

The Reality of Retail

by Angela Cornacchio



The Reality of Retail Panelists — (L-R): Moderator CEO CCHIO agency Angela Cornacchio, Master Tailor Alan Rouleau Couture, Keyla Williams CEO Bogosplit, Dina Akei Owner Vieira Luxe.

Recently Umbria Steakhouse in Boston's North End hosted a panel discussion featuring fashions finest brick and mortar business owners and a room filled with aspiring designers, field related professionals looking for guidance in the industry.

The event began with a networking hour for attendees to bring their business cards, meet fellow creatives, entrepreneurs, and trade professionals. Guests mingled amongst gourmet appetizers and antipasto curated by DePasquale Catering within the beautiful brick and holiday décor that the North End of Boston brings to the city.

The discussion began with Moderator and CEO of CCHIO agency also BelGioco Media Angela welcoming everyone to their seats and introducing the agency as a being at the forefront of creativity in fashion, hospitality, and entertainment. Their mission is to elevate brands through meticulously crafted media strategies and exceptional event management who forge meaningful connections and partnerships. Their focus is to guide designers in creating more than just a dress, but to build a business.



Board members of New Hampshire Fashion Week — Cory Clark, CEO of Clark and CO (right).

She then transitioned into the scheduled panelists that represent the success of retail business. Yolanda Cellucci: Owner of Yolanda's in Waltham for 30 years, created a one-stop shopping experience for women from bridal to all fashion products. With over four decades of experience, Yolanda has built multiple successful ventures and continues to personally shop for clients and at 91 years old hosting *Style and Glamour* TV show continues to inspire new generations through innovation and resilience. Alan Rouleau: is a bespoke master

tailor and style authority who has owned and operated retail locations from Newbury Street to Boston's North End. Known for precision, craftsmanship, and timeless menswear, and now accessories and custom jeans, Alan brought deep industry knowledge of both the art and business of tailoring.

Keyla Williams is a co-founder and marketplace owner of the vibrant boutique Bogosplit in Copley Place, a destination known for spotlighting emerging designers and bold fashion statements. As a curator of creativity and culture, Keyla bridges retail with storytelling and community. Closing out the list of panelists was: Dina Akei, is the founder and CEO of Vieira Luxe, an award-winning bridal and eveningwear boutique and the creative force behind Vieira Luxe Couture. She is also the founder of New Hampshire Fashion Week, making her one of New England's most influential fashion leaders.

The focus of the conversation was about honesty, insight, and real experience. The wins, the losses, the pivots, and the strategies that work in today's retail landscape. Retail is not just about selling products. It's about relationships, resilience, branding, and staying relevant



Creator Caribbean Fashion Week Althea Blackford, CEO Bogosplit Keyla Williams, CEO Events by Tailleen Linda Ramirez

in a world that changes constantly. After all the wealth of insight that came from the panel, the room was opened to questions for the expert panelists. CCHIO agency commented, "The interaction with the professionals and those starting out was absolutely heartwarming, the mission for the event." Continuing, "An achievement of the evening was when emerging patented adaptive clothing designer, amputee Sandi DeRuntz asked the panel very in-depth financial number crunching questions. It was the most beautiful moment to see industry specialists provide such specific value to an aspiring creator that came into the room looking for that information."

The evening ended with CCHIO agency giving gratitude to Michael Rose Photography, DePasquale Ventures, Umbria Steakhouse also DePasquale Catering for the wonderful hospitality and delectable dishes with a beautiful table spread of authentic Italian appetizers. From there the room opened to interactive networking, fashion community holiday celebrations and connections to make 2026 a successful year in the industry. For more information on the event or to get involved visit www.cchioagency.com.

(Photos by Wen Long Zhou)

• News Briefs (Continued from Page 1)

soldier wrote "Jingle Bells" to make fun of black people," and has its origins in bigoted minstrel shows that were popular then.

Tulsi Rips into a Top Dem in the House

Director of National intelligence Tulsi Gabbard was absolutely infuriated that longtime Democratic House member Bennie Thompson referred to the killing of a National Guardsman in Washington DC in an ambush as an "unfortunate accident" at a Capitol Hill hearing. Gabbard states

"(He) refuses to directly identify this attack on our own soil."

