

her story

ISSUE 8 | JAN/FEB 2021

Laura Robertson
COACH | TRAINER | SPEAKER





17 Miss Nathania Atkinson
M.A PGCert AFHEA



11 Laura Robertson
COACH | TRAINER | SPEAKER

FEATURES...

- 7** | A Woman's Path To Self-Discovery
by Cordelia Gaffar's Story
- 65** | Caroline's Story - Caroline Namugabi
- 48** | Dr. Kamakshi Jindal's Story
- 33** | Women's Public Rise To Prominence:
Why Continued Publicity Is Key To Progressing
Female Leadership By Salome Asabre
- 44** | Hazeology...Hazel Llewlin's Story
- 54** | Ihuaku Patricia Nweke
- 42** | Julian Busing - A Success Journey
- 30** | Samantha Hardingham's Story
- 57** | Wellbeing & Skincare For The Changing
Seasons By Selina Gooding Bsc, Ifpa
- 27** | Wiggins Toyin Phyllis - A Change Agent Who
Believes Change Begins With Her.
- 67** | Voices By Eva Arissani
- 36** | Yogita Ridgley' Story
- 51** | Upgrade Your Mindset With Tonya And Dexter



62 The Invisible Girl:
Samantha Houghton's Story



4 Dr. Jerca Legan Cvikl



38 Defeating Hopelessness
by Vanessa R Brooks



22 Professor Ona C. Miller's Story...

a letter from **THE EDITOR**

Welcome to the 8th edition of Her Story magazine and thank you for being here and keeping us going! I am always excited to publish. It always feels like it's the first time!

Last year was eventful and just as we ushered the new year hoping to leave the tensions of 2020 behind we were greeted with even more uncertainties

Even though it appears uncertain we can be sure as we peak through the illusion that humanity is winning, people have come together to form supportive loving groups making unconditional love both towards self and others cool again.

We are seeing encouragement and more human based companies and organisations rising up answering the call to love and bring peace. There is a great awakening that is growing creating awareness towards self and others in a remarkable way.

Great inequalities have and will continue to be exposed and there are many changes in the horizon, women's voices are being amplified more than ever and meaningful conversations are held globally.

For this edition we decided to tap into and reflect some of the changes as we too transition the magazine and its contents.

Women's voices are important and to me represent unique expressions of feminine essence that reflect or mirror divinity forming a beautiful picture of this world, each expression connected, echoing and revealing deeper truths of connectedness and the flaws of illusions that once were. If we listen beyond the 5 senses, we see a picture of what is to come.

Change is inevitable and love is necessary to transition us to a time where women are included.

What changes are we ready to make?

Whatever it is, may you live in your own terms and with intention creating the world you want to see.

Always love hearing from you and your feedback is ever appreciated.

Email publications@herstorymatters.com to have your story shared or just to say hi!

With love



Her Story matters 
the journey of a woman



Dr. Jerca Legan Cvikl,

Anthropologist, publicist, strategic communication expert, entrepreneur, philanthropist, founder

As a curious and hearty girl, I spent my childhood and early youth in hometown Novo mesto, a small city in South East Slovenia. I was born on February 19, 1977 – as an interesting fact, in the same delivery room as the most famous and only Slovenian woman in the White House, American First Lady Melania Trump. Although I was a child of great love, my mother and father divorced early when I was 4 years old, so I spent most of my time with an amazing and beautiful woman who marked me for life with her views, values, hardworking hands and big heart. My mother Dragica and I have been best friends. Always and forever, she is Priceless.

Youth years were full of activities, in addition to regular school, where I excelled among best pupils, I attended piano music school, danced jazz ballet, performed in a theater group, competed in standard and latin american dances, sang in a youth choir,

wrote songs and short stories in my free time, sewed for my dolls and instructed younger students with learning difficulties. The latter were also my first independent earnings, as I was constantly (un)consciously striving for the goal of becoming economically independent as soon as possible, mainly to relieve my mother, who had a hard time supporting us without any father's or other relative's help.

What were your early life influences?

The way of life had a tremendous impact on my development in younger period. In addition to demanding learning obligations during the week, already at high school, I continued with learning instructions, started working as a waitress in a popular bar and took my first steps in the role of a fashion model and future hostess. After the excellent graduation with the best result at republic exam, I set out on an independent life path. I moved to the Slovenian capital Ljubljana at the age of 18, where I enrolled in journalism studies. From there, I climbed the steep social ladder, first as a journalist

in the print media, soon as a recognizable and young research TV reporter who pursued truth and justice, and later as the editor-in-chief of various media. In the meantime, I continued with my academic career, which in 2009 was upgraded with a doctorate in philosophy and theory of visual culture. I started lecturing at the university, I wrote books – today I am an author of 5 books, over 10 as a co-author and published hundreds of professional, popular and scientific papers and media articles. Since I have always been enterprising, I have been looking for a way to capitalize my knowledge and experience for the future. As a media expert, I started consulting for individuals and organizations in the field of strategic communication and founded my own company Status, which I still run today.

What's the biggest setback you ever experienced and how did you overcome it?

Hardest part of my life was a feeling of helplessness that I was not given a complete family and prosperity that can be within provided. My fears were soon recognized as empty bubbles, which grow and grow and eventually crack. I realized that at a turning point in self-awareness, personal growth, when you can reflect on who you are, where you come from, what life offers you, where you go and what you dream about, you can turn your weaknesses into incredible strength, will to live, equip yourself with a solid shell and outline the most seemingly inaccessible goals. Steadiness and concern stem from a strong belief that I'm on my own, responsible for small and great results and lucky life at the end. When on this planned route, I have combined knowledge and experience and nothing or nobody could stop me.

I went out into the world with an open heart to gain new knowledge and experiences during various professional activities and travelling, getting to know places and people, which probably push me among the most liberated people of today.

What are your proudest accomplishments?

Living your dreams is the greatest privilege of life. Which is by no means self-evident, as behind it lies

a tremendous amount of hard work, renunciation, revaluation, empathy, ups and downs. Among my greatest achievements, I consider – if I start from the timeline from the past – a solid family cell in which I have been fulfilled for the last decade. Before that, I am proud of all my creative excesses, such as author's books – two scientific monographs, two manuals, a multilingual children's fairy tale, numerous scientific and other media contributions, many creative projects in the field of strategic communication – event organization, publication production, individual management solutions, visible academic findings, international scientific and professional participation and, last but not least, an established credible public opinion. Among the special achievements are certainly gaining experience and pushing the boundaries in the fight for women's and girls' rights, at home and around the world. In recent years, I have crowned it with the Femmes Sans Frontières movement, which today is an international foundation for women's empowerment with over 300 influential members.

You do a lot of work in female advancement and empowerment, what are the biggest shifts you have observed globally?

The last hundred years in the projection of recent human history – if we disregard tens of thousands years for a prehistoric man, where some gender differences are genetically predestined – are a turning point in the development of consciousness of what gender equality means.

In some societies, the revolution and global movement of women began in the early 20th century to reach today's conditions, where in most chapters of society they are in almost all aspects equal to men – fundamental human rights and freedoms, the right to vote, equal pay for work, access to top social and decision-making positions... In many societies, the process is still ongoing, where women are not guaranteed by even basic rights and key elements for full liberation and empowerment – access to education and economic independence. These are the two extreme realities of the same planet in the complex social relations of women: men. Whichever way we turn, we find that women have come a long

way to gain empowerment, but the process is not yet finished as there is no society in the world where a woman would not have had at least one right or freedom violated. Whether you go for a negative selection in the employment rate or religious interference when deciding about themselves. Thus women have to stay vigilant in building changes for the better world.

How can female led organizations make maximum impact in this shift?

Behind every successful team and every successful entity – companies, organizations, groups, institutions – stands a woman and men. I believe in the best solutions that come from mixed teams of creators, where the key solutions are decided by women and men together. It's not always easy, but it's never impossible. If the organization is run by a woman, it is right to have male colleagues who work with a male view on the same issue, if it is run by a man, it must necessarily take into account the female view. Of course, this is an ideal situation, which is not always possible in practice, but unfortunately there is still too much one-sided decision-making, mostly by men. While women remain an indispensable but voiceless workforce so that these decisions can be implemented. I support a sharp increase in the number of women in the most influential positions in society. Starting with politics and economics, moving on to science, culture, sports and also civil society. This is supported by a number of women's initiatives and organizations that highlight the need for women's empowerment, both in small local settings and globally. As President of the Femmes Sans Frontières Foundation, I like to repeat: The world would be a better and more beautiful place, if women and men were fully respected and made equal decisions. I believe in the necessity of balancing everything that exist. Even if perfect balance cannot always be achieved, it can remain our maxima to which we are constantly approaching.

What motivates you?

Life is my biggest motivator. Every single new

day, when I can create, travel, learn, get to know, share, give... when I can feed my soul, body and heart with knowledge and experience, look for new inspirations, approach to new adventures, when I push the boundaries of the possible and manage to seal my work to leave something visible behind, then I am infinitely and boundlessly motivated.

What does Women's voices mean to you?

“Woman's voice is an indispensable and irreplaceable resource in building a better and more beautiful society. Starting in the family, further in the local society, the wider environment and finally globally. Throughout history, women have been a pillar of strength, of collaboration, and therefore of significant progress. We have enriched interpersonal relationships and supported our families, and in the last century, our voice has also been heard in professional environments and especially from decision-making tops. The latter fills me with great optimism, as I believe that humanity will be able to improve only with clear and loud women's voices.”

What's next for Dr. Jerca?

I will continue my mission as an anthropologist and opinion leader to spread critical thinking in public space and shed a light on contemporary human phenomena. While working as a strategic communication consultant on various projects and manager of sustainable tourism at Lake Bled. Occasionally I will appear in my amateur acting role, tame creativity with writing, and in my free time I will play sports, hang out with friends and travel as much as possible. Of course, one of my important priorities remains connecting, supporting, representing and engaging empowered women on the global Femmes Sans Frontières platform, who with their exceptionality and openness are the best proof and model that women can do anything and without limits. We believe, that once we know and manage how to elevate ourselves, others will follow. Women for women, borderless!



A Woman's Path to Self-Discovery

Cordelia Gaffar's Story

Cordelia Gaffar is the Emotions Opener Transformation Strategist guiding leaders to use their darkest and most difficult emotions to show up powerfully.

So far in 2020, Cordelia Gaffar has been inducted into the Global Library of Female Authors by Ona Miller and her own book related to her Replenish Me Process will be released later this year. She is also Best Podcast Host of 2019 and the ACHI magazine Volunteer of the Year and finalist for Top Influencer and Orator of the Year. She is best-selling co-author of America's Leading Ladies: who positively impact the world with Oprah Winfrey and several dynamic women.

Currently she is studying to become a Tibb Practitioner. She is the Founder of Replenish Me™, a Coach in the Harlem Wellness Network in New York and the official sponsor of She Phoenix, Femme Phoenix Ltd in South Africa. The focus is to advocate for the Girl Child, teenage girls, young women rights to a better education, health & life. (SDG1 to end poverty, SDG4 education, SDG gender equality and Women's Empowerment) As seen on America Meditating Radio and British Muslim TV.

It feels so freeing to just move my hips in so many different ways to music that makes my heart happy and my mind laugh. I am free with every other woman around me...so many women wining up and exploring the limits of their hips without any sexual intention.

This is how it feels every time I have a Replenish Me™ workshop. No ogling men's eyes. No judgmental women's eyes. Only women leaning into their bodies freely to experience emotional freedom and healing. None of us as victims of violence, war trauma or any "severe" emotional situations that may come to mind. No, we are women living our lives and using our voice in a world that normalizes varying levels of emotional abuse of women enforced by company, local, national and global policies which edify the immature male ego whilst demonizing the woman's basic right to walk down the street. As I look back on my journey, I always dance to feel that freedom and healing.

My journey of self-discovery is an intricate awakening emerging into corporate America whilst straddling completing the coveted College Degree being a very spiritual being struggling with my human experience literally colored by being a Black woman. Here are some examples of what my work environment was like at 23.

"I'm a partner here, you cheeky b*tch!"

Or

“You can look the other way so that we can push this through, right sweetheart?” with a wink.

These are some of the colorful comments, I recall when I used to go head to head partners in the law firm where I worked as the billing coordinator at the beginning of my financial career to when I served as controller for a small IT start up. Always being patronized and belittled for enforcing company and federal regulations!

A woman's path to self-discovery is about her voice. It is about the choice to give in to the status quo or to be true to herself. Women are described as celestial beings. For example, Venus is both a goddess and the name of a planet. We have idealized Mother Theresa and Florence Nightingale, both caregivers and pious women. These are all beautiful examples of “purity”. In real life, that looks like us playing the good girl, i.e. not talking back or speaking up. On the more earthly and sinister end, we have been described as Sirens in mythology, seducing men to their deaths. Delilah, Jezebel and concubines were all sexualized, which is a complete misunderstanding of the power and purpose of femininity and sexual energy. Back to my story, that is being patronized as “sweetheart” and not taken seriously as a professional enforcing the financial and legal parameters. At the core, it is the woman's voice that's been silenced...my voice was silenced so many times. There are times when I felt hopeless and froze. Toxic shaming can be overwhelming on many levels. It sounds like this in my head, “I am invisible, my words don't hold the same weight as a man, why did they even hire me? I hate my life, I am going to numb from all this pain!” Can you relate? What do you hear in your head? Each human being should be respectful towards the other no matter the way she speaks, looks or dresses. Women dress for themselves not for others because ***news flash*** we don't objectify ourselves. As I look around the room that day in the Dominican Republic, I welcome the fact that my sexuality is the companion of my spiritual self and self-discovery. Leaning in to the power of my existence by allowing myself to feel deeply into my body, especially my womb space in communion

with other women, I feel free to be. From my studies, I know that women trap negative emotions in the thighs, lower back, stomach and represent in breast, ovarian and cervical cancer. On the physical level, it wears on our adrenal glands which run the show metabolically and send us signs in minor bulges, weight gain, insomnia, or oversleeping. We have been taught to be detached from our bodies so the correlation between insomnia for a week, excessive sugar tendencies and gaining 15 pounds, sudden belly bulge becomes a thing to fix. The conversation in our head is ‘OMG I'm fat!’ not ‘What's been going on for me lately? How can I stay ahead of it and get my systems back in balance’. We've been sold that we need to fear our bodies and have “them” constantly monitor our most intimate parts. What if you could turn it around just by trusting your body and being a student of it and nurturing it the way we are taught to others?

Imagine taking pleasure, sanctuary and joy in your own love manifest as your body? Feel into this as a blank canvas ready for your creative expression. It is a blend of taking back ownership of your sexual story, body, heart, mind, and sexuality/ spirituality as a whole going forward. Yes, spirituality! What happens when we have sex? Usually a child is created without all of the modern precautions. Their souls come from the spiritual realm and yes we even pray for children. I will dive more into that later.

So how is sex spiritual? I was familiar with the commercialized kamasutra but not the true meaning of it or that there are several traditions that have a similar teaching. In July 2001, I chose to become Muslim as the result of a 5 year spiritual journey after my parents had died in consecutive years. Yes, I found it intriguing. I learned about the rest of the prophets, Jesus, Mary may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all. However, I really desired to know more about what it means to be a Muslim woman. I not only found out that Islam came as a liberation for women in a society where the infant girls were buried, women were considered chattel and having daughters were a disgrace but there's more! Yes, Islam gave women rights to land, wealth, education,...and wait for it.....rights over their own bodies down to full books written about intimacy in

marriage. The responsibility of marrying a woman was to protect her lineage, heritage and SEXUALITY. That's the true reason I became Muslim! A way of life that protects and gives voice to your spiritual core as a woman. In the Quran, it is said that the 1% of mercy Allah left on Earth was placed in the woman's womb. Even with the veil of shame lifted through my new chosen life, I still had an internal struggle between my sexuality and my outer appropriate behavior. The Muslim women I met had women's only dance parties but excessive music and dancing are considered shameful. That means that only during wedding season or the two Eids did we meet up. That was a shock to my system as I always used both to decompress from my day. How did I survive? My Ill Na Na or self-expression whispered through my writing. Sexual energy is our creativity. My words are birthed and my voice shows up powerfully, soulfully pulling through the gifts from the spiritual realm meant for this world.

Without our self-expression, it is quite simply emptiness, the epitome of a closed off part and silenced voice. For myself, I did all of the appropriate things and ticked all of the boxes by my choosing to marry. I wasn't being frigid but modest, right? Besides as a Black woman, for me marriage was sexual freedom not bondage because no one would question whether I knew the father of my children. That actually happens! In fact Islamically having sex every four days is recommended because it solidifies the love and compassion in a marriage. However, in most marriages it is weaponized by the wife or the husband and becomes a thing withheld. Besides sex has one purpose, to procreate, right? Have you ever wondered why marriages dissolve and the connection disintegrates? The connection between the physical self and the emotional self is in our loins. All throughout Islamic tradition, the divine is bridged in this world through emotions. When a man and a woman consummate marriage, there is a prayer said to presence God in their intention of combining their bodies in the physical form to welcome the blessing of perhaps a child through intercourse.

Here I will introduce the opposite of my journey.



What happens when a Black woman shows up with balanced feminine and masculine energy rather than just the accepted docile feminine. Foxy Brown, the first Black female rapper of Trinidadian parents from Brooklyn, New York. She was dubbed Ill Na Na, which means awesome vagina in patois, by Nas a male rapper from Queens. Their paths were very different while her career suffered and she was bounced between producers, who were all men, scraped for contracts and to produce albums. Meanwhile he is considered the grandfather of rap and just produced his 13th album successfully after a 30 year career. I'm mentioning her to demonstrate what the single Black women's career, sexuality and path to discovery looks like. Juxtapose to me, a good girl mindful of my reputation and measuring my voice, it appears she suffered more. Yet even though most of my life I hid my truer self and she boldly owned her Divine Feminine, my suffering has been silent and the same as hers. She has been in and out of jail with "anger management issues", suspended

licenses and at the age of 41 like at the beginning of her career is featured on one of the songs on Nas' new album. I started my business at the age of 43 and have been in and out of emotional bondage. When this sexual power is consistently crushed, it is the voice of the woman being silenced, also known as repression. The repression becomes anger and eventually rage. Anger is the most demonized emotion yet the biggest gift to humanity. It awakens a wisdom within our core that can make the world a better place. I used my anger and rage to continue my business even after two and half years of disappointment, being unsupported at every turn and even being threatened with loss of security and love. At the end of the day, I had to take a stand for my values. During my year long period of cognitive dissonance, it leaked out in emotional splatter. It took me to Bali where I could speak freely on stage. When I returned, I went flat overwhelmed with self-doubt and judgement. In Foxy Brown's story, her rage pushed her into compliance. My rage ran

me into the mountains last year to deal with the fact my Divine Black Feminine, my term for my truest self-expression, is not well received. As you see the opposite of my story yields the same ending.

What I know is that moving my hips freely with women wining up is my sexual identity, a power so strong that the world feels off kilter when she speaks. The world may say that it represents something to objectify. The truth is she is the Divine Feminine. As I step more and more into my power and truly begin to show up more powerfully and bold, I question my choice to lessen my expressiveness around my body and sexuality. I fully recognize and accept that I can. Lean into your rage and other dark emotions, allow yourself to walk that talk deep in your soul. Release your voice. Pause and truly allow yourself to feel them for the full 90 seconds they are present. Then speak from the depth of your soul...be Free to BE! Start your path to self-discovery.

Share Your Story

Have you always dreamt of impacting the world? Or simply helping someone else with their journey? Do you have a story to share?

Well this is your opportunity to be part of our exciting media productions. Her Story Matters is inviting you to partner with us by sharing your story.

Send us your story written or video not longer than 10 minutes and via email on stories@herstorymatters.com by 30th June 2019

Please include the following in your submission:

1. Where you were born
2. A bit about your background
3. Share your story
4. Where you are now

Her Story matters 
the journey of a woman





Laura Robertson

Laura Robertson, is the founder of Beautiful Potential Consulting, a beauty and branding company, building confidence and empowering women to pursue their dreams. She is also co-founder of iLocal Online Advertising and Marketing, a full service marketing agency providing a wide range of online and traditional marketing solutions.

As an Independent Certified Coach, Trainer & Speaker with the John Maxwell Group, and degree in Business Management, Laura comes with decades of leadership, coaching & training experience. Laura has worked with billion-dollar, top industry companies in corporate America as well as individual clients and business owners. Besides her advanced business skills, she is passionate about serving others and meets any issue with curiosity and a smile.

Laura came from humbling beginnings. Born into a poverty-stricken refugee camp, Thailand, spending two years homeless and displaced after her family fled the communist rule in their homeland, Laos. Growing up as a refugee in America, Laura had to overcome many obstacles. Her perseverance led her to become the strong, successful business woman that she is today. Through all of her endeavors, Laura continues to follow her passion by using her unique talents to teach, mentor

and inspire others to live out their full potential!

My family's refugee journey began when they were forced to flee the country after the communist invasion on our homeland, Laos. Between 1964-1973, the US dropped 2 million tons of bombs on Laos. During the Vietnam War, a secret war was waged on our country, making Laos the heaviest bombed country per capita. The continuous bombings over a period of nine years had destroyed many villages and displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians in Laos. The Ho Chi Minh Trail, which ran across the border of Laos, was used as an American outpost to help keep South Vietnam from advancing to the North Vietnam. Many Laotian civilians, including my father, were recruited, and trained as freedom fighters by the American troop to keep the communists from invading our country.

