

Lifewire

Lauren Maillian: Elevating Black and Latinx Women Founders

Using tech and data to foster economic growth for women entrepreneurs

by [Michela Graham](#) Published June 1, 2021 02:26PM EDT

✔ fact checked by [Rich Scherr](#)

A serial entrepreneur at heart, Lauren Maillian's commitment to diversity and inclusion shines through all of her work.

Maillian is the CEO of [digitalundivided](#), an organization that offers community and resources to Black and Latinx women at all stages of the entrepreneurial journey. The nonprofit harnesses technology and data to support women of color and foster economic growth in underserved communities.



 Lauren Maillian.

Collette Bonaparte

Lauren
MAILLIAN

"Our purpose as an organization is to lead the global shift toward inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship for Black and Latinx women," Maillian told Lifewire in a phone interview. "We want to create a world where all women own their work."

Maillian was appointed CEO of digitalundivided in June 2020 after previously serving as chair of the organization's board of directors. The nonprofit uses technology to reach more underserved women than it ever has before, since all of its programming is offered virtually.

Digitalundivided hosts training programs, pre-accelerator prep courses, digital summits, a 12-month fellowship for Black and Latinx women, and more. The organization also publishes various data and research focused on women of color, including its ProjectDiane report, which details the state of Black and Latinx women founders and the startups they lead.

Quick Facts

Name: Lauren Maillian

Age: 36

From: Upper East Side of New York City

Favorite Game to Play: "I don't normally game, but my kids do and Fortnite is the game we play."

Key quote or motto she lives by: "Is it worth it, even if I fail?"

A Serial Entrepreneur at Heart

Maillian grew up as an only child and, until the sixth grade, was the only person of color in the classroom. That experience of feeling like "the other" shaped her as an adult, she said.

Maillian originally thought that she was going to embark on a career in fashion, but became a serial entrepreneur instead. She co-founded Sugarleaf Vineyards when she was 19. She eventually sold that company at age 26, and used the capital to



Lauren
MAILLIAN

”I want the conversation around supporting women of color as entrepreneurs and founders to become the mainstream conversation.”

”I was mesmerized by what was happening in technology and the opportunity to be an investor,” Maillian said. ”I was intrigued by the ability to fail fast and pivot and see how ideas are validated enough to become businesses.”

Aligning with this work, Maillian in 2011 launched Gen Y Capital Partners, an accelerator and venture capital firm that invests in mobile and internet companies. She also leads LMB Group, a strategic marketing and brand advisory, which she founded in 2011.

”I’ve always been a marketer, brand strategist, and storyteller,” Maillian said. ”I’m intrigued by a lot and I’m certainly intrigued by this moment that we are in which encompasses opportunity, digital acceleration, and everything in between.”

Maillian’s work doesn’t stop there. She currently serves as an advisor for Pipeline Angels and she authored *The Path Redefined: Getting to the Top On Your Own Terms*, which is a memoir detailing how she moved up the ranks in various industries.

”I believe in teams and systems, whether that’s at home or at work,” Maillian said about juggling her various roles. ”It takes a village and I try to be as organized and as streamlined in my work as possible.”



Lauren Maillian.

Collette Bonaparte

Lauren
MAILLIAN


Removing Barriers for Women Entrepreneurs

With the switch to virtual programming, Maillian said digitalundivided has been able to knock down many of the barriers to reaching women geographically. The nonprofit's 45-person team also works fully remote, and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Maillian plans to continue leading digitalundivided by "meeting the times," she says, and staying digital is doing just that.

"My approach has been very different because I think what it looks like now to help women of color win in innovation and entrepreneurship is so different from pre-pandemic and it's absolutely different from 10 years ago when I was coming into the tech scene," Maillian said. "We're really leaning into all facets of technology to be able to work remotely and stand up a digital community."

Much like the women she's working to support, Maillian said she's come across obstacles while growing her various ventures. One of her biggest challenges, she said, was finding ways to adequately communicate why she was feeling a certain way. Maillian said she works from gut intuition and has made real business decisions that way.

"I think I've always had to push past those challenges, but I don't think I ever saw them as challenges," Maillian said. "I think that's why the men in the industry, especially the non-minorities, respect me. I'm very much about my business in all aspects, always."

 **"We want to create a world where all women own their work."**

Maillian said she's focused on continuing the work of removing barriers for women entrepreneurs and making sure minority women are being prioritized in funding conversations.

"I'm really focused on changing the mainstream's perception of women of color," she said. "Our work is important, but it's not enough. I want the conversation around supporting women of color as entrepreneurs and founders to become the mainstream conversation."


LAILLIAN