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# let's balance for better



“f

rom grassroots activism to worldwide action, we are entering an exciting period of history where the world expects balance. We notice its absence and celebrate its presence.” These are the opening words on the International Women’s Day website, explaining this year’s theme, Balance For Better.

“The race is on for the gender-balanced boardroom, a gender-balanced government, gender-balanced media coverage, a gender-balance of employees, more gender-balance in wealth, gender-balanced sports coverage...” It continues.

As the dust slowly settles from a disappointingly unsurprising election season, and we are left with the aftershock of it all, it is time to shift gears and begin to lay a stronger foundation that exists outside of politics. This call to arms, Balance For Better, does not just concern the women, it concerns everyone who is for gender balance. We still have a very long way to go but it is

encouraging to hear more voices join ours in this campaign. What we are out here fighting for, is for every human to have full and equal access to their basic human rights, amenities, education, earning potential, career horizon and more. Join us, won't you?

Sola Sobowale, has been a force within the Nollywood industry for decades, but with the role of Alhaja Eniola Salami in the record-breaking film, *King of Boys*, (written and directed by another queen, Kemi Adetiba,) she reinforced her position as an acting powerhouse. In this interview, my biggest takeaway was that this woman, who is, at the very least, approaching icon status, still seemed surprised by her own continued success. More than once, thanking her fans profusely and requesting that they “keep praying for me.” In our chat, and thanks to some insight from Ms Adetiba as well, I was able to get a full picture of the Nollywood vet off duty. She has always been an exciting figure to watch on screen, constantly stealing scenes and creating the most impact (so many of us still call her, Toyin Tomato!), but she’s only just scratched the surface. She is reignited and I’m so glad I got to hear her tell it in her own words.

How can we forget that March also plays host to Mother's Day! We've got some slightly different suggestions for gifts this year, so check it out to see how you can win, Offspring of the Year without breaking the bank.

We also go underground in the first of our #GUndercover series with our report: *My Night With Strippers*. My synopsis will do it little justice, but I assure you, it's worth the read.

Endometriosis Awareness Day is also in the month of March and we're sharing some insight and information, thanks to Bridge Medical Clinic, about what it is, how to identify symptoms and much more.

Plus, we've got Denrele Edun, getting candid about gender fluidity, sexuality, career and more; Abimbola Craig telling us just how she balances a 9 - 5 with a burgeoning acting career and so much more.

It's an exciting time for women who are reclaiming their time! Let's keep the fight going, let's balance for better!

Sonia Inabor

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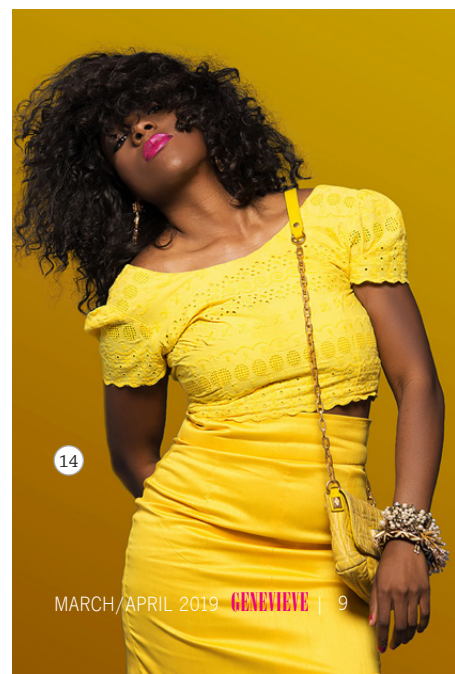
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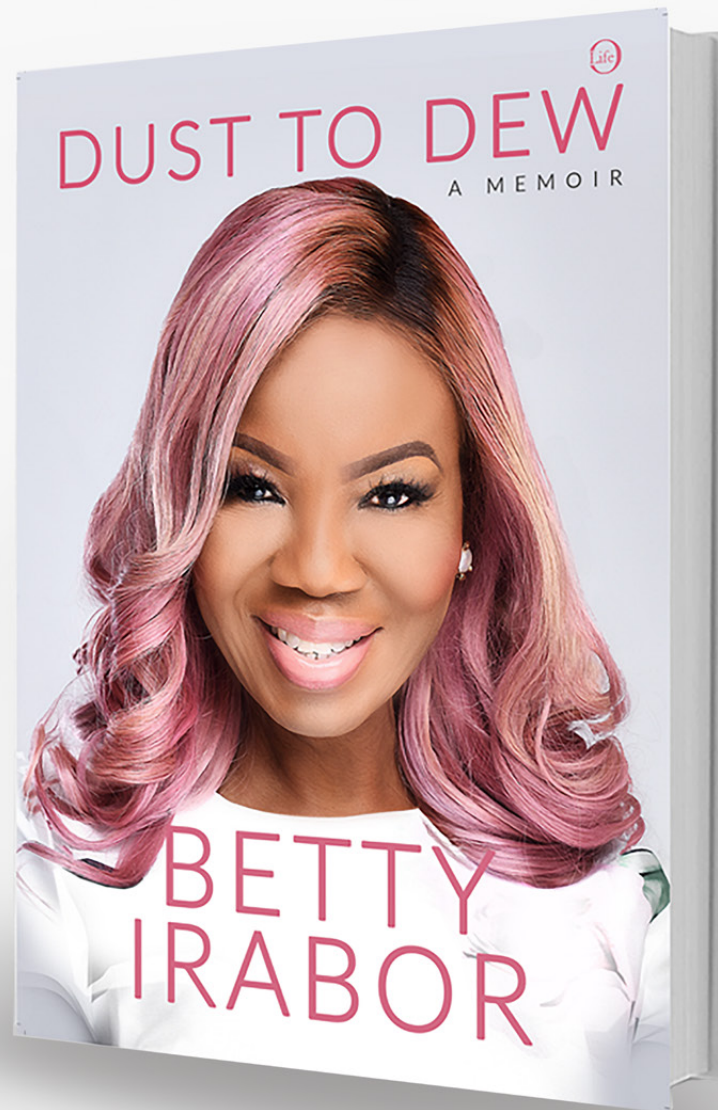
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## *Power to all* **WOMEN!**

International Women's Day originated at the dawn of the 20th century, according to UN Women, thanks to diverse labour movements across North America and Europe. It was designed to celebrate "the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women" and to be a "call to action for accelerating gender parity" worldwide.

Celebrating and empowering women should absolutely not be restricted to one day, so we're celebrating all month and beyond. So in honour of our edition dedicated to ALL women, I want to share a handful of beauty and lifestyle brands that are using their influence to launch powerful initiatives that support women.



**Clarins**

*Beauty and lifestyle brands  
using their influence to launch  
powerful initiatives that support  
women.*



**Clinique**



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## Makeup ideas for WOMEN'S MONTH and beyond...