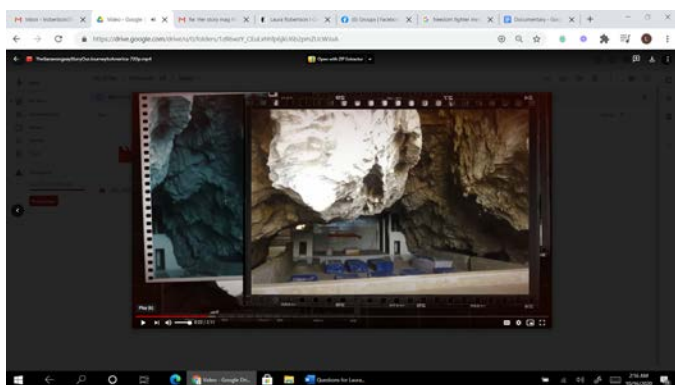
My Father's Story

At the end of the war the government of Laos was very unstable. My father did not feel safe leaving my mother alone by herself while he was tending to his teaching position to provide for the family. She had a toddler, my brother Alisak, and was pregnant with my brother, Norrarak. My father decided to send her to stay with my grandparents in Ampur Wanyai Province Mukdahan, Thailand. After knowing they were safe with family, he went back to work in Vientiane.

In December 2nd 1975, Puket Lao communist took control of the country. The Puket Lao government ran under the leader, Kaysone Phomvihane. Lao communist party leader announced that they renamed the country from Royal of Laos to the Lao People Democratic Republic. They signed agreements giving Vietnam the right to station armed forces and to appoint advisers to assist in overseeing the country.

In the meantime, they took the King of Laos and his family to North of Lao and let them die from starvation. There were a lot of deaths in the Seminar Area.

After returning to his teaching position, the old Royal Government and the Puket agreed to merge together. He was sent off with Puket Lao to the North of Laos, Viengxay city, Houaphanh Province to get re-education on the new communist regime. They called it a “Seminar” at that time. He was severely tortured, not eating enough, forced to work hard without pay. He was held hostage with a tight rope around his wrists. Those scars are still visible today. He was held in captivity in a makeshift prison that was made from a bombed-out mountain.



This is the present picture of where he was held captive:

About one year after being held in the Seminar, he and his friends were sent back to Vientiane. He disliked the new regime governing over Laos and began plotting his escape. In the end of June 1976, he escaped Vientiane with two of his friends. His friends made him a fake ID card with the name Somchanh. His two friends, Somnuk and Mone left Vientiane heading to Thakek City, Khamouane Province. His friend, Mone's parents lived in Taseng Ban Pong, which was nearby where they were heading. The plan was to ask Mone's father to help them escape to Thailand.

While they were waiting for Mone to find his parents, they hid in the forest. During the time that they were hiding, they encountered three bystanders that threatened to report their escape to the communist. Scared for their lives, my father shot and killed the bystanders and ran for his life. They were relieved once Mone finally contacted his father. With Mone's father's help, they started planning a way to cross the Mekong River and escape to Thailand. Mone's

parent were afraid their son will die in front of them while he is making his escape. They had been in the forest for five days without food and survived eating wild fruits in the jungle.

On the day of escape, Mone's father came out to tell them that it was safe to make a run for it because the communist army were in a meeting. At this point, they had nothing to lose. They made their decision to die if something bad were to happen. When we rowed the boat to the middle of Mekong River, they decided not to cross the river in the dark, because they were afraid the Thailand border police will shoot them. They decided to sleep on a nearby island called Kaseth Island. This is where they made a commitment that if something happened, they are ready to die together.

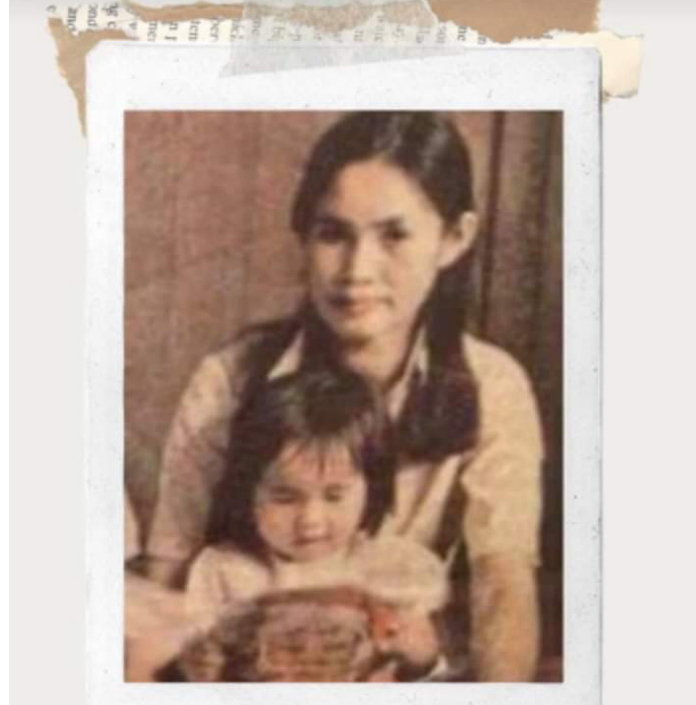
The next morning, they pushed the boat out and found a ton of fruits that Mone's father left. He was worried about them starving and left the fruits without them knowing. They left the island crossing over to Thailand to Ban Laonath. Once they reached the borders, they were pleading with the Thai border patrols at the village to arrest them. They refused to arrest them because they were not immigration police and did not have a car to transport them to the big city. They also said the Thai government ordered them to send anyone crossing over from Laos to return.



My father and his friends laid down in the boat and told the Thai patrol to shoot them if they are going to get sent back to Laos. The Thai patrols had sympathy and decided to help them. They told my father to continue to row their boat until they hear the police call them to stop. They did what they were told and once they saw the Police border patrols, they stopped and asked to be sent to Nakhonphanom Province. They exchanged the boat for help getting to Nakhonphanom province, near where my mother was staying.

When they arrived to Nakhonphanom province they took a taxi to Ampur Wanyai to reunite with my mother and brothers. My father had an emotional breakdown, and his heart was relieved with joy to finally see that his children and wife were still alive.

We entered the refugee camp in 1977, shortly after I was born. We were homeless and displaced and the makeshift tents were used for our shelter. We received free food from the United Nation, one meal per day for each family. My uncle worked as one of the food distributors in the camp and he would sneak us extra food when they had some. After years of living in extremely poor conditions and starvation, we were blessed to finally be sponsored by the church. We arrived on January 29th 1979 to Kingsport, TN. When we got here, we spoke little to no English.

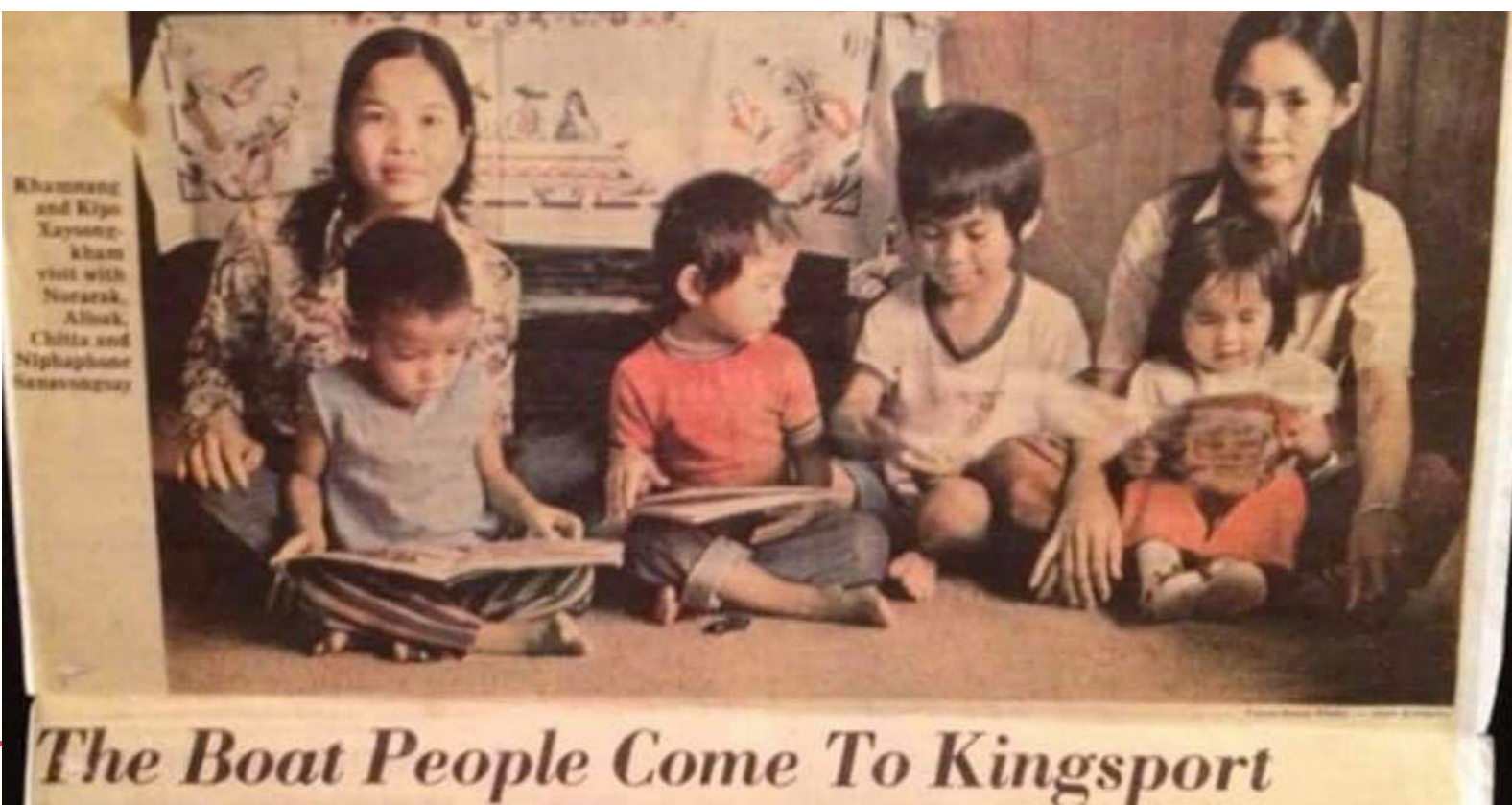


We used our body language to communicate. Many people that tried to escape were shot and killed. We are blessed to have the opportunity and the chance for a better life than what we left behind.

My Childhood Experience

When we learned that we had family in Illinois, we relocated to the Chicago suburbs. We found a small studio apartment for our family of five. We relied on public assistance as we were still poor, but we were out of the extreme conditions that we escaped from.

My early childhood experiences in America were filled with great memories. As more and more



Khammang and Kipo
Xayong-
kham
visit with
Nurarak,
Alloak,
Chitta and
Niphaphone
Sanavongay

The Boat People Come To Kingsport

Laotian refugees found their way to America, many made Elgin, Illinois their new home. My family and I lived in a community surrounded by relatives. We survived as a community and helped lift each other up.

I remember having a happy childhood. I did not understand the meaning of being poor. We lived in roach infested homes, but I thought that was normal. My favorite memory as a child was walking down to the YWCA around Christmas time. I knew that I would walk away with bags filled with gifts and surprises. Now that I am older, I realize that those were gifts from the kind donors that wanted to put a smile on a poor child's face.

I went to bilingual school with about twenty other refugee children and then introduced to public schools. Public school was very scary for me. I had separation anxiety from my mother. My family and I lived in a community surrounded by our relatives. My teachers had to call my mom just about every day because I would not stop crying. I would do everything in my little power to kick, scream and grab on to her while being pulled away by the teachers.

As we got older, things started to change. Many of the families started to become more stable and moved out of the area. We were still a very tight community and had many get togethers for birthday parties and events. Most weekends, we had a full house. The adults would drink and gamble while the children ran around and played. My childhood was school, home and family. My father was strict, and I was not allowed to do anything else outside of school.

Elementary was emotionally challenging for me. I was doing great academically, but I had a hard time trying to fit in. I was often bullied and harassed because of my ethnicity. The famous chant was "Chinese, Japanese, look at these!" with the bullies pulling their eyes back to make fun of my Asian descent. I wore a lot of hand me downs and clothes that my mother would sew up for me. I was often criticized for how I dressed and my off-brand shoes. I had one classmate that did the most. He would throw spitballs at me and often pulled my chair

underneath me to watch me fall to the ground. I was bullied, but I just thought that it was kids being mean and had no understanding of racism at that time. I was told by my fifth-grade teacher that I did not deserve this country. When I told my dad what happened, I remember him trying to explain racism to me. He said "honey, some Americans do not like people with dark hair". I did eventually make some friends in school.

The Biggest Challenge I Faced

Was in my pre-teen to teenage years when life started to take a huge turn for the worst. I was raised very sheltered, by traditional Laotian parents that had this false hope that I would turn out to be the perfect traditional child. That is where the conflict came in. Being raised in America, I did not know "how to" be a perfect traditional Lao daughter. My parents would stress how important school is and that nothing else mattered. I remember a time when I went bowling with my cousin. My dad found out and he came to pull me out of there in front of everyone. We were not allowed to do any extra activities and especially with boys. They often stressed that they did not want me to end up in a factory and working hard like they did.

In my earlier years I was bullied for not being American enough for my classmates. As I got more Americanized, I was too American for my Lao community.

When I got to high school I wanted to be like my friends, and I started to rebel. I did whatever I wanted to do against my parent's wishes. I became the black sheep of the family and in my community. Many of the other children were no longer allowed to play with me. I think this isolation pushed me further away. I was skipping school, failing classes and did not care.

When I started to date outside my race – particularly black guys - I was ridiculed by selected few people of my community. At that time, the Black community was being displayed in the media as criminals and bad people. So, our Lao community also formed a

bias against Blacks. I found myself being followed around in the hallways of my high school being called “Niger Lover” and “Slut”. I was being harassed at home with phone calls yelling the same verbal attacks. I was in multiple fights that I did not start and kicked out of school.

I disappointed my parents and there was a lot of tension between us. I was making stupid decisions and not thinking about the consequences. I remember the time when I took my uncle’s car out for a joy ride. I came back home, parked the car in the garage and went to bed. When my father came home with all the built-up anger from everything that I had done, he broke into my locked bedroom door and beat me up so bad I had blood clots throughout my face. My mother would also say many hurtful things to me like “I’m going to grab a knife and cut your face so no guys would look at you!” I would often hear their late-night fights and one time heard her say to my father “if I knew she would turn out like this I would have aborted her in my womb!” Whoah! The series of incidents took a very emotional tow on me as a teenager.



How I dealt with the challenge

Although it was probably not the most ideal thing to do, I overcame this challenge by running away from my problems. I was dating my high school boyfriend at the time and his step-father was transferred to Kansas City for his job. At the age of fifteen, I ran away from home and moved to Kansas City. I believe getting away into an entirely new environment helped me hit the reset button. I lived with my high school boyfriend and his family. They took me in and his mother, mama Sonja, became my legal guardian.

I was a lost Asian teenager, taken in and raised by a Black family. Initially, we lived in the suburbs of Kansas City. When mama Sonja and her husband separated, we moved to the inner city of Kansas City with her mother, Grandma Betsie. I attended an all-black school, lived in an all-black neighborhood, and had my first taste of black-eyed peas, pinto beans and corn bread! I finally found acceptance, love, and stability for the first time in a long time. This set my



path at the hardest and most critical time of my life.

My turn around came in the last semester of my senior year I broke up with my high school boyfriend and moved back home to my family. I knew how important it was for my parents to see me walk across the stage.

After high school, I went to beauty school against my parent's wishes. They wanted me to go to a traditional college and told me that I would not make a living as a beautician. I made a successful career from following my passion and not following what others have for me. My beauty school career led me into many different areas of the field including education, salon management and owner. I was in my late twenties when I ran one of the top named beauty schools in the country, managing the full operation of a two hundred sixty student campus and twenty staff under my leadership. This is when I realized I had a passion for business operations, coaching and development. From there, I worked in various fields of sales, coaching, leadership, and management positions. I found my passion to be in coaching and development. I love giving the tools to help others become the best version of themselves. That is when I became a certified coach, speaker and trainer with The John Maxwell Group.

I left my full-time position in December 2019, at the highlight of my career, to pursue my dreams. I felt this strong calling to do something more meaningful, and to use my story to make an impact on others. I am now owner and founder of Beautiful Potential Consulting and co-owner of iLocal Online Marketing & Advertising. I have a unique business model that consist of beauty services, photo studio, media room and business office all in one location. We help women look and feel beautiful while providing personal or professional coaching services. I have created a platform that will help women build confidence and to empower them to live out their dreams! I want to be remembered as the cheerleader that helped them find their potential and pushed them past their limitations. I want to make an impact on the lives of the women around me.

I believe that women have a powerful voice that they can use to make an impact. We have many obstacles that is set to hold us back. If we can empower each woman to be more than the limitations that are placed on their lives, we will be such a powerful resource for the generations ahead!

What are the Misconceptions about Refugees

I believe that the biggest misconceptions about refugees is that we were brought to America and handed a silver spoon on a platter. This is so not the case. When we come to America, if we are fortunate, we get a little help in the beginning to get us stable on our feet. We are on our own after that and have to work hard just like everyone else. We have to pursue our education and find a way to make a living for ourselves. Many of us are here because of the challenges we were placed in and the conditions of our homeland. We have left everything behind in search for a better life.



What is Humanities responsibility to those Who are displaced

The church that sponsored us had their doubts about sponsoring a refugee family because of the responsibilities that came with it. After seeing the dire needs and learning more about the conditions that we were in, it pulled at their heart strings and they couldn't turn their backs on the opportunity. I think that the more informed and educated we are about the desperate plight of the families that are displaced, the more we will feel a moral obligation to help make a difference.

Miss Nathania Atkinson

M.A PGCert AFHEA

Nathania Atkinson is a PhD Scholar in American Studies with a specific interest in Womanism, Entrepreneurship, Social, political, economic and cultural advancement, intersectionality, diaspora economies, powernomics and motherhood.

As a Creative Entrepreneur, Consultant and Host of Black Dossier. Nathania is a representation of interdisciplinary self-expression showcased via both her career and personal development over the past 15 years.

Nathania's professional career began on the stage as a contemporary trained dancer before evolving into non-profit arts and community organisation founder, artist development, international creative agency founder specialising in artist/innovator development, costume designer and line producer for award winning short and feature films, artistic director spanning music videos, editorials, fashion shows, brand campaigns, international panelist and producer of heritage documentaries.

While building a solid and evolving foundation in cultural industries, Nathania a qualified Ilex paralegal, youth worker and NLP practitioner also developed a portfolio working with young people both at risk/vulnerable and talented. As creative facilitator, entrepreneur consultant and support

worker she has been commissioned to work with numerous government, corporate and independent organisations.

Nathania's unique amalgamation of professional practice and academia is also showcased in university lecturing, 5 years in criminology and recently embark in lecturing on the 1st Black Studies degree in the UK.

Now she is the founder of Her House of Mastery. An environment created to champion, preserve and support Black creative entrepreneurs and professionals and diaspora communities so that they may cultivate the courage and independence to curate a legacy of Mastery, Heritage and Bold spirit across industries.

Nathania is committed to creating services, presentations, content and programs for likeminded influencers, organisations, and leaders to come together and contribute to forward reform and development that speak to the advancement of Black communities.

Moving forward Nathania's interests are focused on advocating for clear and effective diaspora policy, increased professional presence in higher education, law and the cultural industries as well as wellness amongst single parents and parent and teen relationships.



Please tell us about your childhood (where you were born, upbringing, parents, values instilled in you).

Born in Birmingham England as part of the Caribbean diaspora community. I grew up in a two parent home as well as amongst a village of family, both sets of grandparents, and abundance of uncles and aunts, one sibling, and too many cousins to count. The beauty of growing up like this is that you learn what you stand for, where your voice is and form and identity quickly in order to create your space within your own community ready for the outside world.

I was fortunate to be able to watch my mother work diligently as a professional and maintain a home and family as well as my father providing for and protecting us while becoming the U.K's first Rastafarian lawyer with his own successful and impactful practice. My aunts and uncles demonstrated a mix of being both entrepreneurs and professionals. And my grandparents as West Indian migrants set the foundation for family, and ownership. So in reflection from a young child it was instilled in me to become! Whatever that may be for me I would become. And in becoming I would do it with excellence.

All of my life we have traveled nationally and internationally, been taught that the world is ours and we can go anywhere and become anything in it. Looking back my parents and village instilled a level of confidence within me that relied on my belief in myself and not the voices and opinion of others. It was instilled in me to focus on purpose, contribution and passion. To understand that sacrifice comes with passion and in order to step into my glory I would need to be prepared to go through something while demonstrating faith, diligence and the discipline to persevere no matter what.

By adult life I had witnessed this play out in my father's life until he suddenly passed away, and life changed. It was my turn to endure, and demonstrate my faith, discipline, diligence in order to contribute, and live in my purpose, so that my daughter could witness the journey in preparation for her own becoming as I had.



