

True & Woke

Gifted

Magazine

March 2022





Editor & Design

Nikki Kilburn

Sub-Editor

Shondra Riley

Social Media

Jenna Arkontaky



Like the page
Join the group



@trueandwoke

Thank you, supporters, for being on this journey with us. We are thrilled to share our first edition of the True & Woke magazine with you. It is filled with gorgeous content from our outstanding contributors.

While putting the pages together, we were enthralled by the artwork, moved by the poetry, grateful for the practical guidance and touched by the stories of lived experience. This work maintains our connection to our mission of equity through expression.

We'd love to hear what you think, so email us and follow us on social media.

Feel free to share the magazine with your friends, loved ones and colleagues.

Power in Harmony,

Nikki Kilburn
Creative Director

Shondra Riley
Development Director

CONTENTS

Lived Experience

- 05** LESSONS IN FALLING
Shondra Riley shares the lessons she learnt in falling
- 11** SEARCHING FOR HOME
Charlotte Grieve shares her journey of identity
- 21** LADY RED EGO
Poetry to open you up and connect
- 32** LIVING FROM THE HEART
Slayso on starting in music after 40
- 35** KYK'S V.O.W.
Artist KYK captures the essence of experiences from women around the world.

Social Impact

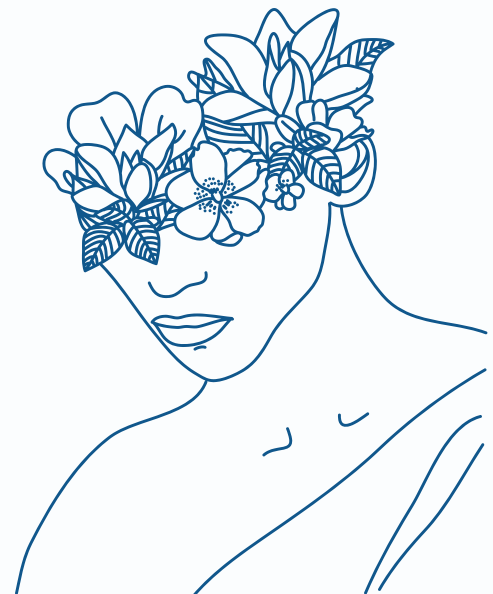
- 34** INVISIBLE WOMEN
Julie Woods explores why homeless women 'disappear' due to cracks in the support systems
- 23** THE ALCHEMY OF TRUE AND WOKE
Nikki and Shondra tell our story and how it all began
- 43** MYLA CORVADAE
Poetry to awaken you to cultural translation

Self-Care

- 38** MIDLIFE & PERIMENOPAUSE
Nutritionist, Felicia Jones explains why you are not having a midlife crisis
- 45** CHERISH THE SKIN YOU WERE BORN IN
Charlotte Grieve shows you how to make your own nourishing body cream
- 55** LISTEN UP
Click on an uplifting and eclectic playlist that we've made just for you

Art

- 03** HAPPY TAMIL WOMEN'S DAY
Mathushaa Sagthidas explores her Tamil identity.
- 08** THE FORTY YEAR OLD VERSION
Yolanda Banos reviews this "gem" of a film directed by and starring Radha Blank
- 15** NICOLE CASSANDRA SMIT
Nicole shares the journey of her debut album, 'Third in Line'
- 31** DAZZELUSTEROUS
Gorgeous jewellery and handbags by sister duo Angela & Ernestina
- 33** VENETTA NICOLE
Contemporary abstract expressionism pop art
- 51** SHREYA BHAN
Spreading happiness, confidence, and respite with 'Brushbound'
- 52** OUR VOICES
Photographer Nikki Kilburn's exhibition alongside Howardena Pindell at Fruitmarket



Happy Tamil Women's Day

by Mathushaa Sagthidas

Mathushaa's work often examines her identity - Tamil Eelam ethnicity and British nationality. Mathushaa sees her work playing an important part in representing Tamil history and heritage. Tamils were once considered "an enormous strain on the system" in London during the nineties, the time of mass immigration (5:48 – 6:17, Matangi/ Maya/ M.I.A, 2018). Something she finds ironic as many institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum were built and have financially grown off the backs of colonisation of the sub-Indian continent (Hunt, 2019). From this standpoint, Mathushaa's work showcases and creates visual reminiscing on every aspect of 'Tamilness' her parents surrounded her with – from their struggles of immigration to understanding important traditions within her lived experience.

வலிமம & விரிதிறன் meaning "Strength & Resilience", refers to my mum's strength and resilience of her journey. From surviving the Sri Lankan Civil war to the struggles of immigrating to London at age 28.

These precious objects are my sentimental reflection of her legacy my sister and I will carry on. In the centre is my mum's Sri Lankan ID. In the top right corner is a photo from her UK college ID, where she worked on her English speaking and writing skills. In the bottom left corner is the first passport photo she had taken since starting a new family in the UK, next to a piece of jewellery my mama (uncle/mum's brother who helped and supported her when coming to the UK) gifted to me.





மீட்டுங்கள் meaning "Reclaim" refers to reclaiming many aspects of my Tamil roots I grew up distancing myself from - such as my name to various Hindu influences like Navaratri.

Navaratri is a nine-day celebration for female goddesses', Durga who represents strength,

Saraswati represents learning, and Lakshmi represents power. I refer to these goddesses through the colours of their saris - Durga for red, Saraswati for white and Lakshmi for green to emulate these divinities in my Tamil roots and personality.

வயதுவரும் meaning "Coming of Age" refers to a Tamil Hindu tradition celebrates a girl beginning menstruation.

The historical belief is the girl is ready to get married and bear children but in my family is about celebrating becoming a woman. Flowers are often used in various rituals as part of an offering to various deities.

The banana candles are part of the aarthi - where the mother and another aunty bless the daughter in these significant moments in her life. Reflecting on my ceremony, it made sense that my Amma (Mother) holds the tray. This stems from another project discussing my own puberty ceremony and how many Tamil women are against it due to its history.

[mathushaasagthidasphotography](https://www.instagram.com/mathushaasagthidasphotography)
Facebook: @mathuxphotos
Twitter: @mathuxphotos
Insta: @mathuxphotos



Instinctively I hopped out of bed. Within a couple of seconds, I realized I didn't have control of my muscles, but it was too late. I bounced off the mattress and onto the pinewood floor with an almighty thud like a plank falling over. My husband ran in to find me, naked from the waist down, awkwardly lying on the floor. He shouted for my carer Mel by calling "Nurse!" because he never learned her name.

Mel and my husband placed me on the bed like a naughty toddler, then scolded me. I said I needed to pee and forgot I couldn't walk. We giggled.

I forgot I could not walk. I had brain damage, and I had been walking for nearly 38 years.

After my stroke, this was my first lesson in falling. Just because you did something one way doesn't mean it will always be that way. Sometimes we have no other choice than to do things differently. There were more falls and lessons to come.

See the beauty

I was face down in fluorescent yellow, green and hot pink. My motionless body was down on the ground with beautiful Scottish sun rays that made the colours dance like a Keith Haring painting. I'd like to convince you I was in some immersive street art project, but the truth is unexceptionally basic.

I tripped on a crack in the pavement outside a craft store while carrying a bag of spray chalk to use on the dog shit outside my son's school.

My fall scared the life out of my then six-year-old son, it was physically painful for me; still, it was a beautiful and spectacular moment.

It has become a magical moment of light and beauty in my mind. I've learned I can see the beauty in seemingly painful moments.

Sometimes I feel like a car crash
Noisy and unexpected
And like at a car crash
People move slowly, staring
Wondering how I became such a mess.
-Shondra at age 16

Pace yourself

I was late for a work training course and in my “I don’t need my walking stick” phase. I got off the train at Glasgow Queen Street station and proceeded to do my version of running, which was moving my body as fast as I could while dragging my weak leg behind me. But there was an ironically named “Trip Mat” at the exit that protested my method.

As I approached the Queen Street exit, the mat flipped up on edge, trapping my weak foot. My “run-dragging” meant the momentum propelled the rest of my body forward while my foot remained trapped. If my tits weren’t so big, I would have smashed my nose for sure, but instead, my “fun bags” saved me.

