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America's Got Talent firing By Variety Staff | 1 week ago

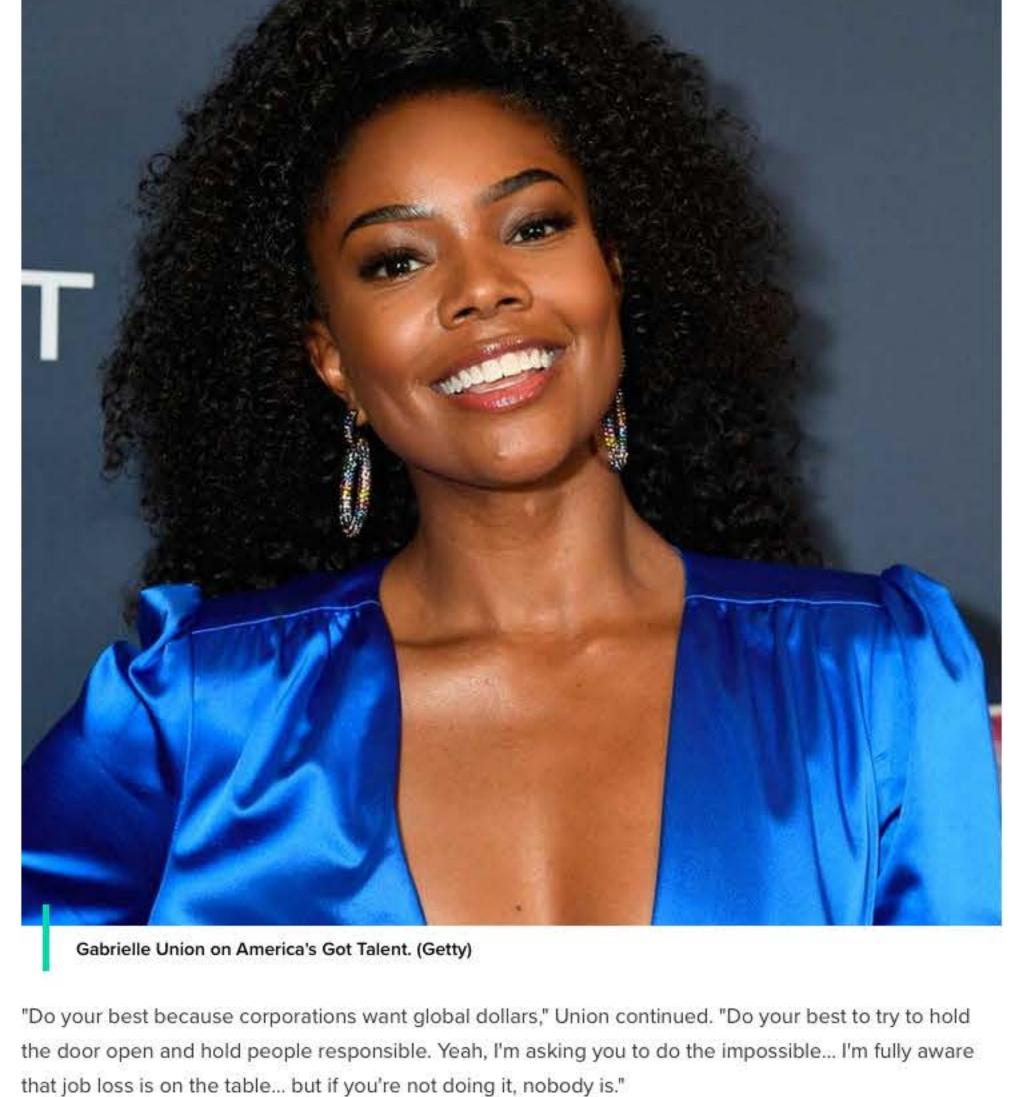
Gabrielle Union delivers powerful message after

Speaking on a female empowerment and inclusivity panel at the launch of her holiday collection with

New York & Company, Gabrielle Union alluded to her firing from America's Got Talent. While she did not specifically call out the NBC series, Union's comments marked the first time since her departure from the show that she addressed workplace inequalities in a public forum.

Giving advice on being a leader in the workplace, Union said, "Don't be the happy negro that does the

bidding of the status quo because you're afraid. Don't allow them to call you angry when someone else is called passionate. It's terrifying. There's a solid chance you'll lose your job... I speak from experience," she quipped, though never mentioning America's Got Talent.