The beautiful thing about looking back in reflection is acknowledging we were an extension of a risk and the faith to travel to a new beginning our grandparents. I was raised in the “hood”, but I loved the essence of community, I was the product of the coming together of a Christian family with pastors and preachers and a Rastafarian family and therefore allowed to explore my own spirituality. Both families in their own manner taught me how to be a warrior, a leader, a woman of her own standing. To see our progress as a family, to become, when the social political and economic is stacked against you, while navigating the continuous systemic battles to break us collectively and individually, yet we remained humble and confident, while loving, laughing, and continuously push forward is an abundance of blessings.

It is my foundation, Family, Purpose, Contribution, Excellence and Faith.

What challenges did you face growing up and how did you overcome?

I wouldn't say I had any real challenges in fact childhood for me included, traveling, family days out to the zoo, theme park, other family member's homes, the park etc. I was in different activities etc. However

what I did have to come to terms with from a very young age was that I was never going to be in with the in crowd. I was a lone warrior and for the most part that is my natural characteristic. And not something I had ever worried about being amongst family.

However as I entered my teen years one of the first test of my becoming was on my self-belief. My ability to continue to have faith and trust myself as I had been taught. But as teenagers this was a little more challenging than it is as an adult. And in reflection I realised it wasn't my confidence that was knocked because I knew who I was. However in knowing who I was in order to not offend, or intimidate anyone else I would dim my light. And in dimming my light I found myself misaligned with people places and situations which were not meant for me. So you learn to pivot and find yourself back to the light with a few scars.

It took conversations with my dad and close family, it took leaning into my spirituality and turning to the most high for answers, it took self-reflection and brutal honesty, it took meditation and returning back to my vision of becoming to get myself back on my path. And a commitment that I would never dim my light again.

You have worked in the Education sector, what challenges face the upcoming generation and how in your experience can we navigate this?

There is a multitude of challenges that you navigate while working and experiencing the matrix that is education particularly from secondary school to further and higher education. Issues of Adultification of Black students particularly Black girls, rules and punishment that disproportionately target Black students, school to prison pipeline, higher rates of exclusion that directly impact the progression of education into further and higher education and most importantly a practice of demotion and de motivation working the relationship of Black students and education. For example not acknowledging the knowledge, skills, progress of Black children in the same way that commend their white counterparts.

All of this issues independently and collectively have a

direct impact on the number of Black students going to university as a start. Once those that do attend university arrive they are faced with another web of issues around retention and representation, support and relatability.

As Both a lecturer and a student I have not only seen the struggles of others but engaged in my own struggles with other members of staff speaking to me in a derogatory manner in making the mistake I was a student not a member of staff. As a student I have been told I was overly ambitious and too confident.

There are number of students that drop out of university or higher education based on not only the issues faced within education but because many meet at the intersection of economic and social challenges that are not supported by the university but come with the low income of being a student but also living a life beyond being a student, such as being a parent, having a job, traveling long distance, proving there is something to say about pastoral care, resources, engagement etc.

You have an interesting career Journey, what has been your greatest learnings and key benefit to your unique path?

The ability to evolve freely and authentically in my purpose. That is the greatest thing I see when I reflect on my journey so far. From professional trained contemporary dancer, to youth organisation founder, international creative agency founder, working in media, lecturing and now pursuing research and new elements that can contribute to the advancement of Black communities on a global scale. All have been a direct reflection of who I was and where I was holistically in my life at that time. However the most interesting revelation is that each step seemed as though it was uniquely placed as a prerequisite before the next. As the skills, knowledge, experience have all transferred to the next level. The key benefit of this journey is that I have been able grow in to and be comfortable in my own identity, my own view point and contribute that whole heartedly into everything I do. I will say that this route of traveling through the narrow gate is not easy, in fact much of it is travelled alone while people look at you in wonder until they

see the end result. And ultimately you become much more resilient, confident, and secure in self without the need of outside approval.

You worked with Black creatives what is the biggest challenge in the creative industry for Entrepreneurs, how can they overcome this?

There is no one singular challenge for entrepreneurs within the creative industries. In fact my current research is demonstrating that there are an abundance of challenges to navigate dependant upon the intersection of which you meet. However common challenges tend to come from a lack of access, awareness and qualifying for resources human, financial, intellectual that can advance, support, and develop the venture and support the entrepreneurial journey.

On a more individual level clarity and consistency is key in vision, messaging, skills, content, networking etc. Each element of the journey requires consistency.

As it pertains to the social political economic and cultural challenges collectively we can participate

and contribute in movements, reforms, peer support, shared resources and overall commitment to ethno-aggregation within communities, strive towards the development of quasi communities. On an individual level take your time to create something that provides a product, service or meets a need contributed to day to day life, sustainability, opportunities, overall advancement etc. Reason being that beyond monetary gain, that what you have created and put into the world is your legacy, and your tangible contribution to your community and this world.

So far what roles have you enjoyed the most and why?

There is no single role I have enjoyed the most. As in each role I have been blessed with so many opportunities, as a dancer I traveled, lived in another city, did shows, choreographed, shared those skills with young up and coming artist, worked in the community set up and organisation and lived an amazing period of life expressing myself through movement, and creative vision while meeting some amazing people.



Creating a youth and community organisation that facilitated the development of young people specifically young ladies with use of the arts, taking them to shows, creating summer and after school programs for them, growing with them was an amazing journey that gave me an extended collection of daughters.

As a women entrepreneur working in entertainment I was able to build an organisation, travel internationally, build an international network, inspire and help develop other women on their own path, work on short films, feature films, music videos, live shows, magazines editorials, photoshoots, fashion shows, and win awards as well as turning down opportunities that were not aligned with me.

As a lecturer I have worked with 100's of undergraduates and experienced their growth and development. Tested my own knowledge, navigate the very white traditional spaces of academia. Be recognised as a lecturer who supports students reach their highest potential.

As a researcher/academic I have been able to raise tough questions around how we, as a collective, can move towards a proactive change across the diaspora. I have traveled internationally and nationally to share my research, ideas and concepts, network with elite well established Black scholars, professors etc. Speak at conferences and facilitate workshops.

And now as founder of Her House of Mastery and co-founder of Speak with my daughter we are embarking on a new journey of womanhood, motherhood, entrepreneurship, empowerment, legacy communication.

So I have loved them as they have offered travel, networks, friendship, business and academic opportunities, adventure and innovation and I honestly look forward to whatever come next.

What advice would you give young women interested in venturing in to the creative industry?

Be honest with yourself about why you are choosing the creative industries.

A passion, talent, creativity, innovation, a skill are normally the catalyst behind the why people have ventured into the particular industry, however the will to sustain the industry goes beyond this. In fact, purpose, business, change, contribution, wealth all begin to play their part so you should consider how they all come together.

Knowledge of the business of the industry and all the opportunities, professions, platform possibilities is also extremely important. In addition to this think about what your statement is, what are you trying to communicate, impact, and change.

However on a more independent level is this part of your purpose, what is your vision. It's vital to have this as it will act as your blueprint when facing the "No" you will hear repeatedly, the shifts in direction the battles between monetary gain and purpose.

What is your favourite go to self-care activity?

Taking long baths, this has to be my absolute favourite self-care activity, music, candles, beautifully scented oils and natural skin and hair products. This is the time of the day where I am able to both unwind, meditate on how the day has played out but also look towards the next moment. Beyond self-care this is where I allow myself to be still, to be free, to reset. The wonderful thing about this particular self-care routine is that it works for you mentally and spiritually but also as a women gives you time to indulge in yourself and feel beautiful.

What does women's voices mean to you?

A woman's voice is the epicentre of our existence, vision and conduct as a community and as a collective. Women have so much power not to stand alone but to bring us back together in balance and harmony. As a womanist a black woman who believes in the social political economic and cultural advancement of both black men and women collectively I believe that the woman's voice is as strong as the heart beating without it everything else stops.



Professor Ona C. Miller's Story...

Is a Global Educator and Founder of Female Civility Initiative™ that has various subsidiaries to include The Global Female Civility Leadership Institute™, The Global Library of Female Authors™, The Global Female Publishing Group™, Little AMAZONS™ and National Female Civility Day that was established in 2019.

Professor Ona has an earned Doctorate of Professorship and an earned Doctorate degree in Organizational Leadership. Her expertise is in resolving issues and providing solutions that will change the environment of Women in Leadership, Female Global Relations, and Societal Positioning." Professor Ona is a panelist, advisor, author and global educator.

Professor Ona is a Founding member on the Board of Directors for YOU! Empower a non-profit organization designed to provide for disadvantaged women and families.

Professor Ona is appointed and commissioned by the Interfaith Peace-Building Initiative as an International Goodwill Ambassador and an International World Civility Ambassador. She was awarded the Women of Global Solutions Award, the Golden Rule International Award and the Female Civility Icon Award.

Professor Ona is on a mission to break all barriers and build sustainable bridges, while leaving no female behind. Her mission is to make sure that all females worldwide know and experience mental, physical, emotional, psychological, societal, cultural and traditional liberty.

Tell us about your early life experiences.

I had an amazing childhood mainly because of the relationship my sister and I had and still have. My sister is my best friend, consultant, and confidant. We were taught to do all things together. We were taught to stick together and always have each other's back no matter what. Everyone thought of us as twins because of our names and also because we do resemble each other quite a bit. But, it was through this relationship I learned love, commitment, determination, loyalty, character, and integrity. I must also include that I learned how to love myself but love someone greater than I even loved myself.

My mother taught me that I should always be honest and tell the truth no matter what. She would say, "Even if it is your mother you always tell the truth." She taught me what it meant to endure and if you want something you will have to work for it. She taught me that everything doesn't come easy, but perseverance would always prevail.

I remember when my mother and father were going through a divorce she was determined to provide for her two daughters. She knew that it was up to her to make sure that we were healthy and well. My mother who was a school teacher would go to school and teach every day, but also would work after school for the after school programs for other children to make extra money. I also remember that my mother would play the piano at different churches on Sunday morning to also receive extra money. My mother was a piano player and singer. She taught my sister and I both how to sing and put us both in piano lessons so that we could learn how to play the piano. However, I saw my mother struggling to pay for the piano lessons and I opted out of taking them. My sister continued because her love for music was much greater than mine.

We were not wealthy nor did we have much money, but we were loved and cared for purposefully and passionately. We were my mother's world. She took us everywhere she went and there was no place that she went that we couldn't go. My mother made sure that we were safe and secure. We never had to worry about her bringing men around or her having a boyfriend to compensate for things that were needed. She

remained vigilant as a woman of character, morals, and ethics. She gave us a great example of how a lady should be and function regardless of what they were going through.

I remember my mother would buy material and make her skirts because it was cheaper. Her goal was to always have enough to feed us and take care of us. Her main lesson that she taught us was the gift of learning and education. She was a masterful educator until she retired after 43 years of service.

My father taught me the importance of your word. When you say something make sure that you follow through on your word. He would always say that your word is your currency. He would always say people will listen to you when they know your word is your bond of truth.

He taught me to not take any wooden nickels and to make sure that I never settle for anything. Earlier in life I didn't have much respect for my father because as a child I saw and heard things that he did to my mother that I didn't like or appreciate. He was the one who defiled the marriage by infidelity. I am just now in my latter years of life being able to truly embrace and love my father unconditionally. At some point in life we have to accept people exactly where they are, set our boundaries, and love them anyway.

What's been your biggest challenge?

My biggest challenge has been throughout life and up until recently, wanting to please everybody without having to say no. I hated confrontation with a passion. So, standing up for myself was a great challenge. I would rather just not say anything and go along with it just to get it over with for the sake of peace. However, I had an awakening. I realized that I had spent most of my life pleasing other people, whether it is family, friends, bosses, mentors, colleagues, acquaintances, church members, mother, father, etc. So, I stopped!!! I decided to do all of the things that I desired to do no matter who didn't like it. It felt so good! I decided that if I am going to be uncomfortable in life it should be because I am going after everything that I want and desire out of MY life. I overcame it because I didn't have enough time in a day, week, month, year to do the things that I wanted to do. I wasted most of my time

catering and pleasing others. I also realized that I was frustrated and agitated all the time. It was because I was living life daily for everyone else but myself.

I started being honest with myself. When someone would ask me to do something, I would then take time to ask myself, "Do you want to do it?" "Do you desire to be a part of it?" "Do you have the energy, time, and capacity to take this on?" If my answer was honestly no, then I didn't do it. I also begin to assess whether or not it was even something that would benefit my growth, development, purpose, mission, goals, vision and overall well-being. Because sometimes it can be a good thing but not a divine thing. I got to a point where I needed every word, action, behavior, deed, and thought to count for something towards enhancing my life. I didn't want to experience depletion but fulfillment.



What does breaking barriers look like to you?

Breaking barriers to me looks like, as a female leader, doing all of the things that said I couldn't or shouldn't do regardless of constraints, bias, prejudice, discrimination, small mindedness of society, tradition, and culture. It is being the authentic, unique, version of yourself without facades, masks, or cover ups. The

greatest barriers that we have to break as women are the dysfunctional cycles that we have been taught. We have been taught to be who they say we should be, do what they say we should do, wear what they say wear. Society, tradition, and culture has given us the things that we should do and the things that we should not do. Breaking barriers means we tear up their list and all of the lists that we have been given AND MAKE OUR OWN!!!!

Our great barriers are insecurity, intimidation, inadequacy, irrelevance, voiceless, condemnation, etc. We must realize that the only way those things can take root is if we allow them to. The greatest barrier is realizing that we don't have to accept anything unless we want to.

I remember when I first started my Female Civility Initiative one of my male mentors told me that Men would always run the world. I thought to myself he must be blind and he surely is dumb. Regardless of what it may appear to be, women have been running this world forever. We are the ones that give birth, structure a household, undergird visions, and have a keen sense of insight and intuition. Likewise, he is no longer my mentor because that say's several things that are a detriment to my existence. Breaking barriers is not being dominated or contained by ill perceptions or sterilized beliefs.

Based on your vast experience, what is the biggest challenge with global female empowerment and leadership?

The biggest challenge with global female empowerment and leadership, in my opinion, is that we lack balance. We are not trying to take over the world or diminish the need of male existence, but we are saying we will be included. Women must realize that we don't need empowerment, WE ALREADY HAVE THE POWER! We don't need man to give us a position we were created in position. It is our attitude and intentions of why we feel the need to empower females. Our mindset and behaviors should be regardless of the stereotypes, categories, limits, and boxes I am who I am and I am going to be who I am without hesitation.

Additionally, another area that is a big challenge is

when we as females constantly compete with each other. We say it is collaboration when in reality we are trying to figure out a way to take some other females vision and turn it into our own. Rather than using our own brilliant and unique creativity to author what we were purposed and created to do. This is why we see so many empowerment movements for women with the same agenda because we take something of someone else and we think we can do it better. Wrong motive and intent. Likewise, it stifles the growth of the lazy individual, confuses the masses, and causes chaos amongst the mission of change. At some point we must be accountable and lead our own lives to where we are intentionally pursuing our own unique and authentic purpose by design. You are not a leader of empowerment or in power if you are unable to engage in your creative ability within yourself in order to produce a substantial vision that is unique to your life.

What has been the highlight in your journey so far?

The highlight of my journey has been self-discovery and watching myself grow, develop, and bloom into this amazing miracle that I thought I would never see. The highlight of my journey has been removing fear, taking a leap, and never looking back. The highlight in my journey has been the process that leads me to the destination because I had to come face to face with me. I had to learn, like, love and sometimes laugh at me.

Another highlight in my journey is being TRUE TO THYSELF. I have learned to protect me, guard me, and secure my life that is a treasure to not only myself but to others. There is a whole nation of assigned females that are attached to my life and reaching them is definitely a highlight of my journey.

What's your why?

My why is the constant need for change and offer the world a new narrative. My why is to make certain that I am not a complainer but I am a change maker. I want change in the world, change for the better. So, I am the change I want to see. My why is to right the wrongs, bring justice to the injustices, peace to chaos, clarity to the confused, and love in place of hatred, mercy in place of condemnation and grace in place of guilt.



My why is *"I want the world to experience and know love."*

I believe that each generation has the duty and authority to make the path better, brighter, and greater for the next generation to follow. I want to be that example that they can see. I want to be that blue print that that can build upon. I want to be that fingerprint that helps them find their identify.

I want the next generation of females to feel loved, appreciated, accepted, and celebrated. I don't want them to feel lost, abandoned, or existing with no clue of who they are or what they should be doing. I want to be that launching pad, vehicle or tool that they can rely on right now.

What inspires you?

I am inspired by God. I know that may seem unrealistic or deep for some, but for my life it is my truth. I am inspired that I wake up with breath in my body, the

motion of my arms, legs, fingers, toes, etc. I am inspired by being in my right mind and the ability to keep growing and learning through the lessons of life. I am inspired that God created me as a unique vessel that has a small part to play on earth that will impact the lives of females worldwide. My greatest inspiration is knowing that God trusts me enough to say, do, create, implement, and activate something that will ultimately change lives. For me that is the most powerful inspiration of all.

What is the most fun thing you have ever done?

The most fun thing I have ever done is wait late in the morning hours just before the new day on Christmas eve and call everyone in the family while singing, playing the toy piano, and tambourine. The reactions from friends and family were priceless. Some hung up the phone. Some thought they were dreaming. Some thought they were having a nightmare. Some started singing along in their sleep. But the most important part to it all is most never even remember the experience the next day. (I am laughing now just thinking about it...lol)

One thing on your bucket list is...

To write, enact, input, create, establish, and interject a policy that will forever change the trajectory of females forever.

What do women's voices mean to you?

Women's voices are a sacred substance of sensitivity. Our voices are agents of a balanced calming vibration that the world neglects but so desperately needs. Our voices are sacred because they hold elements that produce and nurture growth, keys that unlock and expand intellect, treasures that increase value and worth. Women's voices are the trajectory that has the capacity to enhance society, tradition, and culture dimensionally. Although women's voices are not always appreciated, valued, or heard due to various biases, prejudice, and discriminatory reasons, previously, it did not, and currently, it does not ever diminish the power of our voices. It caused our voices to become sensitive to the needed changes in the challenges we face worldwide. However, as women,

we must realize, accept, and deploy our unique voices without reservations. The problem that I see with women's voices is that we continue to try and sound like someone else, or we try to follow a pattern of



what we think others want to hear. As women, we do ourselves an injustice by not speaking our thoughts, perspectives, and perceptions with brilliance and intellect. We are more than capable of engaging in most conversations at every table and can offer great value regarding every topic. I believe that women's voices are an intricate detail and vital piece to the world individually and collectively. Our voices represent our identities individually and collectively. Women's voices are powerfully phenomenal and phenomenally powerful, to the point that we are afraid of our voices, and so are they.

What legacy do you want to leave behind?

I want to leave a legacy that when people (family, friends, coworkers, mentors, females, little girls) think of me they smile and feel a sense of love, substance, depth, fortitude, solidarity and wholeness. I want to leave a legacy where people will know that I loved God with all of my heart and considers me one of his angels that was sent to hug and kiss their lives.

I want my sister to know that I was the best friend and best support system she ever had!

Wiggins Toyin Phyllis

A change agent who believes change begins with her.

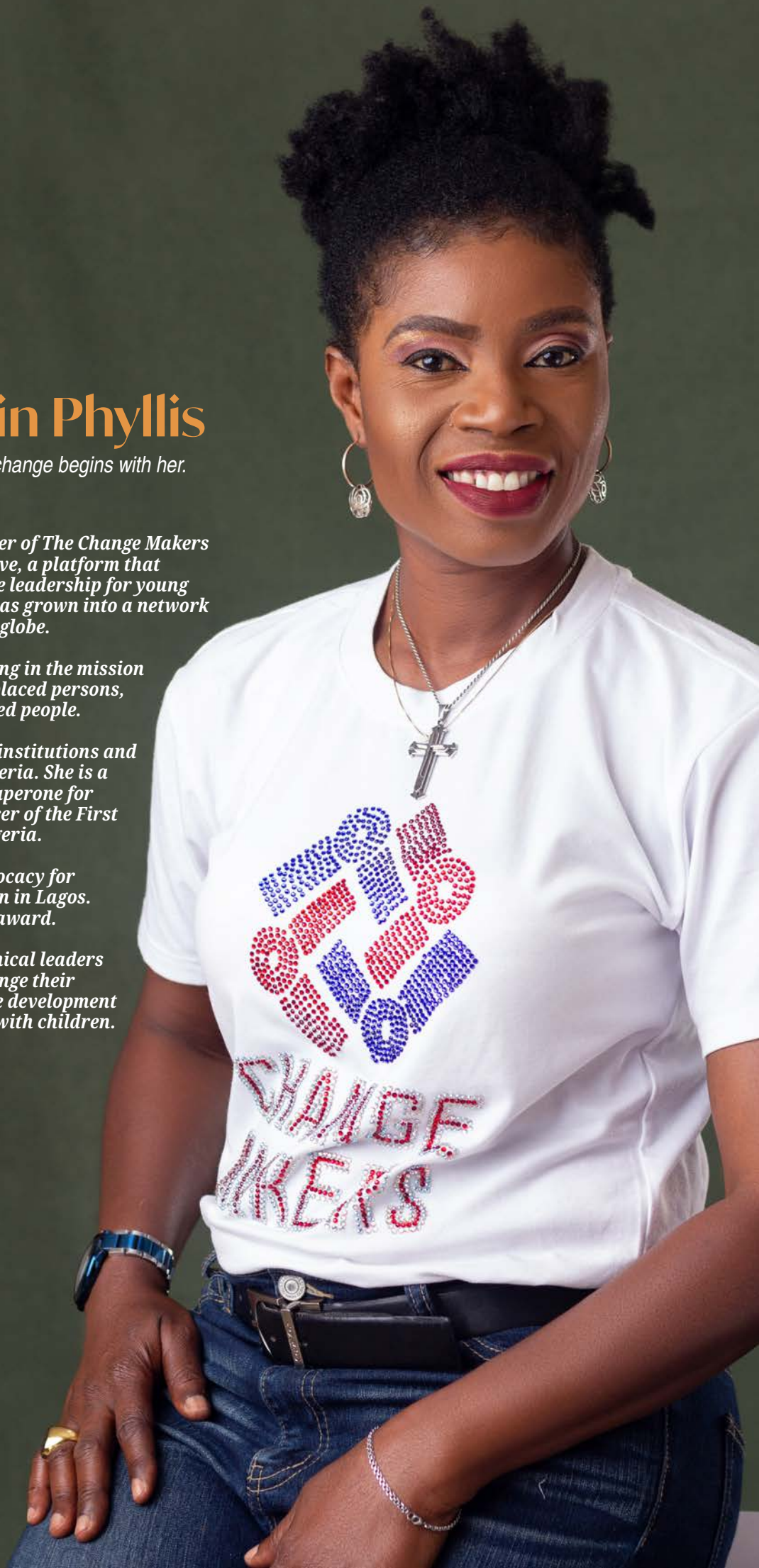
Wiggins Toyin Phyllis is the Founder of The Change Makers Leadership and Mentoring Initiative, a platform that empowers and provides supportive leadership for young emerging leaders. This initiative has grown into a network of 8000 + young leaders across the globe.

