

# Transforming Pain Into Purpose

An Interview with Monique Rodriguez, Chief Executive Officer, Mielle Organics

**EDITORS' NOTE** *Mielle Organics is one of the fastest-growing hair care brands in the multicultural category. In 2021, Rodriguez became the first Black woman to raise a non-controlling nine-figure investment, over \$100 million, in a deal with Berkshire Partners. In 2023, she made history again when Mielle Organics was acquired by Procter & Gamble in an unprecedented acquisition, the largest exit ever for a Black female beauty founder, in which she continues to serve as CEO of the company. As part of her deal with P&G, she also established Mielle Cares, the nonprofit arm of her company, with a \$10 million donation that was matched by P&G.*



Monique Rodriguez

**COMPANY BRIEF** *Founded in 2014 by Monique Rodriguez, Mielle Organics (mielleorganics.com) is a popular Black-founded, woman-led global beauty brand that is rooted in natural ingredients. With a heavy emphasis on incorporating healthier ingredients as its “root to results,” Mielle Organics’ collection of beauty products is designed for Black women. The company began with one product, the Almond Mint Oil, a unique proprietary blend of herbs, amino acids, and minerals to support healthy hair, skin and nails, and the immune system. Since then, Mielle Organics has scaled to become a global brand for consumers with textured hair and is distributed in over 90 countries and 100,000 retail locations across the globe.*

**What was your vision for creating Mielle Organics?**

I'd always wanted to work in beauty, but my mother pushed me towards a more stable career, so I became a nurse – I worked as a nurse for eight years, but never felt fulfilled. Then, in 2013, I experienced a devastating loss when I lost my son during a high risk pregnancy – when you go through those traumatic life experiences, it leads to a lot of self reflection, and I made the choice to transform my pain into purpose.

I began to use social media as a creative outlet to express myself and talk about my passion, which was haircare. I made my own concoctions and documented the process on social media, and I quickly found a vibrant community of African American women who,

like me, were longing for products that enabled their natural texture and curls to thrive. When I saw how engaged and inspired my social media followers were during my healthy hair journey – commenting on the look and texture, and asking about the concoctions I was making at home and if they could buy it – I had the lightbulb moment to create Mielle Organics.

**How do you define Mielle Organics’ mission and purpose?**

When I was growing up, I felt that the beauty space did not have a lot of representation of diversity – everything showed a very European, straight-haired look. There was rarely anything for Black women and our community that showed how to care for and appreciate our natural curls. That void in the market inspired me to provide empowerment to help women feel good about themselves and be confident while rocking their natural curls. I also wanted to provide education around scalp care – as a nurse, I noticed that people didn't always realize that what we put on our skin is just as important as what we put in our bodies. Skin is our largest organ in the body, and people don't always think

of the scalp as part of your skin, but what we use on our hair and scalp affects us. I felt like that knowledge was missing, especially in the African American community, and I wanted to provide this education through my social media platforms.

We founded Mielle Organics on the belief that healthier ingredients encourage healthier hair. We've created natural hair products specifically for the needs of the textured hair community, and each natural ingredient used in our hair care products is chosen with delicate care to meet the needs of our customers. We provide education and empowerment to help women feel good about themselves and their natural hair, and be confident while rocking their curls.

**How do you describe the Mielle Organics customer?**

We've always aimed to serve the textured hair consumer – at Mielle, we blend nature and science to create innovative, affordable, and high-quality haircare products that are carefully crafted to solve their needs. We've naturally built a strong community by listening to their needs, and continuing to provide education and empowerment to help women feel good about themselves and their natural hair.



Mielle Organics products (above and opposite page)

**“I know I have a bigger purpose, bigger than Mielle, to serve our community and our youth, and I am proud to know that the historic things we’ve done with Mielle Organics will continue to open the door for other Black women to do the same.”**

**Will you provide an overview of Mielle Organics’ collections?**

Mielle is one of the fastest growing hair care brands in the multicultural category. We have 10 ingredient-focused collections, including:

- Essentials – As our very first collection of products launched, this line features daily essentials to help moisturize, seal and define waves, curls and coils for a reliable, low maintenance routine.