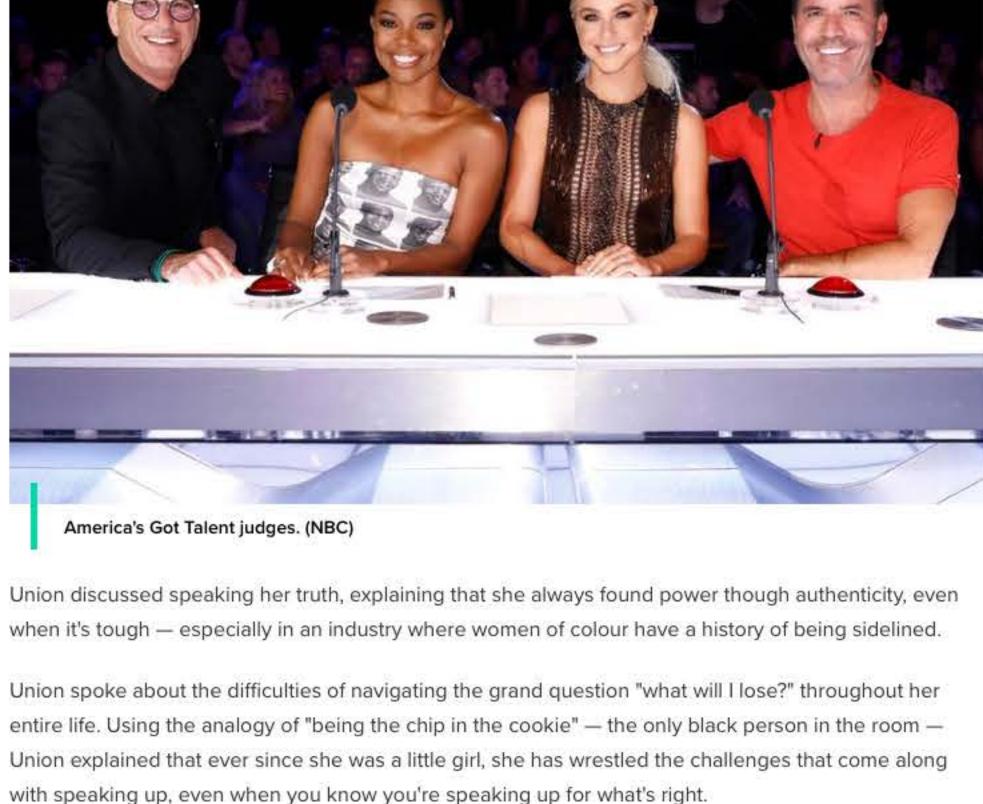
the Women Leading the Charge, held at Laduree in SoHo, Manhattan, Union explained her thought-

enjoy my food if everyone else is starving."

process when she is making personal career decisions: "How many checks do I need? This financial freedom, they're shackles, masquerading as zeros in my bank account."

"There are a lot of people who are only interested in filling their own plate," Union continued. "I can't

Speaking to the media crowd, alongside five other women on a panel titled, the Power of Inclusivity and

