

Diamond

DIAMOND JEWELRY

ISSUE 4: MARCH 2025



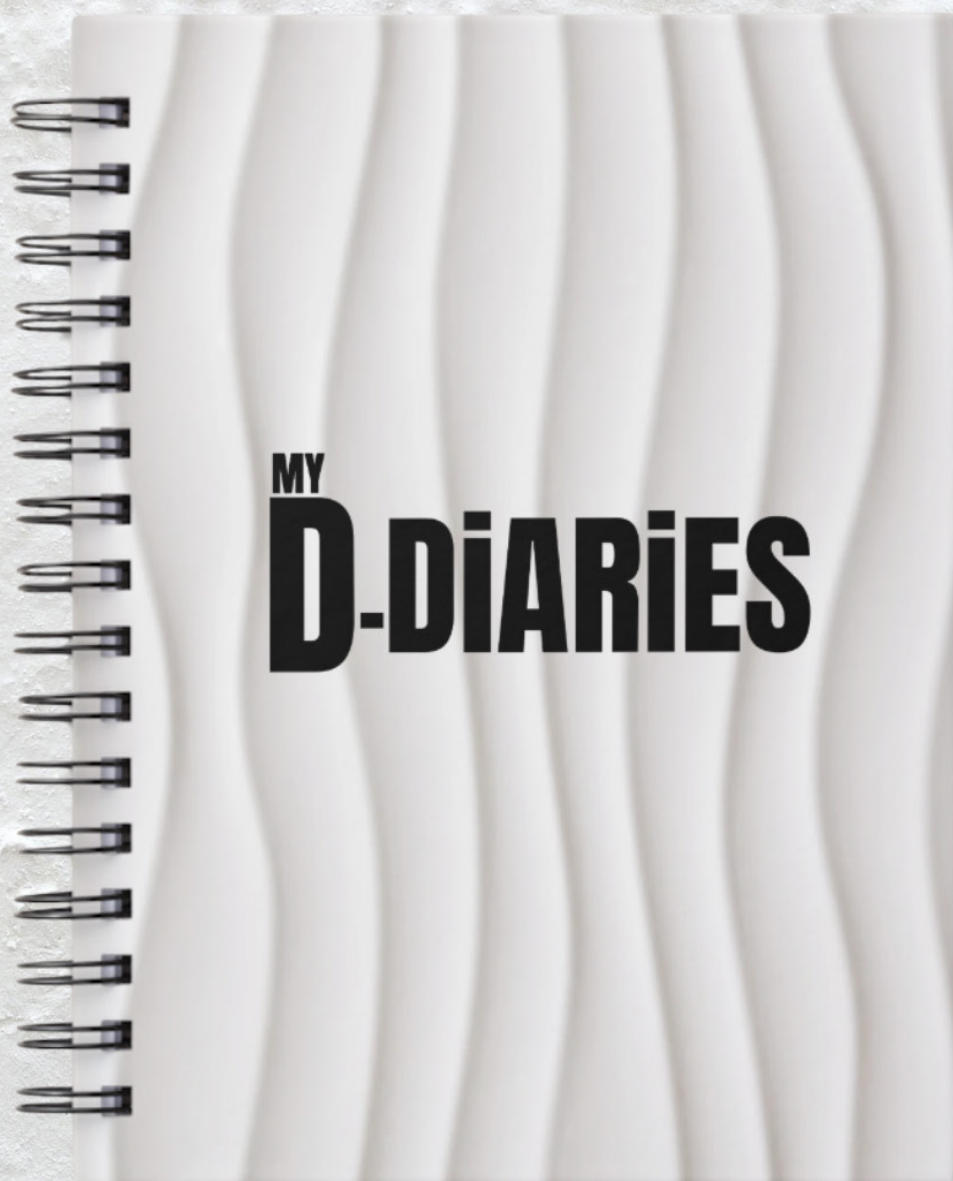
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'PURPOSEFUL LIVING'

THE INTENTION OF LIVING: seen through the eyes & heard through
The voices OF WOMEN FROM THE 80'S AND 90'S. A Woman's World.

A full-page background image of a sky filled with large, billowing clouds. The clouds are a vibrant orange and yellow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The clouds are dense and have a soft, ethereal quality.

IT'S ALL WITHIN REACH.



MY
D-DIARIES



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THE WOMEN'S SERIES



MEET ADI ALFA

10

INSIDE

Editor's Note

Purposeful Living

Life

- Stella's Story
- Creativity & Business with Sharlene Wilson
- Trauma Bonding
- Vaneeta Kaur

Fashion

- Secondhand Shopping for the Win
- Style Edit

Music

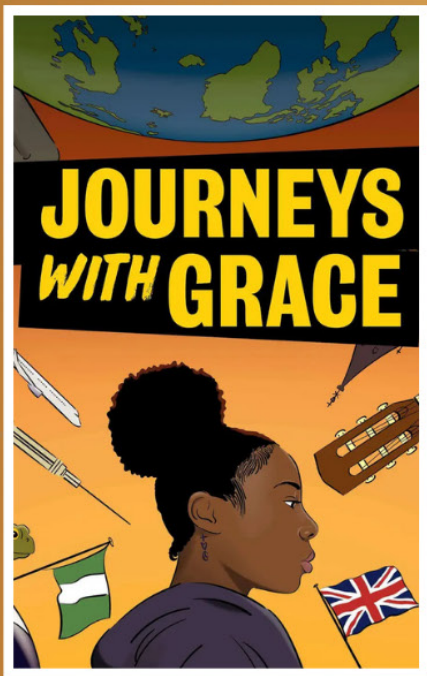
- Amelia's Music Billoard
- Power of Music



VINTAGE TALE



KEMI'S STUDIO



407.





purpose

FUL

LIVING.

MARINA TOWNSEND

It's 2025, and—well—what a year 2024 was! Happy anniversary to Dinkum Diaries, and a huge thank you to everyone involved in bringing us to this fourth and final issue (for now) of Dinkum Diaries Magazine.

This year's theme, a theme that should champion your life-is purposeful living. There's something extraordinary about waking up each day and walking in your purpose. It brightens your days and, when darkness comes, remains a piercing light through the cloud. This issue ends as it began: highlighting women from different sectors, each living life to the sound of their own trumpet. Somewhere along the way, the original intention of DD became lost, clouded by the noise of others running a different race, one towards a goal ignited by something unseen to me. So, intentionality had to be revisited, grace extended, and space given—not for failure, but for realignment. It was about course correction, evolution, and positive change.

With every year that passes, we expect to become wiser. Experiences shape our thinking, like realising the beautifully scented shampoo I've used for years is actually harmful. So, I found a better alternative, one that's less damaging but still holds a beautiful fragrance.

That shampoo switch represents the shift within the walls of Dinkum Diaries. A year of searching, discovering, meeting new people, and learning new things has meant recognising what needs to change, what must go, and what simply needs to evolve. So, as we stand boldly in our what and why, this next stage, this new year with added wisdom—will be a great one, as we amplify what truly matters. But before we talk about the future, let's focus on the present—because, as we know, tomorrow is not promised.

This issue celebrates International Women's Day and the ongoing achievements of women born in the mid-'80s and '90s who are making waves in their fields. Having the privilege to listen to and converse with women from different walks of life has brought pure joy to the start of my new year—something I know will continue to drive this journey forward.

Though we each walk our own individual paths, being born and raised in the same era creates an unspoken understanding, as if we've known each other for years. Shared experiences have shaped our perspectives, and that's why this issue feels different to me—it carries a deeper meaning.

Our first issue, *Roots to Blossom*, laid the foundation. This issue?

It's the harvest, the healthy growth from what was originally sown. And that is all we can ask for.

So, what's next? For now, Dinkum Diaries Magazine is coming to a close—to make space for something even more intentional, authentic, and creative. This next chapter will showcase our what and why, and the how will be revealed through *The Dinkum Diaries Annual Coffee Book + Event*—

A celebration of authenticity, creativity, and, most importantly, philanthropy. Stay tuned for more details.

BUT FOR NOW, READ, INDULGE, AND CELEBRATE EVERY VOICE IN THIS ISSUE—AND THE INCREDIBLE WOMEN AROUND YOU.





THE CHOICE IS YOURS.

The short story of confidence, resilience and the outcomes of chosen choices.

Intentionality producing the dreams you dreamt behind closed doors

Watching Doechii win a Grammy
 for Best Rap Album, and hearing her speech to
 every black girl gave me goosebumps; I am truly in awe
 of her resilience and persistence in attaining her dream. We
 often fail to recognise the years of rejection, failures, and silence that
 go into claiming what is rightfully ours. As we explored in the last issue,
 comparison is a killer-it robs many of their dreams. Ultimately, all that stands
 in your way is consistency, conviction, and belief.
 This story is for every individual who started and stopped because fear crept in and
 doubt lingered, fed by the subtle words and lingering looks of those around them.

Once upon a time, there was a young girl named Bree. She was the eldest of five siblings
 and was surrounded by the abundance of family love. Though Bree came from humble beginnings,
 she never lacked the real riches of life: love, laughter, and comfort.

As she grew, she began to experience the world beyond the warmth of home and soon realised it
 was nothing like the one she had known. She made friends, encountered her first heartbreak-not from
 romance, but from the betrayal of someone she once called a friend. She witnessed the quiet cruelty that
 could lurk behind a smile, the sharpness of words spoken in whispers. She struggled to understand the
 negativity that oozed from the tongues of others.

Whenever the world felt unkind, she found solace at home, soaking in the love of her parents and siblings,
 despite the occasional annoyance they brought. But as she spent more time in the outside world, she noticed
 something: she was changing. Bree quickly learned she had to protect her heart. Like a chameleon, she adapted
 to her environment, blending in to survive. But as time passed, she realised she was losing the identity she once
 knew.

She had always dreamed of becoming an architect. She worked tirelessly through school, college, and university,
 studying architecture and business. But after years of dedication and thousands spent on her education, she left
 university feeling uncertain. Not because she no longer loved her field, but because doubt had set in. Looking
 around, she saw glimpses of lives she longed to live and wondered: should she take time to “live” before diving
 straight into her career?

Despite the uncertainty, Bree chose to pursue her dream. Rejection didn't deter her; instead, it fuelled her
 passion. She threw herself into projects for family and friends, building a portfolio when companies refused to
 offer her experience.

Two years after graduating, her persistence paid off-she landed her dream job. She continued to grow, learning
 and building her future. Along the way, a few relationships, both romantic and platonic, threatened to dampen
 her spirit, but she refused to let them define her story.

Her career took her across the world. New places, new cultures, and unfamiliar faces helped her see life from a
 different perspective. Moving away from everything she knew allowed her to rethink, rediscover, and reclaim
 the parts of herself she had lost through years of adaptation, conformity, and self-protection.