She is also the Co-founder of walking in the mission which cares for the Internally displaced persons, orphans, widows and less privileged people.

She is a Board member of various institutions and member of the Actor's Guild of Nigeria. She is a Producer, Director, Actress and chaperone for beauty queens. Toyin is the producer of the First Face of Automobile industry in Nigeria.

She is Project coordinator for Advocacy for Widow's Empowerment Foundation in Lagos. A recipient of Plateau Leadership award.

She is passionate about raising ethical leaders who will drive innovation and change their communities using the sustainable development goals. She is married and blessed with children.



I hail from the land labelled with the motto “Liberty and Service” Osun State. I was born in the mid 60’s to the family of Mr and Mrs Oyediran from Ikirun in Ifelodun Local Government area of Osun State.

I was born in the city of Kaduna in Northern Nigeria, the City of Learning, which houses one of the most prominent educational institutions in Nigeria, Ahmadu Bello University popularly known as ABU Zaria. The primal phase of my life was in Kaduna where I had my primary school education before proceeding to a state called Kogi for my secondary school education. Shortly

After my secondary school education, I returned to Kaduna State to further my education. I went ahead to bag an academic strata in Spinning in the department of Textile Technology from Kaduna State Polytechnic.

When I was done with Polytechnic, I moved to a city located in middle belt Nigeria which has been over the years loved for its cool weather, Jos Plateau State. I have always loved to explore all my talents and hone my skills and the reason I studied TV/ Film Production in Jos.

It was a diverse field of learning for me, having studied Spinning prior to this time. I have a masters degree in theology. Am also an ordained Reverend of The Missionary Church International, Columbia South Carolina.

Growing up some of the values instilled in me were to always esteem everyone that comes my way while at the same time, focusing on achieving God’s purpose for my life.

I am married and blessed with two awesome gifts as my children.

Please tell us about the biggest challenge in your life and how you overcame.

Life throws several shades of challenges as we progress. How best we handle it determines the colour of the future we are planning or have already planned as the case may be.

My greatest challenge was taking a drastic decision to be with the wrong person, someone who didn’t want to be with me. The decision had a very heavy toll on me for a while. I am glad I was able to heal. So

many who find themselves in such a position take a lifetime to heal. We grow and we learn. That is the beauty of life.

This was certifiably overwhelming for me, for a long time I couldn’t get my life together. It upended my progress and thrust me on a downward spiral. Don’t fall under pressure to get into a relationship or get married to someone who is not meant for you. It comes with a lot of bitter experiences and life changing outcomes.

One day God spoke to me; that He was going to use what I love to heal me.

He said I should take my box and go to a studio to take pictures. I did just that and took 550 shots and divided them into 5 segments and laced each of them with “Music of the Masters”. Each day for 3 consecutive months I watched the video and continuously spoke life unto myself. It was a healing process and it took a while before I got healed and my life took a new turn for good. This was a drastic turning point for my life.

Let me reiterate that we must all have the God factor to sail through challenges of every sort. In my case Jesus held me tightly in His grips and turned my life around to showcase His glory.

Never be ashamed of your story, it has the power to heal others in similar situations.

What are you passionate about?

I am passionate about empowering the next generation, facilitating their personal development and enabling their voices to be heard so they can become persons of influence in their world. I am awed by the authenticity in the power of young people. We must help them use this power right.

To bring about such revival, I am open to mentoring young global leaders. I call them Change Makers, people who shun trends to tackle an enigma. It gives me so much joy to see the young ones lead. If we raise them well, they will do better!

What does ethical leadership look like to you?

Integrity is the core base of what ethical leadership should look like. It is the true mark of leadership

coloured by trailblazers who are undaunted in saying the truth. I think a true leader must have integrity first before he or she can pick up quality values. Integrity is respecting yourself first, others and the image you hold dear which is of valuable status.

I believe that having a leader regardless of age, who is steadfast in keeping good values we all hold dear, will enable us to start changing mindset one person at a time. Don't wait for support! We all have a part to play in effecting change. I think the major value for ethical leadership to be directed by is Integrity. If people can be true to themselves and people around them, we won't have shady dealings either as leaders or followers. Transparency can only be effective where integrity is lord. Ethical leadership for me must be directed by integrity, character trust, charisma, respect and fairness. This will provide a strong personal foundation for what we believe in.

What are the biggest challenges you have observed that emerging leaders face?

The biggest challenges emerging leaders face is emotional intelligence, this is not only in emerging leaders but also leaders in position.

Emotional intelligence deals with studying emotions and handling your own emotions as a leader. Leaders especially need to understand that people will troll or disagree with them. Having emotional intelligence over your oppositions automatically changes the game for you without you speaking. I am not saying don't speak, but only do that when necessary because as leaders people model your actions. Emotional intelligence is indeed a game changer.

What drives you?

The soothing notion that my actions and voice is influencing future generations gives me more focus to keep being an impact maker because change begins with me.

Most times at the brink of giving up, every leader is reminded of the passengers he has on the train, so many special destinies are sent to deliver a message. If the leader fails, he fails them as well. A

leader is not just for himself or herself he shares in the burden of so many people who look up to them. This is why giving up is a future impossible tense. My Voice matters! My actions speak!



What legacy do you want to leave behind?

After this whole movie is over and the breath of life is sniffed out of my lungs, I Toyin Phyllis Wiggins would love to be remembered as a poured out wine, someone who spent her talents on others; someone who lived her life to the fullest as a beacon of light -guiding others to the truth of their existence.

I believe that kindness can change lives and heal wounds we are not even aware of. By lending out my voice and spinning the philanthropic wheel in my capacity to so many people is also one of the things you want to be remembered for. All that matters is making a mark, even though you may not get popular doing that. The goal is not to get famous anyways but reach out to so many as well as impacting values in their lives.

If your mind is centred on popularity you might miss the baton of actually fulfilling destiny. Popularity fades, legacy remains. I choose legacy but, if it's coming with popularity then it's a double boxed gift! I am a Changemaker and change begins with me.

Samantha Hardingham's Story

I grew up in Shenfield, Essex. My Dad ran my grandfather's family signwriting business, my mother looked after us and all the animals. My grandmother died at an early age of bowel cancer which meant that my parents helped to bring up my uncle who was only nine at the time. We're a very close knit family, it was such a quick and unexpected death and with my grandfather being 60 when my uncle was born, he's more like an older brother to me with only six years between us. We went to the same school but if I called him uncle in the playground I'd know he'd wrestle me to the ground until he got shouted at when we got home. After school on a Friday we'd have afternoon tea with my very traditional, loving great aunt where they'd be a feast of cakes but it was a way of the family all checking in on each other. I still have vivid memories of the chocolate bunny jelly moulds that my great aunt used to produce and I've never tasted anything like it since! Delicious!

My sister and I had a typical middle class, simple and idyllic childhood, lots of outdoor time, fresh air and lots of animals. My memories seem to be dated by whichever animal we had at the time. One of my favourites was our Jack Russell, Thimble, I'd like to say she slept on the bed but to be totally honest it was in the bed alongside my milk bottle as a small child. Totally disgusting to think of it now but obviously great for my gut bacteria as both of us were never ill! Being a typical terrier she had tried to kill other dogs,



but we used to dress her up and put her in the pram. She used to love eating wasps and then shake for hours afterwards, she lived to a grand old doggie age. I was devastated when she eventually passed away.

We got into horses early on and built great friendships through the sport. Horses became a big part of my life until recently and as a result of that I ended up training one of the New Zealand Olympic Event Riders a couple of years ago.

Holidays were always spent down in Salcombe, Devon with great family friends and forty years later we're still going to the same place! We're lucky enough that our kids love it just as much. The couple of weeks that we spend down there is full of adventure on the water with kayaks and paddle boards, no screens are allowed.

It's a good old fashioned British beach holiday. I haven't got much to say about school, I loved my junior school but hated senior school and that had a negative impact on me for many years, I just didn't fit in, but it also carved out who I am today.

I loved the learning, it's still a daily question I ask myself, 'what have I learnt today?' but generally I just couldn't wait to get home to see the animals to be honest. I've learnt so much about human behaviour through observing animals. They keep you grounded and enable kids to have responsibility at a young age.

What was your biggest challenge?

I put on four stone in weight whilst having my youngest daughter and suffered with pelvic girdle pain which is excruciatingly painful and had to be non-weight bearing for most of the nine months. Desperate to lose that weight and not ever have to diet I set to work researching how on earth I could achieve what seemed like the impossible.

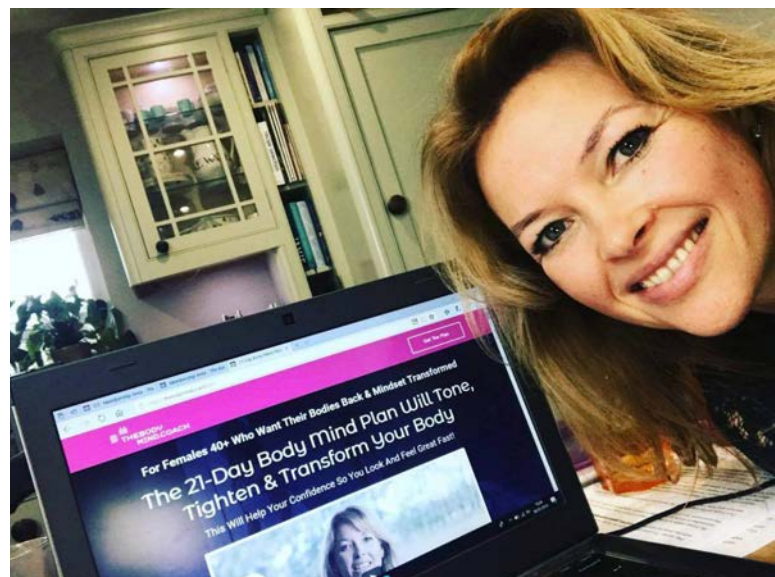
I can honestly say that the pain was so acute that I just wanted to go to bed and not wake up. Armed with as much info as possible I started my method of losing weight and within 10 days I'd lost 10 pounds and in five months lost the four stone. (10 years down the line and I'm still the same weight.) It felt amazing but hit another bout of depression not long after that.

It's tough for any mother with young kids, you're bottom of the list, sleep deprived and life feels like Groundhog Day. I was desperate to not take any medication as that felt like sticking a plaster over a broken leg and not getting to the root of the problem, so I just started walking briskly for 20 mins a day. I had identified that as a key component which I had always had as a happy child and yet here I was stuck inside with two young kids all day, feeling like a prisoner in my own home. The walking turned into running. Every run started with tears but by the time I returned I'd shed another layer of depression. By the time I'd got to my fourth London Marathon I couldn't run anymore, there was nothing negative left to run off!

What are you passionate about?

I'm passionate about moving my body, having an attitude of gratitude, empowering and leading my girls/clients by example, we're not perfect by any means, but failure is a fantastic thing as long as you

learn from it.



What drives you?

Pain! It's the driver for every area of my life but the thought of going back to having any back/hip pain drives me forward every day to move my body and eat delicious nutritious food.

Prior to having my two girls I had lots of miscarriages. I've not had a parent die but the grief was unexpected and completely threw me. My face felt paralysed, being of a generally sunny disposition I remember not being able to laugh for months which also saddened me greatly.

A lovely consultant friend at the time explained that it's like experiencing the grief of a parent dying at the three month mark which was comforting. My female GP was particularly unhelpful but another male GP at my practice had all the time in the world for me, I'll always be grateful to him for that. In the end I went to a traditional Chinese acupuncturist, it felt like she just flipped the switch, my hormones changed overnight and two beautiful girls followed.

What worked for you in your weightless journey?

Consistency, educating myself in nutrition and the psychology around food so that I could escape the diet trap. Diets don't work but we're still conditioned to think that we have to diet. It's short term thinking. Making the shift to long term health goals is a whole

different ball game, it takes the pressure off us, with that comes long term success and confidence.

What are the myths around weight loss?

Muscle is heavier than fat always makes me chuckle, a pound of muscle weighs the same as a pound of fat! It's the density that's very different, muscle being far denser than fat. So for example you could have two women both weighing 65 kilos, one with low body fat and muscly, the other with high body fat. The woman with more muscle would be two dress sizes smaller than the high body fat woman.

Another myth is the middle aged spread, our bodies do change but it only spreads if you let it! The stubborn fat around the middle of your body is usually due to the brain being stubborn and full of excuses. Harsh but fair!

What advice would you give to someone who is struggling with weight loss?

Educate yourself and break your long term goals down into what you need to do daily in order to achieve them. When it's a small daily goal, it's easy and doesn't feel overwhelming. Drink three litres of water a day, this is the biggest kept secret to anti-ageing and weight loss out there. Just measure it out and get it down. 10 years I've been doing this and I still have to measure it out otherwise it doesn't get drunk. Track your food, if it's not tracked it's not measurable. Lastly just get started, they'll never be that perfect time, just start with the next meal. What are you waiting for? Health is our only asset, treat it like it's your best investment.

What unique ways do you work with your clients?

The majority of my clients tend to be in the medical profession, they're high performers, perfectionists, they've more than likely dieted for the best part of 20 years. They come with a huge amount of frustration as they're successful in every area of their lives apart from health and fat loss! I work with them to help unlock that pressure they put themselves under to create a more balanced lifestyle where they don't beat themselves up for failing and hand them the



keys to solving their long term culture of dieting. Our brains love fun and excitement, it's the quickest way to learn, yet weight loss is deemed as hard work, tedious, restrictive and feels like punishment, everything our brains hate and fight against. Being mentally strong and fit is so empowering. Rewiring and building new neural pathways for my clients is an absolute game changer for them, so they go on to lead a life of freedom from food. I encourage clients to go out of their comfort zone and experience new adventures to make them feel alive again!

About Samantha Hardingham

47 year old Samantha Hardingham is The Body Mind Coach specialising in helping focused driven professional women that are 40-60 years lose up to 20lbs in 90 days. Her 12 Week Online Nutrition Program will not only help you drop up to 20 lbs but will leave you standing in front of the mirror, feeling proud of who you are and the woman you've become. She lives in Suffolk with her husband and two daughters.



WOMEN'S PUBLIC RISE TO PROMINENCE:

Why continued publicity is key
to progressing female leadership

There's a female revolution taking place dismantling patriarchal systems and it's not about to stop. The rise of female leadership is on display for the whole world to see and so it should be as history is being re-written.

The uncovering of discrimination, social injustices as well as recognising women who have broken barriers and risen to once inaccessible leadership positions has been focal in giving women a voice. Through access to worldwide news on the progress of female leadership many women have found the strength and courage to stand in their truth and take up roles as leaders in varying capacities. In this article I will look at how documenting and showcasing the progress of female leadership in public forums serves to amplify the voices of women as we work to create a new normal where a women's ability to lead in any capacity is no longer questioned.

One of the ways in which publicly acknowledging women who take up leadership roles progresses female leadership is that it finally starts to give women recognition where it is deserved. Throughout history women have been instrumental yet for the most part it is our male counterparts who have benefited from public recognition with women being cast to the background.

If we look through history there was a time where a woman couldn't freely walk in her truth without fear of prejudice as was experienced by English literary sisters Emily, Charlotte and Anne Bronte who are responsible for novels such as *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, poems amongst other work. They chose to publish their work under the masculine pseudonyms Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. The 1840s was a time where female authors were not taken seriously as they were seen as more suited to holding traditional roles of mother, wife and all other stereotypical roles applied to women, so it was quite common back then to publish under males' names to project masculinity.

There were many women who were instrumental to the civil rights movement that have probably not been given the recognition they deserve. For instance, Ella Baker who played more of a role behind the scenes advising and mentoring the likes of Martin Luther King Jr and Rosa Parks. How about Septima Poinsette? Known as the 'Mother of the American Civil Rights Movement' she was a teacher and advocate for education starting citizenship schools teaching adults literacy in order to help many African Americans register to vote.

For years women have been made to take the

backseat and watch men be glorified and celebrated on the biggest platforms and now we are living in an era where women are being publicly credited for their work. Women are finally being seen and heard and that is an accomplishment. In no way am I saying this is enough, but it is one in many giant leaps for women that we can look upon proudly.

Another way in which public exposure progresses female leadership is that it addresses the false labels that have been placed on women by society seeing women just as wives, caregivers, domestic goddesses and not capable of holding high power roles and creating successful businesses. By showing what women are doing it works to dismantle these false notions. It shows the dynamism and uniqueness that women possess in being able to wear many different hats. We now see women holding high ranking roles within corporations, creating businesses out of their passions, leading change programmes within their communities and fighting against injustice openly. Women are showing it is possible to use the very things that have been used against us to lead and change the course of leadership, creating opportunities for others.

Data being published, shared and spoken about on public platforms as to the progress of female leadership can also help to inspire and encourage innovation and creativity that can bring balance economically, socially and politically. For instance, In the UK the country where I reside, research has highlighted that one the greatest sources to help boost the economy is women with a projection that supporting female entrepreneurs could contribute £250 billion to the UK economy. This example just goes to show how important women are in building the economy around them and why it's important to invest in women. Through the existence of research such as this and case studies showing women of successful businesses it is an incentive to support and invest in female leadership. Having information like this helps women to realise the opportunities that exist, it encourages women to

start the businesses they've always dreamed of. It provides a much-needed encouragement to women that there is room for our creativity, ideas and solutions we might have to world issues.

Another reason I think the progress of female leadership in the public eye is important to amplifying the voices of women is that it helps women to address inferiority complexes that many possess as a result of how we've been brought up to see ourselves, our abilities and success. Seeing the progress of female leadership helps women to unravel the lies that have been placed on us by society. How many of us were aware of things such as imposter syndrome prior to the rise of discussions around female leadership? How many of us can say we thoroughly examined our issues of anxiety or not feeling good enough prior to an awakening that we could possess roles or opportunities that were once seen as out of our reach? Female leadership being discussed publicly through conferences, events, article publications and other media outlets has brought greater self-awareness and self-actualisation.

Being able to read about and listen to the experiences of successful women in leadership has been helpful for many of us in answering questions about not feeling qualified for certain roles or starting a business. Having insight into the journeys of other women has helped us fill in the gaps as to what's needed to get to the next level, how to communicate with c-level executives and other pieces of information that many of us didn't have access to before. It removes this idea of exclusivity when a successful female leader shares their journey both the highs and lows and you begin to realise that no leaders journey is plain sailing and without moments where they question whether they are fit for purpose. As we witness female leaders share it begins to remove a lot of the perceptions we had as to what it takes to be a leader. We start to imagine ourselves in the roles, businesses and positions we desire because it's no longer presented as some

foreign concept only for the elite or requiring access to an exclusive members club.

For many it has sent us on an intentional journey of self-discovery to uncover the gifts, talents and skills within ourselves. It has sent us on a journey desiring greater and wanted to get that next promotion, wanted to lead teams, wanted to create our own businesses, our own roles. Without the publicity, without the push through media coverage, through the creation of digital platforms, events and more many of us might still be in the dark, unable to understand what's holding us back, why we think we're not good enough to lead or work within a certain industry. The public exposure seeing other women's rise in leadership helps in building confidence in many of us as well as challenging us to work on our mindset, change our language from 'I can't' to 'I can'.

Lastly, publicity on the progress of female leadership helps to instil desire, will and determination in the next generation of female leaders to come. Many of us have all but dreamed about being leaders in our chosen fields but it is important for the development of young women that we create an environment where they can do more than dream; they can aim towards it and see it as a goal this that is more than achievable.

