**The Preacher and the Podcast**

***Transcript***

**COLEMAN:** Um mic checks … One, two, one, two, ok … We got four minutes before we start team. Make sure please the phones are muted. Especially you Stan, especially you Stan!

**THOMAS COPELAND:** Saundrea Coleman says she isn’t in charge. But as showtime draws near, everyone can see she’s the boss.

**COLEMAN:** Talk to me! I’m listening…

**TC:** It wasn’t always this way. Ever since she was a child, Saundrea struggled to find her voice.

**COLEMAN:** I guess I always wanted to be a preacher. I was about 5 years old and I told my parents to come into the living room at 3pm or something like that cause I was going to preach. I got my mother’s gown that looked like a preacher’s robe, I had the Bible, but nobody showed up.

**TC:** At the age of 56, Saundrea’s audience finally showed up. She was ordained a minister, but she hasn’t been assigned a church to lead. Instead, she’s found her own.

**MUSIC:** *One NYCHA Theme*

**TC:** She’s the host of the One NYCHA podcast, a show which tells the stories of residents of New York City’s Housing Authority. And nearly a thousand of them tune in to hear her voice every week.

**COLEMAN:** Alright alright alright. Welcome to the One NYCHA podcast y’all. One NYCHA, one people. One NYCHA, one people. One NYCHA one people. Check in where you’re from, what borough, what city, what state, what country! We worldwide, we worldwide! One NYCHA, one people. Check in what NYCHA development you from, we want to hear from you all.

**MUSIC:** *Onomatopoeia Theme*

**TC:** I’m Thomas Copeland and this is Onomatopoeia, a podcast about the people and places of New York City. In this episode, The Preacher and the Podcast

**TC:** Hi Saundrea, how's things?

**TC:** I meet Saundrea outside her home at NYCHA’s Isaacs Houses on the Upper East Side.

**COLEMAN:** It’s good to see you! Greetings, greetings, greetings and thank you for coming out. Let’s go!

**TC:** Where are we going? Where are we going?

**COLEMAN:** We’re going to our studio in Queens

**TC:** Great, you lead the way, what’s the journey like?

**COLEMAN:** Q train and then the R hopefully is working good. Hopefully!

**TC:** This is a journey Saundrea makes nearly every week. But today, we’re out of luck

**COLEMAN:** Oh god…

**SUBWAY:** We are being held in the station momentarily. We should be moving shortly. Thank you for your patience

**COLEMAN:** It’s like always a learning curve on the MTA!

**TC:** As Saundrea plots a new route, I want to know why she puts up with this hassle.

**TC:** So, you’re not paid, and you have to go through this every Sunday.

**COLEMAN:** Exactly! Exactly yeah yeah

**TC:** Why bother?

**COLEMAN:** It’s just me, I mean the show is really good. We have over one thousand followers on our Facebook page. People find it very informative.

**TC:** And she’s bagged some high-profile guests. Here’s a show from 2021

**COLEMAN:** So we are humbled and excited to have Chuck Schumer, the United States senator with us. The majority leader! A phenomenal man.

**TC:** Saundrea might now be a minister, but there’s no black robes or dog collars in sight. Instead, her hair is dyed pink, blue and green, she rocks neon nails and a handbag and scarf from Louis Vuitton.

**COLEMAN:** Is this our stop?

**TC:** This is Jackson Heights. So we get off here?

**COLEMAN:** Yeah

**TC:** As we arrive at the studio, I notice Saundrea struggle up and down the stairs.

**COLEMAN:** Climbing and descending is uncomfortable, yeah the knees.

**TC:** And is that related to the fall?

**COLEMAN:** Yes. I’m legally disabled. I might not look it to people but I’m disabled.

**TC:** Saundrea spent most of her career working in payroll for the NYPD. In her late 40s, a workplace accident changed her life. She slipped and fell in a parking garage. It doesn't sound like much, but by the time she made it back to her desk, Saundrea’s neck had started to click. Saundrea is now on her 9th surgery. She’s had multiple operations on her knees, spine, shoulder, wrists, and this week, to fix a trigger thumb. The pain she felt that day, she still feels today, and every day.

**COLEMAN:** I don’t share my pain but I’m in pain 24/7. Literally like, I wake up not from the alarm clock. Pain wakes me up. Literally

**MORSE:** You know, you in pain but you travel an hour and a half or whatever it may take to get to this studio and you would never know.

**TC:** Stan Morse is Saundrea’s co-host. They met at a NYCHA protest in 2018. She was a resident, and he was an activist. Saundrea was now medically retired from the NYPD, studying to become a minister and searching for a new way to serve. So they came up with an idea. A brand new podcast all about public housing - home to 1 in 16 New Yorkers and many of the city’s most vulnerable residents.

**MORSE:** You probably know she’s just fierce. Just what I would say, you’ve probably gotten that sense. She’s not somebody that you’re going to tell no.

**TC:** Today, Saundrea and Stan are discussing resident voting and privatization. And here, on the One NYCHA podcast, no one can stop Saundrea from preaching

**COLEMAN:** We run this city we make this city tick NYCHA residents … even if they talking the talk we have to look back to see if they walk the walk … and I wasn’t necessarily referring to water I was referring to government … do some notes next time … stop taking all those pictures, do some work, what are you doing … I don’t believe they respect us but they want our vote, there’s a narrative that we don’t vote but we do vote … we see their faces, but then we don’t see them no more

**TC:** Saundrea’s found her voice. She’s found her pulpit. And her audience is ready to listen.

**COLEMAN:** One NYCHA, one people

**MORSE:** One NYCHA, one people

**COLEMAN:** We’re lifting off y’all

**MUSIC:** *Onomatopoeia Theme*

**TC:** This episode of Onomatopoeia was created by me, Thomas Copeland. Onomatopoeia is a production of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Joanne Faryon is our executive producer and professor. Original theme music by Lee Feldman. Our graphic was created by Sunny Bean. Special thanks to Columbia Libraries.