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## Ask CLARA

**What is the point of International Women's Day?** *Phebe Sekoni - London*

International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated on March 8 every year. It is a focal point in the movement for women's rights. After the Socialist Party of America organised a Women's Day on February 28, 1909 in New York, the 1910 International Socialist Woman's Conference suggested a Women's Day be held annually.

**Why do we celebrate women's day?** *Mary Opara - Ogba*

The Women's Day date was moved to March 8 in 1913. But we're celebrating throughout March and April. The day aimed to help nations worldwide eliminate discrimination against women. It also focused on helping women gain full and equal participation in global development.



# TOMI ALAYANDE

From stellar performances in Jenifa's *Diary* and *Funkel!*, to presenting for EbonyLife TV and Silverbird TV, while still presenting a daily radio show on Unilag FM, TOMIKE ALAYANDE is one hardworking multi-hyphenate with no intention of slowing down. We caught up with the actress, presenter, and all-round influencer for a revealing and laughter-filled interview.

Interview: Racheal Abiriba  
Opening image: Seye Kehinde





**My childhood was** beautiful! I was the baby of the house. Trust me, it was the sweetest time ever!

**I would describe myself as** daughter of the Most High and your #FaveTVGirl; an actress, radio and TV personality, compere, a brand influencer and an entrepreneur. I love multitasking. I laugh a lot. One last thing, I'm terrible with texts and I procrastinate a lot- working on it though.



**I am passionate about** succeeding. Success is sweet, to be honest. I'm passionate about my job (TV Presenting & Compering most especially) and that drives me.

**Beauty to me means** what shines through you. For me, it's not in the face, or the body but what's in you. One of my favourite quotes is, "no beauty shines brighter than that of a good heart" and I couldn't agree more.

**I can't do without** eating. Just kidding. I love food but I also love fasting. I certainly can't do without God! Never e ver.

**I have a weakness for** cake and ice cream!

**My typical day** involves getting up as early as 4:30am, going to TMT by Layinka's, to get my makeup done, and then heading out for one event or the other while also posting content on social media. Most times, I'm not done till midnight. On days I'm not working, I can sleep until midday. I love sleeping and so I use such days to catch up on the sleep I've missed.

**My style is** simple most times. I don't like drama. Pass me a pretty dress, heels, studs and I'm good to go!

**My style icon is** me! (Laughs).

**My go-to makeup items are** mascara, eye liner and nude lipstick/gloss

**My favourite colours are** white, black, yellow, powder blue and coral. There's also this cockroach brown that I love. (Laughs) Just kidding.

**Working in the Nigerian Media industry** has been so much fun. It's been super stressful as well as an eye opener. I've learnt so much. It's opened several doors for me. I'm also grateful for

growth. I studied microbiology and I'm yet to attend a single training so basically, everything I know about media/TV, I learnt on the job. I'm hoping to take classes soon to broaden my knowledge.

**I am motivated by** the fact that I'm trying to build a legacy. I want my name to open doors for my children and generations to come.

**The most valuable advice I have ever received** is from my mum. She usually says "It's better to be hated for who you are, than to be loved for who you're not." There is nothing like being you.

**Social media has been** the only PR agency I've had asides God! Most of my clients see my work on social media and contact me there. It's been a huge blessing to me.

**I let off steam by** crying. When I'm sad, I cry. When I'm happy, I cry. When I'm angry, I cry. (Laughs).





ART

*for*  
**AMIN AMEEN**

Photo by: Oye Diran | NYC



# ...EVERYTHING, INDEED, IS ART!

*"So many of us are searching for a sense of connection and a place to call "home", a space that fosters growth and community."*

*Instagram can often feel like one endless scroll; a pointedly empty search for some kind of inspiration. But once in a while, our zombie-like commitment to this social media app is rewarded when we come across a profile or an individual who has curated something so bright or so specific that it sparks something in us. Such is, perhaps, the feeling when one stumbles upon the Instagram page or hashtag, Everything Na Art - it certainly was for me. ENA, run by Engineer, Amin Ameen, has become a digital community with a tribe far more equally engaged than a lot of other online communities or influencers can boast. With 20,000+ followers, Amin's approach to visual presentation, breaks the fourth wall, as it were; inviting her followers inside the world of online influencing and marketing, teaching them - often for free - how they too can build, create and curate a digital presence that will stop people scrolling past and draw them in. I had the opportunity to chat with Amin about Everything Na Art, freedom to create and more. SONIA IRABOR*

**One of the biggest things that I think makes you stand out from a very crowded pool of influencers is that you and your community, truly function as a tribe. What did you do right/differently/more of/less of, that attracted your audience to you in such a way?**

Thank you so much. This tribe is actually truly remarkable. I am honoured to be the catalyst and conduit that started this community. I believe what I did differently was "treat the janitor with as much love and respect as the CEO." So many of us are searching for a sense of connection and a place to call "home", a space that fosters growth and community. I believe that I have created that space with this brand. I answer every DM, every email, every comment, every question. My response to them serves them; so, my audience in turn, feels right at home. We no longer feel like followers but more of a family. I believe herein lies the "secret sauce" and the fullness that you described.

**How would you describe the core of Everything Na Art in three words?**

That's a hard one. I would say: Service. Innovation. Love.

**What do you think online brands in Nigeria need to learn about engagement and how to improve their relationship with their audiences?**

I think it's simple. Give before you take. People that follow me know that I love to reverse-engineer everything. I did an Instastory tutorial once about how I tripled the following on the tribe page (@TribeCalledENA) by simply starting the engagement process instead of waiting for followers to engage with the page when they followed. Pretend that your Instagram page is a storefront shop. If someone walks in the door (in this case, follows you); welcome them! The same way you would greet a customer in person at your store. Show them around, tell them what you are about. Make no assumptions. Again, the spirit of service.

**You've now reached a point where people can point to you as a great source for visual inspiration but I'm curious about your earlier attempts and when you felt like you were finally on the right track?**

Well, Rome wasn't built in a day. Michael Jordan didn't always have the killer jump shot and neither did I. I am still on the court practicing, building; shooting air balls and missing free throws every day. You may not see it because you get to see my best work manifested on the 'Gram, but it has been a long time coming. Today we are 20,000 strong but we started from the bottom.

I started my first Instagram page in 2012. Many people don't know this, but I used to do wedding photography; then I started making throw pillow designs and selling them online on an e-commerce site while working full-time as an Engineer. Then I moved on to just documenting my travels, my love of art and my personal photography. Then one day I started the hashtag of all hashtags #EverythingNaArt while in Paris



in the summer of 2017. That was just my way of documenting the things I found beautiful and worthy to be called “Art” in my world. The hashtag became a call to action, and 10,000 uses of it later; it [has gone] from a personal hashtag to a global community hashtag that started right on my Instagram page.

**Community is at the heart of ENA. Why is that sense of collaboration so central to the creative process for you?**

Two heads are better than one. There is power in community. There is power in a team and a sense of diversity that is attached to collaborative work. Diversity of thought; diversity of skill; diversity of leadership and what everyone can bring to the table. Everyone has that special ‘egg’ that is the critical ingredient in the cake (team) we are trying to build to complete a particular task or project. We need each other. Nothing happens in a vacuum.