If I was using my walking stick and was not rushing, it probably wouldn’t have happened.

I hadn’t realised that my handbag was unzipped. All its contents flew onto the pavement and at the feet of the man selling The Big Issue.

Strangers gathered around were deeply concerned. They insisted I stay down as one of them went to get the police in the station.

Two Policemen arrived, and they started helping me to get up.

Unflattering as it is, the only way I can get up from the ground is by getting on all fours then pushing my way up with my fully functioning right leg and right arm. One officer says, “hold on, don’t move! You’ve injured yourself. I’ll get an ambulance!”. So I spent 5 minutes doggy style, trying to convince him that my body was fucked up before I fell. He eventually made me promise I was ok as he and his partner helped me get upright.

Meanwhile, the man who sold the Big Issue outside the train station was carefully picking up the contents of my bag. He put everything back in, including my phone and money, and handed it to me with the warmest, most caring face. I tried to buy a Big Issue for his kindness, but he wouldn’t let me.

This fall taught me to take the time to pace myself to minimise the risk of ending up ass up in front of well-meaning individuals.

Sometimes we're just unlucky

"Is that blood?!" This was my first concern as I realised my hair was stuck to my throbbing wet face. "No. It's not blood. It's water." I said. "Do we need to get you to the hospital?" said my husband. I was in pain, but I was more concerned about my eleven-year-old son, who was about fifty feet ahead of me, in tears. People were sitting in Nando's to my left, stuffing their faces. I was embarrassed that all these folks just saw what happened. Not one of them put down their chicken to come to the aid of the middle-aged black woman lying on the wet, cold pavement. I get it; it's good chicken, but seriously?

I did what I was supposed to do this time; I used my walking stick, took it slowly, and looked down to scan for obstacles. Still, I could not anticipate a scenario that landed me face-first on the pavement in front of the popular chicken restaurant.

My walking stick slipped on a wet metal grate in the pavement. It was as simple as that. It wouldn't have happened if I had walked an inch to the left. I was upset and in pain, but ultimately, I was just unlucky. Sometimes, the shitty, scary moments just happen, and they hurt.



Be out there living fully

Brene Brown says if you put yourself out there, you will get your ass kicked repeatedly. Still, I'd rather be out there living fully, honouring the rise, the fall and the painful, embarrassing lessons that may come.

Insta:[@shondrabowieriley](https://www.instagram.com/shondrabowieriley)

The Forty-Year Old Version

by Yolanda Banos

Film Review

I was wildly excited when invited to write a film review about *The 40-Year-Old Version*. This movie is about finding yourself – specifically, about finding yourself while ageing as a black woman in the creative fields. It would be far more relatable as a middle-aged brown woman than the standard Hollywood features of self-discovery playing at my local cinema about petite privileged blonde femmes. But there was something else that drew me in. As I turned forty this past year, my existential crisis plagued me. What was I doing with my life? Was I enough? Was I supposed to be more? Could this movie give me some outside direction?

First, a confession: I was a bit of a smug twit who thought a movie review would be an easy assignment to tackle even after my hiatus from writing

I fancied myself a writer once, long ago. But I found that as time and life passed, I didn't always devote myself to my creative outlets as I should. Having that opportunity again to pen my opinion for others was bewitching. Maybe I could still be more. Perhaps it was time for me to become my 40-year old version.

Director, Writer, and Lead Actor (the filmmaker triple-threat) Radha Blank did not make my task easy. She wrote a love letter to growth, in a complicated world as a complex human. She never makes her audience feel stupid, and for that, I am grateful. It was a movie that made me feel things that I didn't have the language for.

Things made it hard for me to find my voice in writing this review. Ironic, considering this is a film about another human (albeit wildly talented) finding theirs again. It made me introspective and managed to make me feel seen. It wasn't what I expected, but it was what I needed. Sometimes it takes a movie for you to realise precisely how stuck you are in your own life.

Blank wrote a beautiful, uncomfortable, and complicated film. It tells the story of a playwright at a crossroads in her life. Forty is bearing down on her while she copes with grief, a life she's not sure about, and relationships tainted by life and dreams.

It feels challenging to reconcile this artistic direction, particularly in these bleak COVID times when colour is sometimes all we dream about.



Photo: Jeong Park/Netflix

In the same breath, as someone who has lived a life with depression and anxiety, all I could think was that this is what my depression looks and feels like.

Grey, just grey. Like moving through poured concrete. It was hard to watch. Not being able to see the vibrant pace and sounds of New York City felt strange but also necessary. This is her story. And nothing should take that away from her. But still, there was hope, love, friendship, and more importantly, there was an honest look at what happens when we give ourselves the grace to move on from what we had expected of ourselves and our lives.

She is faced with the realisation the time is now. Will she continue trudging down the difficult path she's rebelled against for the last decade, or has she found something else, another road to take?

Sometimes the only options we are presented with are shit and shittier.

A delightful character named D, played by the smooth Oswin Benjamin, made me feel fluttery things in my belly.

Imani Lewis (Elaine) and Haskiri Velazquez (Rosa) have a moment while watching a production highlighting the cruelties of gentrification on BIPOC communities and musical theatre that **portrays how whiteness is unable to let Black voices tell their stories.** The film itself is presented in black and white.

The performances were nuanced and thought-provoking.

More than once, I wondered how I would react if I were in the same position that some of the characters found themselves. What was I willing to risk to be true to what I value, whom I hope to be?

The character Radha may not know who she is in life, but Radha, the director, knows that our giant leaps often come from a series of small steps. The story is not rushed, and Blank reminds us that we become new versions of ourselves every day with every decision and every response, or lack thereof.

Her wonderfully complicated tale of a human being unsure of her place in a world that does everything it can to silence her is soft when it needs to be and hard in just the right moments. Radha is a character who knows she has stories to share and deserves an audience. It was beautiful to see someone who looks like me, that also feels unsure about this adulthood business but still knows she isn't destined to be muted.

There are a lot of gems in this beautiful film, and to real-life Radha Blank, I offer a genuine thank you.



Photo: Jeong Park/Netflix

**If we're lucky, maybe she'll
give us The 50-Year Old
Version.**

Available on
Netflix

Searching for Home

Contains racist language and explores an experience of racialised trauma.

By Charlotte Grieve

I'm a dark-skinned British Black woman. My birth mother was born in Barbados and moved to Britain during the Windrush generation with her Grandmother. I was adopted and grew up with a white family. My birth mother brought me into the world, previously she'd birthed a boy. He was sent to Barbados to be cared for by his Grandmother. A white woman became my mother.

I grew up surrounded by white faces puzzled why I looked and felt so different from my family and peer group. Nobody offered me support, helped me to understand the differences. I had no words...

I wondered why black children at my secondary school were so nice to my white brother and muttered under their breath, 'White nigger' as they passed me. My other white brother, once screamed, 'Nigger' when he was annoyed with me in the family home.

Another family member then thought it would be funny to shout 'nigger' at me. I went with the abuse, thinking it was comical. I was so confused.

I'd been displaced, part of the diaspora. I didn't know where I belonged. I felt on the periphery of my family, of any friend groups, constantly trying to pierce my way in and feel an ounce of acceptance. These feelings have been present for as long as I can remember remembering. I feel them now, as I try to navigate this world.

I have three children, it felt important to me, to create my OWN family. One failed marriage, a few dysfunctional long term relationships short ones too and many one-night stands. In between this, I found my birth mother. She'd remind me how lucky I was to have been adopted by a 'good' family. The relationship was strained, we both had so many expectations she rejected me again and again.

Being transracially adopted has left me moving through life differently than my white counterparts.

Being black is hard enough but growing up and not seeing anyone who looks like you - apart from my black baby brother, also adopted but not from the same family - is painful.

I think my adoptive parents thought there was a certain amount of cool having a blended family, (two white children and two black children). I disagree. It left me floundering, flailing, unbalanced, insecure and continually searching for identity and belonging.

