



Tiffany Haddish

Makes You Laugh

BUT ALSO WORKS TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF KIDS IN FOSTER CARE

ACTOR, STAND-UP, AUTHOR AND PHILANTHROPIST RECEIVES THE PRESS CLUB’S VISIONARY AWARD FOR HUMANITARIAN WORK

BY SARAH KROUSE

Tiffany Haddish understands how stabilizing seemingly small items can be: Shoes. Toiletries. A suitcase.

The actor and stand-up comedian, who spent part of her childhood in foster care and a portion of her young adult life living in her car, devotes much of her charitable time and money to providing resources and normalcy to children who are or have been in foster homes.

“Every child who is removed from their parents deserves to have a suitcase, a safe place to lay their head, and a platform to follow their dreams,” Haddish has said.

The Los Angeles native, known for roles in the 2017 film *Girl’s Trip*, Disney’s *Haunted Mansion*, and “The Afterparty” on Apple TV+, started the She Ready Foundation in 2019. The nonprofit offers educational and emotional support to kids in foster care.

Haddish is being honored tonight with the Los Angeles Press Club’s Visionary Award for Humanitarian Work. It was created in 2012 to honor individuals in the entertainment industry who use their status to enact social change.

She Ready’s Life Leadership Academy helps young adults with financial literacy, job training and other skills that promote self esteem, money management, conflict resolution, critical thinking and career-building. The organization’s short film internship program offers youth who are currently or have been in foster care an opportunity to learn about the filmmaking process, from script development to casting and editing.

The foundation hosts an annual adult prom to raise money for its programs. It was among 60

L.A.-area nonprofits that received a total of \$3 million in grants in October from a coalition of organizations including the Goldhirsh Foundation and the Annenberg Foundation.

Haddish, 44, knows how untethered kids in foster care can feel. Her father left when she was young and her mother later suffered serious head injuries in a car accident that left her unable to care for the family. Haddish and her four younger half-siblings were placed in foster care. They remained separated until her grandmother took them in.

Haddish recalls having to move from one foster home to another with little notice, her belongings packed in garbage bags. She remembers the dignity of eventually being given a suitcase, how it helped her feel more like a traveler on a journey than a child shuttled between homes.



She pays that kindness forward in her charitable work. Days after visiting Los Angeles County’s Camp Scott probation facility in 2019, she sent dozens of roller suitcases with toiletries and personal items. A luggage and libraries initiative by She Ready has given away more than 5,000 suitcases.

She Ready has also provided books to libraries, as well as shoes, blankets and toys to children in foster care. It has partnered with other nonprofits focused on addressing the shortage of safe housing for foster kids.

As Haddish grew up, comedy became a form of release. She participated in the Laugh Factory Comedy Camp as a teenager, telling *People Magazine* that a social worker had given her two options: the camp or psychiatric therapy. Today, she serves meals at the Laugh Factory’s free Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

Haddish has described the stage as a place where she can connect with her feelings and get an adrenaline rush. She won a best comedy album Grammy award in 2021 for her special *Tiffany Haddish: Black Mitzvah*.



Left: Tiffany chats with a girl at a She Ready and Travelpro event.

Her acting career has spanned the big screen, with comedic roles in films like *Night School* with Kevin Hart, *The Secret Life of Pets 2* and this year’s *Bad Boys: Ride or Die*. Her TV credits include sitcom “The Carmichael Show,” animated series “Tuca & Bertie” and the unscripted show “Kids Say the Darndest Things.”

She has leveraged some jobs to advance

Above: Getting her start at the Laugh Factory Comedy Camp as a teen, Tiffany counts Jamie Masada, owner, a friend.



Clockwise from top: Tiffany shown with a stack of her She Ready luggage; on stage at the Laugh Factory; celebrating with SoLa scholars; surrounded by friends among the foster care youth.

her charitable work, participating in a round of “Celebrity Family Feud” this year with the *Haunted Mansion* cast. They played for the chance to win money for the She Ready Foundation.

Haddish, who journals, meditates and stretches as acts of self care, has shared life lessons—some hard fought—in books for kids and adults. She published *Layla the Last Black Unicorn* in 2022; it’s the story of a unicorn who wants to fit in at school, but realizes she needs to embrace what makes her unique.

Her new book, *I Curse You With Joy*, offers a candid retelling of the ups and downs of her personal and professional life. From “making dumb decisions that left me broke, hungry and living in my car” to a time when she was so intoxicated on stage that she bombed, Haddish frames her past as something that has helped her grow, rather than limiting her.

The comedian said in the book that she once hid parts of her life because she didn’t want to be pitied but has had a change of heart. “I real-

ized if I hide the mistakes I’ve made, I’m going to give people the wrong idea,” she writes. “There’s going to be some little girl out there thinking that if she messes up, that’s it. Game over. No chance of having a good life.”

Haddish recently told the *Los Angeles Times* that she continues to work on herself, setting more boundaries. She has given up alcohol, exercises more often and gets more sleep.

She has invested in real estate in South L.A. that she rents out to organizations that provide housing to people in foster care. Additionally, she is working to open a grocery store that she hopes will expand local access to healthy food.

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