**Did it take some convincing to get people to not just join the tribe but to participate in the way that they have?**

Yes and no. There will always be critics or, let me say, sceptics who are wondering who you are, why people like you so much, what your motive is and whether or not it’s ulterior.

Outside of that group of people, you have what you call the “brand evangelists”. The folks who see how hard you work and how much you give and have been benefactors of your service and value. These folks don’t need convincing. They see you in action and make it their business [to allow] others to see you as well. That’s the core of this community.

**You’re an engineer by day and my instinct is to ask how you balance that with this job but instead, I’ll ask, do you see art in your work as an engineer? And what form does it take?**

Absolutely! There is art in the AutoCAD drawings we produce. There is art in the way we communicate and work together as a diverse team; there is an art to seeing a project from the idea to initiation to planning to execution all the way to the closeout of the project. Everything Na Art!

**When we first met, we exchanged stories about the experience of taking photographs around Lagos. We realised that we both had experiences of being verbally attacked by men who didn’t want us taking photos of their buildings, gates or walls. What did your experience teach you about the**

**potential difficulties that come with being a creative in Nigeria?**

In my humble opinion, the creatives in Nigeria are bad ass! I have so much respect for them. It can’t be overstated. They’re truly the epitome of the word creative. When you have to struggle to create content because of the inequities in society and the lack of basic resources and you can still manage to flesh out rad ideas and dope content? You are a hero in my eyes. Whether they are photographers, artists, fashion designers, architects, writers, bloggers, freelancers - you name it - these people are doing their thing every day with serious disadvantages in front of them. They are battling against infrastructure, access, and the ignorance of the “gatekeepers” when it comes to taking photos in a public place.

**Did that experience in any way influence the way you interact with art (creating or curating) in Nigeria and in general?**

Yes, a bit. I was not free to create. But I sense a change sweeping through as my last few visits and attempts at public photography have not been as tense. You’ll even have an amazing restaurant have their security stop patrons from



*When you have to struggle to create content because of the inequities in society and the lack of basic resources and you can still manage to flesh out rad ideas and dope content? You are a hero in my eyes.*

taking photos. But why? A photo is what led me here. I found your place of business on Instagram because of a great photo someone took here. Artistic freedom is so important. I think ignorance is the main issue. I try to educate the “gatekeepers” as I resist them. (Laughs).

**Fast forward to the future, a retrospective is being done on your life, what would you hope that profile includes about your work with Everything Na Art?**

All I want it to include is that I did it my way, despite all odds. That I took others along with me; that they made a way for themselves, which in turn created a pipeline for others to do the same. Service. Leadership. Innovation. Love and most certainly, legacy.

**In our discussion leading up to this interview, you mentioned ENA’s desire to ‘empower people with tech and digital skills to take care of themselves financially’. Do you think this is the next frontier for creatives in terms of the earning potential? Has digitisation created an easier route to earning money?**

Absolutely! I have witnessed it. Innovators in tech will indeed be the new wealth builders in Nigeria regardless of the socio-economic climate. Beyond all the English I just spoke, if you have a smartphone and you are ready to learn, you can make enough money to feed your family and take care of yourself and save. If you are business savvy, you make a whole lot more doing what you are already doing each day on Instagram. ENA has taught thousands of its tribe members how to beef up their networking skills, grow their brand, grow their email list, approach businesses and brands for paid collaborations, market their services and products, and so many more business skills required to move from just being a creative to actually running a business as a creative whether you have a 9-5 or not.

**Finally, what has been your most significant experience with a piece of art thus far?**

My most significant experience with a piece of art was meeting the artist behind “Planets in My Head” (Trumpet Boy).

I met artist, Yinka Shonibare, (MBE), while working on the production/digital team for ART X Lagos in 2018. He is a brilliant man. An icon living.

Meeting him in-person and hearing him speak about his life and never treating his physical disability as a reason for him to limit or restrict himself. I am deeply moved by his work and his life as a whole. I think many of us can take a chapter from the book of his life and hold on to the valuable lessons about true grit and perseverance.

*Follow #EverythingNaArt on Instagram*



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In The Embrace of the...

# GIRLS LIKE ME!

Words and images produced by Sheba Anyanwu for Genevieve Magazine.

*With a creative vision steeped in self-love and expression, Doreen and Joan Caven are building an online community to encourage freedom of expression for African Women.*

**L**.

There is long trail of breadcrumbs, part of an already existing digital ecosystem, which you can trace on the internet. Follow it and you will eventually find, “a space where women can navigate the world on their own terms”. This is the visible slogan on the [thegirlslikeme.com](http://thegirlslikeme.com), the website of a women-centered online community built by sisters, Joan and Doreen Caven, to encourage girls to live their lives courageously without shame. It is impossible to speak about this

online community without highlighting its catapult to digital consciousness, most visibly on the vehicle of Doreen Caven’s Twitter feed. Carefully crafted threads and patient responses to social commentary, retweeted and liked a thousand times, might have spilled onto your timeline and you might have wondered; who is she? How does she know all this? And perhaps, how does she have the time? These are the questions I too have wanted to ask.

The Cavens have a peculiar online history, beginning, at least on the internet, with what was formerly [the4aces.blogspot.com](http://the4aces.blogspot.com), a now defunct site where Nigerian women were first introduced to the duo. There, they regularly published posts on fashion,

creativity and personal stories alongside friends, all of whom have now gone on to diverse creative paths. Before they built The Girls Like Me, there were blog posts, a few videos on YouTube - notably, one where they don sunglasses and sing along to El-dee’s infamous 2008 single, “Big Boy” - a few fashion videos, and even a short skit where they reimagine Amy Heckerling’s *Clueless*.

There has been no aversion to fun and creativity here. It’s all light social commentary and without much premeditation, the message has consistently been fun, wrapped in creativity, with a spirited slight towards the invasive norms imposed on a woman’s ability to live fully. And so, it touches a nerve- who are we in society without the approval of men



hovering over our heads?

Before meeting the Cavens, my own story asks me to confront the importance of an opening - a rip in a tightly sewn seam - and how the sliver of light that filters through can change the composition of one's mind, and even the ideas and perceptions of self. Like many women in Nigeria, I too was assaulted outside of my family home with invasive messaging about my desirability and it's assumed legitimacy or illegitimacy - not for my own sake but rather for the sake of men whom I hardly thought of or had never met. With the fear of social ostracism and a building, often misplaced distrust of the women around me, I grew up unable to fully articulate the feelings of anger, confusion, and perhaps rage, which followed me through my teens in Nigeria. I looked at the older women around me, the mothers and aunties, and though I didn't always know their full stories, I sometimes felt like I didn't want to be, or end up, like them. Yet, I knew it wasn't necessarily their fault. I longed for their strength, but not the circumstances that activate its eruption.