When my children were grown, and my adoptive Mum and Dad had passed away I had the space to travel to Barbados and see where my birth family were coming from. I spent 3 years travelling back and forth from Scotland to Barbados. It was my dream/plan to spend 6 months in Barbados and 6 months in Scotland. I wanted to meet someone, be in a healthy relationship. I desperately wanted to be accepted by my birth family, by my people.

I had two relationships with Bajan men during this time and many sexual encounters. I just wanted to feel something, anything. I ached to feel secure, feel loved.

I was also curious about black men. I'd never really spent time around black men. I'd always had relationships with white men. I wondered if black men were different.

My encounters with Bajan black men left me with brief moments of happiness. I felt somehow my culture was interested in me. However, overall I felt cheap, worthless and lonely.

Having a relationship feels very difficult to me. The trauma of adoption, that early rejection has left me unable to connect in an intimate relationship. I struggle with self-esteem, self-worth and forming emotional attachments. These things illude me.

I'd always felt like an outsider living in Scotland, a predominantly white country. Spending time in Barbados, a predominantly black country left me with the same feeling. I now know wherever I am, I'll have these feelings. The external isn't the problem, it's what I feel deep inside, loss of cultural heritage, home, roots and a sense of belonging.



I'm 52 now and I'm trying to look after myself with yoga, meditation, healthy eating, regular visits to the spa and connection to nature. These are of good support. Self-care is a commitment to myself to spend time lowering stress and anxious feelings.

Time to fill up with relaxation and explore happier feelings. Sometimes the emotions are overwhelming, and I just rest, and I now know this is OK, this too is part of my self-care routine.

I have a fascination with biological families. On viewing a family, I study facial features, hair colour, mannerisms. I'm able to look at my children and see the resemblance between us.

Growing up around people who look like you, knowing that your mum, dad and auntie share the same DNA and are all connected by bloodlines. This develops positive self-esteem, self-image and individuality.

I'm banging my tribal drum, feeling a connection with my ancestry. Letting the sound of the drum reverberate deep within me. I'm blowing into my flute and producing rich deep sounds. I'm exploring my musical creativity. Rhythms feed the soul and are supporting my healing.



Nicole Cassandra Smit

Journey to the Blues



Photo [Tom Wigmore](#)

On the cusp of releasing her debut album, *Third in Line* Nicole sings about what she knows, she shares her journey of discovery with us.

Both my parents were massive music lovers. I grew up listening to everything from Beatles to Elvis to Carole King to Anggun, an Indonesian singer from the 80s who moved to France and reinvented her career in the 90s. My father used to tell me I had this knack for guessing what song was on the radio from just a couple of seconds of the intro I suppose I was training my ear early for what was to come.



My family knew I sang, but I had no desire to perform for other people, I sang for myself. I didn't even know if I had a good voice or if I could sing until one day in high school while watching MTV, I found myself singing along to every song that came on, on key, on pitch, on time.

It dawned on me I know how to sing OR every song on MTV was exactly the same. I chose to flatter myself and go with the first one. From then, when there was an opportunity to perform, I committed to showing up and despite my massive lack of confidence, sing. It took around eight years from my first time performing in public to my first time on stage with a full band to accept feeling terrified on stage is part of the experience. It was only after going through my first Fringe run with the Blueswater band that I felt that I had value as a musician.

Singing blues helped me find my vocal strengths giving me the confidence to develop the way I want to express myself. This journey led me to create my first album. Creating this album has been one of the hardest and most freeing things I've ever done.

To finally arrive at a state where I feel secure knowing what I have has value, and will have value to someone else out in the world has opened up the creative process in a way I've never felt before.



The experience of women is the heart of my creative inspiration, women who have never felt like they belonged anywhere, women who are carrying displacement from their mothers and previous generations. Women who, like me, have always had a hard time having clarity over their identities, their allegiances and experienced miscommunications with people who don't understand them.

I remember years ago a young woman came up to me after a gig and asked if one of the songs I sang was about my mother, I said yes. She said it moved her because she could see her relationship with her mother in it too and having that reflected made her feel less lonely. We both almost cried at that moment. My album is for women like her as well.

These relationships between women, mothers and daughters, has informed a lot of my writing in the album. There is something I don't yet fully comprehend when I think about this jumble of cultures I carry inside me.

How can I feel inherently Indonesian and Swedish at the same time? Not to mention that English was my first language despite it not being my mother tongue. How does - and I'm saying this for all of us with any mixed heritage or blended cultural backgrounds - one physical being contain all of this?

The answer is, it doesn't, nor does it need to. I thought I had to contain it all, to manage the contradictions, to tidy it up for other people so that they had an easier time digesting me but the truth is I didn't need to do any of that.

Once the container was cracked open it poured out of me in melodies, lyrics, and soundscapes that I didn't even realise I had. The result of this is what I hope will be apparent in the music of my album.

The same feelings that ignite my creativity are an extension of the inspirational women I grew up with. In the beginning, they were characters, like Ariel in *The Little Mermaid* who loved her other-worldly trinkets so much that she sang about them. Evolving into larger than life icons, like Whitney Houston who just JUST wanted to dance with somebody. There's something about unbridled emotion and reckless abandonment that appeals to me and when that is combined with a well-honed craft, it makes me want to strive for the same.

I admire people who put a lot of effort and heart into something and yet present it so effortlessly and self-assured oblivious to if anyone cares or pays attention.

There's joy and freedom when you find something you love doing so much that you would do it in a vacuum. It certainly has been key in making me feel comfortable and content on stage in the way that I never felt off stage, because off stage I was always just a girl with a weird-looking arm.

I've never seen the fact that I have a brachial plexus injury as an obstacle and don't see myself as having a disability. This doesn't mean that I didn't feel incredibly self-conscious about how it looked but it also just made me incredibly stubborn about not being treated differently.

It drove me to constantly want to prove to everyone that I was as strong as everyone else, if not stronger. This attitude meant that sometimes, as I go through life, I put blinders on and completely ignore any barriers. So if there have been any, in the course of me building my music career to date, I have ploughed through them.

Systematic discrimination exists, and if I've made it up till now unscathed it is due more to the early adoption of an I-will-bulldoze-before-I-get-pushed-over-by-anyone attitude I picked up from my mother, my aunts, my grandmothers.

A line of matriarchs who have endured worse things in their lives persevered and passed onto me their fire to always stand your ground against any opposition.

If I've learnt anything in the last seven years that is worth passing on, it would be:

1. You will not get jobs if people do not know who you are. If you are a singer just starting, go places where you can show people what you have to offer, get to know as many musicians in your scene. Get involved in jams, open mics.

2. Be ready to take these opportunities when they do come. Know your voice, what its strengths are, how you can adapt any type of song to suit you, to make you sound good.



I listen on average to 2 hours of music every day. If you see me in the streets of Edinburgh I will probably have my headphones on singing out loud to nobody. You might also hear me working out mixes for this upcoming album which will be out in late spring/early summer of 2022, with the first single Sundown out April 2022.

Available from [Bandcamp](#) for purchase and all other streaming platforms for listening.

xoxo NCS

Photos [Tom Wigmore](#)

website: nicolecassandrasmit.com

Insta: [@nicole.cassandra.smit](https://www.instagram.com/nicole.cassandra.smit)

Lady Red Ego

Lady Red Ego's poem Undershirt connects to how she felt about being Chinese as a child.

Lady Red Ego is a Chinese/British lesbian writer concerned with intimacies. She has published work in multiple acclaimed anthologies and magazines, including *We Were Always Here* by QWPS, *Crossing Lines* by Broken Sleep Books, and Issue 43 of *The Dark Horse*. Her first pamphlet, *The Red Ego*, was published in 2019 with Wild Pressed Books and her second pamphlet, *Natural Sugars*, was published in 2020 by Broken Sleep Books. Her work has also featured in two videos on BBC The Social.



website: [ladyredego](https://ladyredego.com)

Insta: [@ladyredego](https://www.instagram.com/ladyredego)

Undershirt

I loved you when no one was looking.
Yes, we can say it now, that we loved each other.
I can say it – that you were at times the only
heartbeat in the tourniquet of my future,
my silk life warmed by your skin.
I loved you like an undershirt, a thin
thing to keep close. It makes all
the difference in winter. It makes
all the difference when I eat so little
and my skin cracks so often. Yes,
we can say it now, that

I loved you the way I loved China,
a country kept in a bedside drawer
lined with lint and childhood relics.
Loved you the way I loved Mandarin,
sometimes just murmuring it alone
in my bedroom, just wanting to hear

my mother's voice, the way she relaxed
into a Shaanxi accent, somehow childish
again as she tried to escape my grandfather's
wads of money. Some loves are like the past
smiling up at you. It's like nothing passed.
I think often of what it would have been like
to have lived here. To come from somewhere.
I wish often that you would say my Chinese name.
I wish that you would say it as we ordered dinner,
or put a blanket over me, or out in public
in front of your friends, as easy as putting
on clothes in the morning. Say it until it frays.
Until even needles cannot mend it.