We've all been glued to our devices as we've waited to hear how the US elections would go and it has been confirmed that Joe Biden has won the US presidential race however, I would say more importantly for women all over the world Kamala Harris becoming the first ever female vice-president of the United States of America is a huge accomplishment for the progress of female leadership. Her rise to leadership on a world platform is something young women can look at and aspire to. Being able to witness such significant moments in history is inspiring. Seeing this public rise to leadership removes this idea of female leaders in prominent positions being the works of miracle or a once in a lifetime event and

makes it possible for a young woman to aim beyond her wildest dreams realising that nothing is out of her reach.

Public exposure is key to the rise of female leadership. For long we didn't get to celebrate our accomplishments. It wasn't seen as 'ladylike' to have certain interests or work in certain industries. We weren't allowed to boast about our achievements or be the best at something as it could be seen as a form of emasculation for the men around us.

Female leadership should always be publicly seen in order to inspire women locally, nationally and globally to go on their own journeys of discovering the leader within them. Through public acknowledgment, it shows that our abilities matter and we have a profound purpose. It shows that we're essential to fixing some of the imbalance and lack of synergy in the world, that women's voices in every area of work and business offers the fresh perspective the world needs.



Written by: Salome Asabre

Salome is a business consultant working with businesses to strengthen their client relations, workforce management and their product/service strategy positioning within the market.

Yogita Ridgley' Story

Yogita Ridgley is a successful Business woman, CEO and Founder of Traveling With Me, Myself and I, which offers Personal and Business development services. Yogita wears different hats, Solo Travel Specialist, Personal development strategist, an award winning International speaker, Author and Blogger, with over a decade of solo traveling experience.

Yogita was featured by one of Australian magazines as a Female change maker, finalist of an Innovative Business Award and leadership award. She is an advocate for Mental Health and Well-being and Dyslexia Awareness.

Yogita's mission is to get every woman to play the role of "ME" without mask or pretence.

Yogita's passion is solo travel to Self Discovery. Yogita's vision is helping women to unleash the power of the authentic self through personal development.

Please tell us about your early childhood

My childhood was absolutely amazing all the way until school. I was born into a beautiful indian family in Auckland, New Zealand. Hard work and spirituality were values I learnt very early on in life. My parents loved and embraced me exactly the way I was which was a great foundation for me.

How was school life for you?

I started school with so much excitement and anticipation, I loved to learn. Not long after starting school, I started struggling with reading, writing and spelling. As time went, I felt like I was stuck in a bad dream and needed to wake up.

I remember the time my class teacher told me that I am an embarrassment to my family, school and class, she continued to say, "Lucky you are pretty, you can get married and be a good housewife".



My self esteem started deteriorating as years went by in school. My experience with learning and my teacher caused me to have low self esteem. Overcoming low self esteem was not an easy task, but when I had my two beautiful daughters, it became more important for me to work on my personal development. I wanted my daughters to be proud of me but most importantly wanted them to believe in themselves, be confident and the very best of themselves.

Please tell us two tools that you have been able to use in your self discovery journey.

The key to self discovery is getting out of your comfort zone. You cannot see the complete picture unless you step out of the FRAME.

The tools that I mastered and now teach with my personal development program is Solo Travel and Mindset Strategies

Who is authentic Yogita?

Authentic Yogita is made by Dyslexia. She is an introvert, she wears her heart on her sleeves, she is creative, innovative and a born leader. To own my strengths after believing for over 30 years that I am an embarrassment to society was a long journey. I am grateful for the likes of Albert Einstein, Richard Branson, Steve Jobs and Steven Spielberg .. yes these are names of famous people with Dyslexia

You started off in corporate tell us abit about your transition to what you do now.

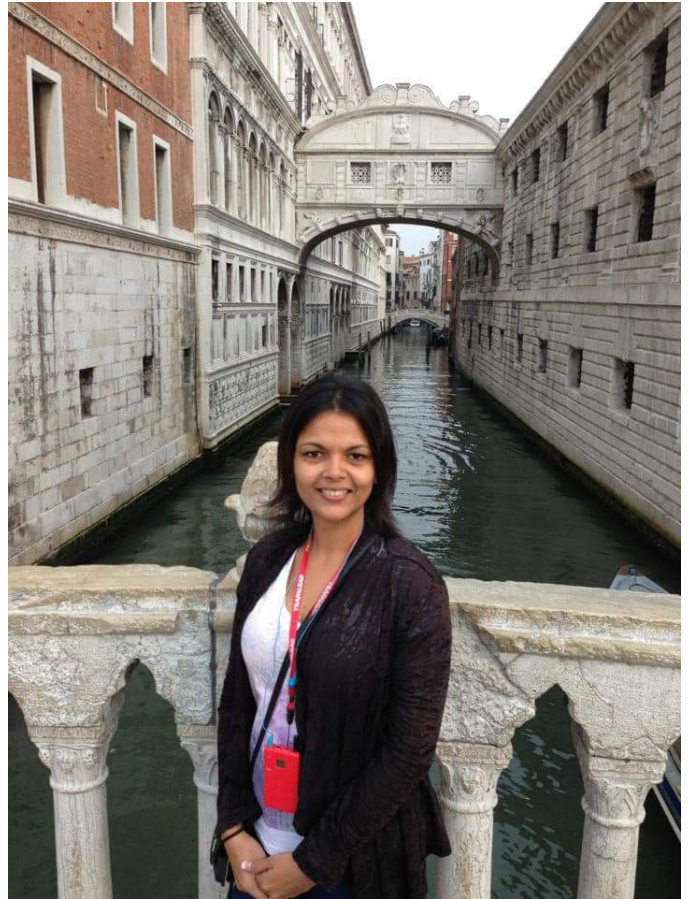
Like 97% of the human population , I was not different. I was also conditioned that success is when you get rich. It is valued with material things. My corporate life was successful. My life was picture perfect but I was mentally and emotionally dying inside. My first step to personal development was a solo trip to London, during this trip I found my passion and purpose. Helping others with their personal development to achieve good mental health, emotional health and physical health. My success is now measured in how many lives I change for better and how many people I inspire and empower with my voice and my story

Please tell us the correlation between finding myself and I and what it truly means to you.

Finding Me, Myself and I is a story about my journey to loving my Authentic self. My true self without the masks and pretences

What would Yogita tell that struggling mum who has lost herself in putting family and children first?

As a mother, it is in our nature to do everything for the family and children. From my life experience, I have learnt you can not be a good mother or good wife or good anything unless you are the best version of yourself. This requires self love. But you can't truly love yourself if you don't know who your true self is. Your children learn from you. If you teach them self love and self respect... they will thank you for it. My advice is to start your journey of self discovery. I would love to help you on this path, just reach out.



You love travelling, what is the one thing you always take with you?

I love everything about traveling, especially the unknown and less visited places. I do not travel without first aid and travel insurance.

Your favourite destination is?

I have two favorite destinations. I love India and Europe. Each city I enjoyed for different reasons.

Which city inspires you?

Pairs, France inspires me with creativity and self love.
Rome, Italy for history and innovation.
Agra, India more a town then city for the history.
Jackson Hole , US for the nature and beauty.
Auckland, New Zealand for its warmth and love... it is home for me.
Rishikesh, India for spirituality and healing.

I can go on and on... when you travel with the right mindset, you connect with places and things at a deeper level.

Defeating Hopelessness-

Overcoming the Shame of Abortion

By Vanessa R Brooks

The North American Nursing Diagnosis Association, defined hopelessness as “the subjective state in which an individual sees limited or no alternatives or personal choices available and is unable to mobilize energy on his or her own behalf.”

I know what hopelessness feels like. I battled with it thirty years ago. It’s a deep emotional tormenting feeling of loneliness, worthlessness, shame, failure, guilt, and darkness.

I was a 20 year old college student who used college life as an escape from my reality. In “my” real world I was an awkward, sore thumb who battled internally with feelings of rejection and not loving myself.

I felt different and as a young girl who was always the tallest in my class, slightly overweight, with gap teeth, and deformed feet I had constant reminders that I was different. I can attest to the destructive power of negative and toxic thoughts and faulty beliefs. Because internally I had convinced myself that I was unloved and unliked, based on being teased by kids at school and even family members. Not only can sticks and stones break your bones but so can words. Words broke me! Words wounded my soul and shattered my spirit.



I remember it like yesterday, I was a young teenager in the church choir, an adult choir member was irritated with me because I chose to wear a beautiful brooch on my choir robe. I think that was against the church rules, although I don't recall anyone ever saying so. Looking back from a restored place, I think the woman who scorned me was just irritated by my freedom, slight rebellion, and independence.

Unfortunately, my self esteem wasn't as peak as it is today so I was crushed when she screeched out at me in front of everyone "Vanessa, you're not supposed to wear that brooch, you always stick out like a sore thumb." Ouch, the sting of those words broke my spirit. 'They broke my bones'. A huge lump built up in my throat and huge tear drops left my eyes, and rolled down to my choir robe. No one offered hope to me that day. No one said a word. The choir members proceeded to sing songs of worship to God with me on the back row crying uncontrollably with that same lump in my throat. I felt depleted, drained, humiliated, and vowed never to return to church again. That was one of many days that hope seemed like an impossible reality to me. With an internal, seemingly never ending war, of constant feelings of rejection and feelings of worthlessness, I did a pretty good job of convincing myself of the same. I felt like a freak, felt like people were staring at me and disgusted by my presence.

You see a mindset that is left with toxic thoughts growing wild is breeding ground for despair, darkness, hopelessness, depression, and an opportunity for the enemy to taunt you with lies.

You may think that my story of the choir robe and brooch is petty but when you already battle internally with soul wounds, rejection, negative word curses, and being taunted and bullied it really doesn't take much to oppress you. Hopelessness sets in relatively easy when the foundation is already laid.

I eventually learned to turn to marijuana, alcohol,

cigarettes, partying, and men as a source of acceptance and validation.

When I was intoxicated or high, I could get lost in my daydreams-it was a time to escape reality and detach from my internal pain. I lived a fantasy. I was loved, beautiful, and accepted. Even though the men I was entangled with were far from healthy relationships we seemed to feed off each other's pain. I now realize they were broken too. Broken people attract and are attracted to broken people. Most of the men I dated were older. I know now I was looking for a father's love, for male authority. My father passed away in 2007 but all of my life I just don't recall ever hearing him say 'I love you'. Not hearing those words created a void in my soul and lay a foundation for rejection. Despite this I love my Father and have no ill will towards him at all just identifying roots.

My Father loved God and I'm sure was dealing with his own soul wounds. He's totally forgiven. I chose to uproot those painful memories of my past and in some ways I've learned to accept that the toxic parts of my past are non existent.

I eventually moved away to college in 1990, I started college as a 20 year old who felt a deep sense of failure and addicted to cycles of self sabotage.

By the fourth year I had wrecked my automobile, dropped out of community college, ran away to live in Atlanta for a year, and was severely addicted to getting high. On the college campus I found more rejection from snooty city girls though I did manage to connect to a few girls and develop friendships which by the way was a new concept for me. I was much more interested in partying and getting high. It was during my college years that I GOT PREGNANT I panicked and felt alone. I remember the doctors saying my baby would be born with severe birth defects, including missing limbs. Alone in a clinic I made the decision to get a late-term abortion. I remember the day of

the abortion procedure, the hospital staff was a bit cold and stiff. I'm sure they have to separate themselves from the emotional tie.

I was told I would be given a saline injection which in turn would start labor contractions ending in the birth of my stillborn baby. I was left alone in a cold hospital room going through all the symptoms of what felt like a normal delivery, only to give birth to a deceased baby.

I rang the hospital bell to notify the nurse I had delivered. It felt like hours before anyone came to my room, I'm sure it was only minutes. I was told it was a baby girl. The tears streamed, I felt lonely, guilty and ashamed, it was unbearable.

I was offered no emotional support from the hospital staff, no referral for counseling from the prenatal clinic, and the shame I experienced prevented me from reaching out to my family and I dared not seek help from the religious community.

When the mind is filled with toxic thoughts and in a depressive mindset, the worst thing to do is make life altering decisions. I didn't understand depression and degenerate Mindsets then, I was such a loner and felt so isolated in my mind that I didn't know how to reach out to anyone. I had become numb to sharing my heart because I couldn't handle being teased, misunderstood, taunted, rejected, or mocked anymore. I contemplated suicide in my mind. I often thought about taking myself out of the world. I am glad I didn't.

Hopelessness causes you to feel despondent, and low in spirits. It keeps you on the merry-go-round of oppression, darkness, depression, isolation, and fear. You feel like you're on a spin cycle of failure. You function but there's no real feeling of life on the inside. You detach from your true identity because it's a source of pain and rejection. I mean with so many people repeatedly treating

you like a freak of nature you convince yourself that something is wrong with you, that surely God made a mistake when you were born.

I often wished I had never been born. I've never shared this before but I created alter egos within my head. I would become other personalities trying to create one that somebody would love. In my fantasies I was accepted. It was the only place I felt accepted.

After years of living in this mental prison. One night in my home in 1996 God changed my life—forever, In what can only be described as an outer body experience, a miracle, the Spirit of God visited me in my bedroom. By this time I was married to {my first husband} with my first of two children. This particular night I was in a dark place emotionally. I was very sad, crying, hopeless, and in despair. I remember sitting at the foot of my bed in the dark wondering if I should continue living. But at that moment the Spirit of God spoke to my heart. I had a three month old son, and equally important I was deserving of life! I cried out to God and He Heard me and delivered me—instantly. I received His love, forgiveness, eternity with Him, power, and for the first time in my life a SOUND MIND.

2 Timothy 1:7 "For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

This scripture was a game changer for me. Before my miraculous encounter with God, my life was ruled by the spirit of fear or what one bible translation calls the spirit of cowardice; which manifests itself in timidity and shrinking oneself to avoid intimidating conflicts. It was in this verse that I learned that it was not the nature nor the will of God to create anyone who felt safe operating as a coward. Shrinking or dummifying down just to appease man or in order to escape man's displeasure with me was not a mindset that came from the Spirit of God. I reinvented my life

with this newfound revelation that God's original intention for my life was to have a sound mind: The intellectual or intelligent power, understanding; the power to conceive, the power to create, the power to judge, or reason, and most importantly, the power to live in abundance!

I love the Greek word for sound mind: *sophron*'. It means self-controlled, temperate, well balanced. Look at the root: (*phrēn*) its where we get the word "diaphragm," the inner organ (muscle). The diaphragm regulates physical life, controlling breathing and heartbeat. Through this life changing unveiling I've learned the power of meditation, breathing in fresh air and exhaling toxins, and relaxation exercises—breathing from my diaphragm-my heartbeat and breathing are regulated, giving me mental clarity, reducing brain fog, stress and ultimately aiding me in gaining a sound mind. Did you catch that? Life is regulated by the diaphragm (by a sound mind). The Spirit of God spoke to me and drew my attention to the connectivity of faith, hope, faithlessness and hopelessness. If faith can be restored hope can be restored, If hope can be restored lives can be saved and depressive and oppressive mindsets can be healed.

The scriptures below helped me in my healing journey.

Isaiah 40:31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not grow faint.

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Hope can be restored, I am living proof of it. I started to believe how God sees me and I wish I could tell you I had a neatly outlined and packaged process to overcoming hopelessness. Honestly, hope was found after many failed efforts to reclaim the

authenticity of my identity. I realized that nothing external could save me. My truth is this: after over two decades of serving and searching for God in doctrine and religion, I finally realized God was within me. The Kingdom is not in observation as Jesus said, it's not something that can be discovered externally. The Kingdom is an internal place of rulership, sovereignty, and dominion and it is all within the Soul. Once I became conscious of this deep level of truth hope was restored. For me it meant evolving and challenging my core beliefs. I had to do deep inner work, I had to endure the dark night of the soul. I understood Psalm 23 with clarity and revelation. "Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of the death I will fear no evil". I felt like a version of myself died in order for my heart and soul to expand and make room for the new, higher version of Vanessa to emerge. My name means butterfly—and like the butterfly I lived in the cocoon until I was ready for true flight in freedom. Like the phoenix I too had to rise from the ashes. My transformation was a result of much inner healing, meditation, releasing the limiting and self-defeating beliefs that persistently continued to oppress me and hold me hostage in the loop of despair. Today I am happy, full of life and the divine spark of God is my Source. I found Vanessa and that is what I was looking for all along.

About Vanessa R Brooks

Is a Spiritual Entrepreneur, Owner & CEO of Brooks Consulting & Training Solutions, LLC , Inner Healing Specialist, Neuro-Leader, Law of Attraction Expert, Counselor, & Consultant. I help professional and purpose driven individuals experience deep inner healing, emotional and mind healing, and soul care.

Julian Busing

A Success Journey

Julian is the Founder and CEO of Royal Civility Global Initiative, a firm that specialises in helping people discover, develop, deliver and celebrate their true identity through the word of God. We are committed to developing a Royal mindset, helping people to reign in power as God has originally planned for humanity.

Julian Businge is a Royal Fashions Expert who is creative, caring and customer focused. Since 2019 she has been working closely with the Queen Mother of Tooro, HRH Queen Best and HRH King Oyo Nyimba, in Uganda to create unique Royal fashion and design wear. This is aimed at blending tradition and modernity and creates modern-day cultural wear.

Julian is a published author of several books, Award winning speaker, co-authored books about Royalty, property and business and is well versed in both areas.

She has been privileged to be coached and mentored by the great legends of our generation like Les Brown, one of the World's best Motivational Speaker and His Excellency Sir. Clyde Rivers, Ambassador at Large for Burundi and Founder of IChange Nations. With their help and support, Julian has gone on to become an inspirational speaker whose message touches people in all areas of their lives. She has spoken for various conferences and has won a speaker's Award.

In 2020 she was awarded Businesswoman of the year, Inducted into the Global Library of female founders and became UN representative for the Peace society of Kenya.

Julian is passionate about what she does and continues to work with people who are seeking to change their life's trajectory and rewrite their future.

I wear many hats, am a mother of two children and married to the man of my dreams Professor Patrick Businge.

I was born in Uganda but currently living in the United Kingdom. My parents are the late Eric Sabiiti and my mother is Lucy Sabiiti. Growing up I absolutely loved entrepreneurship and am glad my parents believed in me and supported me. In my teens I managed various businesses like importing



products from other countries to Uganda and selling them in town. Later I became the CEO of my late fathers Tours and travel company called Jes International travel consultants when he passed away in 2007. As much as they supported me in my entrepreneurial endeavours, they instilled in me the value of Hard work, Tolerance and respect for other people, Respect for tradition, Loyalty, saving money and many more valuable qualities that have been instrumental in both my personal life and business success.

I left Uganda and joined my husband in England. Once in England, I worked mostly night shifts in both the children's and elderly healthcare sectors and did childminding business as a side income. I chose working nights because it was flexible and I got to look after my children during the day while my husband was at work.



Unfortunately in July 2016 early one morning I received a call from my boss, she asked me to go to her office before I could travel which was strange. When I went to the office I was informed that I was fired. I lost my job the same day I was traveling to Uganda for my annual leave holiday.

When I returned, my husband and I decided that we should concentrate on small investments of serviced apartments using the rent to rent property strategy that we had started building instead of looking for work. It involved a lot of hard work and sacrifice but it has been worth it.

Today, we have over 20 serviced apartments in Luton and looking to grow nationally and globally. My husband and I are co-founders of several businesses, e.g. Peace Apartments, providing serviced accommodation commonly known as Airbnb. Through this firm, Julian also offers property mentoring and coaching services to women looking for time and financial freedom. Also Together with her husband co-founded World Greatness Awards.



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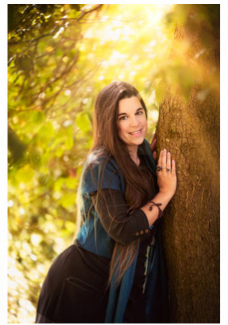
We are a company specializing in language services (translations, interpreting, editing etc.). In 2020, our biggest literary translation projects was the coordination and translation from English to French of the book, *The Asian Aspiration: Why and How Africa Should Emulate Asia* (Le modèle asiatique: Pourquoi l'Afrique devrait s'inspirer de l'Asie et ce qu'elle ne devrait pas faire) by Greg Mills, H.E Olusegun Obasanjo, Hailemariam Desalegn and Emily van der merwe.

Don't get lost, have peace of mind.

Contact Transcentral for all your translation projects: director@transcentral.co.za

Hazeology ...

Hazel Llewllin's Story



I was born in Redhill and my family moved to the quirky town of Hastings where I grew up. I experienced many challenges from a very early age, life growing up was hard, But I learnt so much and have absolute gratitude for all those experiences.

My parents split up when I was 6years old. Things for my mother began to spiral as she developed a drinking problem. I was often left to get on with all sorts of things that really, a 6 year old should not have to deal with. So I grew up really very fast, my mum re-married when I was 9yrs old. The man she married was an alcoholic who emotionally and physically abused me, making my life a living hell. Living with my mum and stepdad was really very difficult, I was always in a place of fear.

The last time my Stepdad physically hurt me, I ran away, this was really only a 15 minute run. But at the time It felt like the biggest run of my life. A lady I knew took me in and offered my mother help. She

chose to leave me there going back to her husband who really had so much control over her, which she did not really realize at the time.

