

# PRIDE MAGAZINE ONLINE



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## **By Eren Simpson**

India Rochelle Rice is the owner of Rochelle Salon Suites, located at The Shoppes at University Place, and hers is the only black, female-owned business in the entire shopping center.

Not only that, but her suites offer others a chance to fulfill their entrepreneurial dreams by allowing them to own their own business without the traditional overhead costs. All a stylist or barber has to do is pay rent for the space and the look/feel/services provided for each suite is entirely up to the individual owner.

Rice has a bachelors in communication and a masters in business, and spent 20 years working in finance and later the cosmetology industry. But after moving from New York to Charlotte eight years ago with her husband (they now have two sons), Rice had a hard time finding work after taking a year off to care for her family. When a cousin in Maryland introduced her to the idea of salon suites, she was hooked.

"I loved the business concept of helping others," she said. "So I came back to Charlotte and decided I was going to do it. I put a business plan together, looked for a location and opened Rochelle Salon Suites."

Rice grew her business from the ground up, handing out flyers to anyone she thought had nice hair, and eventually her suites were filled. That was five years ago, and today all but one of her 11 suites is full.

And that suite would still be full, but for Dee Bryant, who was with Rice from day one vacated the space in July 2016.

"I stayed for four years, and the only reason I left was because I now live in Texas," Bryant said.

Prior to renting a suite from Rice, Bryant worked for a traditional, commission-based salon.

"I felt I should be able to pay myself and work for myself, and being at Rochelle enabled me to do that," Bryant said.

Bryant said it allowed her to be a business owner, taught her a lot about management, ownership and "it enabled me to provide my clients with the customer service I believe they should get. Because sometimes in a traditional salon, you're unable to do things your way."

Bryant said it also gave her a chance to get out of her comfort zone by participating in Rice's annual hair show.

Rice started The Hair Games in 2012, and each year the event has grown to give stylists and barbers a chance to show off their skills. This year's event is scheduled for May 21 at the Charlotte Convention Center.

Rice said the hair show was a natural fit with the salon suites because it allowed her to help others in the cosmetology community to promote and market themselves.

"I'm passionate about helping build small businesses," she said.

Outside of business hours, Rice also teaches Zumba class and sits on the board of the Empire Beauty School's Pineville-Matthews campus.

She's busy, but Rice said she's finally figured out how to balance life as a working mom.

"It is a balance. I am constantly struggling and challenged to make sure I give my all to the company but I don't neglect my family. It is a balancing act," she said.

To learn more about Rochelle Salon Suites or The Hair Games, visit [www.rochellesalonsuites.com](http://www.rochellesalonsuites.com) and [www.thehairgames.com](http://www.thehairgames.com).



INDIA RICE