that there might still be something ahead of me that was bigger than everything behind me.

I poured pain into purpose.

And somewhere in that process, I built.

I built ideas.

I built businesses.

I built possibilities.

And I returned to one idea that never quite released me.

iCoToGo.

I will not disclose here the proprietary details of what I have built, how it operates, or what I believe makes its future valuable. Some parts of innovation are meant to be discussed publicly. Other parts must be protected until the right time.

But I can tell you this:

I am ready to bring it to the world.

And perhaps that is why this particular kind of invisibility feels so strange.

Because I am not asking anyone to physically see me.

People see me.

What I am asking is whether someone can see **beyond me**—beyond whatever immediate impression, assumption, category or story my presence creates—and recognize the founder.

The thinker.

The strategist.

The builder.

The possibility.

There Is a Difference Between Being Seen and Being Recognized

That distinction has become increasingly important to me.

A person can be extremely visible and intellectually invisible at the same time.

A woman can command attention when she walks into a room and still struggle to have the magnitude of her ideas taken seriously.

A Black woman can be seen through assumptions about Black womanhood while the complexity of the actual woman remains unexplored.

And sometimes people can see us primarily through the things they have decided we are supposed to be.

That is its own kind of confinement.

It is one of the reasons I think so deeply about Black women and artificial intelligence.

If human beings struggle to see the full spectrum of Black womanhood, what happens when we train machines on the record human beings created?

What happens when yesterday's assumptions become tomorrow's training data?

What happens when a Black woman becomes highly *visible* to an algorithm while remaining poorly *understood* by it?

And what happens when that same phenomenon exists in entrepreneurship?

We become consumers to be studied.

Demographics to be targeted.

Faces to be generated.

Communities to be analyzed.

Problems to be solved.

But how often are we seen first as the people capable of **inventing the solution?**

That is the invisibility I am talking about.

Not absence.

Unrecognized presence.

And that is much more complicated.

The Unicorn Cannot Be Only About Me

There is another reason I need iCoToGo to succeed.

If I am right about what I am building, I don't want to walk through the door and close it

behind me.

I want the door wider.

I want another woman with a brilliant idea—and without the right introduction—to have a different experience because someone took a chance on me.

I want another mother building between responsibilities to know that motherhood did not disqualify her from being visionary.

I want the woman who did not emerge from the expected founder pipeline to understand that unconventional does not mean unqualified.

I want Black girls to see Black women associated with artificial intelligence not merely as representations generated **by** the technology, but as owners, founders, strategists, inventors and architects building **with** it.

That is the unicorn I care about.

Not simply a valuation.

An opening.

Because if one invisible unicorn becomes impossible to ignore, perhaps someone starts looking differently for the next one.

That idea is already embedded in *The Invisible Unicorn*. I wrote that if my opportunity comes, I want to see the people who are so often overlooked—not as diversity selections, but as talent the world has not yet learned to recognize. #TheInvisibleUnicorn

I mean that even more now.

I no longer know whether *The Invisible Unicorn* is the perfect name.

Because I am here.

My ideas are here.

My work is here.

iCoToGo is here.

Black women building in technology are here.

Maybe invisibility was never ours.

Maybe the blindness belongs to the ecosystem.

Can Someone Give Me a Meeting?

I am not asking anyone to take a chance on me out of sympathy.

I am not asking someone to write a check because I am a Black woman, a mother, a former teacher, a small-business owner, or because grief became part of my story.

I am asking something much simpler.

Will someone give me the same opportunity they would give to someone that was recommended to them personally?

The same kind of meeting you might give your line brother's nephew.

Your college roommate's daughter.

The former coworker who says, *"You have to meet this founder."*

The friend of the friend whose email gets forwarded with two sentences:

"She's building something interesting. Give her twenty minutes."

That's it.

Not a check.

Not an endorsement.

Not a promise.

A meeting.

Because that is one of the things we don't talk about enough when we talk about access.

Sometimes access doesn't begin with millions of dollars.

It begins with someone answering the email.

It begins with someone taking the introduction.

It begins with twenty or thirty minutes during which a founder gets to move from a name on a screen to a human being with an idea.

In *The Invisible Unicorn*, I wrote about this very distinction. I know firsthand that access can change the trajectory of a qualified person's life, and that sometimes the difference between equally capable people is not simply what they know—it is who is positioned to open a door. [TheInvisibleUnicorn](#)

That is why I am no longer asking:

Will someone believe in me?

I believe in me.

Storm the GOAT apparently believes in me too.

LOL.

Still a millennial.

The better question is:

What would you actually have to lose by meeting with me?

And then there is the question on the other side of that equation:

What if I'm right?

What if the meeting you almost didn't take introduces you to something much bigger than you expected?