It took time-years, in fact, but Bree slowly unlearned the habits she had picked up from the world and she
 did the work to heal.

Bree represents many of our beginnings and middles, but for too many, the ending is different. Many
 settle for the life they are handed. The things we have the power to change, we often don't-because
 change demands effort, consistency, discipline, and the strength to endure hardship without
 numbing the pain with the distractions of the world.

This short story is a reminder: it is never too late to turn pain into purpose, to change
 the course of the inevitable, and to find your own version of happiness. But, it
 requires commitment. It requires action. So the choice is yours!

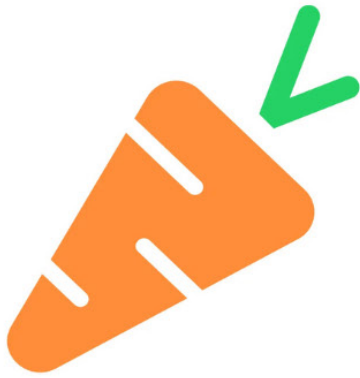
LIVING LIFE

LIFESTYLE

IN ALL ITS
FORMS

WELLNESS

it's yours



Yuka






Goldfish cheddar crackers

Pepperidge Farm

7/100
Bad

Negatives

-  **Additives**
Contains additives to avoid 6
-  **Sodium**
Too salty 833mg
-  **Calories**
A bit too caloric 467 Cal

Positives

-  **Protein**
Excellent amount of protein 10g
-  **Fiber**
Some fiber 3.3g
-  **Sugar**
No sugar 0g


History


Recos


Scan


Overview


Search



Yuka



THE WOMEN'S

@mellisaswardrobe



@hqyleymulenda

SER

Melissa Hodbrook-Akpose aka (MELISSA'S WARDROBE) Middle centre. **Hayley Mulenda** Middle second image. **Rachel Williams** Top corner second page. **Misi Chanel Ogunlana** aka (MISI AFRICA) Second image from top. **Giovanna Vieriraco** Third image **Annie Phillips** Bottom corner image

There are millions of women doing their thing and we have picked out a handful of those that are doing their part in society to inspire and cultivate change in their own personal ways. Here are a few women we are celebrating and READ ON to hear directly from a few more...



@misiafrica



@rachelwilliamscreative



@giovannavieiraco

iES

@madeby_annie_





ADI ALFA

MEET ADI: *MULTI AWARD WINNING* Actress, Director, Producer,
Founder, Wife and Mother.

FROM HER FIRST MAJOR ROLE IN TAMLA ROSE TO BECOMING A FIERCE ADVOCATE FOR WOMEN IN FILM, ADI ALFA HAS ALWAYS BELIEVED IN THE POWER OF STORYTELLING. HER JOURNEY HASN'T BEEN WITHOUT CHALLENGES—FACING REJECTION, NAVIGATING A MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRY, AND BALANCING MULTIPLE ROLES, BUT HER PASSION HAS NEVER WAVERED.

IN THIS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW, SHE OPENS UP ABOUT THE LESSONS SHE'S LEARNED, THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATING SAFE SPACES FOR WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY, AND HOW MOTHERHOOD HAS DEEPENED HER SENSE OF PURPOSE. SHE ALSO SHARES HER VISION FOR EMPOWERING UNDER-REPRESENTED VOICES, PROVING THAT STORYTELLING ISN'T JUST ABOUT ENTERTAINMENT IT'S ABOUT IMPACT, LEGACY, AND INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION.

THE INTERVIEW: ADI ALFA

For our readers, can you describe what “purposeful living” means to you in the context of your life and career?

Living in your purpose is something not afforded to everybody. It took me a while to understand what my purpose was, and now, I think I might have figured it out, it makes life that much more wonderful. Purposeful living starts with YOU. Figuring out who you are, what your voice is and what you want to say about the world. As a creative I feel that it's my job to tell stories of voices that aren't heard, but also share different perspectives and empower people and communities, however that is formulated.

How has motherhood/ family life and values influenced the kinds of stories you want to tell in your creative work?

I think becoming a mother has made me more conscious of the work I do and attach myself to. I want my kids to be proud of their mummy, and I want them to feel as inspired as they make me feel. I also really want to create a film or TV show that they can watch and say, “that's my mama” or “my mama made that!” I would say in terms of my values, they have only heightened my sense of leaving a lasting and impactful legacy. I feel blessed that I have the power to tell impactful stories as a creative being!

As a multi-hyphenate creative with numerous projects, how do you maintain balance and ensure time for personal fulfilment?

I will be completely honest, it's difficult balancing so many different roles. But I also think, that because I love what I do, I find a way to make them all work... most of the time. It requires a very organised and dedicated mind. I also take one day at a time and try to focus on one thing at a time and complete it.

How do you see your work as a vehicle for inspiring purposeful living in others, especially young women or aspiring actors?

Perhaps given the fact I am so passionate about opening doors and giving opportunities to young people, in particular women and young girls, drives my feeling of purpose. I just want people in general to know that they are important and what they have to say matters. I know I have said this before, but I believe in it so much! I think the work I create has a way of making people think and feel and those things and feelings remind us that we are humans first before anything else.

Through Women in Film and Creative Industries Group and your production company, Media Worx Films, how are you fostering a creative and inclusive community?

As a black woman in the creative industry it's easy for me to feel under-represented and like I'm not seen or heard, and it does get frustrating, however I feel like I'm in a fortunate position, whereby I can now offer an inclusive space for under-represented talent via the women in film group as well as work opportunities and workshops for those looking to learn and grow in an encouraging and experienced environment.

What advice would you offer to young people, particularly those from under-represented backgrounds, who aspire to break into acting or film making?

My advice would be to make meaningful connections, always show what you have to offer and they have to gain by making their connection with you. Tell your stories and make your voice heard however you can. Be brave and be persistent and consistent and find your tribe, your community, your space, where you can collaborate and make great art, whatever that looks like.

THIS IS STELLA

In her own words...



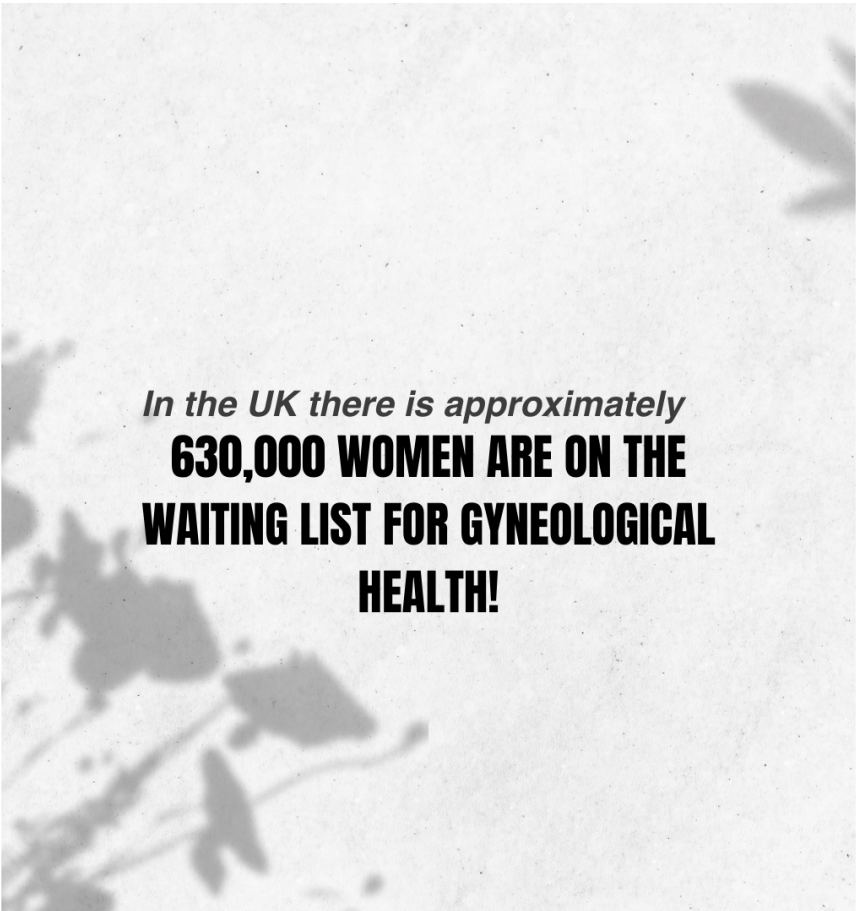
“In 2023, I was baptised. During my testimony, the pastor said something profound: “It wasn’t God’s will for you to go through these health challenges. What the enemy intended for evil, God is using for good.” Those words ignited a boldness in me to share my journey openly, using it to uplift others.”

“I guess I’ll start from the day my mum passed away. I was in the hospital with my dad, learning that on the 2nd of January, she was going to die. I spoke to my dad on the phone prior as it drew closer and I could hear him welling up as he realised she was slipping. Even though he tried to stay strong, I could hear from his voice on the phone that something was terribly wrong. On the 2nd of January, in a small intensive care unit, I was with my dad and my siblings. Together, we watched our mum’s life fade away. It was peaceful. Although she could no longer speak, connected to a machine with a tube in her throat, she communicated with her eyes. When they switched off the monitor, the reverend prayed, and I sang “Blessed Assurance,” one of her favourite hymns. I could see her gasping for air, and her saying “Amen”. It gave me peace, knowing that as she was transitioning, she was with the Lord and not just fading away. That day changed my life. I became an interim mum, as the oldest sister my heart immediately went out to my younger siblings and my dad. Over time, my brother just after me became like my older brother after finding stability; He met an amazing woman, strong and faithful, and having his own household allowed me to step back from always being the responsible older sister.

For three years, I did my best to ensure my siblings were okay and that my dad was managing. But once everyone seemed to find stability, my life started to fall apart. I was working as an art worker at the time and was in a relationship that I eventually had to walk away from. While mourning, I began questioning my life. Was I happy? Did I enjoy what I was doing? Around the same time, I started experiencing chronic pain—severe period pains. A doctor once told me that the womb stores emotions, and after my mum passed away, I didn’t talk to anyone about how I truly felt. Not my siblings, not my dad, not even my friends. I internalised everything. Looking back, I believe that emotional suppression contributed to my gynaecological health issues.

During that time I worked at August Media publishing house, which was phenomenal, they managed major accounts like IKEA, Ocado, and Christie’s. My manager, Jules Rogers, saw me in a way no one else did. She noticed my creativity and encouraged me to document my evolving hairstyles, and challenged me to explore my potential. During my last review, I asked for a promotion, but she said no. I burst into tears, but her reason changed my life. She told me, “Stella, there’s nothing I’ve asked you to do that you couldn’t. You can do anything. If you decide to freelance, we’d hire you back.” At first, I was angry because I wanted the promotion, but after weeks of reflection, I made the decision to leave and freelance—and they did hire me back. That transition was perfect because freelancing gave me the flexibility to manage my health while still doing the work I loved. I got into prop styling and worked on incredible campaigns for brands like The Guardian, Prada, and Valentino. I learned how to bring visions to life, working on sets and creating stories through imagery.