- Rosemary Mint – As our #1 best seller, the Rosemary Mint collection transforms a stressful routine into a labor of love that flips the script on the cycle of breakage and encourages holistic hair health from root to tip. It’s about more than managing your curls; it’s about empowering them to reach their full potential so your hair doesn’t just survive, it thrives.

- Pomegranate & Honey – Formulated for thick, curly Type 4 hair, our Pomegranate & Honey collection isn’t just about looking good – though, trust us, you will. It’s about saving you time, energy, and frustration. With an innovative Prep, Prime, and Define styling system, you can simplify your hair routine, giving you the freedom to unleash your curl creativity and achieve superior curl definition, styling, and hold.

- Avocado & Tamanu – Launched in 2023, this collection gives you the freedom to rock your curls even when the heat and humidity are on high; the freedom to move around without sweating out your blow-outs. As the first line of products from Mielle specially formulated to target frizz triggered by dryness and humidity, this silicone-free line features an exclusive, refrigerate-to-activate Cold Application Technology™ to achieve up to 70 percent less frizz when you use the full 4-step system.

- Mango & Tulsi – Discover the perfect balance of nourishment and control with our Mango & Tulsi collection, crafted specifically for loose waves and curls. This collection provides hydration and lightweight hold that enhances your texture while giving you those pillow soft curls.

- Rice Water – Designed to revolutionize your protective style journey from start to finish, our Rice Water collection ensures your hair remains nourished and resilient with your favorite low manipulation styles. Providing solutions from install to take down, it’s your time to shine with styles that let your creativity and the curls underneath flourish.

- Sea Moss – Crafted to combat shedding due to breakage, this collection is your secret weapon to maximizing hair retention and reaching your ultimate hair goals.

We’re excited about a forthcoming collection launch slated for early 2025.

**Where do you see the greatest opportunities for growth for Mielle Organics?**

As Mielle just marked its 10-year anniversary this May, we’ve been reflecting on where we have been and where we want to continue to grow. We’re focused on innovation and new product offerings, expanding production and access, and increasing community-driven work through the Mielle Cares nonprofit that will provide resources and support to advance education and economic opportunities in Black and Brown communities. I also see us expanding into new categories – not just on hair, but also into skincare, and continue having the foresight to anticipate the needs of our consumers to remain ahead of the curve, innovative, and a solution-oriented brand.



**What do you feel are the keys to effective leadership and how do you approach your management style?**

One of our mottos is that slow and steady wins the race – when you’re building a brand, it can be difficult when you see your competitors going faster than you, but an important quality of leadership is to have tunnel vision. Do not let what others are doing or saying overshadow your ultimate goals of where you want your brand to go. Silence the naysayers.

It is also important to shift your mindset – feed your faith, not your fears. I’ve read countless stories of other entrepreneurs and none became successful without failure, so when you’re facing these challenges and underestimating your abilities and vision, know you’re not the only person going through them and with God, you can get through and accomplish your wildest dreams.



**Did you always know that you had an entrepreneurial spirit and desire to build your own business?**

I always had the passion to work in the beauty industry, and I always knew I wanted to be a business owner. I wanted to be independent, and I tried selling everything from Mary Kay to cable subscriptions. However, I did not realize the level of entrepreneurial success I could reach – growing up, I didn’t have any examples of women who ran their own companies, but I went out to find my inspiration.

I’ve always said you cannot be what you don’t see, and it’s important to me that we show others that it is possible to become successful. That’s why I’m so passionate about giving back and being a role model for the next generations so they can see that there are possibilities and they can be whatever they set their mind to. I know I have a bigger purpose, bigger than Mielle, to serve our community and our youth, and I am proud to know that the historic things we’ve done with Mielle Organics will continue to open the door for other Black women to do the same.

**Are you able to take moments to reflect on the success and impact of Mielle Organics?**

I am constantly grateful for the success we’ve had – I am so proud of what we have accomplished in 10 years. Mielle is now distributed in 90+ countries and 100,000+ retail locations across the globe, and just last year in 2023, we were acquired by Procter & Gamble with the largest acquisition ever for a Black female beauty founder, in which I will continue to serve as CEO of the company. ●