Dazzelustrous

Sister duo Ernestina and Angela are making waves across Scotland with their gorgeous designs. We had a lovely chat with Ernestina at their shop on Easter Road in Edinburgh.

Ernestina tell us a bit about you and your sister?

I'm a mum of three beautiful people. I love to sing and dance. I love movies. I love to be creative. I love expressive poetry and art. I love nature. My sister is a mum of two beautiful people. Very passionate about worshipping the almighty God. A lover of music and movies, a food lover. loves shopping, loves projects, loves to be creative.



What is the inspiration behind Dazzelustrous?

I have always been passionate about jewellery. As a young child, I remember saving some money to go to a bead shop on the weekends to buy beads to make a necklace or a bracelet to match an outfit I had in mind.

As I got older, the responsibility of adulthood took over and so the creativity was lost, but not for long. A job in a jewellery & accessories shop rekindled my love for jewellery. I always wanted to start my own business and after working in so many dead-end jobs, the inspiration came. I contacted my sister in Ghana. We put our heads together and Dazzelustrous was born.



Bracelets: Krobo Glass Bead.



What influences your designs?

Our culture is a big influence in our designs. Jewellery plays a big part in our culture through weddings, parties and specifically ceremonies. We want to share with the world a part of our culture through our designs of bright krobo beads jewellery and wax print fabrics.

How do you source your materials?

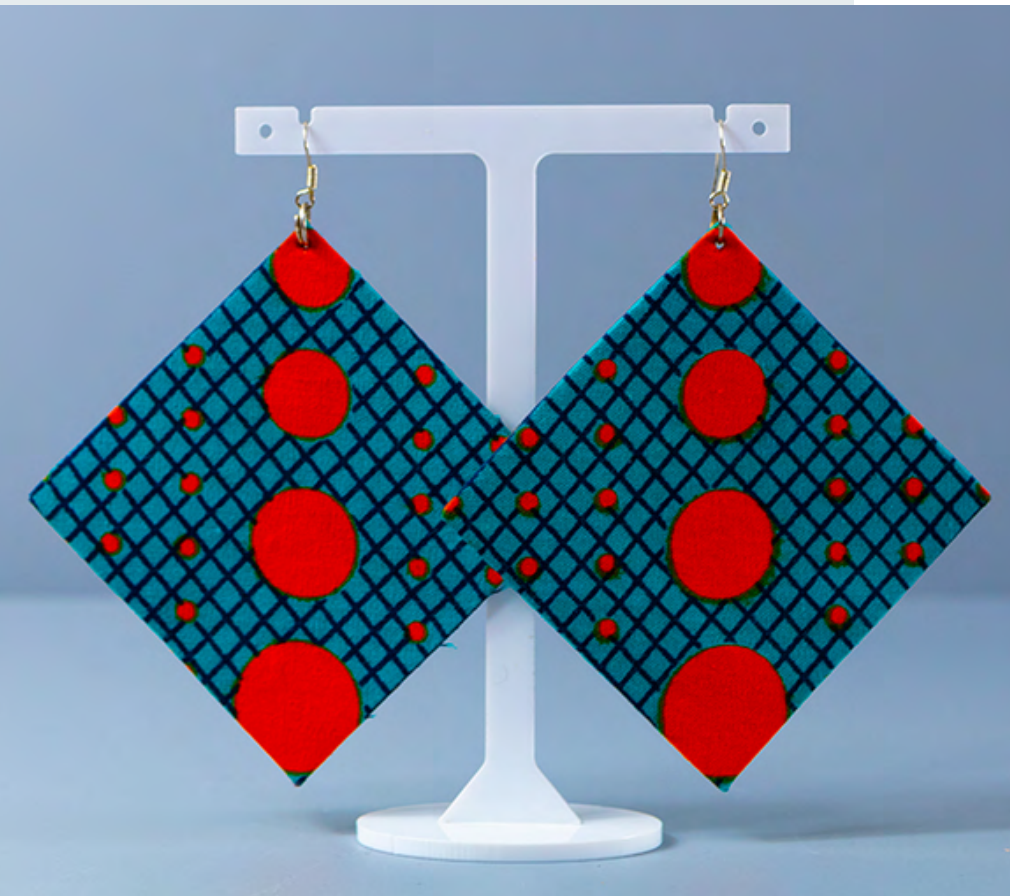
Our materials are sourced in Ghana. We have a selection of tradesmen and women whom we source our beads & materials, as well as some of our other products.

Top: Tangerine earrings and krobo bracelet. Bottom: Blue & orange wave bead bag.

What do you enjoy making and why?

We enjoy making all our jewellery but we love making necklaces the most, as they tell more of a story and can be inspired by many things like the Adinkra Symbols or like the trees outside, from the deep blue sea to the enriched soil beneath us.

Everything tells a story and it calls us to create it.



We want our customers to experience the love we put in making our products. We want them to feel beautiful and proud. We want them to feel the dazzle from the sun & the lustre from the moon. We want them to feel untouchable, we want them to feel dazzelustrous.



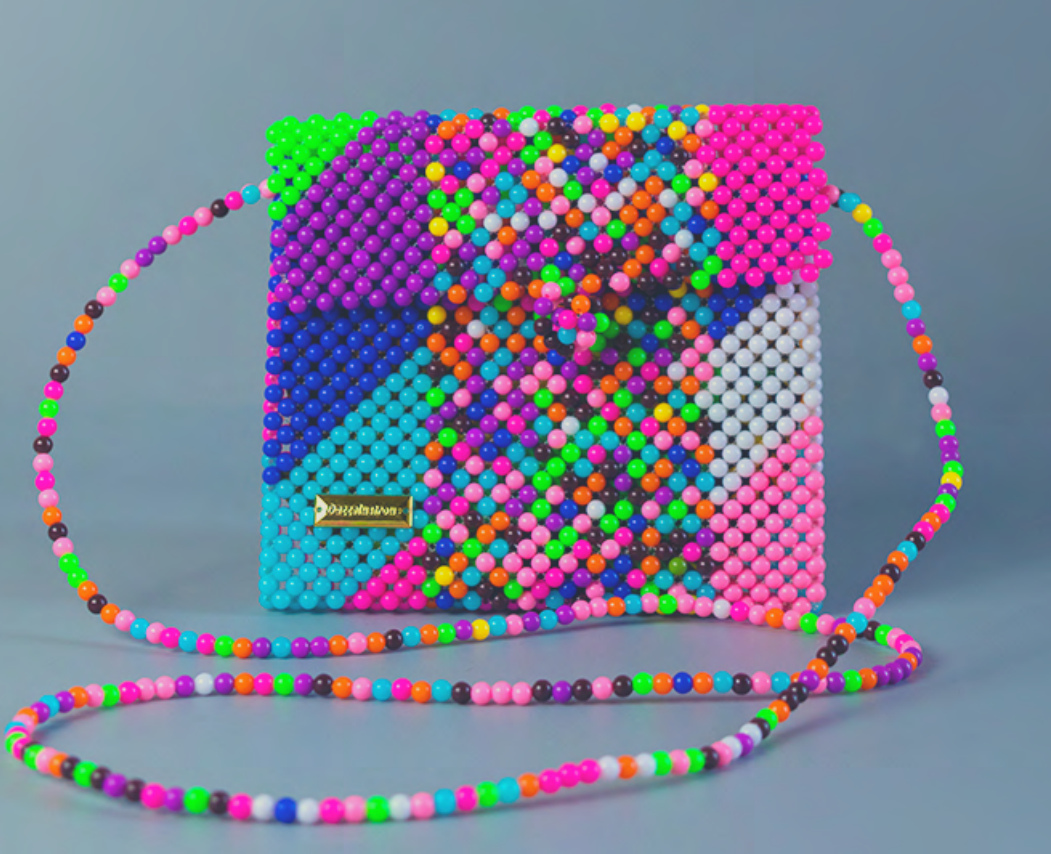
Previous page top: krobo bracelet, left, wax print earrings, top right, brass face krobo necklace, bottom, three dot sanfoka brass and krobo bead necklace.