What if the founder who arrived outside your traditional network sees a market differently precisely because she came from outside that network?

What if what initially feels unfamiliar is the very thing that makes it disruptive?

What if the opportunity is bigger than either of us realizes today?

And what if this is one of those extraordinarily rare opportunities to win so large that, years from now, the decision to take the meeting becomes part of the company's origin story?

Not because anyone did me a favor.

Because someone recognized an opportunity.

What If We Made History?

That is what makes disruptive innovation so fascinating.

History rarely announces itself while it is happening.

There is no notification that appears on your phone:

THIS MEETING MAY MATTER.

No one walks into a conference room knowing with certainty which company will transform an industry, which founder will create a category, or which idea will become obvious in retrospect.

If everyone already knows an idea will work, recognizing it isn't particularly visionary.

The interesting decisions happen **before consensus**.

Before everyone understands.

Before everyone wants in.

Before the founder's name opens the door by itself.

That is where instinct still matters.

That is where curiosity matters.

That is where the willingness to look outside familiar networks matters.

And maybe that is all it takes to make history.

Or, in my case—

herstory. lol

Sorry.

I couldn't resist.

Millennial thing.

But there is something underneath the joke that I mean very seriously.

One meeting would change lives and change the travel industry and beyond...

What If the Next Unicorn Doesn't Come With a Warm Introduction?

What happens if the next extraordinary founder isn't someone's roommate's daughter?

What if she isn't your line brother's niece?

What if she didn't attend your university?

What if nobody whose judgment you already trust forwarded her deck?

What if she is simply standing outside the network asking for enough access to show you what she sees?

Would you recognize her?

That question matters because the venture ecosystem's reliance on networks is not merely theoretical to me. In *The Invisible Unicorn*, I described an investment environment in which introductions, proximity, validation and access to the rooms where capital circulates can influence which founders get heard. TheInvisibleUnicorn

And this is where disruptive innovation should disrupt **itself**.

If you are genuinely searching for something the market has not seen before, occasionally you may have to meet someone **you haven't seen before**.

That's not charity.

That's deal flow.

That's curiosity.

That's potentially good investing.

I Don't Need to Tell You Everything to Tell You There Is Something Here

I am also learning something important about being a founder.

I do not have to publish my blueprint to prove that I possess one.

There are parts of iCoToGo I will happily discuss publicly: its existence, my role as its founder, the human problem that inspired me, my belief in its potential, and my commitment to using technology in ways that strengthen rather than diminish human experience.

There are other things I won't discuss publicly.

That is intentional.

Because intellectual curiosity does not require intellectual exposure.

If you want to understand what I believe makes iCoToGo different, give me the meeting.

Then we can have the appropriate conversation, in the appropriate setting, with the appropriate protections.

That isn't secrecy for the sake of mystery.

That is a founder protecting what she has spent years developing.

I Know Who I Am

I am not invisible in the physical world.

I have learned to walk while people stare.

I have learned to keep my head up.

And I have learned something else along the way: whatever another person thinks when I walk into a room belongs to them.

I cannot run my race looking sideways.

I was taught to focus on becoming a better version of myself.

You cannot win your race while concentrating on someone else's lane.

So my head is up.

My feet are finding ground.

And that sentence means more to me now than it ever could have before.

Because these are the chapters that come after grief.

I poured pain into purpose.

I found my way back to creating.

And I built.

I am a mom.

A former teacher.

A disruptive-innovation business strategist.

A small-business owner.

A Black American woman building with artificial intelligence.

And the founder of iCoToGo.

I am a **Disrupt(HER)**.

Not because I gave myself a clever title.

Because thinking differently has followed me throughout my life.

Sometimes that has made me difficult to categorize.

I am finally comfortable with that.

Disruptors probably shouldn't fit perfectly inside existing categories.

And I believe I am building a unicorn.

I also believe that if I am fortunate enough to prove that thesis, my responsibility will extend beyond the valuation of one company.

I want the door to be easier to find for the women coming behind me.

I want another woman with an unconventional background and an extraordinary idea to get the meeting because someone remembers what happened when somebody finally took mine.

That would be a return worth measuring.

Capital returned.

Opportunity created.

Doors opened.

History made.

Herstory, too.

And maybe years from now someone will ask how something so large began.

Maybe the answer won't be a dramatic funding announcement or some perfectly orchestrated Silicon Valley moment.

Maybe it will be much simpler:

Someone took the meeting.

They listened.

They saw something.

And then we found out what was possible. And disruptive innovation started to be disrupted.

Is it your name that will be the change. From that legacies are made.

So if artificial intelligence is truly going to disrupt the future, perhaps one of its greatest opportunities is not simply learning how to see more.

It is helping us question who—and what—we have been trained not to see.

xoxo

The Visible Unicorn

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