

Curiosity And Intentionality: Staying In Service To Her Audience

An Interview with Tina Perry, President, OWN TV Network and OTT Streaming



Tina Perry attending Essence Black Women in Hollywood

EDITORS' NOTE Named President of OWN: Oprah Winfrey Network in 2019, Tina Perry oversees all operations and creative areas of the network, reporting to OWN Chairman and CEO Oprah Winfrey and Warner Bros. Television Group and US Networks Chairman and CEO Channing Dungey. Her leadership is a driving force behind the network's ongoing evolution to become the leading destination for Black audiences. She oversees all operational and creative areas of OWN, including all OTT properties (OWN on HBO Max, d+, WatchOWN, podcasts, YouTube and Oprah.com), social good campaigns (OWN Your Vote and OWN Your Health), and all digital creator short-form programming. Perry was instrumental in OWN's successful launch into scripted programming with popular drama series *Queen Sugar*,

Cherish the Day, *Greenleaf*, *The Haves and Have Nots*, the Peabody Award-winning *David Makes Man*, and annual holiday movies.

She oversees the continuing success of the network's line-up of unscripted bits that includes *Love & Marriage: Huntsville*, *Belle Collective: Birmingham* and *Belle Collective: Jackson*, *Family or Fiancé*, *Put a Ring on It* and *Put a Ring on It: Cheathab*, *First Time Buyers Club* and *Ready to Love*. She has also shepherded the creation of OWN Spotlight, which features programming that tackles meaningful topics affecting Black women today. Perry serves on the OWN Board of Directors, The Paley Center for Media's Los Angeles Board of Governors, and is Director and the Chair of the Television Academy Foundation's Board of Directors.

Perry is the recipient of multiple awards, including: the 2026 Cablefax 100; 2025 Cablefax 100; 2025 Synopsis Top Women in Media; 2025 Cablefax Most Powerful Women; 2025 African American Film Critics Visionary Award; 2024 Hirshhorn National Arts and 2024 Synopsis Top Women in Media awards; 2023 Cablefax 100; 2023 Synopsis Top Women in Media; and 2023 Cablefax Most Powerful Women.

Will you discuss your career journey and where you developed your passion for media and entertainment?

I did not take a traditional path into entertainment. I grew up in Oklahoma City and developed a love of television and film as a teenager, though I had no idea how that passion could materialize into a career. From my living room in Oklahoma, Hollywood felt a lifetime away and almost unattainable.

I attended Stanford, where I studied political science, and then Oxford, where I earned a degree in comparative social policy. But my fascination with television and film never left me. Before leaving for Oxford, I put together a box of books about the entertainment business and shipped it ahead of me. I spent hours studying those books simply because I wanted to understand how the industry worked. I didn't know what I would do with that knowledge. I was just genuinely curious.

By the time I left Oxford, I had earned an MSc and developed a much deeper understanding of the entertainment business. I carried that knowledge with me to Harvard Law School, where my interest in



Tina Perry at the ColorComm Conference



Oprah Winfrey and Tina Perry at the David Makes Man premiere

entertainment remained tucked away in my back pocket.

After Harvard, I joined Cravath, Swaine & Moore in New York as a corporate lawyer. A close friend who worked in entertainment eventually encouraged me to consider business and legal affairs as a way into the industry. It meant taking a significant pay cut, but I saw it as my opportunity to finally pursue the field that had fascinated me for years.

I joined OWN in 2009, two years before the network launched, as Vice President of Business and Legal Affairs. Over the next decade, I moved from Senior Vice President to Executive Vice President, joined the board, and in January 2019 was named President, overseeing both the business and creative sides of the network.

Looking back, my journey was nonlinear, but it was intentional. Those books at Oxford helped me realize I was as passionate about the creative side of entertainment as I was about the business. Cravath gave me a strong foundation in corporate finance.

Business and legal affairs taught me the art of dealmaking and brought me closer to the creative process. And being at OWN since its inception has allowed me to understand and work closely with every part of the organization.

What I discovered I wanted to do at Oxford is exactly what I am doing today.

How do you define OWN's mission?

Our mission at OWN is driven by whom we serve and fulfilled through stories that allow our audience to see herself clearly, honestly, and authentically.

Early in my tenure as President of OWN, Oprah said to me, "You can never forget; we are in service to our audience." That has been my North Star ever since. Our mission is to be the premier destination for authentic programming and the entertaining exploration of Black relationships, where our audience can see herself reflected and represented.

What have been the keys to OWN's leadership in the industry?

Our leadership begins with a deep understanding of our audience and a commitment to serving her intentionally. We made a deliberate decision not to be everything to everyone. Instead, we chose to deeply understand Black women, their experiences, aspirations, culture, desires, and how they want to see themselves represented. That understanding drives our programming strategy and the decisions we make.

Authenticity is essential. We tell stories that reflect our audience truthfully and culturally while entertaining, inspiring, and making her feel seen. We pair that commitment with premium content and some of the industry's most talented creators.

Our leadership comes from that combination of focus, authenticity, intentionality, and adaptability. We know our audience, respect her intelligence, and consistently deliver content that feels relevant, meaningful, and



Tina Perry, recipient of the 2025 African American Film Critics Association Visionary Award



Tina Perry and Morris Chestnut at the ADCOLOR Conference

culturally resonant. At the same time, both our audience and the media landscape continue to evolve, and we must evolve with them.

How do you focus your efforts leading OWN?

OWN is a brand built for a very specific audience – Black women ages 25 to 54.

Today, that audience engages with us across linear and streaming television, social media, YouTube, the Watch OWN app, our website, social good campaigns, podcasts, and in-person experiences.

A significant part of my focus is ensuring we continue to amplify the brand and connect

with our audience wherever she chooses to engage. As consumption habits evolve, we are constantly identifying new opportunities to expand our reach in innovative ways.

Most recently, we launched two short-form creator projects that have allowed us to connect with younger audiences in new ways. Meeting our audience where she is while staying true to who we are remains one of my highest priorities.

What has made the relationship between Oprah Winfrey and you work so well?

Oprah is one of the most extraordinary business leaders and creative executives in the industry. She has remarkable instincts, exceptional creative acumen, and a clear understanding of who she is and what she wants the brand to represent. She provides clear direction, which I value tremendously, while remaining remarkably open to experimentation and new ideas. We are able to have candid conversations about both the brand and the business, and she welcomes that dialogue.

We share a belief in being intentional and clear about what we're trying to accomplish while remaining willing to listen, evolve, and adjust along the way. That combination of clarity, trust, candor, and openness has been the foundation of a highly effective partnership.

How do you approach your leadership style?

My leadership style is simple. I communicate openly, listen carefully, and encourage creativity and collaboration. I believe deeply in a democratic approach to leadership. I want vigorous debate and every voice in the room to be heard because the best ideas rarely come from a single person.

But leadership is not only about strategy. I lead with empathy. I care deeply about my team, not only about what they accomplish, but also about their goals, growth, and well-being. My responsibility is not just to build an impactful brand. It is to help the people building that brand thrive, both professionally and personally.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?

Stay curious and never stop learning. Early in my career, while working in business affairs in Los Angeles, I regularly took evening courses through UCLA Extension in creative and production-related subjects. I knew I eventually wanted a career that would allow me to work closely with creators and collaborate on storytelling, so I followed that curiosity even though I didn't know exactly where it would lead.

That instinct is even more important today. The world is changing rapidly, and new technologies are reshaping our careers, industries, and ways of working. Remain curious, keep learning, and be willing to explore paths that do not yet have a clearly defined destination.

Curiosity can open doors you never imagined and lead you exactly where you're meant to be. ●