This page: left, wax print earrings, right, wax print necklace and earrings, bottom, Ethiopia bead bag.

What is your vision for the future?

Our vision is God willing to expand. We want to continue to create and share our beautiful hand-crafted jewellery and products with the world. We want our history and culture to continue to spread and be touched by the world through every creation.





: Multi-beaded shoulder bag

Photos by Nikki Kilburn

Where can people find you?

Our store is located at
32 Easter Road,
Edinburgh,
EH7 5RG

[Website](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

Left: Angela - Right: Ernestina

BEADED BAG



The Alchemy of True & Woke

Our Story

by Nikki Kilburn and Shondra Riley



After the murder of George Floyd, seeing people come out and share their experience of racism was painful and profound. Things I had been talking about for years were trending in the mainstream. People were actually listening. I felt relieved and hurt that suddenly popular culture was woke to racism. Hurt because alongside this enlightenment narrative were people living in the pain of their experience of racism with an intergenerational history of having their human rights infringed.

I watched individuals that had previously ignored my needs as a woman of colour fill their social feeds with anti-racism.

My life had been framed by racism to the extent living inside my body has felt as if I was under constant attack. From daily microaggressions throughout childhood to being physically assaulted as an adult for being South Asian and thinking I have the right to live in Scotland.

Knowing you are at constant risk of attack is injurious to health but what I found more harmful was the persistent refusal from the white majority to take the trauma of racism seriously and understand majority whiteness provides belonging and inclusion because of racial background. I have a lifetime of examples of being coerced into silence or controlled into minimising my racial experience because people can't accept the extent to which racism exists.

In essence, True & Woke was born out of a lifelong storm in the pit of my gut, we were in the middle of a pandemic, and I reflected on what I could do in the moment to support people and have informed conversations for change.

After a lot of thought and talking to friends, I started True & Woke Facebook group in June 2020. Not a fan of social media, I set it up and felt very small but significant. **I created online sessions for women to share their experiences of racism and connect with peer support.**

I also hosted online conversations for women of colour and allies to talk about racism and what it means to be anti-racist. I flooded the group with wellbeing support and the feedback was good. We have since evolved into sharing varied experiences centring the experience of WoC.

Shondra and I met on Facebook. She invited me to appear on a panel discussion/art project about breaking the cycles of racist upbringings through self-examination and empathy. I was quite nervous going on the panel despite my background in art and post-colonial studies. I didn't always feel comfortable and safe talking about racism in a public forum.



Shondra was a grounded source of connection and vibrance, she facilitated an, at times, difficult conversation with elegance and focus, magnetised by her authenticity I invited her to join True & Woke and come along to the online group sessions.

When we finally met in person we clicked like magic, Shondra tells it well:

Before I said whom I was meeting, the waitress said, “oh, your friend’s here already!” I can only assume she thought we were friends because we were the only women of colour at the restaurant. As she led me to the table, I slightly panicked. I had made the booking outside! Although the outdoor seating is in a dynamically green Scottish country park. It was a typically wet Scottish summer day.

Nikki had soulful deep dark eyes, and her hair intertwined in braids with flowers across the top of her head, a la Frida Khalo. I could only smile when I saw her. Frida Khalo is one of my favourite artists because her art resonates with my upbringing in Los Angeles and a connection to Mexican culture.

When I sat two meters across from her under the umbrella, I commented on the rain and apologised for booking outdoors. She said, “I like it.” I said I liked it too, but I knew we both were being polite, confirmed by how we always book a table indoors for subsequent lunch dates.

An energising chat over oat cappuccinos, poached eggs and salmon. The pitter-patter of rain over our heads and the lush green woods added to the vibe of organic comfort and connection.

We had to give up our table after an hour and a half, so we decided to sit in my red MINI to continue talking. We talked about our past experiences, the light and the dark. There was magic and alchemy as we planted a seed of connection. Over that year, we cultivated that connection resulting in a profoundly supportive sister-girl friendship and the blossoming of True & Woke.

We hope you are enjoying this magazine. Our podcast will be flowing this Spring. Join our [Facebook group](#), a warm nourishing safe space for all women. You can also find and follow us on [Instagram](#).

Venetta Nicole

I am a London based artist and graphic designer. I would describe my work as contemporary abstract expressionism pop art. I like to depict an emotion or a moment in time, I create imagery using elements of African motifs.

I grew up interested in Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol then I was into Georgia O'Keefe. I also love Yayoi Kusama, the way she just uses dots to create eye-catching imagery. I have been selling my art consistently over the past two years. I couldn't tell you how my work started selling but I can tell you I have been doing a lot of manifesting.

I also work with young people, we have created a project called 'Art on the Wall'. Art on the Wall is a safe creative avenue for young people to express how they feel. Partnerships include Westfield and Newham Libraries.

You can connect with the project on insta:

[@artonthewall](https://www.instagram.com/artonthewall)

Check out more of my artwork via my [website](#)
Insta: [@artbynature](https://www.instagram.com/artbynature)



Artwork on page 14
'Emerging'. Right of this page, 'Unity'.

Living from the Heart

The passion of Slayso

Emerging songwriter and performer Slayso took the leap during the 2020 pandemic to immerse herself in her passion for songwriting. Having built a career in the tech industry alongside raising her two daughters the pandemic gave her much needed time. On a wet winter morning, we met up for a cuppa to hear about her transformational journey.

Music opened a new chapter in your life during the pandemic, how did it come about?

The pandemic gave me time to be still and connect with the direction of travel I was going in. My daughters are teenagers and I realised I had more headspace to think about other things rather than the constant demands of being a mum and working. I said to myself you have time, what do you want? Not just for right now, but to plan ahead for when they leave home. I signed up for a Hip hop course with artist Steg G and a Songwriting course with the Academy of Music and Sound in Glasgow. They were both intense learning curves with fantastic tutors, in small groups, we created new songs and performed them. I completed three new songs in two months and performed two online sets. I was equally shocked and proud I could actually do this.

At points, after signing up I had self-doubts that nearly stopped me, but the feedback on my performance from tutors, students and assessors were super encouraging.

I am so glad I didn't let the self-doubts win. One of the challenges was to create a song for an artist and the feedback was,

“Absolutely hear Grimes performing this. Captured her subtle melodic and spacious vocal style. Toys with boundaries of reality & other world experiences”

Photo by Belinda Love



What was the turning point that made you just go for it?

I never thought of being a singer/songwriter as I didn't think I could sing. On a night out in London, a member of the International Opera Awards heard me sing karaoke me and declared I had an opera voice and insisted I must sing. Coincidentally the same weekend my mum sent me a link to a local opera group looking for new members. I'd written lyrics about a traumatic breakup as therapy. I wrote when I felt emotional as a coping mechanism rather than writing not for sharing. I met a rapper (Kaddy Kay) on a modelling shoot, he invited me to visit his studio (Power Control in Glasgow) for a chat and before I knew Steve Beats had made a custom beat and they encouraged me to hit the mic and I'd recorded vocals in half an hour.

It is quite a big deal to throw yourself into something did you experience any hesitations?

I think as a singer/songwriter the main barrier is self-belief. There can be thoughts that run through your head that will stop you in your tracks such as, nobody out there sounds like me, the crowd will be too cool for me,

I'm too old to be a newbie in the industry. I've concluded it all comes down to the frame of reference and your attitude to yourself and your work. We all know authenticity trumps, but it is not an easy reality.