I was 10years old and felt completely abandoned, the lady that took me in ended up becoming my foster parent. Which really was my choice, my farther did come and offer for me to live with him in Cornwall. However I felt like I would be a burden to him, so chose to be near my friends. He wanted to do whatever made me happy as I had been through so much already.

My new home with my foster parents and their 3 children was very strange, but it was nice to be so welcomed into a family environment. They helped rebuild my confidence that had been knocked down by my stepdad. There were still many hurdles through this time in my life.

At the age of 15 I had my first home by myself, I got a

part time job at Clarks Shoe shop where I worked my way up to supervisor. I also had a 2nd job at a local fish and chip restaurant. I was going to school part time to complete my GCSE's the teachers at the school were really great, as my case was rather unusual. I was juggling study with work and keeping my home running. It was a lot, when I think about it now. I really do not know how I managed it; I just did.

I just about made it through my GCSE's but with all the pressures I did not do so well, so I did not go to college afterwards instead I went into work, really to survive, I had such a low income and it was education or earn a living so I can afford to live and eat. I chose to go into full time employment. Most of the time I had 2 jobs, I continued in retail, but I also worked in a residential care home as well until I got into more customer service based roles and luckily landed a full time job at a large company. The company had in-house training which I was fortunate to go for and this eventually led me back to college!

At the age of 19 I was back at college part-time as I still needed to work. I took up an access course in Humanities and social sciences to get me to university. At the time I was also in a new relationship, which I thought at the time was positive, so things were really looking up for me.

The next 10 years that went by were a struggle. I did finish college and I got into Hull University, I lived in Hull for 5 years with the same partner I had met when I was 18yrs old.

That relationship really did a number on me. They say hindsight is a wonderful thing. Really it is, however I would not change anything. I am truly grateful to the whole situation, I learnt so much and it gave me strength in the end. I always look to find the lessons from a situation rather than dwell on the negative.

I was never physically hurt but emotionally the damage was being done. I had been taken away from all my friends and family, made to feel guilty if I wanted time with them. Made to feel like a possession. I could not be me. I was in a box. I did

not know who I was anymore. I could go into more detail so you get a deeper understanding, but I'm hoping you get the idea. It felt like slowly bits of me were just being chipped away each day but I was blissfully unaware for most of it. I did not see what was happening to me. My friends and family did, but naturally they did not feel it was their place to say anything and they also felt like I would not listen.

My partner ended up going to prison, I moved back to my mum's in Hastings in late 2011. Even though he was in prison I was still locked in the relationship, slowly dying inside. I took a job working for the local council full time. Proceeded to wear my happy "how can I help you" mask every day at work. While really, I was dying inside.

I was deeply depressed, suffering with anxiety, not really sleeping right or eating well, just going through the motions because I had to. I was also dealing with my mum who had been diagnosed with bipolar a few years prior which made a lot of sense. At this time she was deeply mentally unwell and I had to send her to a psychiatric ward for her own well-being.

Again, it felt just like I was 15 years old, I was juggling lots of things, getting on with it.

The biggest skill I learnt from everything I had been through was to be adaptable to any change to survive. Which really is a skill that serves me well. You may be wondering, does this story ever get better?

Well don't feel bad. It really was not all doom and gloom. The next part is the start of where my life flipped into something I could never have dreamt of!!!

2012 is the year I woke up... one lovely thing I forgot to mention, is that since I was 15 years old, I would always go on a yearly trip with my dad camping for a week with a festival at the end. We go with our friends from all walks of life and from all over the world. Meeting up every year in August. Letting go of all of our worries and having a great time. Generally consisting of laughing so hard that your

face and stomach hurt from all the laughter! It's fantastic.

I was dragged there in 2012, and as I will still suffering in silence, I had not told everyone what was happening. I was scared of what people would think. I was terrified of them seeing what a true wreck I was, I felt I would fall apart if they knew, because these were people that really knew me.

I hid in my tent for most of the week before the festival. Our friends from Holland, Henk and Geertje arrived. I felt the urge that I should really go and greet them, having not been in touch all year. Geertje took one look at me put her arm around me and said, "Come with me. I am going to give you some energy."

She took me to her tent. This was the turning point in my life, I just said "Ok" as I was not really in a place to ask questions. Truly what happened next was at the point in my life the most weird and profound experience ever! She sat me in a camping chair, stood behind me placing her hands on my shoulders. I felt a lot of heat coming from the palms of her hands. I felt like my whole body was shaking and convulsing like I was about to take off from the chair like a rocket, but really, I was hardly moving. It was all internal, my body began to weep, and my eyes were leaking so hard that it was like a waterfall.

It felt as if Geertje was pulling off layers and layers of heavy invisible blankets off me until eventually everything became still. I left the tent with a bottle of water and went to lay down in my tent. I woke up several times in the night needing to use the loo. Honestly the most I have ever needed to in my whole life! I was wandering what on Earth had Geertje done to me? Eventually I drifted into deep sleep. The next morning when I awoke... I felt incredible! I felt the best I had ever felt in my life! I ran out of my tent to my dad's caravan and I was beaming with a feeling of being so clear and happy! I thought "Wow! Where have I been?!" because I had been lost for so long. I waited for Geertje to wake up, I had many questions for her. It was then that she told me this was Reiki. A form of Energy Medicine. Little did I know then just how much that one treatment would change my life.

2012 the start of my healing journey, which to this day continues, because there is always something new to explore and learn. Things that we may have been holding onto that are only ready to go at the right time. After that one session, I did a lot of research on Reiki and I found a teacher in Hastings. I did my Reiki 1 certification and a week after I did it, I ended my relationship with the partner who was in prison.

I broke free!

I then spent a year healing myself with the amazing help of Reiki. This led me on to study Reflexology, Thai foot massage and other body massage courses. It was through the case studies where I learnt that I could really feel so much in people's bodies, and help to release a lot for them. Through the amazing modality of Energy medicine. I really went from strength to strength. I was still working part time whilst practicing all these amazing new skills that I had been using to help so many people feel so much better. The greatest lessons learnt from all of this energy medicine was how much I was healing myself and growing as a person.

5 years ago, I hit another bump in the road. I fell in love deeply with a real narcissistic character that made the previous 10 year relationship seem like nothing! 18 months into the relationship I was a broken person, a shell of who I am today. I had to flee for my own safety. I took myself up to the top of Scotland, where I stayed for 3 months. It took every ounce of strength to leave. Really one of the hardest things I have ever had to do. To leave someone that you truly love for the safety of your own health and wellbeing was seriously hard. But the best thing I could have ever done for myself.

I have so much gratitude to that whole experience. The major lessons I learnt which I am now helping other women with makes all that terror truly worth it. When I arrived in Scotland, I felt like it would take me years to heal. Every day I woke up and did a Reiki self-healing treatment. I also had a weekly Chinese body massage with one of the locals who happened to be studying this and needed a case

study. In return when I was better I treated her with Reiki. She asked me to teach her. I decided to go to Holland do my Reiki Masters and to teach.

I quit my job, raised the money to go for my course in Holland with donations in return for healing treatments.

I was lucky enough to be gifted the exact amount of money I needed to do my Reiki Masters course.

I was in Holland for 4 weeks doing my Reiki masters and providing lovely healing treatments in return for donations. Geertje and I worked out how much we needed and counted the donations and we had exactly what we needed down to the exact Euro!

We used the donations to travel to Bosnia to do voluntary healing and teach Reiki to those that wished to receive.

We helped the woman that were still suffering from the 1995 war. When we got back from Bosnia, I went self-employed teaching Reiki and offering healing and massage. My business has continued to be very organic in its nature. Soon animals were coming to me, so today I work with horses, dogs, cats and other animals as well as teaching Reiki and animal Reiki.

I am always looking to further my own development and knowledge. The past 2 years I have been on a healing journey with the womb. I now do womb healing which is absolutely incredible and so important for us all. But that is an entirely different subject!

My biggest challenges in life were the day to day stuff when I was 15. Sometimes not knowing if I could get through the day. Realizing that I don't have to be the victim anymore. Feeling strong enough to speak my truth. Taking time to journey with my shadow self, accepting all parts of me and fully finding myself. Honestly not an easy journey. Healing can be painful. However it was totally and utterly worth it.

Today I am in my truth, proud to be who I am and

excited to help others to find that amazing light that is within them all and helping them to truly reconnect with themselves.

What keeps me going is focusing every day on what I am grateful for. This is something that was inspired by Dr Wayne Dyer. But also from my time in Bosnia and truly feeling how lucky I was to have the childhood I had growing up. It may have been a bumpy ride but as a dear friend of mine from Bosnia always says, be thankful for your happiness and your health. So, if I have a bad day, as we do get them from time to time, life continues to challenge us.

I think of what I am grateful for and it always brings me back into balance. Also practical things I do to bring me back to my centre, would be meditation, grounding with Mother Nature. Taking walks at sunrise. Spending time with horses, just being and breathing with them. I love a good fire burning ceremony. It really helps to release what we are ready to let go of.

The thing I have become deeply passionate about in my life is how energy medicine is such an amazing life tool for our total health and wellbeing. This continues to surprise me every day. For me it has become a way of life. I live and breathe it every day. I look forward to where it will take me to in the future, as I continue my energy medicine journey. My animals are my inspiration. Unconditional love is the most amazing lesson they show us every day.

About Hazel

Hazel is a Reiki Master and complementary therapist.

She combines a range of therapies to suit the needs of both animals and people, where every treatment is tailored to your needs.

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Dr. Kamakshi Jindal's Story

"have built my own road. My road is not very smooth but I know one day I will complete my journey to empower all womenkind"

- Dr. Kamakshi

Dr. Kamakshi Jindal is a very well-known fashion stylist, trend identifier and event curator. She is the co-founder of Aesthetics International, a 17 year old organisation.

She is the founder of Aesthetics International Council for progressive women (AICPW) which is currently working in 25 countries and 90 districts of India. She is also the vice chairman of Asian Chamber of Commerce and industries. She is the Global Goodwill Ambassador of ladies of all Nations International (LOANI).

She is also a founder of Aesthetics World of Talent (WOT) - A national competition for kids comprising dance ,singing ,fashion, junior chef ,instrumental-music ,poetry ,theatre etc. She is the co-founder of Aesthetics University and an online channel- Aesthetics prime.

She gives to the society by devoting time to empower women. She is actively working on women empowerment, cancer survivors and youth leadership. Her International project "THE PINK RIBBON - A breast cancer awareness initiative is currently running in more than 15 countries.

Dr. Kamakshi was born into one of the most renowned families of Meerut, India. She had a great relationship with her father who was very supportive and wanted the very best for her. Early life was great until her father died when she was only 11 years old, leaving behind three siblings.

After her father's death, her mother not only struggled financially but also experienced many social issues which made her life challenging. Back then women were not allowed to live happily without a husband and if she was a widow then it was considered the biggest curse. Watching the struggles her mother and other women in the society went through as a young girl only made her very determined with a strong desire to serve the world and the underprivileged. She was determined to reduce inequality.

Dr. Kamakshi started earning at the age of 17 but earning was not only her dream. She wanted to dedicate herself in eradicating social problems. She kept doing little work to provide social service other than her fashion design, she wanted to help in areas of jobs, tutitions and college.

"People who see womanhood as a disability should look at us and realise that everybody in this world is equally abled" she proudly says.

Dr. Kamakshi pursued Fashion Design and awarded best designer award by the Bollywood actress Chitrangda Singh as a result of her work and contributions. She got married in a renowned family and she completed her doctorate in economics and proved that every woman can achieve and do many things. She received many job offers from colleges and organisations after completing her PHD but she turned them down as her target was quite different.

By now she was a hardworking housewife and a responsible mother, she always felt the need to find her own voice and to understand the underlying problems in the world. She always wanted to be independent.

In 2016 she started her small boutique at home with the name "SAMYUKTA", this was questioned by her family because she had previously turned down great job opportunities only to run a small business, what they didn't understand about her is the great fulfilment she had when helping others, if she took on a professor job she wouldn't have enough time to do what she loved which was helping others economically and socially.

So instead she opted to start her own business of



garments with her savings which was not a huge amount. Over time she transformed her boutique into a big International brand and got recognition as an International designer. This was not enough for her, she then collaborated with her brother who organised lifestyle exhibitions on a big scale.

As someone who is fond of children and trained in Kathak dance she included it as part of the exhibitions and performances, she also launched "kids fashion runway " which involved cultural exchange from Nepal. She held auditions for more than 5,000 children

in the first season of the show. This event gave her recognition across India and she started getting calls from school principals across the country which led to collaborations with many schools for the participation of kids.

This show opened greater opportunities, one being collaborating with her brother to organise International summits for Educationists where they did culture exchange with many countries. This summit was a new ray of hope for both of them and led to International



growth.

They branched out to media, advertisements, University, film festival International fashion week, Asian Chamber of Commerce and Industries, International Awards, online channel, coffee table book etc.

The growth only fueled her to do more, she then started her talk show with Bollywood and Hollywood celebrities called "Success Stories with Dr Kamakshi", which has now completed 3 successful seasons.

What started as a strong desire to serve the underprivileged and create a platform for women didn't take shape until many years later when she founded the organisation Aesthetics International Council for Progressive Women (AICPW) in 2017, with a vision to help women who are facing problems? She was never against men but always wanted the equality factor for both genders, this was also due to how society treated boys more favourably than girls

which she was totally against.

It was her dream to create a better society where a girl or woman could live happily without any issues. Her family was evidently worried and circumspect initially when she confessed her intentions to get into this line of work. They didn't initially believe in her capabilities to achieve what she sought, but as she progressed and started getting results they trusted more in what she could achieve.

Recently she has launched "GRAHNI" whose aim is to generate employment for all women's households in India. Her current projects include project "AASRA" which will provide shelter to all women who have been kicked out by their husband, brother or any other family member, "GURUKUL DHAM" which will provide free education to children and impart knowledge to not only build their brains but also their souls.

Dr. Kamakshi has received awards from many organisations for her work. She was awarded by the prestigious Alta springs fashion award, Brazil and was counted the 51 most influential women of India.

She has also been chosen among 112 most influential people worldwide by LOANI London, been the National Director of India for Ms/Mrs Singapolitan worldwide 2019, founder partner in Aesthetics International Fashion Week, Aesthetics International Music and Dance Festival and Aesthetics international film festival.

She has also recently launched her show "kids fashion week", which is to be conducted in 5 states of India.

Her future plans include a short movie on Women Empowerment for international film festivals. When asked what women's voices mean to her, Dr. Kamakshi said "Women are the soul of a family. Women can create life and if her voice is heard, this world would have been a better place because only she can handle multiple tasks altogether".

"have built my own road. My road is not very smooth but I know one day I will complete my journey to empower all womenkind" - Dr. Kamakshi

UPGRADE your mindset

by Tonya and Dexter



I think we can all agree that 2020 has been a year of major transitions. From a pandemic that seemed to come out of nowhere to a crippling economy, most of us have experienced anxiety on many levels. Who would have ever thought that wearing a facemask in public would be common place?

A broadcast on CBS This Morning several months ago stated that we are in the stages of a New Abnormal and the (3) T's. Tonya and I added another T making it the (4) T's:

1. Triage
2. Transition
3. Transformation
4. Timing

There's no doubt that we haven't gone through these stages since the beginning of the pandemic, but what does that mean for what's ahead? Have we all worked on transforming our minds for a powerful 2021? I mean really, how could we, with so much going on.

Being in the field of personal development with a strong focus on mindset, we have seen extremities in hopes for 'what's next' or the lack thereof. We are challenged in the area of positivity and growth in the face of all of what we are seeing play out in the world and what the media shows us.

So what do most people want? They want security (physical and financial), protection, freedom, happiness, good health, long life, productivity, and acceptance and

to be heard, just to name a few.

On the other hand, what are the blocks that stand in the way of what most people want? Fear, anxiety, unhappiness, negative thinking, health concerns, worry, unworthiness, etc., the list could go on and on.

So let's get into the good stuff! How do we transform our minds to focus on the possibilities of 2021? We have a simple process you can implement immediately called I.D.K!

Ok, we know what you are thinking... IDK means I Don't Know, right? Well it does but not how we see it. I.D.K. for us means:

I - Increase

D - Develop

K - Kick Ass

Let's explore these acronyms.

NCREASE:

In order to begin to transform your mind for 2021, you need to begin IMMEDIATELY increasing your knowledge in your area of interest. Some of you may not know exactly what area you want to pursue, and that's okay. Dennis Kimbro, Ph.D., said that if you are not exactly sure what you are called or gifted to do, ask 5 people (that you trust) the following, "What do you see me doing?" By doing this, you will get a good idea of what those you trust see you doing. Explore this information as it may contain an awesome direction for you. Once you have an

idea, INCREASE your knowledge. We recommend using books (both paperback and audible), YouTube and social media. The information will stretch your mindset in that area and you can begin to do what we call 'Information Stacking'. Information stacking allows you to learn reams of information that builds upon itself, resulting eventually to expertise. YouTube is a source that we heavily use and recommend to provide you with visuals of those that you follow in your area of interest. Make a list of those individuals and study them. This will begin to provide a visual for you to utilize in your own mind. Social media provides the same visual information. You can have real time, up to date posts and messages from those you want to follow which will also give you incredible insight into what you could possibly advance towards. Know this, the goal is to RENEW your MIND with information in order to live the TRANSFORMED LIFE you desire.

DEVELOP:

Develop your strategy. Now that you have an idea of what your area of interest is and have begun information stacking, you need to develop your strategy. This part is vital as you will map out the direction you are going in. What's important is that while you are setting the strategy in motion that you remain flexible with your outcome. In Deepak Chopra's book, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, he speaks on *The Law of Detachment*. The Law of Detachment says that in order to acquire anything in the physical universe, you have to relinquish your attachment to it. This doesn't mean that you give up the intention to create your desire. Instead, you give up your attachment to how the desire will manifest.

This is an extremely powerful law as it tells us exactly how to transform our minds. Remember when you were rushing out of the house and misplaced your keys? Remember how frantic you were? When you calmed down and simply gave up looking for them, VIOLA! The keys showed up. It's the exact same principle. Developing a strategy sets in motion your plans to transform but keep in mind that you must let the outcome be what it will be, without your anxiety. This is a concept often overlooked. Anxiety, being a major blockage, will keep you on the hamster wheel of manifestation. You will be hyper focused on the strategy and goal but wondering why you can't seem to get traction and transformation. It's because your autonomic nervous system is releasing familiar chemicals into your body that act in opposition to what

you want to manifest. This is how blockages work. So, in other words, relax and let it happen. As long as you are moving in the direction of your mindset transformation, exercise faith that GOD will bring it to pass. He is always directing your steps, as long as you let Him in and allow Him to.

KICKASS:

Sure, this may be a shock to your system but describes exactly what you need to do. Let's face it, up until this point you haven't kicked ass to accomplish a newly transformed mindset. We spend a great deal of time in personal development listening to a plethora of thought leaders and change agents. One of the individuals we now listen to is World Renowned Speaker and Trainer Tony Robbins. At first, we just couldn't get with Tony and his style of communication. His cursing and such was just too much for our ears. LOL. One day, all that changed. We were watching and listening to YouTube and the video we were watching ended and then Tony popped up. As we listened, void of judgment, we were completely blown away. He was dropping so much knowledge that we couldn't retain it fast enough. As a matter of fact, the information was so good that we could have kicked our own butts for not allowing ourselves to listen to him earlier. We lost out on a lot of information because our mindset wasn't in the right place. We began to understand that in order to shake most people from mediocrity, you have to do something pretty drastic. That's where Tony thrives. He's not interested in you remaining the same. He wants you to leave his presence differently than you came. Of course you don't have to take the route of cursing but you can develop your own method to get moving. What will it take for you to grab the bull by the horns and make it happen? Understand that in order for you to produce different results, you will have to be shaken from your comfort zone. That's what we do. As *The Upgraders*, we challenge you to become uncomfortable with your comfort zone. Do you accept our challenge?

As we move out of the 4th quarter of 2020 into a new year, we believe that these (3) acronyms, I.D.K. (Increase, Develop and Kick Ass) will help you create the mindset transformation that you are looking for.

As *The Upgraders*, we would love to connect with you as we are on a mission to UPGRADE the lives of everyone

we encounter. Feel free to connect with us on our social media networks below:

About Tonya and Dexter

Dexter and Tonya are Coaches, Leaders, Authors, Certified National/International Speakers, Mindset Development Trainers/Instructors and down to earth authentic people who have spent years motivating and inspiring audiences to upgrade their mindset and lives and focus on internal success.

They have presented on stages and virtually to thousands and have trained on countless platforms seeking to teach people the tools to slow down and understand the process which will speed up their success rate.