But, my health continued to decline.



I became so ill that I couldn't get out of bed. I self-medicated, taking pills just to get through the day. I went from being financially independent to relying on universal credit, struggling to choose between paying bills or buying food. It was a humiliating fall from stability, and it led me to a dark place. I became depressed and suicidal, although I didn't realise it at the time. I isolated myself because I felt misunderstood. My friends couldn't grasp how severe my gynecological issues were, and I felt like a burden. I missed social events, and they grew frustrated with me. I went through numerous misdiagnoses and faced gas-lighting from healthcare providers. I was given medication that only made things worse, with side effects that left me drowsy and exhausted. I became tired of everything-of being sick, of complaining, of feeling trapped in my own body. I shut everyone out. I didn't know how to ask for help or even how to explain what I was feeling. But in my solitude, I slowly began to understand myself better. I realised that my journey wasn't just about physical healing; it was about emotional healing too.

IN THE UK IT'S REPORTED THAT 1 IN 10 WOMEN SUFFER WITH ENDOMETRIOSIS

Ten years flashed before me, filled with struggles, triumphs, and self-discovery. I finally found my calling-designing jewellery. It all started when I was going through my mother's belongings. In those early days of grief, I would go into her cupboard just to smell her clothes, trying to remember her scent. It was my way of keeping her close, even after she was gone. As my family and I found the strength to sort through her things, we came across her jewellery. Most of it was sent to her sister abroad, but my dad insisted on keeping two pieces-one for me and one for my sister, to wear on our wedding days.

At the time, I was experimenting with different creative mediums. I was good at making leather bags and dabbled in basic beaded jewellery. But when I held my mother's jewellery in my hands, something clicked. I realised this was what I wanted to do.

Then, I found her Bible. She had underlined passages that brought her comfort and joy. Knowing she found peace in God's word brought me solace. My mum was someone who only went to church on the last Sunday of the year to give thanks. Her father was Muslim, her mother was Christian, and she walked her own spiritual path. Although my father raised us as Christians, my mum gave us the freedom to choose our beliefs.

In my darkest moments, battling depression and suicidal thoughts, it was her Bible that brought me comfort. I called out to God, saying, "Lord, I want to do this jewellery thing, but I don't even have the energy to design or draw." Her underlined passages inspired me to create a charm collection based on the Word. I designed them digitally, and that was the start of my jewellery journey.

I began attending church again after years away. That's where I met Bukky, who told me about an opportunity at the British Academy of Jewellery. At first, I hesitated, I didn't have a proper sketchbook, just a small collection of digital designs. She encouraged me to apply anyway, and God was faithful. I got an interview, showed them what I could do, and received an unconditional offer. That's how my formal journey into jewellery began.

I thrived at the academy, earning a distinction in my Level Two course. During this time, I was head-hunted by a jeweller who often saw me rushing between school and my own projects. When he asked what I was up to, I told him about starting my brand Clara Rose in honour of my mother. He invited me to join his workforce. I had no idea he was a celebrity jeweller, highly respected in the industry. I naively declined his job offer, thinking I needed to focus on my own brand.

After confiding in a mentor who rebuked me for turning down such an opportunity, I humbled myself. I started visiting the studio regularly, learning everything I could. It became an unspoken agreement that I was part of the team. They were generous with their knowledge and encouraged my unconventional designs, like my first piece-a bomb pendant symbolizing my explosive entrance into the industry. I surprised them again with a nine-piece interchangeable ring, designed not for women but for men who enjoy variety-whether they wear a bi-metal watch, go all-gold, or feel like being understated one day and flashy the next. This innovation earned me a place in the team. My mentor was inspired to create a fully diamond-encrusted flip ring for a celebrity, solidifying the belief that anything is possible if you believe.

Through this journey, I found a creative partner with whom I could truly vibe. We would spend days designing, visiting museums, and pushing each other to new creative heights. Our ideas would bounce off each other like a sparring match, each of us inspired to outdo the other. During the lock-down, he designed a collection for a celebrity that never got released. But it was a blessing in disguise because he found one piece he loved, while I inherited the rest. Those pieces were so unique that they deserve to be in a museum, and I believe that one day they will be.

We sacrificed social lives and leisure to grind, design, and plan. Whether it was fashion design, interiors, architecture, mathematics, or engineering, we immersed ourselves in creative study. It was an incredible time. But in 2022, I was hit with more gynaecological issues.

While I was thriving in the jewellery industry, buying gold, sourcing diamonds and gemstones, meeting clients, and creating meaningful pieces-I was silently battling severe gynaecological health issues. I was diagnosed with endometriosis, ovarian cysts, and fibroids, all of which were causing unimaginable pain.

W

hat I didn't know at the time was that there were also layers of webbing, scarring, and blockages within my fallopian tubes, leading to trapped water that turned into bacteria. The pain was so intense that it became nearly impossible to work.

Despite this, I pushed through. In the jewellery world, meeting deadlines is non-negotiable, especially when crafting engagement rings or memorial pieces with deep sentimental value. So, I would always prioritise my clients' special moments over my health, even though it was the worst decision I could make.

The NHS appointments were quick, often leaving me too overwhelmed to discuss the depth of my pain. It took nine years for a full diagnosis and ten years before I finally had surgery. During this time, a mentor and jeweller I worked closely with urged me to get checked out privately, and he did something incredible—he paid for the scans. Those detailed examinations revealed the extent of my condition, finally giving me the evidence I needed to push for more urgent NHS treatment.

In 2023, I began Zoladex to shrink my endometriosis and fibroids. There were eight significant fibroids—fitting, as the number eight has always been meaningful to me. My mother was born on the eighth, I was born on the eighth, and eight symbolizes new beginnings. But the eighth fibroid in particular was precariously located on a stem inside my womb, growing at the speed of a fetus. It posed a life-threatening risk if removed too hastily. Shrinking it safely took eight months.

On February 14th—Valentine's Day, 2023—I went in for surgery. To lighten the mood, I joked with the surgeons, "Well, I've never had so many hands fondling me before. I guess God really loves me today." It broke the tension, and they laughed, easing some of the anxiety in the room. The surgery was complex, partly because I had two cancer scares leading up to it—one for cervical cancer and another for bowel cancer.

Thankfully, the scans showed that it was the endometriosis that had spread to my bowels. To make matters worse, I was one of the rare few—one in 100,000—who suffered extreme side effects from Zoladex. I experienced excruciating knee pain, which forced me to use a walking stick. After the surgery, I woke up to the news that I had lost half my womb, including a fallopian tube. Strangely, my ovary was still attached but was so disfigured that it often "hides" during scans. This meant IVF was my only option for having children. The doctors were upfront: I needed to act quickly, as the NHS wouldn't be able to help me after the age of 40. At 38, the pressure was on. Yet, I found comfort in my faith, telling myself, *"With God, all things are possible."*

T

he surgery left me with a large scar stretching from my navel down to my "lady garden," as I like to call it. But I see it as a mark of survival—a symbol of everything I've conquered. Inspired by this journey, I designed a bracelet called "Erupt," reflecting the internal scars and adhesions that felt like cracking within me. The piece is unreleased to the public, but is significant in my healing journey.

In recovery, I leaned heavily on my faith, family, and community. My dad and brothers became my caregivers, while my sister and sister-in-law helped me bathe and regain basic mobility. Friends from church and the Forthergill family offered emotional and spiritual support, while sermons and worship music from Tab Church kept my spirits high. I had to relearn how to walk, undergoing rigorous hydrotherapy, physiotherapy, and even emotional therapy. It was during this time of reflection and gratitude that I felt God calling me to do more than just survive—I was meant to serve others. As I thanked God for the people who supported me, I felt a nudge: "What about the women who don't have this kind of help?" That's when the vision for starting a charity came to me. At first, I resisted, questioning my own abilities. But as I shared my story with various gynaecological communities, they encouraged me to pursue this path. So, I took a leap of faith and started building a charity dedicated to supporting women with gynaecological health issues.

Whether they need thorough check-ups, financial help for egg preservation, or support with IVF, I want to create grants and bursaries to help them, one woman at a time. I received a vision from God, but at first, I didn't quite understand it. I kept seeing flashes of chain links, but these weren't ordinary links—they were pear-shaped. Pear shapes are incredibly significant to the Clara Rose brand because the pear-shaped diamond symbolises joy, but it also represents tears—the tears I've shed. It's a shape that carries deep meaning, a reflection of both sorrow and happiness.

When I realised the chain links were pear-shaped, I knew instantly that this was meant for Clara Rose.

To fund this mission, this jewellery collection wasn't just for me—it was meant for this cause. Fifty percent of the proceeds will go directly into the charitable fund. I believe this is the purpose God has set before me.

I never set out to be this type of jeweller. I thought I'd be a lifestyle jeweller after my experience with interiors and high fashion. But now I see that I'm called to be a high jewellery designer with a mission to advocate for women's health. I'm turning my pain into purpose, and I believe my story can inspire others to do the same."





EKI KERE

VANEETA KAUR

Writer, Author; Debut book "Broken Branches"

It was a cold, grey Saturday morning in London, the kind of day where the chill seemed to hang in the air, clinging to every passer-by. The courtyard of Somerset House was alive despite the weather-people pouring out from the cafés, their coats pulled tight, what looked like a stage was being built and the working site less appealing to the eye than usual. Inside a busy café, the warm smell of coffee and pastries greeted us as we found a small table near the window.