"We used to joke about being those ostracised aunties. I always thought I would be one of those aunties," Doreen says. Seated in the plush green living room of their Los Angeles apartment. I've asked about their experiences growing up in Nigeria and their thoughts on the archetype of the Nigerian aunty; the one who never gets married and swoops in from a life of eccentricity and alleged social exile, to bestow sensibility and gifts upon you. The sisters were raised in Lagos, in a fashion they've both described as unorthodox. The interactions with the women in their lives, aunties and older cousins who lived with them, were their primary exposure to gender relations in Nigeria. And through the transparency of these interactions, they grew uneasy with the unfair expectations and deprecating lives of the women around them. "I never really saw or heard of people making marriage into what worked for them," Doreen says. "We saw a lot of women performing," Joan replies, "it looked painful, and I just knew that I didn't want that for myself."

The Girls Like Me editorial style is executed to loosen this tightly wound seam of ideas, conditioned into women's minds from birth.



Joan (left) and Doreen Caven at home in LA

But they're doing this their way, true to their idea of expression. It's distributed as a quirky counter-narrative, threaded through needed social media posts pointing sharply at women loving themselves. Far from being an Instagram page with re-published twitter posts, the 10,000+ community on thegirlslikeme.com, fall into the embrace of a brand voice, which feels very much like the eccentric aunty you're told to be ashamed of. She's smart, she cares, and



she won't let you betray yourself. On their website, African women contribute stories on sexuality, femininity and the challenges of living in a patriarchal society. Posts like The Likability Problem, I Owe My Feminism to Buchi Emecheta and A Girl, The Subject or The Object, are sourced from contributors who send their work to the team. As their community grows, they've begun hosting community events in Lagos, bringing these much-needed conversations and interactions into physical spaces.



Though sisterhood is a huge component of their creative process, a respect for individual ideas remains the foundation of how the duo operates. It is also what they hope to bring to their community, which, despite these aspirations, has come under criticism for what some find to be an insistence on centering men in their politics. "We're always open to learning, but we're not going to invalidate our experiences," Doreen says. In a time where feminism is being adopted in our online world, not necessarily for survival, but for commodification, it's understandable why so much needs to be protected. And as this narrative unfolds, it seems unjust to expect women to have everything figured out in relation to all the ways we articulate our experiences with oppression under patriarchy.

Still, I'm forced to confront again the value of an opening; the various entry points through which we can arrive at the same place. Who would I be without a mother who worked defiantly in the face of patriarchy? Or the aunty who told me that she wanted me to be free. Perhaps this is why The Girls Like Me resonates so deeply - the Cavens are creating openings in the tightly sewn stitches we've used to weave life together. Some rips are freeing, others create discomfort, but they all let the light in.

There will be more from the Cavens. "We're working on more projects, and we hope to launch more events where we can create a space for women to talk," Joan says.





Photo Credit: Shutterstock

# TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR PLEASURE!

It has long been purported that sex is something that is gifted to a man, but simply 'happens' to a woman. The idea that sex is solely a one-sided activity is the very foundation of an incorrect assumption that it is a woman's lot to go her whole life without ever experiencing the big O. But what if we told you, dear woman, that you too were deserving of an enjoyable, and not just a tolerable, sexual experience? Claim your orgasm! It is your right as a consenting, sexually active adult.

The amount of shame that overshadows a woman's ability to enjoy her sexual experience is something that is being combated by more vocal women out there. But what if this is not your area of strength? How can you then reclaim your pleasure? Well, through three key areas: vulnerability, exploration and communication, you can ease yourself into a rhythm that allows you to enjoy the sensations of a stimulating sexual experience.

**EXPLORATION: Pay attention to your body:** There are many reasons, beyond a mediocre sexual experience with a partner, that can lead to a disappointing encounter. Your body will tell you exactly what it likes and doesn't like. It is your duty to listen to it and respond accordingly, you do this by communicating with your partner. Do not block your pleasure by remaining quiet when you are not enjoying the experience.

**COMMUNICATION: Let your partner know what turns you on and off:** One of the biggest setbacks to women achieving orgasm is a fear to speak up when something isn't working for them. Why not try incorporating dialogue into your love making by responding in real time to each other? Communicate to your partner what they are doing that stimulates you and as well the things that do not. It doesn't make you 'difficult'. It is your right as one half of that sexual experience. Dialogue can happen before, during or after sex. Alternatively, you can communicate through moans of approval. There are no rules. Just be sure to treat the issue with tenderness, it is a vulnerable experience for both parties.

**VULNERABILITY: Get out of your head:** During sex, it is very easy to get caught up in your own thoughts and insecurities. How is this going? Am I sexy enough? Does my partner think I'm sexy? Use this as an opportunity to tune into your partner's responses to you. Achieving climax is as much a mental exercise as it is a physical one. Allow yourself the opportunity to enjoy your partner and the experience and you will find your muscles relaxing and becoming more receptive to your partner's touches.

Sure, not every sexual experience will end in mutual climax but isn't it fun to get as close to completion as you can? Go ahead, take charge of your pleasure!



## EFUA EXPLORES:

### WHEN DID YOU REALISE THAT YOU WERE ENOUGH?

She moves with a grace belying her age, seeming taller than her petite height of 5'3. Although always composed, she is almost constantly in motion, sorting out something or the other in her house.

Later on she sits, perfectly still, a wide smile on her face as she focuses on me, intently. There is a serenity to her countenance that has become more pronounced with age and experience, much the same way that wine develops more layers the older it gets. The story of her life is written across her face - from the crow's feet at the corners of her eyes, to the laugh lines bracketing her mouth. She looks very ladylike in her skirt and blouse set, but she's told me that soon she will switch to something more comfortable. I don't blame her, because life is too short for discomfort. On her slim, elegant hands she has on two rings: one, a set that she likes - and the other, the wedding ring placed there by her late husband. Although he has been gone for around twenty years, she is still known to all as Mrs Dolapo Agbeke\*, or Big Mummy.

As I sit with Mrs Agbeke, I ask her one question.

"Please, Ma, when did you realise, that you

were enough?"

She looks at me, her smile turning puzzled as she ponders the question. She's not sure what I mean so I explain further.

"I want to know... when did you realise, that you were enough, just as you are? As a Nigerian [and African] woman, with all the pressures and expectations upon us - when did you realise this? When did [it dawn on you] that you were complete as a person, and as a woman, in who you are?"

**Some people may think that they are never enough, but, at each stage they will hopefully come to find that they have to be enough for themselves.**

Her eyes seem to glance back introspectively as she thinks of her life over the past eight-plus decades. Now I'm the one listening attentively, hanging on to her every word. There's a twinkle in her eye as she begins to reply.

"There was no one time. I had this epiphany several times. The years have taught me, that life is stage by stage."

"From the beginning, since my life with my parents, I thought I was enough. With my marriage, I thought that was good, too. I've always felt like I was enough, at every stage of my life. You learn as you get older."