Challenges were presenting my identity as a performer. Coming from having credibility as a spokesperson and a recognised figure in my industry to becoming a performer later in life was a bit concerning around how I could approach it. I'm a mum and daughter so I didn't want to do anything to embarrass my kids or parents. I had advice from a Trust Circle of businesswomen, who encouraged me to follow my destined path

As a performer, it's definitely my more sexy, sensual and dramatic side that comes out. Mentors at the Academy of Music and Sound sent me on the path of self-belief and discovering my authenticity Steg G, Bruce Wallace and Marina Rolink. Shelly Poole and Kevin McCove from The Songwriting Academy gave me helpful advice. Shelly helped me lean into what makes me unique and celebrate that in my writing and performing, and Kevin gave me practical tactics to share what I want to with whom I want to.

Where is your focus as you progress through this year?

My future focus is cabaret music and burlesque performing. I'm doing burlesque dancing once a week with Marvelesque Cabaret in Dundee. I need a burlesque name, please send your suggestions in! As I get older I need to think about energy flow a lot more, in the past, it was just hyper and in abundance. **Now It's about balance and choosing wisely how I spend my time and who I spend it with.**



Website: www.slayso.com
Instagram: [@missjakoo](https://www.instagram.com/missjakoo)

KYK's V.O.W

Karis Yves Knight (KYK) is a Glasgow based artist. Through her artwork she explores the concept "redefining strength" through different collections. This means everything that doesn't come naturally to us as individuals and creates resistance, growth.

This collection is from The V.O.W Project (Voice Of Women). Karis approached different women from around the world asking them to write their life stories while she captured their true essence and value behind their physical sexualised bodies in each painting. Tapping into the notion of who we truly are beyond the egos and how we present.

Karis says, "it creates a sense of togetherness as we discover the similarities in the stories that accompany each painting. We are never alone in our experiences."



Lisa - Imperfect

"Grow through what you go through"

I was born in Derby (...came out of the womb an animal lover...sensitive and wanting everyone/thing in the world to be OK) to a white British mother and a Sri Lankan father.

Read Lisa's full story [here](#).

Rose - Driven



"Growing up mixed race, brown and racially ambiguous in Britain is definitely not easy and everyday holds its little challenges but it's something I wouldn't change for the world".

Read Rose's full story [here](#).

Debbi's - Powerful

"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any"

-Alice Walker



This quote is probably plastered around my room like crazy. I pretty much live my life by it. Whenever im feeling beaten down or like im not fully in control. I remember what Alice said. People describe me in many ways, ive gotten mean, funny, shy, introverted which im all of the above depending on the situation but just recently ive been called powerful.

Read Debbi's full story [here](#)

Read their full stories and visit the whole project [here](#)

Website: kykartist.com

Twitter: [@kyk_artist](https://twitter.com/kyk_artist)

Insta: [@kyk_artist](https://www.instagram.com/kyk_artist)

Midlife and Perimenopause

by Felicia Jones

Am I having a crisis?

The answer is probably no, but I get why you might feel like that. If you're having day or night sweats, spikes in body temperature, brain fog, belly fat, sleep problems, irritability, fatigue, irregular periods and fluctuating moods, it can be really unsettling.

Mary J Blige has said;

“There’s so many things that life is, and no matter how many breakthroughs, trials will exist and we’re going to get through it. Just be strong.”

I love this quote for inspiration, but do you think; ‘surely that can’t apply to menopause because I feel worn out, tired and not strong at all?’

Well, you’re not alone. Menopause is almost sold as a time of pure relief and celebration, but getting there isn’t always easy. For one thing, perimenopause can begin in our 30s and last for up to 10 years before our periods’ end. This is a major, major change and here are some of the reasons why.

Up to perimenopause, our body has been focused on maintaining a balance between oestrogen, luteinising hormone, follicle-stimulating hormone and progesterone. But the reduction of female eggs literally changes the way that the body has to work.

In a short time, oestrogen increases to use up as many eggs as possible. Then it lessens dramatically, even though we still need it for bone health and maintaining healthy cholesterol. This is where the adrenal glands (which also support stress regulation) step in and are stimulated to produce oestrogenic substances.

It’s not only the female hormones that are involved though. The brain, nerve cells, natural chemicals, stress hormones, the liver and pancreas all play a critical role. With so much going on, it’s no surprise that it may also affect us mentally, especially if we don’t feel ready to be at that mid-point yet.

So, what can we do?

Maintain a healthy blood sugar level

This is so important because irregular blood sugar creates stress in the body and with it a cascade of stress hormones. But by supporting our blood sugar we can avoid antagonising the pancreas which regulates insulin to manage our sugar levels. This can then stop dips in energy, mood fluctuations and brain fog.

Go regularly

Passing stools means that our body is working well and likely to be binding up and eliminating our old hormones and any hormone disrupters. These can be anything from toxins in make-up and beauty products to foods, drinks or chemicals in the environment or even cleaning products. They can mimic hormones, or stop our hormones from functioning properly creating havoc in the body and leaving us feeling very unwell.

Skin brushing

The lymph lies below the skin within the fat tissue. It's our all over body elimination system. But, it needs to be manipulated to get it moving. Exercising can help, so can massage and dry skin brushing.

Keep a record

Get used to knowing your cycle and keep a symptom diary too. Use an app like; Glow, Flo, My Cycles, WomanLog, Clover and Clue to monitor your cycle. This can also help if you need to seek advice from your GP or a practitioner.

Maintain a good weight

It gets more challenging to remove belly fat during perimenopause. This is partly because we still need oestrogen, but instead of it being produced by the ovaries it now uses our fat cells (as well as the adrenals).

Hormones can also get embedded in fat tissue rather than being eliminated. This can give them a longer shelf-life and contribute to them being hormone disruptors.



Eat well

It's really important to eat foods that nurture and support your body. Secondly, eating foods that support a healthy elimination process may ease symptoms. Including lots of cruciferous and leafy green vegetables like spinach, kale, carvelo nero, cabbage and broccoli may help. These contain fibre and support the liver, cleansing and elimination process. Cut back on frying, having lots of red meat, saturated fat and sugar. I know some people say 'well what's the point in life without these?' I'm not saying that you can't ever have these foods. But it's important to recognise that these have a significant impact on how your hormones and nerve chemicals work and how you end up feeling.

Include whole grains and plenty of fibre. As well as supporting the elimination process these also slows down the time that it takes for foods to be digested. This will help to balance blood sugar levels and eliminate food cravings, mood swings and brain fog. The easiest way to get these is by having brown varieties of foods, like rice, noodles and pasta and keeping the skins on vegetables and fruits.

Medication

For some women perimenopausal symptoms are so severe that medication may be needed. But in many cases, simple measures can create, maybe not a celebration, but at least an easier lead up to menopause.



Felicia is a BSc qualified Nutritionist and Stress Management Trainer (Dip) and the owner of Stress Less Living

Website: www.stresslessliving.co.uk

Instagram: [@feliciajonesnutrition](https://www.instagram.com/feliciajonesnutrition)

Facebook: [Feliciajonesnutrition](https://www.facebook.com/feliciajonesnutrition)



More SELF LOVE Today

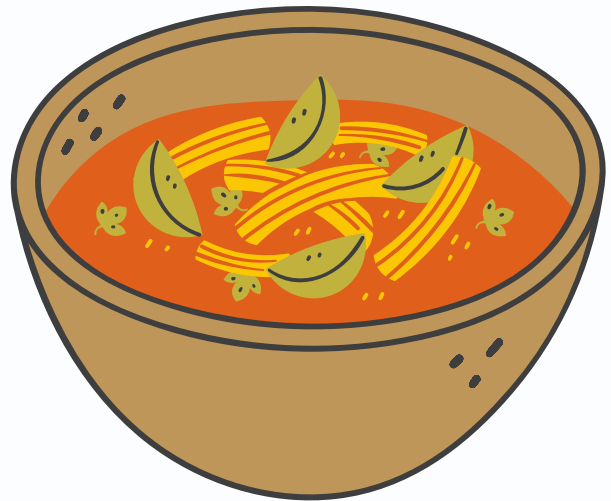
Felicia's Hearty Soup

Recipe

This hearty hormonal supporting soup is one of my favourites, it contains complex carbs for energy, okra which is really soothing for the gut, plenty of fibre and if you opt for the white fish gives extra protein which helps to support tissue damage. Then the brown rice provides vitamin B (1, 3 5 and 6) which support the nervous system, digestion and releasing energy from foods.