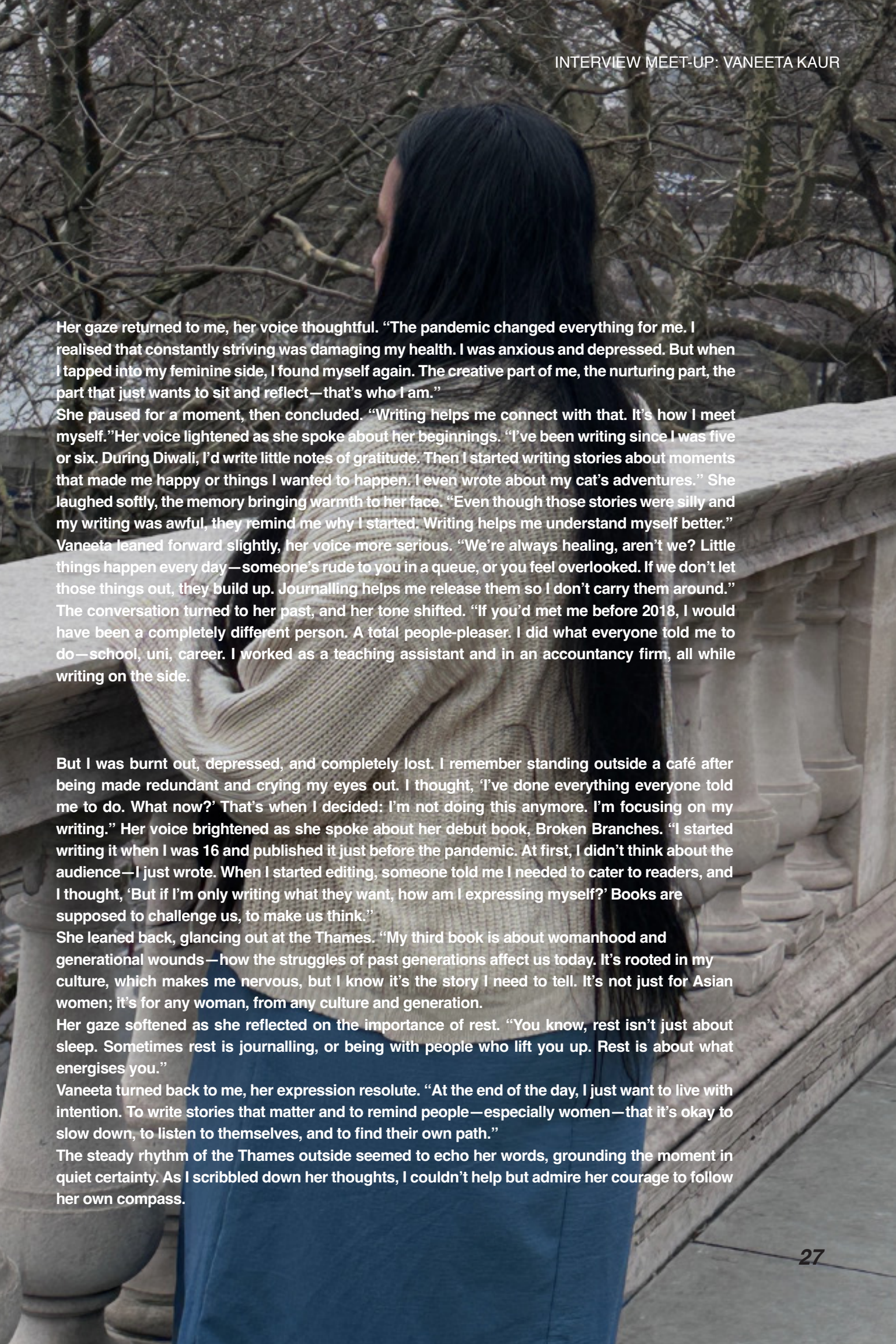
Vaneeta Kaur sat across from me, a steaming cup of hot chocolate between her hands. Her scarf was wrapped snugly around her neck, and she occasionally cupped her hands around the mug for warmth. The café was noisy, with the chatter of voices and the clatter of cups making it hard to hear. "Shall we find somewhere quieter?" I suggested after a while of enduring the surrounding noise.

We made our way to a quieter section of Somerset House, settling into one of the not so plush black leather sofas. Through the large windows, the River Thames was visible, its surface rippling under the gloomy sky. I opened my notebook, pen poised, and she leaned back into the sofa, letting out a soft breath.

"The divine feminine," she began, "is like a compass. She asks you why you're doing the things you're doing. Without her, we're just running around, lost."

"Before Covid, I was all about ticking boxes—selling my book, getting a house, buying a car. I was stuck in masculine energy, always on the go. Don't get me wrong, masculine energy isn't bad. We need a balance of both, but society doesn't let us slow down. It's like the feminine energy-the part of us that's creative and reflective-is being squashed."





Her gaze returned to me, her voice thoughtful. “The pandemic changed everything for me. I realised that constantly striving was damaging my health. I was anxious and depressed. But when I tapped into my feminine side, I found myself again. The creative part of me, the nurturing part, the part that just wants to sit and reflect—that’s who I am.”

She paused for a moment, then concluded. “Writing helps me connect with that. It’s how I meet myself.” Her voice lightened as she spoke about her beginnings. “I’ve been writing since I was five or six. During Diwali, I’d write little notes of gratitude. Then I started writing stories about moments that made me happy or things I wanted to happen. I even wrote about my cat’s adventures.” She laughed softly, the memory bringing warmth to her face. “Even though those stories were silly and my writing was awful, they remind me why I started. Writing helps me understand myself better.” Vaneeta leaned forward slightly, her voice more serious. “We’re always healing, aren’t we? Little things happen every day—someone’s rude to you in a queue, or you feel overlooked. If we don’t let those things out, they build up. Journalling helps me release them so I don’t carry them around.” The conversation turned to her past, and her tone shifted. “If you’d met me before 2018, I would have been a completely different person. A total people-pleaser. I did what everyone told me to do—school, uni, career. I worked as a teaching assistant and in an accountancy firm, all while writing on the side.

But I was burnt out, depressed, and completely lost. I remember standing outside a café after being made redundant and crying my eyes out. I thought, ‘I’ve done everything everyone told me to do. What now?’ That’s when I decided: I’m not doing this anymore. I’m focusing on my writing.” Her voice brightened as she spoke about her debut book, *Broken Branches*. “I started writing it when I was 16 and published it just before the pandemic. At first, I didn’t think about the audience—I just wrote. When I started editing, someone told me I needed to cater to readers, and I thought, ‘But if I’m only writing what they want, how am I expressing myself?’ Books are supposed to challenge us, to make us think.”

She leaned back, glancing out at the Thames. “My third book is about womanhood and generational wounds—how the struggles of past generations affect us today. It’s rooted in my culture, which makes me nervous, but I know it’s the story I need to tell. It’s not just for Asian women; it’s for any woman, from any culture and generation.

Her gaze softened as she reflected on the importance of rest. “You know, rest isn’t just about sleep. Sometimes rest is journalling, or being with people who lift you up. Rest is about what energises you.”

Vaneeta turned back to me, her expression resolute. “At the end of the day, I just want to live with intention. To write stories that matter and to remind people—especially women—that it’s okay to slow down, to listen to themselves, and to find their own path.”

The steady rhythm of the Thames outside seemed to echo her words, grounding the moment in quiet certainty. As I scribbled down her thoughts, I couldn’t help but admire her courage to follow her own compass.

the truth TRAUMA

While I may not have a robust definition of what Love is, I know what Love is not and trauma bonding is not Love. It's survival mode and when we mistake survival for affection, we risk misunderstanding the very essence of human connection. We begin to experience trauma bonding from the early stages of life, like the toxic friendships pretty much everyone experienced in high school where your friends would make fun of you and then turn around to be super affectionate when they need your help and you're stuck between the pain of their hurtful words and the fear of losing the friendship altogether. That push-and-pull dynamic, being trapped between the devil and the deep blue sea, between the fear of being alone and the fear of being hurt again – that's the hallmark of trauma bonding. Where you're compelled to return to a source of pain or fear because it's familiar, or feels like the only choice. It's a powerful force that creates intense emotional connections that rip you to your core. I'm talking real tears, genuine pain, and hurt that cuts deep.

It's not about being weak or flawed. And no, you're not crazy. It affects even the strongest, most independent women, just because we as humans are vulnerable to the manipulation of others. Imagine being drawn to the very person destroying you?. Pete Walker calls it a twisted love affair with your own suffering. Love is not control. Love is not an obligation. Love should not feel like a battlefield. We trauma bond because we are afraid of being alone. Like a child's fear of the dark, trauma bonding can make you feel like you can't survive without the very thing that's hurting you. Trauma bonding patterns do not only occur in romantic relationships where the individual becomes intensely attached to someone who is emotionally unavailable or abusive, but also in family relationships, friendships, and even professional or societal relationships where there is a power imbalance or ongoing emotional or psychological manipulation.

Leaving means facing the unknown and that's terrifying. Walking away means letting go of the familiar and that's daunting. How do you take back your power? Leaving a trauma bond may involve physically walking away, but even more importantly, it also involves breaking free from the emotional hold the relationship has on you. It's not just about breaking free from the abuser; it's about breaking free from the version of yourself that settled for less. It's about breaking free from the version of yourself that tolerated the pain and made excuses for the abuse. It's about breaking free from the version of yourself that believed you were unworthy of love and respect.

about BONDING

Dr. Charles Whitfield's healing process for trauma bonds focuses on reconnecting your inner child, the vulnerable, wounded parts of ourselves that were formed during traumatic experiences, essentially embracing and nurturing it. According to him, by doing so, you release the shame, guilt and fear that may have been buried for years. As you offer love and acceptance to your inner child you start to integrate these fragmented parts of yourself, leading to greater wholeness. Let's face it, relationships can be messy, and trauma bonding is like the ultimate messy relationship. It's essential that we also acknowledge its connection to shame.

The weight of shame can be overwhelming for us when we're trapped in a trauma bond. Shame can be a powerful tool used by abusers to control and manipulate us, making us feel unworthy, unlovable, and responsible for the abuse. This shame can become so deeply ingrained that it becomes a part of our identity, making it even more challenging for us to break free from the trauma bond. It's crucial that we recognise shame is not a reflection of our worth, but rather a symptom of the trauma we've endured. Breaking free from trauma bonding requires a gentle and compassionate approach. We must acknowledge our own feelings and experiences, rather than simply telling ourselves to "let go" or "move on." This can involve seeking professional help from a therapist or counsellor, practicing self-care and self-compassion, and surrounding ourselves with a supportive community. We must also recognize that healing is not a straight forward process, and it's okay to take things one step at a time. Soon enough, we would realize that our experiences, though painful, have given us a profound sense of purpose.

May our journey ignite a fire within us, that we not only survive, but thrive. May this passion propel us to help others, reminding the world that healing is possible. And in doing so, may we discover that it is the greatest gift of all.

Written by: Joy Alagoa

BALANCING CREATIVITY, CAREER & WELL-BEING

With a *DYNAMIC* 20-year career in the creative industries, Sharlene Milwood has built a reputation as a leader in *META DATA MANAGEMENT*, royalties, and data analytics, holding key roles at music week, warner, ppl music, and PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE. Now a PUBLISHER RELATIONSHIP MANAGER at prs for music, her journey began with an a&r assistant role at peoplesound.com, leading to a BA HONOURS in music & MEDIA BUSINESS MANAGEMENT.