I notice that she does not mention children, when she talks on the importance of being a complete person. Nor does she touch on social status, or the importance of getting married. They are important, if you want them; but if you don't, you are fine too. She does mention her beloved husband, whom she loved and still misses. The stage of her marriage ended, but her story did not - her marriage was a chapter, not her whole entire storybook. The duty of care for her personal growth and development is introspective, focused inward. Almost as though she alone bears responsibility for making herself feel complete.

"About 20 years ago, my husband passed on. Though that's been hard and I do miss him so much, I still feel very much enough as I am. I have my family. I go to church a lot; with church, I have reaffirmed that, honestly, fulfilment comes from within."

If life is a collection of moments, then marriage, popularity, wealth... are parts that we have been conditioned to believe we would be incomplete without. Mrs Agbeke does not say that those are not important stages, nor does she advocate that they should be anything but sources of happiness. They are all a collection of joyful moments, bound together with our internal resilience.

"Some people may think that they're never enough, but, at each stage they will hopefully come to find that they have to be enough for themselves."

Listening to this wise, beautiful woman, I am encouraged to think that I alone bear responsibility for my happiness and validation. That as a woman, establishing my self-worth, my strength, my commitment to my own development, is the glue that binds and holds my own joyful collection together.

I wonder how much time it took her to get there.

*[Efua, I Am...] is a project under Efua Explores, a monthly column by Efua Oyofo. Through this column, she will be exploring socially and culturally normative issues amongst Nigerians and Africans at large. The Efua, I Am... series examines personal stories and introspections, of people and their navigation process through the world. You can follow her actions, stories and reflections here, Instagram, and Twitter at @efuastar.*

\*Names changed to protect identities.

# Endometriosis FROM A MEDICAL ANGLE

With the commencement of menstruation, women become susceptible to various health conditions that can lead to infertility. One of such conditions is Endometriosis, a gynaecological condition surrounded by taboos, myths, and a lack of awareness. It manifests itself in two forms: Asymptomatic (without noticeable symptoms) and Symptomatic (manifests with noticeable symptoms). Despite having existed for years, this condition has only recently gained awareness and visibility, so, naturally, women have many questions- 'Is all painful menstruation a result of Endometriosis? Is the condition curable? How can one know whether or not they have Endometriosis?' And the list goes on. We turned to specialists at The Bridge Fertility Clinic for expert advice on this health condition and how it affects fertility.

- Racheal Abiriba





In the past, there wasn't much talk or sensitisation around endometriosis. In fact, there were myths and taboos surrounding one of its most common symptoms, painful menstruation. Many women living with endometriosis found themselves suffering in silence and having to find different solutions to cope with their symptoms. But all of that is changing as more women share their stories and struggles, and as medical advancements have created greater insight into the condition.

Endometriosis is a common and painful disorder in which endometrial glands or endometrial-like tissues that normally line the inside of the uterus, grow where they aren't meant to be (outside the uterus). These tissues act like those inside the uterus: they grow, thicken, and try to shed with every menstrual cycle. Since the tissues have no way of leaving the body, they can cause injuries which can trigger inflammation and lead to pain and other complications, like infertility.

Pronounced 'end-o-me-tree-o-sis,' this condition affects the quality of life for women as a result of its varied symptoms; chronic pelvic pain, severe menstrual pains, painful sexual intercourse, painful bowel movements or urination, heavy periods, bleeding between periods, infertility, loss of hours at work, fatigue, diarrhea, constipation, bloating or nausea, especially during menstrual periods, and more. These symptoms vary in women and are similar to those of other health conditions making it easy to mistake for another condition. It is therefore important to get a doctor's diagnosis.

According to The Bridge Fertility Clinic, "Endometriosis affects 10 - 15% of all women of reproductive age and 70% of women with chronic pelvic pain". This translates to about 425,060 of the over 42 million women of reproductive age in Nigeria. Many of these women will have asymptomatic endometriosis, so they don't know that they have this health condition. And because the symptoms of endometriosis can begin in early adolescence, or show up later in adulthood, it is recommended that women of reproductive age go for periodic health checks.

The first step is understanding what endometriosis is and knowing its symptoms and this is the phase we are in- creating awareness of the disease. The next step is to understand what causes it and in doing so, try to find ways to avoid developing the condition. Unfortunately, there has been no definitive cause of endometriosis, however, various

theories have been proposed such as Retrograde Menstruation (when menstrual blood containing endometrial cells flows back through the fallopian tubes and into the pelvic cavity instead of out of the body). However, as many as 9 in 10 people have Retrograde Menstruation, and most do not develop endometriosis, suggesting the involvement of other factors.\* There is also the theory of Transformation of Peritoneal Cells (when hormones or immune factors promote the transformation of peritoneal cells - cells that line the inner side of your abdomen - into endometrial cells). There are other theories such as embryonic cell transformation, surgical scar implantation, endometrial cells transport, and immune system disorder, which have been proposed, but there is yet to be a definitive cause that doctors agree on.

Several risk factors that could place women at greater risk of developing endometriosis have been identified and they include early age menarche (onset of first period), short menstrual cycle length, going through menopause at an older age, having higher levels of estrogen in the body or a greater lifetime exposure to estrogen, which the body produces.

Other risk factors are low body mass index, one or more relatives (mother, aunt or sister) with endometriosis, any medical condition, which prevents the normal passage of menstrual flow out of the body, uterine abnormalities, alcohol, caffeine intake and nulliparity. Signs and symptoms of endometriosis usually end temporarily with pregnancy and end permanently with menopause, unless one is taking estrogen. The American Society of Reproductive Medicine has classified endometriosis into minimal, mild, moderate and severe, based on the severity of adhesions, number, size and location of peritoneal implants and the presence or absence of endometriomas (endometriotic ovarian cysts).

"The gold standard of diagnosis is by diagnostic laparoscopy with biopsy of endometriotic lesions, however, a preliminary diagnosis can be done based on clinical history and physical examination. Chronic pelvic pain is a common symptom, but all other causes of chronic pelvic pain need to be ruled out first. On physical examination, pelvic masses may be palpated, tenderness during pelvic examination could also be elicited. Doing a pelvic ultrasound can visualize endometriotic cysts" The Bridge Fertility Clinic advised.

And so finally, we come to the ever-important

question 'how can endometriosis be prevented or cured?' Unfortunately, endometriosis is a long-term chronic condition. It significantly impacts a woman's physical health, emotional wellbeing, and daily routine. For some women, symptoms stop them from normal activities and may lead to feelings of depression and relationship difficulties. There is no cure at this time, only management.

Management of endometriosis is multifaceted and involves various strategies to improve one's quality of life. Pain management, hormonal treatment, surgical debulking of disease and fertility management are principles in the management of endometriosis. Pain and hormonal management involve the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, opioid analgesics, progestin, low dose oral contraceptive pills, androgens and gonadotropin-releasing agonists.