Some of their accolades include:

- SRT (Subconscious Release Technique) Certified Mindset Coach and Instructor
- Instructor of the "Upgrade Your Life" Weekly Training Series with SRT Global
- Certified Speaker through NBC University. (Networking Business Building & Coaching)
- Former Host of the "The Upgraders Show" on the Direct Sales TV Network which appeared on Roku, Apple TV, Chromecast and Google Play.
- Host of "The Upgraders Show" podcast on Apple Itunes, Podbean and Google Music
- Appeared in the Huffington Post in an article entitled "Million Dollar Magnetism" and a contributor to the Huffington Post book review of NY Times bestselling author, Bishop TD Jakes and his book Soar.
- 2020 IMPACT MAGAZINE Honorees
- Co-authored over 4 books on personal development, mindset development, relationships and faith and their soon to be released book, "Luminaries".
- The 5th Ranking Ambassadors in their Direct Sales Company and Multiple 7 Figure Earners
- Selected leaders from the Direct Sales industry to professionally film with Dr. John C. Maxwell on 15 Laws of Growth for Network Marketers
- Featured in Business for Home Magazine on multiple occasions highlighting their leadership and growth
- Tonya is the Founder and Visionary of "Conversation Camp for Women" which has successfully transformed the lives of thousands of women all over the world through conversations that promote healing.
- Tonya is the Founder of the "Shine Movement" which is a book anthology project highlighting the stories of women all over the world to impact, inspire and encourage other sisters to SHINE.

They continue to personally develop themselves where they can provide the most value to any audience they come in contact with,

They have been married for almost 20 years and have 4 beautiful children, a Son in Law and 2 amazing Granddaughters.

Their tag line says, "We may not know you but we know what's in you" and they just recently added the following to ask who they are working with, "Are you up for the challenge"?

Website: TheUpgraders.com

YouTube - @theupgraders

Facebook - @dexterlscott, @tonyajoyner-scott, @theupgraders

Email: info@yourupgradeteam.com



NO FEMALE LEFT BEHIND FEMALE CIVILITY

The goal is to build a bridge for Females globally to be able to make a greater impact. Females are designed to be sitting at the table and we will compete anyone. Females are the missing piece that is vitally needed around the world for making the desired global impact. Our voice has the sound that resonates security, safety, and substance that the world desperately needs to hear. Our influence as females transcends division and promotes unity. A movement that educates females on how to be the best individual that they can be. Through education females will understand and maintain the perspective that they were created as a unique voice that the world must hear. We offer attributes of intuition, security, soundness, and substance. The first step to education is identifying those key areas that are broken and breached, and then build a bridge for recovery.

The Global Library of Female Authors (TGLFA)

is inclusive of females that have created and established programs to enhance the lives of other females globally. The Global Library of Female Authors is a global centralized online location for connectivity and collaboration. The Female Library was created to engage female individuals, groups, and organizations around the world. The individuals, groups, and organizations were founded and established by females and for females. The Female Library consists of females who are internationally recognized and are doing established work in other countries and continents for the advancement of females.

Little AMAZONS was created and established to provide "Little Dresses" to Female Orphanages, Schools and Academies worldwide. The Female Civility Initiative - Little AMAZONS has been graced with the privilege of partnering with Goshwe Simi-Simji, Founder/Executive Director of Simji Girl-Child Empowerment Initiative & Orphanage/Simji Integrated Academy (SIA) - Nigeria. In the days, weeks and years to come we will continue to expand distribution in other countries and continents.

WombHER Foundation is an anti-abortion and anti-abandonment critical mission that intentionally focuses on the elimination of abortion and abandonment physically, mentally, emotionally, and purposefully.

Ihuaku Patricia Nweke

My name is Ihuaku Nweke (Nee Obi Nwagwu / Chinyere-Ezeh). I was born in Lagos Nigeria to a late Medical Doctor Father and an Accountant. My life up until the age of 11 years old was pretty enchanted. We lived in a peaceful area of middle class Owerri in the Eastern part of Nigeria.

My father Dr Obi Nwagwu or the Action Doctor as he was lovingly known in the political realms and amongst his supporters was a very dominant figure in my life. I remember happy memories of him swinging my sister and I like a human see-saw on his strong legs and carrying us high on his shoulders. I also remember him scraping dandruff off mine and my sister's heads as we sat in between his legs on his stool. Some of my memories include me and my brother being taken to school in one of my dad's blue campaign buses by one of his staff drivers with vote NPP hollering and Action Doctor bellowing out of the megaphone at the top of the van. My father's political supporters and staff were always around the house and available to assist in any errands we needed.

We always had house helps around the house and each of us had a nanny who took care of us until around the age of 5, my nanny was called Aunty Eugenia. The rest of my childhood was full of sweet memories of walking to school, friends popping round to ours unannounced and vice versa, having sand fights or water fights with the neighbours' kids and having a house surrounded by fruit trees. We would casually picking fruit from whichever tree took our fancy, be it an orange tree, guava or mango tree or the paw tree by the kitchen window. There was also a crevice in the large mango tree at



the front of the house that used to provide solace as I hid there reading my book oblivious to the world around me.

I have fond memories of rainy seasons when we would run around naked in the rain, jumping into the waterfilled drum outside the house. After the rain, there would be a swarm of flying insects called 'Aku' everywhere and we would run around with bowls hunting and catching aku. These insects were so delicious, that no oil or flavouring was required; aku had its own fat and unique natural smoky flavour.

After taking the Federal Common entrance examination at the age of 10, I was hoping that I would be able to join my sister in the nearby Federal government Girl's Secondary school Owerri because these were seen as the Grammar schools of Nigeria and it was my dream to also attend there. However, fate was to deal me a very cruel blow which my young mind found it hard to comprehend.

In Nigeria there was a system of favouritism that would benefit the less educationally minded Northern indigens over the Easterners and I had fallen victim to this. The last 5 names of Eastern girls that had made it through to the exam were removed and were replaced with the names of 5 girls from the Northern part of Nigeria and my name was one

of those girls. I had to settle for the least favourable state school, the dilapidated Owerri Girls School. Which don't get me wrong was a good school ran by nuns in fact my mother and Aunt had attended Owerri Girls or Ojimgbo girls as it was fondly called. However, the school had seen better days and the facilities had not been maintained at all. The truth was, Federal Government schools always received better funding than state schools and it showed!

Attending a state secondary school in Nigeria was an eye opener and a shock to my system. I was welcomed to a world where toilets were dark, dingy corridors with human excrement on the floor and showers were open outdoor cubicles. The best way to describe the food was unceremonious gruel. It only took me one term before I developed Anaemia and had to become a day student. I quickly became everyone's best friend, bringing rich home cooked meals in several containers to my less fortunate undernourished friends. There was talk at the school that I would be made queen of the Christmas Bazar that year but that was not to be. I had hardly completed my first year of Secondary school when my family and I embarked on the journey to England in the summer of 1988 that would change the trajectory of my life.

Just before coming to the U.K, I did something very stupid- perhaps it was the excitement of coming to England or a subconscious form of self-sabotage, but I took a pair of scissors to my hair and snipped off one corner of my hair. When my mother came home and saw me, she flipped out and the only remedy to redeem my ridiculously cropped hair cut was to scrape everything off. So here I was coming to the U.K and no one was sure whether I was a boy or a girl.

My Father picked us up from the airport and we took the tube to his two-bedroom bedsit which he shared with an elderly Caribbean woman in New Cross. I remember the distinctive sound of the EastEnders sitcom music playing every evening. I also remember trying Chinese food for the first time and vomiting everywhere because my system was not used to that type of food. It was an interesting

summer getting used to the sun shining till 8pm and not setting by 6pm as we were used to in Africa. The open displays of affection of lovers on the tube and every other public place was something we were not accustomed to in Africa and needed some getting used to, a lot of getting used to!

My father, though an Oxford graduate and Medical Doctor who had his own clinic in Owerri, the popularly known Lifecare was now driving Taxi cabs to make ends meet. We moved from new Cross to a bed and breakfast facing Finsbury Park called Queens hotel. My sister was in Nigeria studying and my mum decided not to give up her high-powered job as a top executive at a national bank. She had about 200 staff members that reported to her. So, whilst I and my two younger brothers of the tender ages of 8 and 4 stayed back to face the life of hardship and uncertainty that awaited us in the U.K.

My mother returned to her work and my sister who was sitting exams in secondary school. It must have been a very difficult and heart-breaking decision for her to make.

I got admission into a catholic secondary school, Mount Carmel whilst my brothers got admission to a nearby primary school Woodgrove. Life as an immigrant in the U.K was tough. Because of the way I looked and my accent, I was badly ridiculed and bullied. However, I quickly became best friends with an Irish girl, Deidre Reilly. I used to take a bus to her house every Saturday which was near the Caledonian Road swimming pool and we would go swimming with her older brother Shaun and her younger siblings. Deidre made my life in the UK easier but that was all very short lived and would all change when she returned to Ireland with her family. I became very shy and timid and would eat my lunch hiding in the toilets because I didn't want all the other children to see that I had no friends. The playground was the loneliest place for me. I was constantly bullied by a group of 5 popular girls in my class who were a lot bigger than me. I couldn't wait to leave Mount Carmel secondary school.

Life at home was not easy either, my dad had to go to

work most of the time, so I became mother to my two younger brothers, even though I wasn't that much older than them. I grew up very quickly. I would cook whilst my brother washed up. On Saturdays, we would embark on the two-bus journey from Finsbury park to the only nearby supermarket in those days, a Sainsbury's on Holloway road. From there, we would go to Fontil road to buy meat from the butchers and African foodstuffs, then we would take all our clothes in a black bag to the laundrette and read our books whilst we waited for the clothes to wash and dry. We would then go home and prepare dinner.

Christmas was mostly spent at family friends' houses and once at one of the chamber maid Ann's house from the Bed and Breakfast where we lived. She had agreed to have us whilst my father worked yet another Christmas.

My sister joined us in UK 2 years later and mum a year after that.

We got approved for a council house in Edmonton and we moved. My sister and I got admission to Enfield County Secondary school and my brothers got admission to the local primary school. Though I was still bullied, I had a group of about 4 friends, and I became best friends with a very popular Ghanaian girl, Sheila Crosby-Bennet. My sister became part of the popular group of girls in the school. I tagged along sometimes when they went out, but I mostly spent my time dressing up and dancing to music videos at Sheila's house or occasionally hanging out at Woodgreen shopping mall after school.

I have always loved fashion and for as long as I can remember I have sketched designs on paper of elaborate wedding dresses as I dreamt of my own fairy tale wedding. I would transform tinned cans into ornate bracelets making holes at both ends.

Though I had pursued a degree in Economics and soon after that a master's degree in Business Information Technology, my mum helped me pursue my passion by paying for me to take a course in Jewellery making at a local college. Soon after, I started making jewellery for myself as well as

friends and family. I held very lucrative jewellery, clothing and fabric showcases hosted by myself, my mum or her friends who would take a commission of sales proceeds.

I took further training to develop my skills and I started my design line in 2009, showcasing in several international exhibitions such as Collections London. I further developed into Fashion design, taking short courses between 2009 and 2011. In 2014, I got the opportunity to showcase at African Fashion Week London (AFWL), launching my fashion and jewellery brand I.Kollection, www.i-kollection.com. I debuted with my jewellery designs at AFWL and debuted my first clothing collection at Fashion Finest, London Fashion Week in the same year. I went on to showcase at Birmingham International Fashion week in 2015 and again at AFWL in 2017.

I have since taken further vocational courses in Fashion Design and have done two exhibitions with Commonwealth Fashion with the last exhibition being in August 2020.

I am now an alumni of Henley Business school and Parsons University of Technology for an online course titled Fashion Futures undertaken with AFWL in October 2020.

I have since had several highlights in my fashion career such as being featured in Vogue in 2015 and designing for high profile clients such as Marie Diamond one of the Authors of the International Best-Selling book, The Secret.

Whilst pursuing my fashion career, I also managed to hold down a full-time career as a Procurement Consultant, achieving the chartered status in 2014 with a graduation in 2015. All this with a family and three children in tow!

Within my procurement career, I have been privileged to work with top government departments such as the Department for Transport, ministry of Justice, Department of Health, the British Business Bank and several NHS trusts.

(ARTICLE CONTINUES ON PAGE 62)

WELLBEING & SKINCARE FOR THE CHANGING SEASONS

By Selina Gooding BSc, IFPA



The warm heady days of summer have already given way to crisp autumn days as leaves change colour from vibrant green to burnished bronze and sienna orange and rusty reds. All around us nature is preparing for the changing season.

Lao Tzu said that "nature never hurries, yet everything is accomplished."

Winter is the season that signals rest. It is a time to feel comfortable, safe and secure. There is an awareness of wholeness, satisfaction and abundance. It is a time of peace and trust, and in that, there is restoration and rejuvenation.

This quote from Daily Aromatherapy reminds me that when life seems out of control, we do have control over what we put in and put on our bodies. When chaos

abounds, it is the consistent routines we have in place that serve to ground us and that only we have the power to create restoration and rejuvenation in ourselves and our bodies.

2020 has been an incredibly stressful year for everyone and the pandemic has affected us all in different ways. Stress, anxiety and sleep issues are recurring themes that many are experiencing as communities and individuals work out how to adjust to life in what is increasingly becoming the new normal. With all the challenges now is a good time to focus on more self-care, connecting with our innate selves and self-reflect as the year begins to wind down

As the days become shorter, darker and colder this starts to impact our mood our mental health which in turn takes a toll on our skin. Focusing on your skin may not be a priority at the moment especially if you are dealing with other challenges, though the changing season gives us an opportunity to focus on our wellbeing, nourish our bodies with hearty autumnal fare, brisk winter walks and snuggling down under cosy blankets and wood fires.

However, with more time spent working at home, many

of us will neglect our daily skincare routine especially if we are not going out in public. Juggling multiple responsibilities with work, childcare, social media etc, makes focusing on our personal care routines even more of a challenge. The traditional CTM (Cleanse, tone, moisturise) and is oftentimes replaced with a quick splash in the morning and the normal routine goes out the window.

The clocks went back last week and as the days shorten, we are sure to spend more time indoors especially for those of us working from home. This can impact our skin and wellbeing health as we spend longer working at home. The air within our living space is often drier than the air outside. With the central heating on in our homes and offices and the air is recirculated and results in a dry atmosphere, which in turn plays havoc with our skin. Already I can feel the dehydrating effects of the central heating and the air outside all over as we start to layer on clothing. This is a time of year when our skin becomes vulnerable as our skin on the face and body respond to the cyclical patterns of the seasons just as nature does. It's a good time to start thinking about the seasonal considerations to your current routine and make adjustments as the skin on our face and body can become flaky, dry and dull. In addition, the wearing of face masks has also given rise to a host of skincare problems especially those that have to wear face masks over a combined period of time.

The stress and anxiety of COVID has without a doubt had an enormous impact on our wellbeing and skin health. There have been multiple studies carried out on the relationship between stress, anxiety and skin health. The organs in our body all respond to stress and as the largest organ in the body, the skin is not immune to the effects of stress. Stress leads to an increase in the production of the stress hormone cortisol, which can also impact on the skin's quality through increasing inflammation and destabilising the immune system. This can aggravate skin problems such as acne and eczema and create new imbalances.

Now more so than ever is the time to be attuned to what is happening with your body and to ensure you have a wellness routine in place... It's not about long complicated routines, but rather simple steps consisting of some movement, good nutrition and natural therapies to help balance out your body mind and spirit.



The practice of aromatherapy

The practice of Aromatherapy once dismissed and derided as scented emotional quackery is now recognised for the significant benefits on our emotional wellbeing and skin. Dr Tara Swart, Neuroscientist and psychiatrist and Brand Ambassador for Aromatherapy Associates explains that "the sense of smell is linked to the deepest parts of the brain – the limbic system – and unlocks our basic instincts, feelings and memories. 'It's the most emotive sense,'.

The International Federation of Aromatherapists (IFA) describes aromatherapy as an ancient art and science of blending naturally extracted essential oils from aromatic plants, to balance, harmonise and promote the health of body, mind and spirit.

Aromatherapy aims to enhance well-being, relieve stress and help in the rejuvenation and regeneration of the human body. It has been used throughout history in various forms of traditional medical practices of the world's greatest civilisations. Nowadays, aromatherapy is widely accepted by orthodox and complementary practitioners as one of the most comprehensive of the natural therapies.

Essential oils are used synergistically in aromatherapy practice where their distinctive therapeutic properties may help;

- skin problems,
- muscular and arthritic pains,
- menstrual issues,
- respiratory and
- stress related issues

Using Aromatherapy and essential oils in our daily lives is a wonderful way to relax and rebalance the body holistically and can be used in various ways throughout the day at home and at work.

Mornings:

- Aromatic showers – using shower steamers made with essential oils is a great way to start of your day. Look for invigorating blends containing rosemary, grapefruit, eucalyptus, niaouli essential oils.
- Diffusing essential oil blends for focus, clarity, relaxation, sleep in an aromatherapy burner or diffuser. – Citrus oil blends are fantastic to uplift and detox the atmosphere
- Roller balls for pulse points – these are a quick pick-me up that can be used throughout the day and can be used with breath breaks that you take during the day.

Evenings:

- Aromatic Baths using a mixture of salts, botanicals and essential oils are a fantastic way to wind down after a long day. Aromatic baths help to alkalise and detox the body and help your joints and muscles.
- Self-massaging body creams/oils/lotions with essential oils into the skin before going to bed
- Inhalation - lean over a bowl of steamy water containing essential oils or sniff a drop or 2 from a tissue.
- The most important thing to remember is NEVER apply essential oils neat on the skin - they must always be diluted.

There are many brands on the market that incorporate essential oils into personal care products or you could chose to consult a qualified aromatherapist for a one-on-one treatment consultation and have a variety of products blended to suit your skin and help calm and balance the mind.

Aromatherapy can be extremely beneficial for individuals when the season is changing and particularly now as Covid-19 poses its own challenges.

Here is a blend I use regularly to help boost mind, body and skin for the coming autumn season and to calm anxious overwhelmed minds.

So Sleepy Body Oil

- 30 ML Carrier oil – Olive, sweet almond, sesame seed
- 4 drops Lavender Essential oil
- 2 drops Bergamot Essential oil
- 6 drops Vetiver Essential oil

Bergamot aka the happy oil is one of the most useful aromatherapy oils and is often labelled as 'nature's prozac' by many aromatherapists, as it may be beneficial for treating anxiety and depression.

Lavender essential oil can be used to treat a plethora of physical and emotional conditions. It is a calming, relaxing and balancing essential oil which is useful for treating stress, anxiety and mood swings. It is also ideal for use before bed to help with night-time awakenings and insomnia.

In modern aromatherapy Vetiver essential oil is known as the 'oil of tranquillity' as it has a deeply relaxing effect on the mind and body. It is calming, soothing and restorative.

Maintaining Wellbeing and Healthy Skin

As an IFA qualified aromatherapist and holistic facialist, I follow an integrative approach which involves assessing and thinking of the person as a whole (mind, body, and spirit). This helps me get to the root cause of the problems or complaints so I can determine the best methods to use when treating the skin on the face and body and to determine which ingredients and essential oils will be of use in the treatment protocol. Ayurveda one of the most ancient surviving medical systems in the world maintain that the path to radiant skin requires a healthy diet and digestive system, breathing practices, regular exercise.

The most common skin conditions clients present with as the season changes are:

- Dry flaky skin
- Inflammation and breakouts
- Dry chapped lips and dry feet
- Rough dry patches
- Dull skin lacking in radiance and a healthy glow

I advise my clients how essential it is to establish skincare routines to prevent the skin from drying out and to

maintain happy skin through the autumn/winter months. In addition this is the time of the year to incorporate natural remedies to enhance your routine.

For the face – Give your skin a chance a skin to breathe and calm as it adapts to the changing temperatures and harsh cold winds. Use gentle nourishing products and avoid over exfoliation and peels.

- Morning and evening cleanse are essential for healthy skin
- Keep the skin moist by using hydrating toners and spritzes throughout the day to counterbalance the effects of central heating on the skin
- Eat nourishing food and do a light detox program if you are feeling bloated

I have found incorporating honey into skincare a huge benefit for healing the skin. Honey is a natural humectant and a natural antibacterial agent full of antioxidants. Make sure you use a good raw honey as a mask once or twice a week to deep clean the pores. Massage into your face and leave on for 20 minutes and then remove with a warm cloth.

As a weekly treat for your face you could incorporate a facial steam to help eliminate built up grime and toxins and to hydrate and decongest your skin.

Exfoliate your body with sugar scrubs as dryness becomes more prevalent. Every autumn I make a up a large batch of this hydrating sugar scrub to help keep my skin flake free, smooth and moisturised. Sugar is a natural source of glycolic acid and breaks down the dead skin cells on the body that cause the dryness and flakiness.

Warming Winter Sugar Body scrub

- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar
- 1/2 cup Olive or rice bran oil
- 1/4 cup virgin coconut oil
- 1 tbsp rose powder
- 1tsp cinnamon powder

You can add essential oils to the scrub but I prefer to keep it scent free as the brown sugar and coconut oil combined with the rose and cinnamon are fragrant enough

How COVID-19 has impacted your Skin

Face masks and face coverings have now become our new reality and can help to protect our health. Unfortunately, they also lead to a plethora of undesirable skincare problems such as blocked pores, breakouts, rashes and irritation. Pre-existing conditions such as acne, rosacea and eczema may also get worse.

Skincare issues experienced by NHS and healthcare workers wearing surgical-grade masks have been well documented throughout the pandemic. A cloth face covering is nowhere near as problematic but it can still have a detrimental effect on the skin if worn for prolonged periods of time.