C

CREATIVE AND BUSINESS + MENTAL ADVOCACY

Being both creative and technical hasn't always been easy to balance. It took me a while to get into a rhythm that worked for me. I love learning so I've always made time to keep up to date with the latest in whatever passion project I'm focusing on while mixing things up between business and creative so to not let one side of me become monotonous, variety is the spice of my life. I'm quite an organised person so I use calendars and to do lists to find harmony in all aspects of my life and make sure I schedule time for what's important to me, breaking up my days for example between being in the studio, brunching with my sisters and designing a project for a client.

Self-care is where it all starts, you can't give to others what you haven't got. Pouring into self fills you up so when you're full of positive energy, joy, happiness, peace etc. you can pour into others. We all have to make time for self, even if it's a 1min meditation when you're feeling overwhelmed in the office or at home you put on your favourite music and dance for 5mins, you have to stop and come away from the everyday life stuff to maintain balance. Pay attention to what you're feeling and act if things don't feel good. If you're stressed, depressed, anxious etc. communicate that to someone you feel you can trust, speak to a family member, friend, therapist, manager/HR or GP to get support. Most organisations have a well-being policy and should commit to ensuring that employees are well, healthy and able to perform. I'm a qualified mental health first aider so I've been trained by my organisation on how to spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill health confidently, guide someone to appropriate support and provide help on the same basis as physical first aid. This is something I think all organisations should have. I've worked with some great organisations where there are wellness times scheduled for the whole organisation, 'No meetings slots', massages, group walks, running clubs, healthy breakfast clubs, meditation sessions, well-being and healthcare benefits etc.



PERSONAL PRACTICES

Walking has been my go-to for years, not only do I get away from my multiple screens I get to be move my body and top up my Vitamin D (even when it's not sunny, you'd just need to spend longer outside I'm told) Breathing exercises such as box breathing or the 4-7-8 breathing technique are a big part of my life. They help me to stop, centre myself and brings calm to whatever is going on around me at the time. Another non-negotiable step is being strict with my time and energy. For example, I have a calendar reminder in my phone for no screen-time to help with sleep hygiene and reduce the effects of blue light on my sleep. I also schedule "sloth days" where I plan a day or half a day to rest and do nothing, again these are non-negotiable commitments to my self-care.

THE ROLE OF FOOD AND WELL-BEING

I'm a big foodie, I love to create and explore different foods and cultures. Food plays a big role in my mental health and well-being. Simple things like making sure I eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, pulses, beans etc. (Vegan) are paramount to my mental and physical state including gut health which can affect our moods. When I don't eat well, I feel sluggish and can get brain fog from a lack of nutrients. Yes, a burger & fries, cakes and doughnuts (my favourite treat) etc. feel great in the moment but I often don't feel great afterwards so I don't cut out these things I cut them down and try to eat well 70% of the time...Well that's the aim . Balance is key to everything.

CAREER GROWTH IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

I'd advise anyone interested in the business side of the creative industries to try different parts of the business to see what excites or inspires you. What really interests you and why? Once you've done that, find an organisation that aligns with your values as I believe you'll be more likely to thrive in an organisation you care about. Also know your worth and add tax, the creative industries can be cut-throat and when you're starting out the pay may not be great. Once your skilled up and get more knowledge and experience don't accept the pennies; we all have lives to live and pay bills. In my experience a company will compensate as little as they can get away with, don't let that be you. I'd also advise to keep learning; everything changes so fast you have to keep up with what's going on to not fall behind the crowd. Also find your tribe, people who support, inspire, uplift and encourage you and vice versa. You don't need to be everywhere to make a difference, again respect your own time and only go where you feel valued and/or can add value. Networking is great but only when it's right for you and what your career goals are. Pay attention to the details, meta data is detail heavy and so are royalties. They're complex and can be difficult to understand so do your best to dig into the details and learn as much as possible about your subject matter.

One lesson from my journey that aligns with purposeful living is always try to make a positive impact on others. I love the Dali Lama quote

"Our prime purpose in this life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't hurt them."

STYLE GUIDE

SPRING 2025

*The colours of
the season*

*Powder
Pink*

REFORMATION

*Pink Dress, REFORMATION £98. Lemon
Jeans, DAMSON MADDER £100, Earrings,
MISSOMA £159 Scarf, MIU MIU £210, Skirt,
HOLLAND COOPER £169.*



*Faux Fur Coat 539 EUR, THE FRANKIE SHOP £.
White Tank Top, ARKET £17. Sunglasses, LINDA
FARROW £290, Loafers, DUKE & DEXTER £270.
Mohair Pink Vest, COS £85. Leopard Tote, OTHER
STORIES £155*

“RETHINKING FASHION: HOW THRIFTING AND TIKTOK ARE REDEFINING WHAT WE VALUE”

The Thrill of Second-hand: A New Era of Conscious Consumption

As 2024 drew to a close, a remarkable shift in our approach to consumption began to take hold. Across every facet of life, people were rethinking what it means to buy, own, and value. More and more of you started making thoughtful decisions about where your hard-earned money goes, favouring meaningful purchases over mindless accumulation.

And where do we go when we need advice these days? TikTok, of course. The platform has transcended its reputation as a hub for dance trends and lip-syncs to become an unrivalled search engine. Need to uncover the best thrifting spots or car boot sales in London? TikTok's treasure trove of video reviews has you covered.

Thrifting is not for the faint-hearted. It demands patience, a discerning eye, and an intentional mindset to uncover items that are practical, unique, or outright stunning—all for a fraction of their retail price. For the brave souls who enjoy combing through racks in person, London's bustling thrift shops and car boot sales offer the thrill of the hunt. For the rest? Platforms like Vinted are a godsend. The beauty of these digital marketplaces is the ability to negotiate from behind the safety of a screen—no awkward haggling required. Plus, you can sweeten your offer with a cheeky picture of your cat if you wish.



DO YOU WASH YOUR HIGH-STREET PURCHASES BEFORE WEARING?

COMMITTING TO PRODUCING AND BUYING NATURAL FABRICS MEANS LESS PLASTIC CONSUMPTION...

Why Second-hand?

We've talked endlessly about the perils of fast fashion, but today isn't about that. Today, it's about celebrating the joy of scoring a 100% authentic leather jacket for just £15, flawless and brimming with character—or a cosy, second-hand wool jumper for £10. It's about reclaiming trends with the original pieces rather than settling for poor-quality imitations. Those 90s-inspired looks everyone's chasing? Skip the high street knock-offs and go for the real deal. You'll look sharper, spend a fraction of the cost, and embrace natural fabrics that are kinder to you and the planet. That's a win-win-win. But don't confuse affordability with indulgence. Shopping second-hand doesn't mean falling into the trap of overconsumption. It's about choosing wisely—picking timeless, high-quality pieces you genuinely love. When you're done with them, pass them on to the next generation or resell them to extend their life.

Debunking the “Icky” Myth

One hurdle remains: the persistent “ick” factor. Millennials, in particular, often equate second-hand shopping with wearing a stranger's hand-me-downs. But let's unpack that. Do you wash your high street purchases before wearing them? Because chances are, countless people have tried those jeans on before you—possibly without underwear or after skipping a shower (you get the picture). The reality is that second-hand clothes, especially from charity shops, are often cleaner than items from big-name retailers. A simple wash or dry clean, and you're good to go.




BRICK LANE: Shoreditch

The Future of Fashion'

Will second-hand shopping become the norm? We already have an abundance of clothing circulating worldwide—more than enough to eliminate the need for constant new production. Yet, there's always room for innovative designs and personal expression. The future of fashion doesn't have to choose between new and old. It's about balancing nostalgia and novelty, sustainability and style, past and present.

So, as you sift through your grandmother's wardrobe or browse the racks of your local charity shop, ponder this: could the future of fashion look a lot like its past? With the right mindset, we might just find that everything we need is already out there, waiting to be rediscovered.





Superfine: beyond the suit

The announcement of the 2025 Met Gala theme ‘Superfine Tailoring Black Style’ —sparked the initial idea. What began as an exploration of structured design soon transformed into a deeper conversation: the unspoken language of clothing and how power is both embodied and enhanced by what we wear. This was not just about garments but about presence, about how a woman commands space with or without adornment. Inspired by the Windrush generation, we set out to explore the many facets of superfine tailoring, its craftsmanship, its history, and its meaning in motion. Brixton, a place where history lingers in every street corner, where cultures intertwine in a dynamic rhythm of past and present. Here, tailoring is more than just fabric and stitches, it is a statement, a legacy.

Esther fastens the bolo tie around her crisp shirt, smoothing down the tailored two-piece suit that frames her figure with effortless precision. Brogues polished, briefcase bag in hand, she steps into the morning light. The air is cool, but the sun slices through, illuminating her path.

She moves with purpose, weaving through the hum of Brixton’s working pulse, past the town hall, past the steady stream of buses and cars, past others like her, dressed in determination. Today is hers. A week of victories begins with this first, confident step.





*Suit, DUNN & CO, Shirt,
VINTAGE D&G, Bag,
VINTAGE MULBERRY,
Shoes, VINTAGE
BROGUES. All items above
from Vinted, Vintage stores
or Car boot sales. Bola Tie
by STELLA AJAO.*



The shift

The weekend arrives, bringing a change in rhythm and attire. Saturday calls for ease, for vibrancy—a contrast to the structured elegance of the work week. Esther steps into colour: an ankle-length green skirt, a bright yellow short-sleeved shirt, layered with a suede waistcoat and her signature weekend tie. Rubber platform shoes add playful elevation, a quiet rebellion against the rigid formality of weekday brogues. Brixton hums with weekend energy.

Esther moves through the markets, fingers grazing bolts of fabric—potential for her next handmade creation. The scent of sizzling street food fills the air, mingling with the familiar essence of hair oils from beauty shops. She greets friends, embraces family, exchanging laughter and warmth. The sun lingers longer, and so do the smiles. Today is about presence, about joy, about the beauty of an effortless stride.







Waistcoat, VINTAGE Shirt, VINTAGE, Skirt, VINTAGE-Tie, VINTAGE, Shoes, ADIDAS PLATFORMS. Jewellery & Glass Jar, COSTUME All items above from Vinted, Vintage stores, Car boot sales or Portobello Market.





Reflection

Sunday—a day of rest, of stillness, of quiet indulgence. A woman of leisure moves with intention, not urgency. Church bells chime in the distance, their echoes weaving through the crisp morning air. Esther embraces the day in her Sunday best—a perfectly tailored green skirt suit, its hue mirroring the nearby gardens in full bloom. A silk scarf, knotted with care, drapes around her neck, catching the soft breeze as she walks.

She moves effortlessly, savouring the simplicity of the day. At the flower stall, she selects fresh blooms—an unspoken ritual, a gift to herself. Their scent lingers as she continues, settling into her usual corner at the local café. A steaming coffee in hand, her weekly read awaits. The pages turn with ease, the world slowing down just enough to let her breathe.

This week has been one of victories, small and large. And as she meditates on what's passed, she readies herself for what's to come. The new week will be blessed—because she will step into it with grace, intention, and power.