Many women have found that lifestyle changes and natural remedies can help relieve some of the symptoms such as exercise, a healthy and well-balanced diet, use of a hot water bottle and/or taking a hot bath, but these are just techniques to help manage the symptoms. Surgical interventions involve the excision of endometrial implants, ablation of uterosacral nerves, and in worst case scenarios, hysterectomy and oophorectomy (removal of the womb and ovaries). Surgery in itself could worsen morbidity, especially in cases of infertility in which the ovaries may be compromised.

Although research is ongoing to identify markers of endometriosis that could help in diagnosing the disease, as well as acting as targets for improved management, more needs to be done to encourage women to voice concerns about their health. No woman should suffer in silence.

In conclusion, endometriosis is a debilitating condition that affects women of reproductive age and has an impact on quality of life. More investment is needed in the area of research to improve diagnostic capabilities, management and outcome. Endometriosis can be a challenging condition to manage. An early diagnosis, a multidisciplinary medical team and an understanding of one's diagnosis may result in better management of one's symptoms. It's important to not ignore the fact that proper counseling is necessary to help women living with this health condition, and to help those around them cope with the symptoms until long-lasting cures are developed.



## MINDFUL PRACTICE FOR NECK & SHOULDER RELIEF

Spinal pain is a major public health problem, and living with pain is never easy. It's so commonplace that sometimes neck and shoulder pains may seem like an inevitable part of humanness. Fortunately, most of this tension can be released through understanding of the anatomy, and by practicing a few stretches.

**INTENTION** - a thing intended; an aim or plan

**1. Bring Awareness** to the factors that precede the neck and shoulder tension. Monitor yourself and try to observe what situations occur that precede neck and shoulder discomfort.

- Immobility from too much sitting? Interrupt every 60 - 90 minutes and move
- Ergonomic factors like looking down at a screen too long? Try raising the screen to eye level
- Emotional factors? Most of us tighten the muscles at the back of the neck when we're anxious, angry or frustrated. Learn strategies to let go of these negative emotions, taking deep belly breaths and problem solving for the factors affecting you.

**2. Move Sequences:** there is a reason why people say, "the weight of the world on my shoulders". A stiff neck or sore shoulders can inhibit you from performing at your best each day.

- Side Stretch: With feet apart, stretch both arms to the ceiling and take turns pulling one arm gently to the side at a time. Grab by the wrists.
- Ear-to-Shoulder: Gently drop the ear to the shoulder at each side, stay 6 -10 breaths on each side



- Chin-to-Chest: Pull the chin into the chest and allow the rise and fall of your chest to lift and drop your jaw slowly. After five or six breaths, add a slow side-to-side movement, with your jaw moving towards your armpits.

**KNOWLEDGE** - facts and skills acquired through experience/education, understanding theories

#### 4. Common Cues Heard in a Yoga Class

are to gradually bring awareness to areas of bad posture, to counteract what the body has conformed to. During your yoga practice use these cues to remember, they keep your neck/shoulders safe.

- Create space + length means it should feel like there's action and lengthening in the muscles/tendons, not bunching up and shortening

- Release shoulders down your back means pulling gently away from your ears, also avoid overworking them to keep the focus on lengthening and strengthening

- Stack your head above shoulders means pulling your chin above your sternum, not above your feet

**5. You can prevent injuries** as long as you take caution and perform the exercises in moderation, and according to your strength and flexibility level. The rewards of basic yoga far outweigh the potential physical risks, however injuries have been noted parallel to the increased popularity of yoga, and the usual causes are: poor technique and/or alignment, previous injury or condition, excess effort, inadequate or proper instruction from teachers. They are all interrelated, and addressing any one will often be a gateway to the others.

**CULTURE** - ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society

**6. Posturing** is a behaviour that is intended to impress or mislead. I always question the perfection in the carefully constructed imagery I see with people (and myself), especially online. There seems to be one style/one look that is taking over. At the core, yoga celebrates our individuality. Take time and connect to what individuality really means to you. The ego that surrounds you when your flexibility/strength is complimented, notice if you feel the need to conform, are you trying to fit a mould? Turn that attention inward and be reminded that you are unique and no one else can be you. Find your own thing.



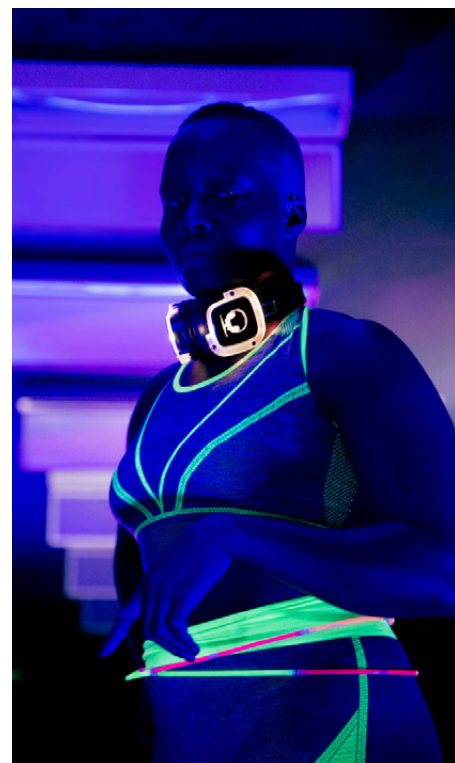
**YOGA CLUB LAGOS** is a members' club

**Sandra Patrick** teaches integrated movement with yoga, and mindful breathing techniques to relax or meditate. She's a certified yoga teacher and wellness coach behind Yoga Club Lagos; she provides experiences rooted in yoga tradition, sharing theories to learn, experiment and grow with each other.

The right teaching can make a difference between loving and hating Yoga classes. There are so many benefits from a consistent practice, and I'm excited to keep sharing them with you every month. I'll keep inspiring you to live a healthy balanced life with no hype, just down to earth, well researched content.

Keep an open mind and I promise to encourage a mindful practice,  
find me on Instagram @onhermat  
Love always,  
Sandy

**Yoga Club**  
intention knowledge culture  
**Lagos**







# ABIMBOLA CRAIG

Photo Credit: Emmanuel Oyeleke  
Styling: Style Infidel



# An Artist in Transit

*ABIMBOLA CRAIG first appeared on our screens in the instant favourite, Skinny Girl in Transit, and immediately became our digital sweetheart. The lawyer-turned-actor shares her journey through a career shift, surviving a brain tumour and her role as Tiwalade and what's to come.*

- Vivienne Belonwu

## **Had you always wanted to be in the TV and Film space?**

No, as a matter of fact, I never thought it possible to be honest. It was purely accidental. I didn't have entertainment in mind at first. I just wanted something different from litigation law.

## **So why TV Production?**

In 2014, I was diagnosed with a brain tumour and I had also resigned from my previous work just before I went for my surgery. After my surgery, Ndani TV [had a vacancy for] a social media position. After the interview, I was offered the position of an Associate Producer because my qualifications were higher than the post I had originally applied for.

