

Interview Questions for Dina Dove author of *The Baglady's Guide to Elegant Living*

I have to say that the title of your book really surprised me. *The Baglady's Guide to Elegant Living*? Normally "Baglady and Elegant" wouldn't even be used in the same sentence. Tell me a little bit more.

Well, *The Baglady's Guide to Elegant Living* is really geared to helping people love the life they have right now. So, no matter what your circumstances are, you can be happy. If a Baglady can have a happy life....then that would imply that anyone could. Right from the beginning of the story you find out that Rose is no ordinary Baglady. She has quite a unique way of approaching life.

For the benefit of our readers/listeners, can you please tell us a little bit about your motivation for writing *The Baglady's Guide*?

Many years ago, I found myself in a downward cycle much like Angela, my main character, finds herself in. Everything seemed to be wrong in my life. I'd been doing exactly what I grew up believing was right....and yet I wasn't really happy. I was so focused on what everyone else thought I should do that I hadn't ever consciously realized it.

When my life fell apart, I finally took a good look inside and got in touch with who I really wanted to be. And it was like a miracle. Where I thought my life was ruined, I finally found true contentment. And once I did that, my external circumstances were no longer an issue. I came back stronger than ever, but this time I'm authentically me.

The format you use for this book is quite unique for a personal growth/self-help/motivational book, can you tell us a little about that and why you decided to write in this format?

You know, there are thousands of self help books on the market. And many are very good. But I think it takes a great story to really touch us deeply. I wanted the baglady's philosophy of life to move past the reader's intellect and touch their hearts. I believe that's where real life changes happen; in the heart.

We've heard so much in the news lately about American's ranking low in overall satisfaction. It sounds like you are helping your audience create more happiness in their lives. What makes you so passionate about that?

I think we in our society are so busy running, making a living, managing a home and family, trying to be super woman in every aspect of our lives. That constant running leaves no time for nourishing our souls and staying in touch with what is truly important in our lives. We find ourselves just going thru the motions of life instead of experiencing the fullness of it.

In my case, I had to totally burn out before finding the answer. But it doesn't have to be like that. I feel passionate about helping people get a new perspective long before they hit rock bottom.

Who would you describe as being your target audience?

Before offering this story to a publisher, we did a market test with 100 women of varying ages. What I found was that by the time a woman reaches the age of 35-40 they have almost universally experienced some of the same feelings that are getting Angela down. Try as we might, we're less than completely thrilled with the way our life has turned out. We've tried so hard to meet everyone else's needs. We've done all the things we thought we were supposed to do, but still feel something is missing.

So, my target audience is women over 35. However, it's funny, when I have heard from the men who read it, their reactions were very positive as well.

What kind of feedback have you gotten from readers so far? Any surprising feedback?

The reaction from the readers has been so heart warming. I always hoped that Rose, the little baglady, would touch people at their core, but the response to her has been so much greater than I ever could have imagined. Women have told me time and time again that she changed their lives. Here's a sample of some reader comments:

I was pulled into the story in every way. It caught me from the first page.
Cheri Conrad, Nurse

I felt like I was the one experiencing it.
Dixie Winne, Elementary school teacher

It made me want to go get a notebook and do the things with her (Angela). It was like the Baglady was talking to me!
Rhonda Rhoades, Worship coordinator

Would you say that some of the lessons Angela your main character learns in this book are applicable to the readers/listeners?

Oh yes. Rose, the baglady, makes the journey of self awareness so fun and lighthearted for Angela. Women have told me that they put themselves in Angela's shoes and felt like the Baglady was talking to them. And Rose is so adorable and accepting that she is a joy to follow. I have to admit, I fell for her just as hard as the other readers did.

What do you hope that readers/listeners take away from your story?

That they will re-discover themselves. Once they realize that everything needed to live a life of joy is within their grasp, the rest of their life will come from that new place.

There is a story I just love.

In it, a Rabbi Lieberman is sharing the message of a dream he had. In the dream he dies and stands before the judgment seat of God. As he waits for God to speak, he fears that the Lord will ask him, "Why weren't you a Moses or a David or a Solomon." But God surprises him. He simply asks, "Why weren't you Rabbi Lieberman?"

Our real purpose is to be ourselves, but often we feel so inadequate. We forget that what God really wants is for us to be ourselves.

I understand that the Baglady imparts lots of wisdom to Angela throughout the story. If you had to pick just one of these as crucial for people living an "Elegant" life, what would you say that is?

I'd like my readers to really make it a habit to see the blessings in their lives and all around them. A life of true elegance is so much a result of inner beauty, and inner beauty comes from a richness of spirit, from a gratitude for what you do have instead of a longing for what you don't. Rose teaches us to truly notice the positive all around us. After all, the flowers bloom, birds sing. There is always good to be seen if we will but look for it.

So, what is next for you?

Now I'm coaching individuals and leading groups on the path to a more joyful way of living. Giving them a taste of a "baglady state of mind."

Are you planning any other writing projects in the near future?

Oh yes, my publisher has already purchased the sequel to this book and Rose has so much more to share. After all, in this first story, she has just picked us up, dusted us off, and gotten us on our feet again. She's helped us find ourselves. Now.... taking our true self into the rest of our lives is the next great adventure.