*Skirt Suit, CUSTOM, Scarf,
BURBERRY, Shoes, ASOS,
Basket Bag, IKEA*

MUSIC GUIDE

*the music
billboard*

by Amelia Poamz



*the artist
and their art*

*MUSiC &
intention*

TOP 5.

AMETHYST
@amethystmusiccc



AMANI
@amani.liaa



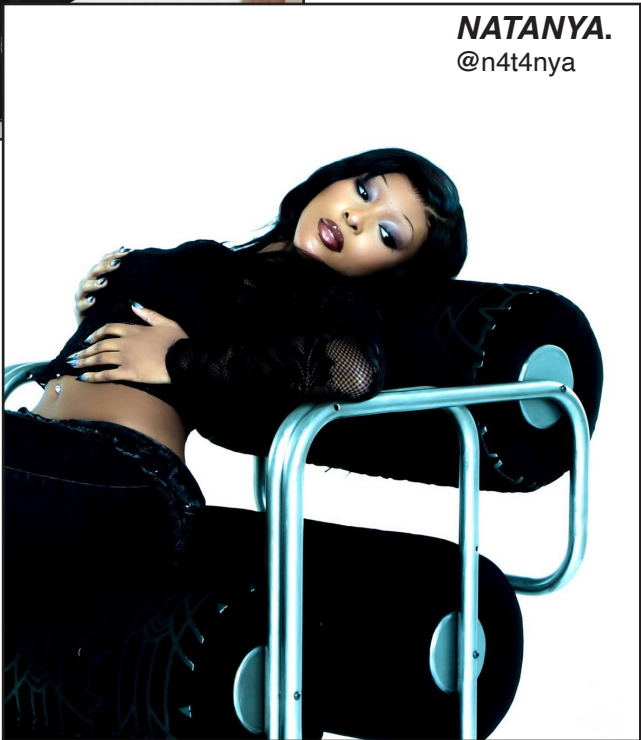
BINA.
@binaofficial



DUCHESS
@duchessartist



NATANYA.
@n4t4nya



THE
ARTISTS

AMELIA POAMZ

3°C weather but sunny and bright—a perfect winter’s day, if there is such a thing. Despite battling the relentless flu season and navigating train suspensions, my journey to meet Amelia Poamz was still underway. Her chosen location? Shoreditch Boxpark on a Saturday morning—an environment that Amelia has seemingly inherited as part of her essence. I appreciated the significance of the setting. Taking an unusual route from Old Street, I passed a local tour guide animatedly explaining the area’s wall art to a group of tourists. It sounded questionable to me, but then again, how would I know? On arrival at Boxpark, I was met with the lively buzz of Saturday morning runners. With my germ-infested self, I ran into the warmth of Boxpark, settling under heated lamps that did wonders for me. When Amelia arrived, it was as though we had met before. She looked radiant, her smile and warmth immediately setting the tone for what I knew would be a genuine conversation rather than a rigid interview. We began talking casually, and after a while, it struck me—this was the kind of exchange that should have been captured on camera. With that in mind, we got mic’d up and continued...



FREELANCE PRESENTER, EVENTS HOST, COMMUNITY COORDINATOR, AND FACILITATOR.

If someone who didn’t know you asked who you were, how would you respond?

“That’s actually one of the hardest questions to answer—like, who are you?” Amelia began. “Erm, I’m a person who values safe spaces and being appreciated, so that’s what I try to create with my voice. I think that’s the best way to summarise everything I do. It’s about creating spaces where people feel seen, heard, appreciated, and held—whether it’s for their artistic creations or their experiences in life.”

‘UNDER 5K CLUB’

The story of the Under 5K Club begins with Amelia’s journey as a BBC Radio London presenter. For over three years—“and don’t forget the four months!” She says with a grin—she hosted a show that spotlighted London’s creativity, from emerging talent to international artists passing through the city. “Established artists already have access to bigger platforms,” she explains. “I wanted to create a space for the new talent, the voices that deserved to be heard.”

When the show ended, she found herself in an unexpected identity crisis. “People used to call me ‘Miss BBC,’” she laughs, “which was fun—until it wasn’t.” Without the big platform, she questioned her value and even her purpose. “Looking back, it sounds ridiculous,” she admits, “but at the time, it felt so real. I’d built something great, but I didn’t believe I could do it without the BBC.”

It wasn’t until she asked herself a tough question—“Why do I feel like I can’t do something similar on my own?”—that things began to shift. Encouraged by people asking, “Where’s your content?” She took the leap. “I was over-thinking everything, procrastinating out of fear. One day, I just sat down, recorded a video explaining my idea, and put it out there.” The response was overwhelming.

The Under 5K Club was born, a platform for celebrating music artists—not because they reached out or asked for it, but because their work resonated with her. “It’s talent over popularity,” she says passionately. “Of course, it’s great when artists have both, but in a numbers-driven world, talent needs its own spotlight.”

Now, the Under 5K Club is expanding into live events, a podcast, and collaborations. “The core premise remains the same—creating a community that values talent above all else.”

FINDING COMMUNITY AND PURPOSE

In-Facts, a creative initiative with her friend, an artist. “We started in 2019 to fill a gap,” she says. “As a spoken word artist—‘paused poet’ now—I noticed so many talented artists who needed spaces to perform.”

When the pandemic hit, Impact adapted, becoming a podcast and eventually a space for artists to share works-in-progress. “Critiquing finished tracks didn’t feel as meaningful,” she reflects. “So we created a space for artists to get real, constructive feedback before finalising their work.”

This love for discovering and nurturing talent keeps her energized. “There’s something special about being able to say, ‘I was listening to them before they blew up,’” she says.



COLLABORATION & NAVIGATING AUTHENTICITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Reflecting on her career, Amelia says collaboration and putting herself out there have been key. “Last year was tough,” she admits. “Not being on the radio made me realize I wasn’t doing enough to let people know what I do.” She created a deck outlining her skills, sent emails, and reignited her network.

To her, networking isn’t just about transactions. “It’s about building genuine relationships. Sometimes it’s not about what someone can do for you right now—it’s about being part of a supportive ecosystem.”

Amelia emphasizes the importance of supporting others. “If you feel unsupported, ask yourself—are you supporting others? It’s a two-way street.”

In a world of polished Instagram feeds, Amelia champions authenticity. “TikTok feels more raw,” she observes. “People are showing up in their bonnets, just being themselves. That’s what connects us.”

She encourages artists to let people into their process. “Art reflects life, so how much of your life are you sharing?” While she respects boundaries, she believes vulnerability is powerful.

“BRING IT TO REAL LIFE”

“When I think of someone like Beyoncé, she’s an incredible performer, but I don’t feel like I know her,” she explains. “Rihanna, on the other hand, feels relatable. You see her life, her personality, and that creates a connection.” When asked if she feels genuine relationships can be built online opposed to in person she responded by saying; “We can absolutely build relationships online, but we have to make an effort to bridge the gap and Bring it to real life. That’s where the real depth and trust in relationships often develop.”



THE UK VS. THE STATES: SUPPORTING ARTISTS

When asked if the UK falls short in elevating artists the way America does, Amelia offers a nuanced perspective.

“This is an ongoing conversation, and personally, I think there are a few things to consider. First, we have to remember the sheer size of America compared to the UK. Also, when we talk about the UK scene, are we specifically talking about the UK Black scene? Because that’s a critical distinction. The UK Black music scene is still relatively new in many ways.

“If we trace it back, we have legends like Soul II Soul, and then movements like jungle and house further down the line. But even those are still relatively young compared to the deep, established history of music in America. So, we need to consider the context.”

“THE TIME IS NOW”

Amelia also highlights the importance of personal responsibility. “If you’re someone who relies solely on curated playlists from major platforms to discover music, you can’t really be part of the ‘we’re not supporting’ conversation. Are you actively going out and seeking these artists yourself?”

She dismisses the notion that UK singers aren’t delivering. “I’ve seen plenty of UK artists doing incredibly well. Many of them go on to find success in America too, and they absolutely should. There are pockets of people and communities in the UK that are actively doing what we say we want—they’re supporting and elevating talent. The issue is that if it’s not coming from a ‘recognised’ voice or face, people act as though it isn’t happening.”

Still, she acknowledges there’s room for improvement. “On a relative scale, I don’t think the UK is doing as poorly as people like to claim.” Amelia’s recent focus has been purposeful living. “Last year, I made a lot of changes,” she shares. One of the biggest? Going six months without drinking. “It wasn’t about having a problem; it was about realising my relationship with alcohol didn’t align with who I was becoming.”

She also revamped her daily routine, waking earlier and finding productivity in small, intentional steps. “It’s about making choices that align with your goals and values.”

Self-care has become a priority. Inspired by *The Artist’s Way* by Julia Cameron, Amelia practices free writing and takes herself on “artist dates.” “It’s about nurturing your inner child,” she says. “Whether it’s a solo cinema trip or bouncing on trampolines, it’s time just for you.”

A Simple Reminder

If there’s one message Amelia wants to share, it’s this: “The time is now. We spend so much time in the past or future that we miss what’s happening right in front of us. Be present. Some of the most beautiful moments in life happen when you least expect them.”

Her words are a powerful reminder to embrace the now, to stay curious, and to keep building community—one connection at a time.