## **After your surgery, in your general perception of life, what changed for you?**

A few days after my surgery, I fell [so] ill that I really thought I was going to die. It was a turning point for me and one of the scariest moments of my life. I saw the need to change my life and acquire a healthier lifestyle. I decided to shed some weight and [focus on] being happy. I made a promise to change all that I did not like about my life. I bargained with God and I promised to become a better Christian if He spared my life.

## **In the last few years, you have transitioned into an actor, starring as the lead actress in Skinny Girl in Transit. What's been the biggest shock so far?**

For someone who had no background in film, it was truly insightful and interesting as well. The biggest shock for me I think was the attention. I'm not an [attention-seeking type of] person and it has been difficult adjusting, trying to learn and unlearn a lot of things. Altogether, it's been a humbling experience

## **And the attention? How do you draw the line between cordial fans and those who cross the line?**

I just stay grounded. I've worked with actors before so I know that [I] have to take things at the surface and not let it get over my head. Other times I just run from social events that would bring me out in the public. As long as it isn't work-related, I stay indoors.

## **You were originally meant to just produce the series SGIT, how was it that you ended up playing Tiwa?**

It was by mere coincidence. My colleague who was originally meant to handle the auditions was unable to make it and she asked me to help her out. We were almost done and just waiting for the last person to come in. I just got in front of the camera and started goofing around, [not knowing that] the camera was rolling. Much later, my bosses, while viewing the entire reel, came across mine and the rest is history.

## **How challenging was it becoming Tiwa in the early days?**

I wouldn't say I faced any major challenge

per se, because Tiwa and Abimbola are quite similar in character, the only difference being Tiwa's attention to men. Apart from that, it literally felt like I was living my life. My only challenge was that I didn't think people would relate with Tiwa so I was quite impressed at how people were able to connect with her.

## **What were your concerns about Tiwa?**

We had a storyline to sell to people, Tiwa was going to play lead role and she wasn't your usual slim girl representation of societal standards for beauty. You know society's way of assuming that once a girl is on the thick side then her life is doomed. So I was sceptical at first.

## **Talking about the obsession with modern beauty and the extent to which people are trying to fit in, what is your take on women and cosmetic surgery?**

I believe that if you do not like something about your body, you can change it, but I also believe in options too. See if you can change it personally by yourself first. Do it because it makes you happy but also do it for the right reasons as well.

## **What other projects do you have in the back burner?**

First, I will say I have a 9-5 job but I'm open to more scripts in the future, but it would have to really be something that is impactful to society. One of my ultimate dreams though is to feature in a series [in pidgin].



## IS YOUR CLOSET MORE ORGANISED THAN YOUR FINANCES?

Teniola, a 23-year-old single lady, inherited a house from her late parents a year after concluding her National Youth Service Corp. The house was a well-furnished 3-bedroom semi-detached terrace located within a cosy neighbourhood in Lagos. With her unexpected inheritance, life got a whole lot better for her financially as she rented out 2 of the rooms to her colleagues at the office. Consequently, she had 2 streams of income (i.e. salary from her “9 – 5” job and proceeds from rentals) and more than enough cash to spend as she deemed fit.

Given her new financial comfort, Teniola developed a passion for buying luxury items such as shoes, bags, clothes and wristwatches (even when she did not need them) and had the best closet arrangement most women dream of. She basked in the warmth of staring at her beautifully organized closet every morning and the compliments from friends whom she eagerly showed same at every opportunity. She was the envy of some of her friends.

However, Teniola got very broke at some point and needed some money to carryout urgent major renovation work on the house. She considered the option of getting a loan with high interest rate but decided to get a second opinion from one of her tenants,

Ifechi, who in-turn offered to assist with the required sum. Teniola was surprised that Ifechi could have that sum of money, knowing that they both work in same organisation and unlike her, Ifechi has only one source of income. “Would you be asking your parents for the money or do you have a rich boyfriend?” Teniola jokingly asked. Ifechi explained that she simply bought things she needed and made structured monthly financial investments from her salary.

Indeed, this was a wake-up call for Teniola as she was so impressed that despite the salary Ifechi earned, she was still able to invest some money and paid her annual rent amongst other financial commitments. Teniola realised she does not need to have a lot before starting good investment plan. If only she had given her finances half of the attention she gave her closet.

It is not about how much you earn but how well you organise your income as it is clear that even the rich can get broke, if their finances are not well organised. It is not too late to start investing, you can channel that gift of organisation you have, and put some time into getting your finances in order. You don’t need to start with a huge sum of money, with a minimum of N10,000.00 you can start building your investment portfolio.



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Photo by- Kiana Bosman

## THE KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOUR AND THE FEMALE BREADWINNER

**Did you immerse yourself in Fairy Tales when you were growing up? “Once upon a time, there lived a damsel in distress who was rescued by her Knight in shining armour...and they lived happily ever after.” This was a fluffy, romantic but unreal narrative embedded in our psyche during the most impressionable years of our lives? Traditional gender roles have presented household income from a perspective where women were expected to stay at home and look after families either in the “kitchen” or the “other room.”**

Every March, the world celebrates women. On March 8th, we marked International Women’s Day when the economic, political and social achievements of women are celebrated all over the world. The 2019 theme is “Balance for Better.” When it comes to personal finances, for a variety of reasons, women have generally not been as successful with their male counterparts in terms of earnings and even in our general attitude to money.

Yet there is a growing contradiction. Economic realities have meant that most families must rely on more than one income to meet even the most basic family needs and future aspirations including educating children, modest living, decent housing and a secure retirement. All across Africa, women are earning and contributing a significant part of the household income,

often assuming the role of primary earner and increasingly, the sole breadwinner. What happened to the fairy tale? Or was it just a tale.

This social phenomenon has financial, emotional and psychological implications for both men and women particularly in a largely patriarchal society with its traditional views and cultural values. Traditional role reversals can be disconcerting, and can lead to frustration or resentment as an increased financial burden is placed on women on the one hand, and potentially bruised male egos and insecurities on the other if such issues are not addressed as a partnership in the family setting.

The changes in the dynamics in the household, places many marriages on shaky ground. Indeed, we are already seeing brilliant, successful millennials on the fast

lane appear to be less prepared or willing to play the role of the “submissive wife” and walking out of marriages so soon after the spectacular wedding.

### **Here are two scenarios**

Charles and Kay Robinson live in Birmingham, England. Kay works as a Vice President in an investment bank with a significant package. Charles is a freelance photographer with much more time of his own. Before Kay returns home late each night, Charles has already picked up the kids from school, helped with their homework and prepared a meal for them all. With Kay’s last promotion, it became impossible for her to take the lead on household chores and minding the children. They discussed this and the family goals, and came to a decision that since her six-



digit income was far more than he could expect to earn in the short term through his small business, which brings in moderate but irregular income.