Happy 100th Birthday Dick Van Dyke

Apparently, longtime actor Dick Van Dyke is still quite supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!!! When asked what he most wants to be remembered for, he named being a part of *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and *Mary Poppins*.

End Quote

"A man of genius makes no mistakes. His errors are volitional and are the portals of discovery." — James Joyce

• L'Anno Bello (Continued from Page 4)

who are lonely or separated from their families during the holidays, including the sick, the poor and those in the military. After all, a family includes more than just blood relations, and the Christmas spirit of generosity and goodwill is too joyous to be contained in small numbers.

This Christmas, I will continue to honor the traditions that have become an intrinsic part of my family. Whether these traditions consist of enjoying *struffoli* or opening gifts at midnight, they link me to the world of my ancestors and their enduring values and spirituality. However, I also plan on paying attention to the true significance of all these beloved customs. For I have found that lurking behind Christmas traditions, no matter their culture of origin, is the universal need for love. Love for family, love for the wisdom of our forebears,

the love which inspires us to improve our local and global communities, the love of Jesus and the Holy Family, the love for the sun which grows ever bigger in the sky — all these myriad facets of love imbue Christmas with its indelible complexity. So on Christmas, as you partake in your own special traditions, take heed of the love which surrounds you, and which you can provide to others. You will find that this love can warm even the frostiest night, and that it will carry you through the wonders of the New Year and beyond.

Merry Christmas!
Buon Natale!

Ally Di Censo Symynkywicz is a high school history teacher. She appreciates any comments and suggestions about Italian holidays and folklore at adicenso89@gmail.com.

• Video Views (Continued from Page 10)

that befriends Ashura, until the Hell's Concubine twists him into a soul sucking creature, pushing the film's fantasy into darker territory.

BEYOND GRACELAND: LADYSMITH BLACK MAMBAZO (DVD) Pop Twist

Beyond Graceland: Ladysmith tells the story of South African musician, the late Joseph Shabalala and his band Ladysmith Black Mambazo who became worldwide sensations after powering Paul Simon's landmark and massively successful *Graceland* album. Bathed in Ladysmith's powerful music, the documentary covers the full breadth of the band's career, from the early years in rural South Africa to the height of global success and Shabalala's passing in 2020. This film takes viewers on their spiritual and emotional journey. Along with footage and insights into the *Graceland*

recording sessions, the film introduces us to many of the luminaries who worked with Shabalala, including Dolly Parton and Whoopi Goldberg, along with hearing from Simon, Oprah Winfrey and many others. The film also documents the complex history of Isicathamiya music the musical idiom whose boundaries he helped to expand — in the terms of political and musical forces that helped to form it. This social context opens a window into his relationship with Nelson Mandela who loved the music. Filmed over five years, *Beyond Graceland* gives us extraordinary access to Shabalala's creative process. Locating this music at the heart of the South African experience, as well as in its physical heartland, *Beyond Graceland* is an engaging tribute to one of the world's most distinctive musical forms and the beautifully resonant voice that made it famous.

• Nanna & Babbonono (Continued from Page 13)

was hooked up and the new engine was traveling on the train track, puffing smoke and whistling away loud enough to wake up my father. He wasn't upset, though, and sort of pushed me out of the way and took over as the chief engineer of my railroad even before he had his first sip of morning coffee.

When Uncle Gino and Aunt Ninna showed up, they and Dad took over the trains completely and I was relegated to the position of either constructing

something with last year's Erector Set or beginning the assembly of a new airplane model. Well, it's many years later and we will celebrate Christmas at my son Michael's place in New York. Before I close, I want to wish **Dean Saluti** and his wife **Margie Cahn** happy birthday, as both were born during Christmas week. And, to all of you that identify with the Italian traditions of **Nanna and Babbonono**, I wish a safe and happy **BOUN NATALE** from the Christoforo family for 2025.



Angela Cornacchio BelGioco Media, Liya of Liya Kay Productions, Sharon Kathryn, Kristie Raymond of HumanKind Casting, Stylist Sandra Melanson-Aussem, KB Vega Designer InspiHer

Happy Holidays
from your Friends at

NORTH END CARES