KENTE GENTLEMAN





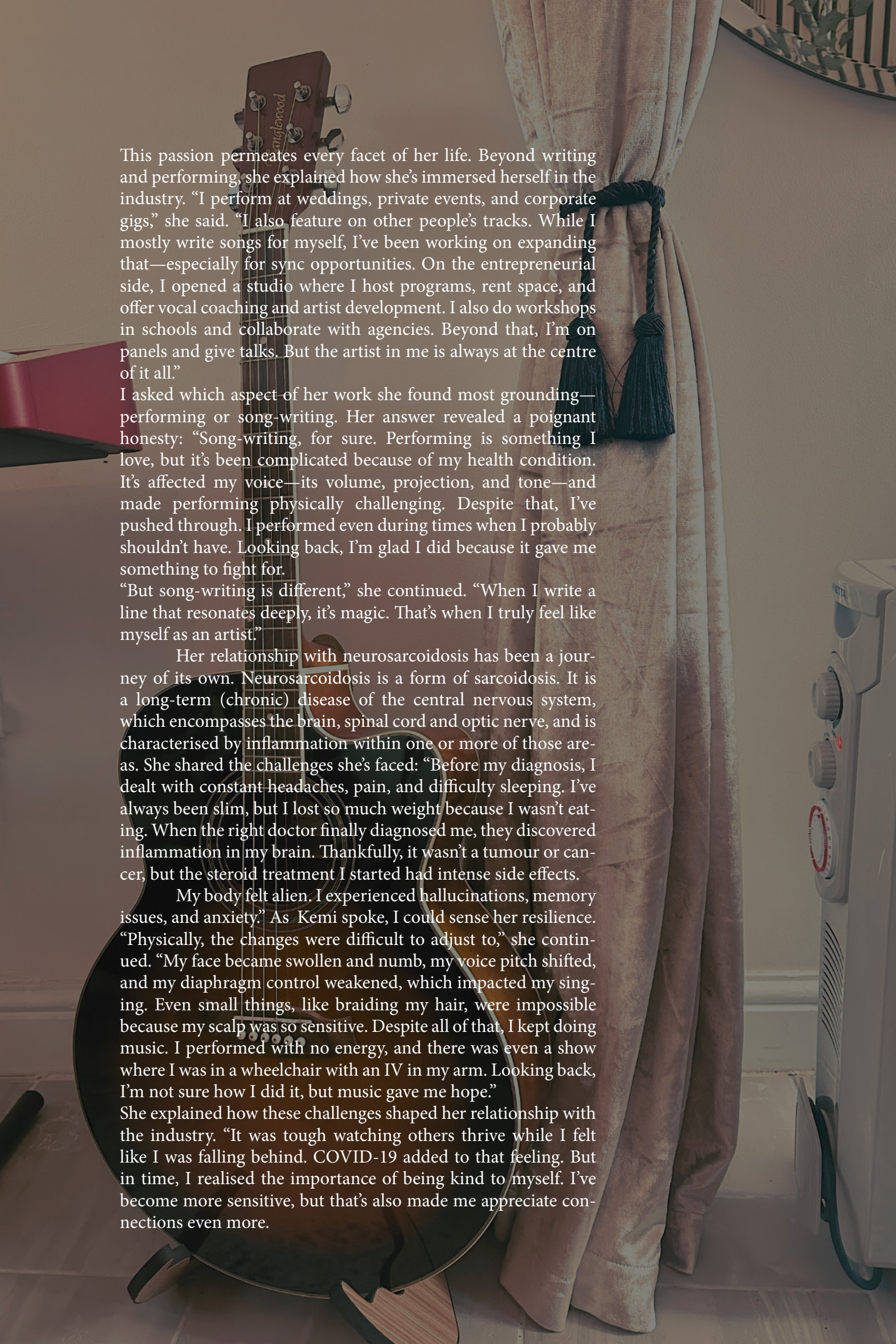
KEMI SULOLA

Meeting new people, you never truly know what to expect. There's a rhythm to interviews—a dance of preparation and spontaneity. You research, craft questions to guide the story you want to tell, and hope the exchange feels genuine. When I decided to meet Kemi, an East London artist whose album 'Fallen for' You had captivated me, I was nervous yet excited. Her voice, melodies, and heartfelt messages spoke to me deeply. I knew I needed to meet the woman behind the music.

As I arrived at her studio, I was greeted with a warm smile and a heartfelt hug. The space mirrored her artistry: carefully curated, every detail intentional, yet welcoming. Instantly, I felt at ease. Before we even began discussing music, our conversation flowed naturally, revealing shared passions and perspectives. Though her life had been shaped by challenges I hadn't experienced, like navigating a health condition, her resilience, creativity, and outlook resonated with me. The day was serene—punctuated by her playing the steel drum, singing, and even inviting me to leave my mark on a project she had in progress. It was more than an interview; it felt like a genuine connection.

As we settled into our conversation, I asked her, "Assuming that you define yourself as a music artist, what does that mean to you? How would you introduce yourself?"

She answered confidently, "I would describe myself as a singer-songwriter, artist, and music entrepreneur because of the things I do in music. I really believe being an artist isn't just something you do—it's who you are. It's a way of life. I'm an artist, and that's what I'm here for."

The background image is a soft-focus photograph of an interior space. On the left, the neck and headstock of a dark-colored acoustic guitar are visible, with the brand name 'Anglowood' on the headstock. In the center, a light-colored, textured curtain hangs, tied back with a dark cord and a tassel. To the right, a white electric heater with several control knobs and a red warning label is partially visible. The overall lighting is warm and slightly dim, creating a cozy atmosphere.

This passion permeates every facet of her life. Beyond writing and performing, she explained how she's immersed herself in the industry. "I perform at weddings, private events, and corporate gigs," she said. "I also feature on other people's tracks. While I mostly write songs for myself, I've been working on expanding that—especially for sync opportunities. On the entrepreneurial side, I opened a studio where I host programs, rent space, and offer vocal coaching and artist development. I also do workshops in schools and collaborate with agencies. Beyond that, I'm on panels and give talks. But the artist in me is always at the centre of it all."

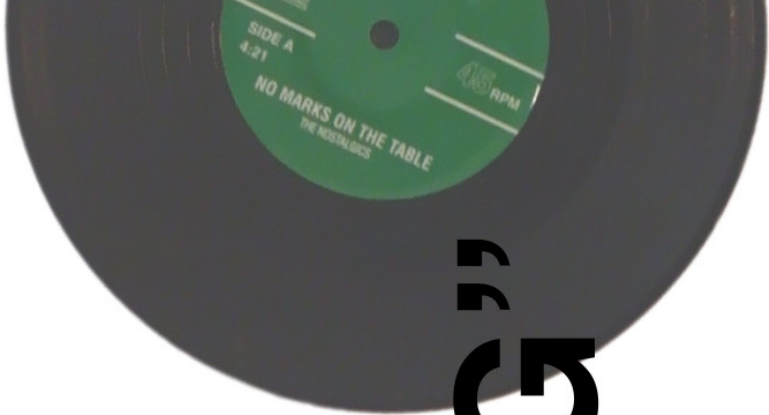
I asked which aspect of her work she found most grounding—performing or song-writing. Her answer revealed a poignant honesty: "Song-writing, for sure. Performing is something I love, but it's been complicated because of my health condition. It's affected my voice—its volume, projection, and tone—and made performing physically challenging. Despite that, I've pushed through. I performed even during times when I probably shouldn't have. Looking back, I'm glad I did because it gave me something to fight for."

"But song-writing is different," she continued. "When I write a line that resonates deeply, it's magic. That's when I truly feel like myself as an artist."

Her relationship with neurosarcoidosis has been a journey of its own. Neurosarcoidosis is a form of sarcoidosis. It is a long-term (chronic) disease of the central nervous system, which encompasses the brain, spinal cord and optic nerve, and is characterised by inflammation within one or more of those areas. She shared the challenges she's faced: "Before my diagnosis, I dealt with constant headaches, pain, and difficulty sleeping. I've always been slim, but I lost so much weight because I wasn't eating. When the right doctor finally diagnosed me, they discovered inflammation in my brain. Thankfully, it wasn't a tumour or cancer, but the steroid treatment I started had intense side effects."

My body felt alien. I experienced hallucinations, memory issues, and anxiety." As Kemi spoke, I could sense her resilience. "Physically, the changes were difficult to adjust to," she continued. "My face became swollen and numb, my voice pitch shifted, and my diaphragm control weakened, which impacted my singing. Even small things, like braiding my hair, were impossible because my scalp was so sensitive. Despite all of that, I kept doing music. I performed with no energy, and there was even a show where I was in a wheelchair with an IV in my arm. Looking back, I'm not sure how I did it, but music gave me hope."

She explained how these challenges shaped her relationship with the industry. "It was tough watching others thrive while I felt like I was falling behind. COVID-19 added to that feeling. But in time, I realised the importance of being kind to myself. I've become more sensitive, but that's also made me appreciate connections even more."



Our conversation shifted to the causes that inspire her music. “It feels natural to address what moves me,” she said. “After the George Floyd incident, I wrote a song called ‘Justice.’ Another track, ‘New Form,’ raises awareness about my condition. Music is my way of processing and contributing to change.”

Her experiences have also brought unforgettable moments, like supporting artists such as Teedra Moses and Stormzy. “Supporting Teedra Moses was special,” she shared. “I used to sing her song ‘Be Your Girl’ all the time. She’s been a huge inspiration. At the time, I wasn’t well, but I couldn’t turn down the opportunity. It showed me that even when I’m not at my best, I can still create meaningful moments.”

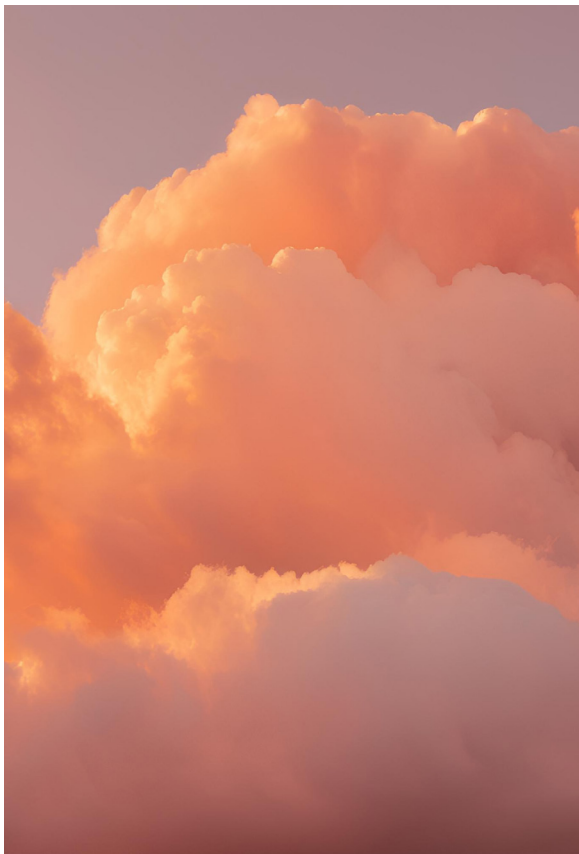
As a member of the BRIT Awards Voting Academy, Kemi’s advocacy for Black music creators is a cornerstone of her work. “We need more diversity—not just in representation, but in how people are represented,” she emphasised. “I want to see Black girls who don’t feel pressured to show skin or fit a certain mould. We also need better artist development. Social media is important, but foundational skills like singing lessons, music theory, and learning instruments are essential for mastering the craft.”

Our conversation came full circle as she reflected on her journey. “Music is my constant,” she said. “Even when I’m not creating, I’m engaging with it—playing piano, attending live shows, or watching documentaries. Music is endless, and I want my work to resonate. Whether it helps someone through a tough time, makes them dance, or simply becomes the soundtrack to their life, that connection is what matters.” Meeting Kemi was more than an introduction to an artist; it was an experience that lingered, her story a testament to the power of perseverance, authenticity, and love for one’s craft.

When I asked Kemi what advice she would offer to the next generation, her response was heartfelt. “Find your thing—the passion that’s yours—and stick to it. No matter what happens, that thing will be your peace, joy, and outlet.” It was a fitting conclusion to a conversation that felt less like an interview and more like a genuine exchange of life.