Ingredients: ½ Onion, 5 - 7 okra, ½ can tinned tomato, 25g brown rice, 1 green banana, 2-3 small potatoes with skins on or 1 sweet potato (spinach, kale optional) white fish (cod, Pollak or haddock). 500ml stock. Salt (optional).

Dice the onion, green banana and potatoes, sauté for 5 minutes until the onion is soft. Add the rice tomatoes and stock. Simmer for 20 minutes, add the fish and simmer for a further 15 - 20 minutes. Add the spinach or kale and let it marinate in the soup.



Felicia runs a Healthy Happy Weight course It's a 10 week (5 weeks taught online) for those who would like to address their weight. But it's really much more about having a good grounding in health in general. You can book directly through her [site](#).

Myla Corvidae



Myla is a multi-disciplinary artist, writer and performer working and living in Scotland. They have worked extensively with Queer Heritage Forum. Having had their work recently published with several places they decided to start UrbanGullsPress – a press dedicated to supporting minorities in publishing.

My poem, Culturally, I am Translated, is a response to Britain not helping India and Pakistan through the pandemic I lost several family members to this callousness. I find it ironic that people in Britain consume products they re-label as British made, which is why I picked the title of the poem to be culturally translated. Tea consumption in the UK is higher than in any other country and yet most people don't know the violent history of tea and the continued issues of the tea trade. In ignorance leaving the people who made it to die effectively. Tea consumption in the UK is higher than in any other country and yet most people don't know the violent history of tea and the continued issues of the tea trade.

Twitter:[@mylafish](https://twitter.com/mylafish)
Insta:[@mylafish](https://www.instagram.com/mylafish)

Culturally, I am translated

All my poems are translations
Dried and laid out in small bags
Dipped in hot water simmering for minutes,
Poured out onto paper.
Translated from one to the next
Culture lost in leaves browning.
Toe curling brown bodies compressed.

Drink your tea,
consume my body
Sip by sip
The violence of dying in hands
Ignorant
Daily.

I consume white bread
I hope you notice my violence
My dying hands.
These scattered leaves.
Strained through translated teas.

The body of oppression brings
comfort
Irony
Ignorance.
I consume
I consume
I consume

by Myla Corvidae

Cherish The Skin You Were Born In

by Charlotte Grieve

Greeting to you beautiful woman. Our skin had received minimal sun over the last months. Our vitamin D is depleted and our skin is lacking hydration and moisture.

Caring for my skin is an integral part of my self-care routine. I use homemade creams on my skin and hair, which I love to prepare myself. It's a beautiful process to use natural butter, oils and add essential oils, (if desired). You've prepared the cream for your skin type and you know exactly what's in it!

The preparation of the cream, the application to wet skin, (The skin absorbs and retains moisture when the cream is applied to wet skin). Massaging the cream into your skin, taking time for yourself.. self-care. Time to nurture our bodies.

The recipe is on the next page. Feel free to adjust the measurements of the butter/oils to suit your skin type.

- Coconut oil rehydrates the skin.
- Shea butter moisturises the skin.
- Olive oil protects, hydrates and repairs damaged skin.
- Almond oil is antibacterial and helps balance the absorption of moisture and water loss.

Coconut oil rehydrates the skin. Shea butter moisturises the skin. Olive oil protects, hydrates and repairs damaged skin. Almond oil is antibacterial and it helps to balance the absorption of moisture and water loss.



Nurturing Body Cream

1 cup Shea butter
1/2 cup Coconut oil
1/4 cup Olive oil
1/4 Almond oil

Add any soothing essential oils you desire. Only a few drops of oil are required, as essential oils are concentrated.

Lavender: moisturises and is antibacterial.

Orange: Antifungal and anti-inflammatory, reduces anxiety and depression. Aids insomnia

Peppermint: Aids muscle and nerve pain.

Patchouli: Helps to promote a smooth glowing complexion, can reduce the appearance of blemishes and wrinkles.



It is especially important for us to take the time for self-care. The Scottish winters are a challenge to get through, add extreme weather conditions and reduced daylight affect the rhythms of our bodies. For many of us, it's in our DNA to be in the sun.



Invisible Women

by Julie Woods

Gender-based services across Scotland have diminished over the years due to, lack of funding, resources, and an understanding of the importance of why women need and want them. There is minimal women-only accommodation which means women don't present to the council because they know they would be put in a B&B where most individuals staying there are male. We also know women don't access homeless charities due to bad experiences with the local authority consequently, women become invisible.

In all the services I have worked in over the last seventeen years nearly all the women I have worked with had experience of homelessness, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. The main cause for women who have/are experiencing homelessness is relationship breakdown. In nearly all intimate relationship cases there is abuse of some sort and controlling behaviours. Family relationships and conflict with family members parents and siblings also cause women to leave the home. Sofa surfing with other friends and family can also lead to them being vulnerable.

The worrying thing is they would rather be at risk rather than approach the local authority. The really sad thing is many women see themselves with no other options

than sofa surfing or going back to violent and controlling partners and just accepting their life especially if there are children are involved.

There is a genuine belief that contacting social work for support is seen as a weakness and that children will be removed from their care.

This really impacts them and the children receiving the support they need and deserve. They don't believe that the help and support are out there.

The main services for women who have experienced abuse and violence are over capacity. Additionally, women are turned away and too often told that it is not a domestic violence issue it's mental health and are not accepted into safe spaces for them to recover.

This is due to the criteria for being able to access specialist services being very rigid, again due to capacity issues and women having to now provide evidence of domestic abuse which can be very frightening and impact their mental health.

Having to prove that this is their experience and feeling disbelieved is very destructive causing women to disengage from services and miss out on help. These services are so underfunded and under-resourced that the service provided is not meeting the needs of the women who are eligible and accepted. Homeless women are mostly left with no alternative but to accept unsuitable and sub-standard accommodation in areas away from support networks and connections that are protective factors for them and their children.

They are often the ones facing the upheaval of moving, changes to routine and lifestyle while the perpetrators of the abuse are able to stay in the same place without any of the upheavals experienced by women fleeing and escaping their situation.

There are many barriers to women finding safe and suitable accommodation the main reason is the same for both males and females; there is not enough safe and suitable temporary accommodation available.



Photo [Matthew Henry](#).

Also, the time in temporary accommodation is around two years and growing all the time meaning there isn't a consistent flow of progression for people.

The thought of staying in a B&B when mental health is already poor coupled with a lack of confidence and self-esteem makes people more vulnerable. Many women who have gone into temporary accommodation have shared they experience physical, emotional, and sexual abuse by other residents in the accommodation.

Priority need was abolished a few years ago which would have seen women with issues such as domestic violence and poor mental health take priority. This loss has impacted the availability of homeless accommodation and the crisis has worsened over the years to the point now where people, are turned away from the local office and told there is nothing available and to return the following day.

Women who have fled domestic violence are told they are not homeless if they have a joint tenancy or a tenancy they have left in fear of their life.

They are told to go back call the police and have the perpetrator of the abuse removed. This is not due to the services not understanding why this is so difficult and dangerous for women but due to the lack of resources, they can use to support them.

Temporary flats are prioritised for families women who have no dependants fleeing Domestic Violence/abuse, presenting as homeless will not be considered for these flats straight away to get one is possible but having to provide proof of poor mental health, and domestic violence is sometimes not worth the bother.

In many cases, the feeling of hopelessness along with exhaustion and living in survival mode is like reliving it all and having to tell their story over and over again to get something that everybody should have a right to which is a safe place to lay your head and night to sleep and somewhere to be able to eat properly.

We need more gender-based services and accommodation with a holistic and joined-up approach to meeting women's needs.