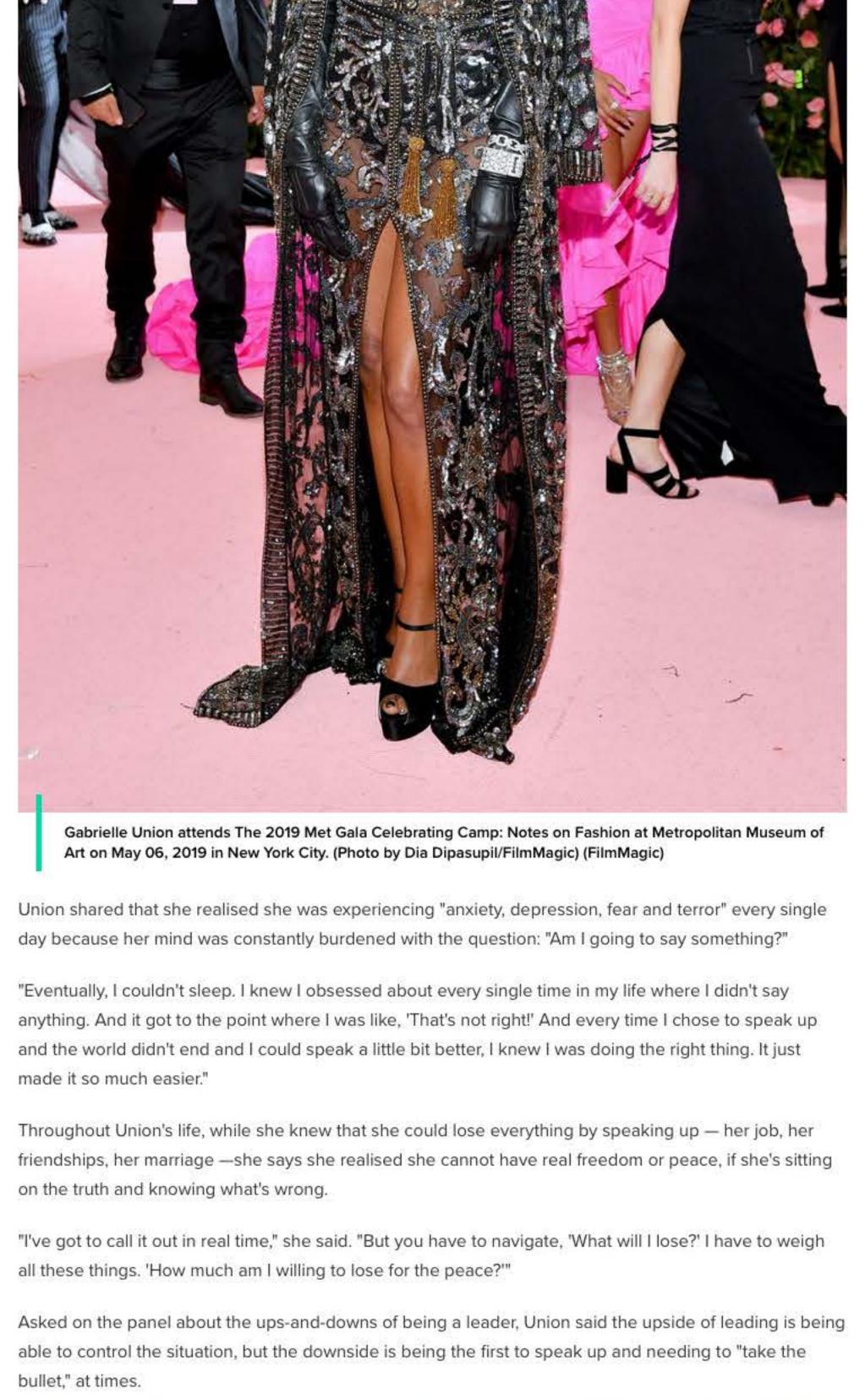


"Being the chip in the cookie, you are always in this situation where you are seeing things, hearing

other-ed? Are you going to say something? You know it's wrong. Everyone knows it's wrong."

things... and you're presented with a choice: what kind of chip am I going to be?" she explained. "Are you

going to assimilate and allow all of this to go on? Or are you going to say something and immediately be



"When you're a follower, often you're not being led by the right person," Union elaborated. "This is not what paradise or salvation looks like to me. You're using me to prop up fraudulent systems... I want no part of that, so I'd rather lead, even if I don't know where the hell I'm going... As long as I have air in my lungs, I will always try to cover us all and I will certainly try to centre the needs of the most marginalised."

Union has not formally addressed her exit or her grievances with "America's Got Talent," as exclusively

Kodi Lee with America's Got Talent, judges Gabrielle Union and Julianne Hough. (Instagram)

many tears, so much gratitude. Just when you feel lost, adrift, alone ... you got me up off the ground.

Humbled and thankful, forever."

NBCUniversal has engaged a third party to investigate accounts of racial insensitivity, labor code violations like Simon Cowell's reported insistence on indoor smoking, as well as a hostile climate for

support from celebrities and advocacy groups, Union expressed gratitude on social media, tweeting: "So

reported by Variety and later Vulture. In late November, following Variety's first report and a flood of

Union has retained litigator Bryan Freedman to advise her thought the process. Cowell has retained veteran Hollywood lawyer Larry Stein.

O O O

AGT's women judges.