“FIND YOUR THING”





After speaking with artists and industry professionals who seek out talent, it's clear we can no longer sing the tune of there being a lack of musicians delivering substance. While mainstream music doesn't always showcase the best of the bunch, there are countless artists, some well-known, others discovered by those truly discovering—who create music that feeds the soul. The truth is, those who genuinely seek meaningful music will always find it.

Music is a revisited topic because it remains one of the strongest pillars of community. Whatever the genre, whatever the artist—when you love music deeply, you become part of something bigger than yourself. A concert, a festival, or even a simple jam session transforms into a space where identity, background, and status fade away, leaving only the shared experience of sound. In those moments, for those two hours of play, nothing else matters except the energy, the connection, and the way the music makes you feel.

But beyond entertainment, music is one of the purest forms of purposeful expression.

THE POWER OF MUSIC

IN PURPOSEFUL LIVING



It has the power to heal, inspire, and challenge. It serves as therapy for the broken-hearted, as a rallying cry for change, and as a melodic retelling of life's highs and lows. There are songs that make you feel seen, as if someone has been reading the pages of your diary and putting your unspoken truths into lyrics. Others shine a light on global issues, using rhythm and rhyme to bring awareness to crisis and injustice in a way that resonates deeply.

To create with purpose means being intentional with what you put into the world. And in music, that intention can take many forms. Maybe it's about pure joy, creating beats that make people dance without a care. Maybe it's about storytelling, giving voice to untold experiences and emotions. Or maybe it's about shifting perspectives, using lyrics and melodies to inspire growth, healing, and action. Whatever your purpose in music, own it, refine it, and deliver it with authenticity. Because when music is created with intention, it doesn't just entertain, it moves, transforms, and connects.



JOY CROOK FT KANO
Mathematics

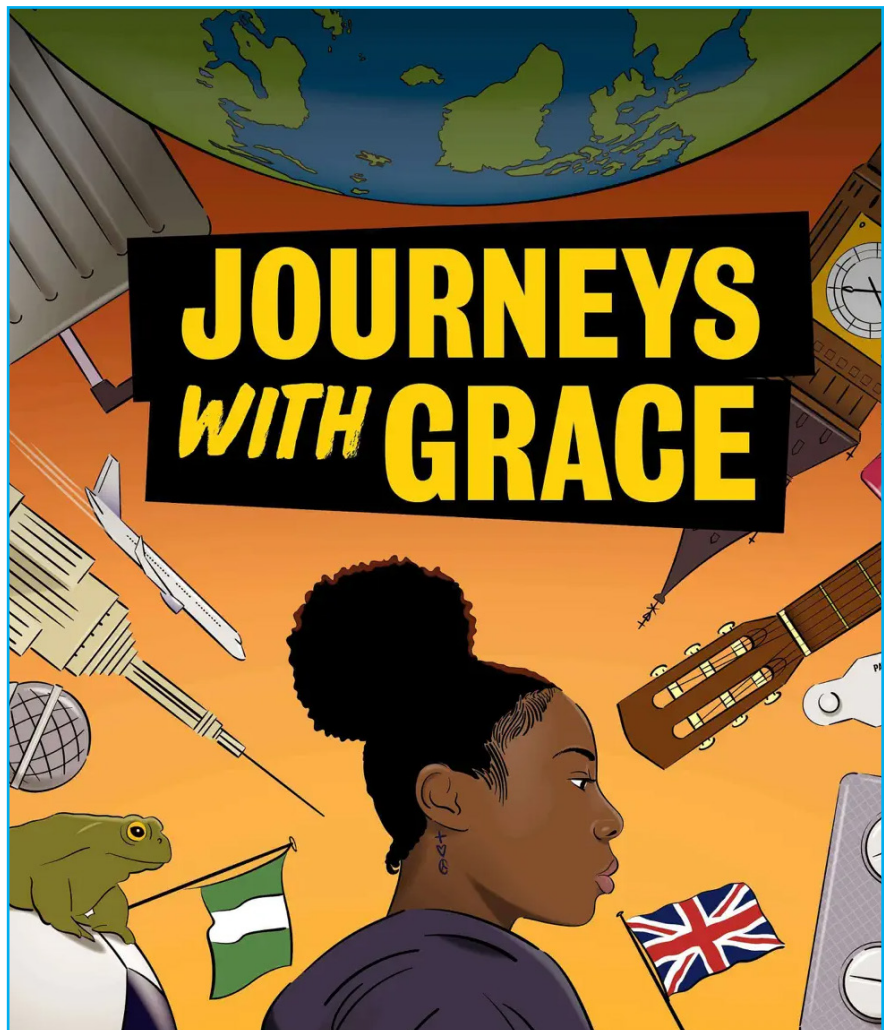
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH GRACE

Your podcast, “Journeys with Grace,” is deeply personal yet widely relatable. Can you share what inspired you to blend your personal story with original music in this format?

Yes, that’s right. Journeys with Grace is deeply personal. And because it is an audio story of self discovery, those detailed series of events that I experienced throughout podcast, whether it was being in that shop when the robbery took place, the joy of graduating from uni, or the lows of losing friends senselessly to knife and gun crime, I knew using music would support the mood, enhance the narrative and guide the listener, especially at times, when the journey is emotionally heavy. And as far as using original music, why would I use anyone else’s, when I can write songs centred around what I have lived? So that was a no brainer. Plus, I have always enjoyed movies with a good ole soundtrack, and wanted to emulate the feeling I used to get watching/hearing them. So I hope I’ve done that for some.

Coming from Brixton, your story highlights underrepresented voices. How important is representation in your work, and how do you ensure your platform uplifts others?

Firstly, shout out Brixton. I think everyone knows the significance of representation. That’s why there’s a fear, in allowing everyone to be heard. It’s not enough anymore, to just see different people in different places or spaces. That’s dead. When representation is done properly, everyone...race, gender, class, religion and so on, gets a seat at the table. And therefore, has to be heard.



wants that. Representation in Journeys with Grace is both positive and negative, so my younger listeners, know exactly what can happen when they make the wrong choices. There’s many themes of advocating for one’s self, speaking up, communicating your needs, being heard, identity, self worth, and taking ownership in the offering. I’m not sure whether it’s my responsibility to uplift others with my platform but I do have a duty to be transparent and of use, that’s super important to me, being useful. So I hope my quest to do that, alongside my story, inspires, engages and excites.

Your podcast explores life-changing news and its effects. How has navigating these challenges transformed your perspective on what it means to live a life of purpose?

Before the life changing news, I always felt I wanted to live a life of purpose. But didn’t know my purpose. Because how do you find out your purpose? We’re forever chasing. And are hardly ever fulfilled. Today, every day, hour, minute and second, is deeply personal. From whom I want to share my time with, down to the quality of the time shared. I can’t just do things just to do it anymore. When you live a life of purpose, everything has aligned, you believe you know what you’re doing, where you’re going, how you want to get there and what you want

to achieve when there. Simply existing, which is what most of us are doing, doesn't feel satisfactory anymore, you feel, almost inadequate for just thinking you can just coast through the days. I'm telling myself this as much as you cos whilst I've thought this, I've never had to write it down. I'm so grateful to be here. For the life of my parents, siblings, cousins and loved ones. News like this can really transform the way you see life. And right now, I'm seated at the front row. Living with intention. Feeling fulfilled and appreciating all that I have.

Living with Crohn's disease is a significant part of your journey. What advice do you offer for balancing ambition with health?

Crohn's was rough man. And had a huge impact on my well-being and the career I was chasing. The only thing I can say, is to listen to the podcast, Journeys with Grace, as it's a beautiful and candid expression of how to balance and navigate ambition with health. And to be honest with yourself. We're not getting sick because we are eating fruits and veg, are we? So the onus is on us to make the changes and do the work. You have to be responsible for yours and your children's health. Not your Doctor. Learn everything you need to know about your health and make changes, small, big, just do it. Trust me.

As we reflect on "Purposeful Living," what does this concept mean to you today, and how do you hope your story purpose?

I don't know. I think it means many things to different people. In fact, I could be here all day sharing my thoughts on what comes to mind when I hear "purposeful living" but I think not knowing one's purpose, is a contributory factor, for why so many people in this world suffer. I think ultimately it's living a life with intention, and pursuing a life, filled with the beliefs, passions, goals, values, and happinesses that you deeply feel resonated with. But like I said, I believe it means different things to everyone. If you asked me what I'd like to see from purposeful living, it'd be that each one of us, was of use to another. I hope Journeys with Grace allows listeners to be vulnerable with their own experiences, forces them to ask hard questions, motivates them to take control and be in the drivers seat of their lives, their stories, their journeys and their world. Lastly, I hope it inspires people to show up, ALWAYS! Cos when you show up, half the jobs done.

What's next for "Journeys with Grace," and how do you see your work evolving to impact more lives?

We're having very early conversations about adapting the podcast to picture, which would be awesome because the incredible feedback tells me that, the people want to see the story visually. And I'm impressed at the imagination of the listeners, and how they visualised certain scenes and so on. You should see some of the comments they have sent me, regarding how they envisioned particular themes from the podcast on screen. So we hope that's something we can work towards. That as well as a book. It would be great to do a series 2 of Journeys with Grace also, but we I gotta figure out the tools and resources to facilitate that. (So if you're reading this and love the podcast...feel free to reach out) And give the people a conclusion to a brilliant first series. Through the Journeys with Grace podcast, I'll be doing some stuff with yestolife.org.uk which is the UK's integrative cancer care charity, I'm hoping through this we can support more people living with cancer, particularly younger people who are now being diagnosed more and those from my community, who wouldn't necessarily be exposed to this type of charity and the alternative therapies available. I guess Journeys with Grace was about sharing my story, helping myself and helping others. And that's what I'm trying to do.

IF YOU HAVEN'T LISTENED TO JOURNEYS WITH GRACE, THE IMMERSIVE PODCAST, IT IS AVAILABLE ON ALL STREAMING PLATFORMS. [CLICK HERE TO LISTEN NOW](#)



THE

AUDIO SERIES

ELDEST DAUGHTER SYNDROME

[LISTEN HERE](#)



We sat down with Paris for an eye-opening conversation about The Eldest Daughter Syndrome—a topic that resonates deeply with those who have lived it and surprises those who haven't. If you're an eldest daughter, this discussion will bring moments of deep reflection and countless "aha!" realisations. Paris breaks down what Eldest Daughter Syndrome is and how it shapes family dynamics, as well as platonic, romantic, and professional relationships. Whether you are an eldest daughter or simply know one, this conversation will help you better understand, appreciate, and support the women who often carry more than they show.





ACTION IS NEEDED



SAVETHECONGO



THE WOMEN'S EDITION