The lack of services impacts women's ability to make positive changes in their life and stay away from peers and violent partners/family who do not support or encourage them but want to keep them stuck for their own benefit.

Services need to be accessible addressing the raft of complex issues surrounding homelessness. Women need a safe space to rebuild confidence, self-esteem, and self-belief. They deserve a safe space where they are not living in survival mode and are able to take control of their own lives and make informed decisions and choices about how they move forward with their lives.

Julie Woods has worked in the health and social care for seventeen years, she has worked with gender-based services across Edinburgh and the Lothians in substance misuse within residential, prison and community settings. Julie has worked for Crisis homeless Services for the last 6 years is passionate about human rights and raising awareness on social issues affecting the lives of vulnerable people.

Email: julie.woods@crisis.org.uk

Shreya Bhan

Brushbound

Brush Bound is my baby, which I have grown and nurtured over the last two years. It started as an expression of my voice and has evolved into a community that resonates with others'. The art and illustrations became my personal way of getting through the lockdown and evolved into being able to spread some happiness, confidence, and respite.

My art typically focuses on strong female protagonists. My process is intuitive, I draw only what I feel deeply about.

More self-love today was a response to lockdown I was reflecting on how much we had forgotten to live a little and were spending our days running from one task to another. Between all the chores and work and calls don't forget to take breaks for yourself. Hear a good song, go for a walk on the grass, enjoy an ice cream, put on a face mask, hug your cat/doggo! See the image on page 41.

Access to my energy is a privilege. You can enjoy my vibes but please don't bring your negativity. inspired by a picture of the incredibly talented designer Masaba Gupta from India who has grown and evolved beautifully through the years. I hope women don't settle for less in their career, love and every aspect of their lives.



Having spent most of my life in Delhi, I majored in design, and have been a part of the fashion industry for over ten years. See my website for prints and my collection of apparel.

Website: www.brushbound.com
Insta: [@brush_bound](https://www.instagram.com/brush_bound)



Above, Cynthia Gentle

OUR VOICES

To enable equal opportunity across the systems that govern our lives, we tick a box to identify ethnicity when we fill in forms. Sometimes I tick 'other' a retort to the system that has denied me equal opportunities. The lived experience of being othered is a significant part of the narrative of racism. The weight of racism can be described as an immutable foot on the head pushing you down.



Above, Nikki Kilburn

Artist Howardena Pindell illustrates the pernicious nature of racism in her video [Free White and 21](#). She describes the harm inflicted on herself and her mother's body.

She then appears as herself and a white woman in whiteface to communicate the separation of experience between white and Black women—a perspective of opposites both living within the same system, one oppressed by it the other liberated. The video was created in 1980 and is still universally relatable to the reality of racism today.

The photography and audio project *Our Voices*, exhibited alongside Howardena's work at [Fruitmarket](#) Edinburgh in February, emerged from the collective experience of racism.

Five women, each with their own unique experience, came together to tell their story. The stories were threaded together to create a spoken and lyrical landscape of healing and strength.



Above, Julia Sutton

The intention of each portrait was to reclaim space from the experience of racial exclusion. **Capturing the heavy irony of being hyper-visible as a woman of colour and being silenced denied the right to free expression.**

Howardena Pindell's oeuvre documents the horrific reality of racialised abuse and trauma. It is a harrowing and necessary experience to spend time with her work. The Fruitmarket has created a safe space for visitors to the exhibition. True & Woke has made self-care guidance available to support visitors to process the trauma material.



Left, Rubistania Ferrier, Above Shondra Riley

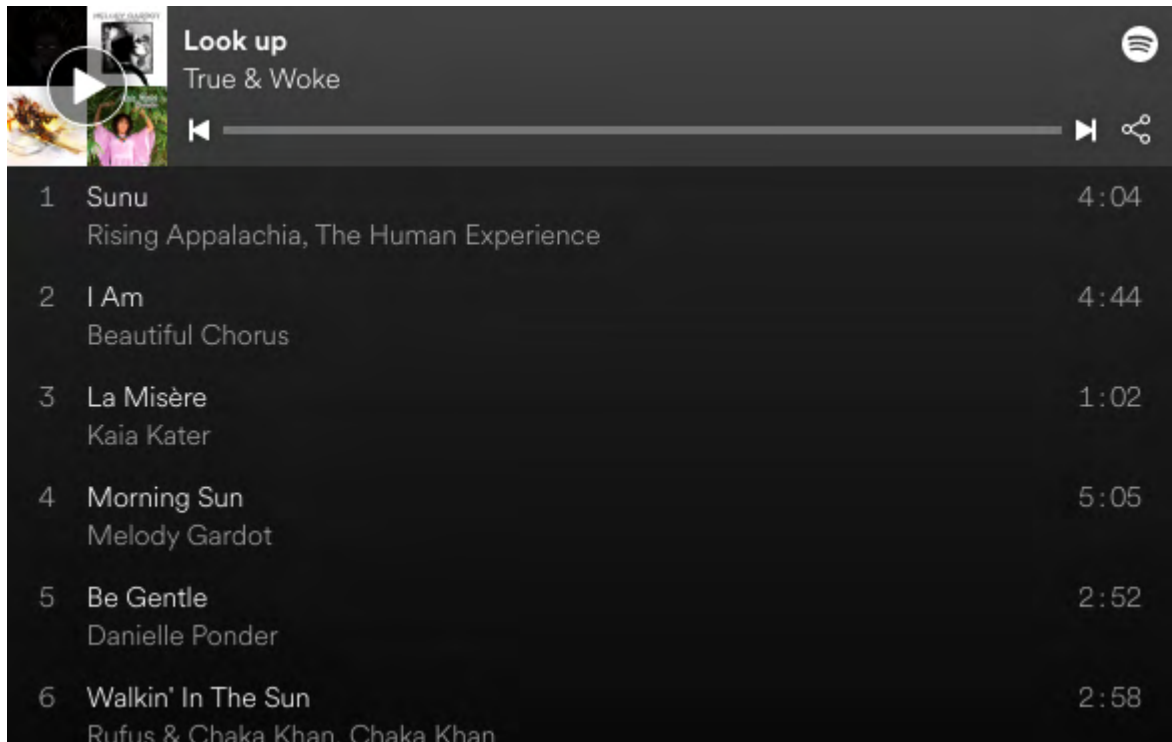
The Howardena Pindell Exhibition is at
Fruitmarket Edinburgh until 02.05.22

The audio narrative for Our Voices is
available to listen to [here](#)

Exhibiting Our Voices alongside
Howardena Pindell was an
enriching experience. There is a
therapeutic quality that comes
from the connection of safely
sharing traumatic lived
experiences. In this instance,
it is a haven of validation and
recognition while we continue to
do the work of anti-racism.

Photography by Nikki Kilburn
Website: nikkikilburn.com
Insta: [@nikki_kilburn](https://www.instagram.com/nikki_kilburn)

Listen up



Fill your heart with this soul vibrating playlist. Created especially for you by our development director Shondra Riley. [Click here to listen directly on Spotify.](#)

Our Podcast Drops in May!



Join us for conversations about change, equality and understanding. Guests include:

- Queer Birth Club's AJ Silver
- Television Director Angela Barnes
- Disability Activist Anna Higgs-Smith
- Arts Equality Activist Briana Pegado
- Nutritionist, Felicia Jones and more!

Sign up to our [mailing list](#) so you won't miss a single episode!

Issue 0

No part of this publication is available for reproduction without prior written permission from the publisher True & Woke.

All content in this publication is the views expressed by the authors. True & Woke assumes no responsibility for the author's work.

All information in this publication was accurate at the time of publishing, True & Woke assumes no responsibility should any of the information change.

True & Woke is open for submissions. Visit our website [here](#) for details.

Contact us:

Collaboration and Project Development:

nikki.kilburn@trueandwoke.com

Media Relations and Sponsorship:

shondra.riley@trueandwoke.com

visit our website trueandwoke.com for more information.

True & Woke C.I.C. (community interest company)
10/5 Marlborough Street, Edinburgh EH15 2BG
Company Number SC717625

Proudly sponsored by