Prolonged wearing of face masks will trap moisture, sweat, oil and dirt close to the skin which can lead to blocked pores, blackheads, blemishes, and acne. The issue of breakouts has become so common that the word 'maskne' has been added to the Urban Dictionary! As we breathe and talk, moisture from our breath is trapped within the mask, creating a humid environment that can upset our skin's natural oil and pH balance and cause an overgrowth of bacteria.

Lots of individuals have experienced irritation from the mask rubbing on their skin. Friction from the mask will cause the skin to lose natural moisture and damage the protective layer, which can lead to dry, irritated skin and inflammation. To avoid this happening, choose a mask made from tightly woven cotton and avoid synthetic fabrics such as polyester, nylon and rayon which can make you sweat.

100% cotton or bamboo masks are more breathable and will feel softer on the skin. Wash your cloth masks regularly to remove oil, dirt and bacteria that could cause breakouts. It may help to use washing detergents for sensitive skin as the chemicals in some detergents can cause irritation. Add a couple of drops of tea tree or lavender essential oil to your rinse water and rinse the mask well to remove any excess detergent build-up.

Keeping your skin clean is one of the most important ways of preventing blocked pores and breakouts. Cleaning your skin morning and night is essential. Your evening cleanse is to remove the pollution, grime and bacteria of the day in addition to make-up. Use an oil based cleanser or micellar water to remove makeup and then follow with a gentle SLS, SLSE free foaming cleanser to leave the skin feeling refreshed. Don't be tempted to over-cleanse though as this will strip the skin of natural oil and cause it to produce more. A light cleanse in the morning will prepare the skin to absorb your products. Always use an alcohol-free skin toner after cleansing to balance the pH of your skin. Your toner can be used as a facial spritz during the day to re-hydrate and refresh the skin.

Choose a moisturiser suitable for your skin type to boost the skin's barrier function and decrease friction between the skin and mask.

If breakouts are an issue, it might help to minimise the amount of makeup you wear under your mask and to keep it as light as possible.

"Remember you don't need to use a lot of products to get great results, you just need to get the right products for your skin types". Renee Rouleau

About Selina Gooding

Selina is a holistic skincare aromatherapist passionate about bringing skin back to life using natural skincare products backed by science.

Since she discovered aromatherapy one rainy winter day, it has been an integral part of her life has helped her maintain wellbeing whilst working in the City and dealing with burnout, stress, overwhelm and depression. After 15+ years working in Financial services as a Relationship Manager and doing an MBA, Selina has pivoted towards working with individuals who want to transform their skin and reclaim their lost glow and zest for life as they have lost a part of themselves juggling the spinning plates of life. She believes that inevitably that journey shows up externally on our faces and wishes to give women the gift of how to confidently look after their skin by establishing a simple daily routines and choosing the right products designed to kickstart the journey to self-care and wellbeing.

Ihuaku Patricia Nweke *(continued from page 57)*

I also run a social enterprise called Cedarcube www.cedarcube.com with the mission to Heal Hearts and Restore families. This is done through education, counselling and financial support. Initiatives include the Building the Excellent Family online summit which is now in its second year and was held between the 6th and the 8th of November 2020 with a global line up of experts in health and wellbeing, finance and real estate, relationships and ministry. Cedarcube runs a domestic abuse advocacy and in 2018 launched the Behind the Mask initiative to encourage domestic abuse sufferers to speak up about their experiences and to remove the taboo that surrounds the subjects. The initiative offers free counselling and therapy to families affected by domestic abuse.

Cedarcube has won several awards including being one of 9 shortlisted community organisations amongst 22,000 organisations worldwide for the multi strand category of National Diversity Awards (NDA) 2019, UK. Other awards include the Corporate Livewire award for relationship counselling organisation of the year 2020.

In October 2020, I got together a group of domestic abuse advocates world-wide to undertake a project that would have a huge impact and provide a useful resource for domestic abuse sufferers during the recent global covid-19 outbreak which saw the number of abuse cases skyrocket worldwide. Together they formed the International Consortium for Domestic Peace (ICFDP) www.subscribepage.com/icfdp.

I am in the process of completing her book about discovering purpose through following ones' passions and going through painful experiences, an inspirational book which is a culmination of her own life lessons and this is set to be completed by December 2020 with a launch in the spring of 2021.

Ihuaku Patricia Nweke is a Designer, International Best Selling Author, Speaker, Social Entrepreneur and Procurement Consultant living in London.

THE INVISIBLE GIRL: *Samantha Houghton's Story*

Samantha Houghton is an award winning author, multi published ghostwriter and inspirational mentor.

A hospital baby, born in October 1970, slap bang in the middle of the UK in the city of Leicester.

There was mum, dad and a younger brother, born three years later. I was a shy girl but with a big belly laugh as my uncle used to say. Mum was a stay at home while my dad, a creative designer, was somewhat of a workaholic. My dad's design business grew, as did his love for alcohol and we moved to a bigger, better house and supposedly, a bigger, better life, except it wasn't. Well not for me at least.

The transition from a city school, leaving behind my best friend (when you are shy this is a very big deal) to a little, cliquey village school, was far from easy. Moving into an unknown world of kids that loved horse riding or playing the cello, when you were crippled with self-consciousness at the onset of puberty. Afraid to show a glimpse of a bra strap under my cardigan or admit to being the first girl to start her period was traumatic to me. All I wanted to do was to hide away.

I got my wish, except it was delivered to me in a way I was not expecting. The taunting at school and generally feeling like a total misfit helped to install some insidious beliefs within my mind that I carried like a suitcase, bulging with nasty labels and self-loathing for the next twenty years or so. I wasn't liked or wanted at school but I didn't feel that I fitted in at home either. Don't get me wrong, I knew that I was loved, I was always dressed well, we ate good food, enjoyed beautiful holidays and I was shown affection by my mum and I felt close to other members of my family. There was nothing that an outsider would spot that was amiss. But that was the trouble, they didn't know what it was like, nobody did, except me.

I felt so alone. I locked myself away into make



believe stories in my mind, it was safer there, I was normal too and escaped judgement. My dad was absent a lot, preferring the company of the pub and what was in his beer glass than to be at home with his family. Mum would be suffering and I'd see and feel her emotional pain, if it wasn't visible tears, or hurting words, it would be the trips away from the house to visit someone else so that she could get away from the turbulence at home. Sometimes I went with her but other times she'd be alone and leave us with dad. Dad, in his drunken state, would shift between silly drunken foolish behaviour that left me cold and seething under the surface, or angry shouting and aggressiveness until he would collapse in a heap on the sofa and proceed to snore heavily for the remainder of the evening.

This was normal procedure in our house. The thing is, the next day, we were all expected to behave as if nothing had happened the night before, and brush it under the carpet with the memories from the time before, and the one before that too. There was quite a collection of fragmented torment. It made me angry. Well I say it made me angry, I'm not so sure if I honoured that emotion at the time as I was fearful, and very afraid to reveal any of my angry emotion. I'd be torn between sympathy for my mum, sadness

and rage towards my dad, ferocious anxiety that gnawed away at me and an overriding concealed fury at all of the situation that my brother and I had been dealt.

With no real true connection with friends that I could wholeheartedly rely on, I felt that my ship was sinking. Social anxiety took hold and doing my paper round became impossible, and gradually, so did going to school. Anger that is suppressed for long enough, or too long some may say, transmutes into depression. It expressed itself as never ending rivers of tears, feelings of such darkness in my heart and a self-hatred that overwhelmed me. I was not enough.

Prescribed anti-depressants at age 15 and a diagnosis of chronic depression, it was only a matter of time before the Samaritans no longer felt enough of a support for me and I was admitted to a teenage adolescent unit. Away from home, away from school and away from the world. Safe. Sixteen months of pills, therapies, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers, I was let go and expected to integrate back into society as a healed young woman.

Except I wasn't because the truth was never told. Instead, I was more locked into my anger than ever, because I'd received help, that hadn't helped and I remained invisible. How despairing that felt at 17

with my future ahead of me, and all I wanted was to disappear.

Over the course of the next several years, throughout my twenties, I depended heavily on my new found friend, Bulimia, to see me through those very difficult years. My twenties brought me an overdose, some breakthroughs - I completed college, I met a man and got married, and I lost six stone. It also brought to me several hospital stays on mental health wards, some new labels, increased self-hatred and a whirlwind of finding jobs, getting jobs and leaving jobs. I could not settle with work, nor friendships but most of all with myself. I didn't even know who the woman in the reflection of the mirror was when I checked to see that I'd left no vomit around my mouth after my latest purge.

Then came the day, aged 28, that two new lives were born. My beautiful baby boy, Joseph, and mine. The love for that little boy was instant, a fierce protective mother's love like no other, and I knew that it was no longer about me. The little bundle that I peered down at while asleep in his cot deserved everything that I never had. Self-belief, self-love, self-confidence, self-respect and a sense of peace. I was going to do everything in my power to ensure he had those essentials and more. With my love for my son, I gradually learnt to love myself. When he was three, I took a huge leap and left my marriage, Joe and I left our home and set up a new life together. I felt freedom that I had never felt before but it was not smooth or easy.

As I embarked on a path of healing my inner child, the grieving I had to do was immense. I wept every single day for two years as I worked through psychotherapy. It was a huge challenge as a single mum as I had no choice but to hold down a job, despite the pain I was feeling after years of numbing it out. The pain was exhausting at times and I made some decisions, such as unhealthy relationships and relapses of bingeing, that added to this. I was after all, a master at self-loathing. But I came through, as my determination to be happy and to be the best mum that I could for my son ensured nothing less.

Can you share some tips of self-love that worked for you?

Embracing CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) was a game changer for me, after grieving my past and re-parenting myself, most of all, for the sense of self-respect that it brought to me as I learnt to



challenge my thoughts, to alter my emotions which created new behaviours and patterns that served me. I continued to express my feelings through written word, as I'd found as my saving grace from my school days, with my love for English Language.

With new found confidence and a son now aged around 12, I took one of the biggest plunges of my life, and walked away from a job that depleted me and into the uncertain world of self-employment to follow my dream of creating a life on my terms. My dad, even though he had his problems and solved them in his way, had instilled within me, a superb work ethic and a desire to be my own boss. It turned out to be the making of me as I threw myself wholeheartedly into a passion that brought out a side to me that had been in hiding for decades.

What inspires you the most?

Every single day, my former self, the young sad girl that wept in her bedroom alone inspired and motivated me to be a success. I thrived as I sought one achievement after another, making myself and my family proud. No-one could now think of me as the sad, lonely, misfit failure.

Throughout the five years of building that retail business, I found my truthful voice and I wanted to use it to make a difference, I was ready. Once that decision was made, my passion for my business waned and waned until I was ready to release it all to step right back into the unknown all over again. After burning out from trying so damn hard to prove to myself and the world, that I wasn't a failure, I took some quiet months out to recuperate. The voice within me, that was guiding me, became a scream that I heard loudly in the silence of not working and stillness. The calling to share my story pulled me like a magnetic force until it became a burning desire as I put pen to paper. Sixteen days later and the book had flooded from me, covering every emotion that could be experienced in succession. With a "no-one's going to stop me" passion the book was brought to life and six weeks later it was published. The magic truly began as I found myself onto a path of alignment as I held my truth and walked forwards in strides, with such love for myself for gifting this to me, as it helped me to heal the stubborn shame that I still kept a firm hold of. I was determined for it to make a difference in people's lives that felt alone and struggled with knowing who they were and their self-worth.

Three years later, with another book under my belt and a thriving new purposeful business, I have been on such a journey. Every day, I now get to guide others to navigate their journey of their soul's story which is such a blessing. It brings me rewards and fulfilment that I had craved for years, by turning my pain, and their pain, into a powerful purpose to inspire and light up the world.

What would you tell anyone going through what you did?

To anyone whom is struggling right now as they read this, please believe me when I say that you are not alone. When you feel alone, the sadness can be immense and the feelings of not fitting in. Try asking yourself if it's for another reason, for some purpose greater than yourself?

What can you do with the pain you feel or have felt? How incredible would it feel to take that suffering and transform it into something beautiful to guide others, whatever it may be.

Talk to someone who may understand and that you trust, I can recommend the Samaritans if there is no-one else. Never carry the load alone, you must offload along the journey of life.

Have faith that better days are coming and dig deep to find your reason to find and feel a strong, unwavering sense of purpose.

Be kind to yourself, give yourself the compassion you would freely show another and multiply that by ten. And do it regularly.

Write, explore your feelings through the cathartic nature of creative writing and self-expression. As you write your "old story" and release, you create the space to call in a new story of self-love, self-care and nourishment for your soul.

Lastly, be aware of how powerful your mind is and how to use your imagination wisely. For years, my imagination and damaging thoughts ran wild, the self-defeating stories that I told myself, that I assumed were my truth, were the driving force of my life. I created energy through what I was thinking and the emotions attached to them, this created my reality before me - the negative loop I was entrenched in for a very long time. Don't be that person to remain stuck in a manifestation of pain and sadness, instead, turn that pain into purpose.



What was the most defining moment in your life?

When I was honoured with a humanitarian award and the day I graduated from University, growing up I was told I was unable to achieve both of these two milestones by certain individuals within the community, at the time I was seen as a very stubborn and fearless child in the community.

In your opinion are the youth misunderstood?

I believe some youth are misunderstood especially those that have been groomed within their communities or that are faced with identity issues. This is because the communities in the western world are more exclusive rather than inclusive, everyone minds their own business only a few care to get involved where there is a troubled child.

What motivates you?

What motivates me is change, change has the ability to give you the drive to see new experiences and to create a new story of your life

What achievements are you most proud of?

Am most proud of my book and becoming an author as this gave me a voice to reach people I wouldn't otherwise internationally, using my voice to enlighten people and also getting the feedback of gratitude.



Caroline's Story

My early life was spent in Uganda up until the age of five. I was born in Uganda, the short time I spent in Uganda I remember the quality of our traditional food and culture was quite different compared to the western world I am in now. Ugandan culture was more inclusive than exclusive, the qualities instilled in me was that family comes first.

How was school life for you?

I had both great and challenging experiences in school. Challenging at times as I had two cultures in me, the African and the western culture. During my school days I was trying to understand my identity as an African growing up in the United Kingdom as I was mixing with a lot of European children of who I was learning from.

Secondly, all the awards I have been given whilst empowering people and the businesses that I have opened up, becoming my boss.

What are you most grateful for?

Am most grateful for the wisdom that God has given and is still giving me to empower people and the ability to create.

What key advice would you give young driven women?

I would encourage young women to love themselves and find their gift in life, everyone is blessed with a gift, use that gift to become a cultural capital of their country. It's been noted that "show me a woman and I will show you civilisation".

How would you like to be remembered?

I would like to be remembered as a people's person, someone who helped to achieve goals in life, a person of impact and not influence.

What do you do in your free time?

I read a lot of books, I like to listen to music and I often go horse riding and play tennis with my friends. I love playing the saxophone.



About Caroline Namugabi

Caroline has Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Criminology, Masters of Sciences in Forensic Psychology, Master of Science International Business, is the founder of Thinktank720 Organisation and recipient of the Mayor's Award 2020.

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*Your voice,
Your power,
Your gift.*

*“Our voices are like a patchwork.
Each patch falls exacty where it is supposed
to be”*

Listen...stay still. Can you hear your voice? Your inner voice? Can you hear yourself talking to yourself, whispering, advising, warning? That voice has so much to say, so much to share, so much to give and too often, we silence it and in so doing, we deprive the world of something unique, something that surely is destined to impact someone else since we are all connected and linked in so many ways.

Life has its way of teaching us new things. I have come to realize that every person we encounter,

every experience we go through, good or bad, every milestone achieved, every loss, everything serves a purpose and is, in my opinion, supposed to be passed on, so as to impact lives. We are a channel with a purpose greater than we can imagine.

We all have scars that at first remind us of the hurt we went through, but not just that, these scars also remind us that we were saved, that we are loved, that we are destined for something so big that our mind cannot even start to comprehend it. The scars may be physical, psychological, emotional or other. These scars are there to show us that we are overcomers and that we can be there for one another. Our scars can teach us so much about our blessings if we take the time to be still and grateful. A scar means that we have been saved and hence a scar implies that we too have the obligation to save other lives through our prayers, love and kindness. A scar implies that we owe our life to God and that we have a role to play in our

global community. A scar can be directly linked to our voice since we have a story to tell and that story can only be one of hope. Hope is, to me, one of the most beautiful things one can give to someone.

Each life story is different since each life is unique, and yet, our voices are interwoven. Our voices are like a patchwork. Each patch falls exactly where it is supposed to be. Together, the patches become a work of art. Our voices, together, have the power to change our narratives, which is why they need to be voiced up.

“I learned that in life you should not be afraid to tell your story”
- H. Masasu

“A few months ago I was in a dark place. A place so dark that I couldn’t see the light at the end of the tunnel. I felt as if my life was over and what made it worse was that I couldn’t share how I truly felt with anyone. I feared opening up because that would mean giving people a chance to see what a big failure I was. Little did I know that this was killing me slowly. At the end of my pregnancy I was at high risk as I was diagnosed with high blood pressure (something that I’m still fighting now). I saw no way out until my lovely Aunt introduced me to a group of young ladies like myself, this was not something that I was used to and I felt like I didn’t even belong there but I gave it a chance. I allowed them into my life and since then life has been bearable. I learned that in life, you shouldn’t be afraid to accept help, you shouldn’t be afraid to tell your story - to the right people of course. You never know who’s listening and what they can do for you. Once I opened my heart, I started to grow, I started to change. Once I decided to be humble and to listen, I realized that I do not have to be a victim. As we speak I am able to carry-on with my studies because I got a bursary through the She Phoenix Femme Phoenix organization and I am taking care of myself and

my son. All this wouldn’t have been possible if I didn’t accept help, if I didn’t open my mouth, if I wasn’t humble and if I didn’t listen. No matter what you are going through, no matter how big it is, there is always a way out. Do not be afraid to accept help. When we go through tough times, we pray to God to send help and when he does we reject it because it’s not the help we had in mind. However, salvation comes in different ways and from different people. Also, we should always remember that no man is an island. The reason God placed us around others is because he knew that sometimes where our problems start is where our logic ends. At times when I face troubles, I often find that I can’t think. My brain seems to freeze and I have a strong impression that it won’t get better than this. It’s at those times, that I seek guidance. I speak about how I’m feeling and then I listen and I act. It always works for me because I have managed to keep only quality people in my life. A quality person is a person who adds value into your life, one who you can trust and depend on. Quality people do not bring you down, they do not make you feel bad about yourself, they do not abuse you. A quote that I like says, “sometimes holding on does more damage than letting go”, attached to this quote are two images - the first is of a hand that has been holding on so hard to a rope that his hand is red, bruised and aching. The second image is that same hand but now it has let go of that rope and the bruises and aching are healing. From this, I learned that often we keep people in our lives simply because we love them so much, we think that letting them go will kill us, it will hurt us, we can’t live without them. While the truth is that keeping toxic people in your life does more damage than letting them go. I am still in the process of learning to deny those who hurt me access to me. People will treat you the way you allow them to and once you know your worth and refuse to be hurt and mishandled that’s when you will not allow anyone who treats you badly to continue to have access to you, cut them off. It might hurt but the reward is great.”

*"We all have a past, but how it influences
our present and our future is up to us."*

- Eva Arissani

"When I fell pregnant 25 years ago, I was then 14 years old, I certainly did not believe that there would be a life after teenage pregnancy. The minute I realized I was pregnant, I got that stomach-churning sensation that carried on for so many years. Every morning, I would wake up anxious and scared for my future. I got acquainted with the ugly faces of Denial, Rejection and Judgment, that I saw every time I dared looking at people's eyes. Every single day felt like a punishment. I never knew if I would get to see a new day. Every breath I was taking was painful. I got so aware of my situation that I even forgot I was a child having a child...You know the feeling of carrying the world on your shoulder? That feeling of being cornered and not knowing who to turn to? I felt that way for many years. I got condemned and silenced so much so that I metaphorically lost my voice...and almost literally lost my life. I grew up at the speed of light. It took a leap of faith for me to carry on living. Over the years, I was blessed to meet incredible people, such as my husband who positively impacted my life. Through their love and support, I learned to accept my past, I learned to heal, I learned to trust, I learned to work on myself, I learned to believe in me and eventually I learned to BECOME. Life trials and tribulations, unexpectedly, made me find my own voice and become an overcomer. Finding my voice was not an easy process after years and years of hurt. It is only when I took the decision to revisit my past and take control of it that I made the switch. I found inspiration, motivation and strength in knowing that God had endowed us with incredible powers. I started developing a growth mindset and eventually became the person I am today. Once I found my voice, I found my purpose. I took the conscious decision to become unstoppable, unshakable and to be a voice for the voiceless. Having walked in the shoes of a teenage mother, I know how hectic life can

be for the young mother and the child. The good news is that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I am the living proof that it is possible to get from where you are to where you want to be. Through God's grace, I get to experience inner peace, joy and prosperity. Through His grace, I get to serve through She Phoenix Femme Phoenix, a Non-Profit Organization that I co-founded and initiated with the aim to restore lives one girl at a time. Today, I am here to tell you that whatever you may be going through, just know that you can make the impossible possible."

***You too have a voice, one that is
filled with past experiences, with
love, hurt, hope and so much more.
You too have are part of this beautiful
patchwork. Voice it up and use it to
heal, give hope and save lives.***

Article from Eva Arissani Nkoulou Ella
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