The family goals include, private education for their 2 children, moving into their dream home in five years which would include a state of the art photographic studio for Charles, early retirement for Kay, and world travel. Charles is comfortable with the situation; he enjoys quality time with the children and is able to focus on doing what he loves. He does not feel belittled in any way, as his non-monetary contribution to the family is as significant as all the money Kay delivers.

Thousands of miles away in Ibadan, Nigeria Mary and Tunde Johnson live with their three children. Tunde runs a small accounting practice; he doesn't wish to work for anyone so has turned down jobs from larger more established firms until the offers have stopped coming. His clients are small business owners that often can't afford to pay what he considers his services are worth. Even with what he has, he is not a real saver and is at the club most evenings after work socializing with friends over drinks.

Mary works for a large multinational and earns two to three times what Tunde brings in. This causes Tunde to feel bad for not meeting expectations. His feelings are further bruised whenever friends and relations visit; some make snide remarks about who is wearing the pants in the house. Outside in the drive way Mary's sleek car is parked with her company's logo brightly emblazoned on the doors. Everyone knows whose car it is. Tunde's 13-year-old "Tokunboh" second hand car is parked behind it. The remarks and his ego get the better of Tunde and put a huge strain that threatened their marriage.

Mary had always looked forward to being taken care of by her man and admits that she finds this situation somewhat jarring. She grew up in a family where her father was totally responsible for the family finances and provided for her mother and their children. She struggled with the role of provider that she found herself in. Every time rent or school fees were due and she had to provide the funds without any support from Tunde, something inside her, died.

As Mary became angry and resentful, her respect for her husband waned and it showed. She felt that he didn't make enough effort and should get a job and set aside his practice; she didn't think it had great prospects in the short to medium term.

She struggled to give him that hallowed position which he expected as Head of the Household.

Fortunately, Mary and Tunde still had a strong foundation on which their bond was built and they wanted to save their marriage. They sought counseling at their church and the conversation helped to put things in perspective. Many couples face similar scenarios. Are you in this situation? Here are some suggestions to navigate this sensitive issue. Communication is key.

If you and your spouse are communicating, you will have a better chance at warding off some of the noise, criticism or snide remarks. The people that make them, usually don't matter and are often dealing with some issues in their lives.

### **Do you have clear family goals?**

What are you working towards? Owning your own home? Planning for your children's education? When goals are SMART, it is far more motivating to work towards them. Does it really matter who makes more money; or is working together as a team to meet the needs of the family not more important?

### **Mutual respect matters**

Maintaining respect and acknowledging how you both contribute to the marriage will help. There are many non-monetary contributions that each of you bring to the table. Acknowledge and appreciate these. Don't listen to the gossip. Sadly, society can be quite judgmental of women with financial and professional influence. Expect criticism from the extended family, including your in-laws; even your friends might look on disapprovingly. Steer clear of such conversations.

Family decision-making Irrespective of who earns more, both of you should be involved. In a largely patriarchal society it is emasculating and wrong to cut your spouse out of decision-making just because you earn more. Ideally major financial decisions about debt, savings, investing, and educating children that concern the family should be made jointly. Improve your financial knowledge. Be proactive about understanding the long-term financial implications of the financial decisions that you both make. Knowledge is power; you need this to build long-term financial security.

### **You are not alone**

The phenomenon of the breadwinning woman is here to stay. There are many couples in a similar situation that have

navigated this situation very well. Share positive advice and compare notes. Look after yourself

Anger, resentment and bitterness will make you ill. Your physical, mental and spiritual health is even more important now than ever, particularly if your family depends on your income. You cannot afford to buckle under the pressure or be laid off work. Eat healthily and exercise regularly.

### **There is no one size fits all**

It is surprising that some successful women go to the extreme and hand over their entire salary to their husband for him to make all decisions; he then provides them with a stipend from their money; for some this is a way to keep things on an even keel. Find a system that works for you; both contributing in the ratio of earnings is a good option. If it is not working, change it.

### **Be thankful**

At the end of the day, it is a blessing that at least one of you if not both, is able to provide for your family at a time when so many families are struggling for the most basic of necessities.



**Nimi Akinkugbe has extensive experience in private wealth management. She seeks to empower people regarding their finances and offers frank, practical insights to create a greater awareness and understanding of personal finance.**

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COVER

# SOLA SOBOWALE

*is just getting started!*



*For millions of millennials and baby boomers across Nigeria, 2001 was the year Sola Sobowale came into prominence. Sure, she'd been acting since the 80s but with Superstory, and her character, Toyin Tomato, the conniving next wife of the weak-willed protagonist turned antagonist, Suara, she introduced herself to an incredibly wide audience, cementing her as a Star of the People. She joined the rankings as the go-to actress for the 'villainous' woman with such a feel for both the dramatic and comedic elements that these characters jumped out at you and made Sola Sobowale the highlight of any film she was - and is - in. She is the Jordan of farcical performances, big movements, the raspy, booming voice with the unmistakable cadence, the face full of expressions that are each characters themselves. And even now, after decades in the biz, she is still as energetic and as animated as when we first fell in love with her.*

**Story:** Sonia Irabor

**Location:** Maison Fahrenheit Hotel, Adetokunbo Ademola way Victoria Island Lagos

**Creative Direction and Styling:** Ifeoma Odegwu

**Photography:** Seye Kehinde

**Wardrobe:** All pieces- Abaya Lagos by Salihat

**Jewellery:** Gbenga ArtSmith

**Shoes:** Donetti

**Make-up:** Mary-Jane Ohobu for Zaron

**Hair:** Dami Ogunyemi for Ceezys Styling

**Fashion Assistants:** Tosin Abiodun and Njideka Akabogu

Black Figure-Hugging  
Blouse And Pastel Multi-  
Tired, Tulle Skirt- P.O.R  
Abaya Lagos By Salihat  
Jewellery- P.o.r Gbenga  
Artsmith





Velvet Black wrap blouse  
and silver metallic  
Culottes. **P.O.R Abaya**  
**Lagos by Salihat**  
Jewellery- **P.O.R Gbenga**  
**Artsmith**  
Shoes- **P.O.R Donetti**



The expansion of Nollywood saw many of our beloved classic performers make way for newer faces. A lot of the time, this meant that actors who came into prominence in the 80s, 90s and early 00s, were relegated to roles that were written almost as a by-the-numbers version of their biggest hits. There were a few who either escaped this fate or fought their way out of it. This is my first question to Auntie Sola; did she mind being typecast? Or does she feel she avoided it? "It's 50/50. In the creative world, there are different types of writers and directors, that love a particular character [of mine]. I've got a lot of directors and movie producers that would ask me to play a certain character [and] I cannot refuse them because they are like family to me." It's immediately clear that loyalty is a far more important element for the Nollywood vet, when choosing a film. This has afforded her the opportunity to remain in the psyches of the decision makers, sure, but what about the characters? A lot of female performers in Nollywood, as they do across many film industries, do tend to fall down the rabbit hole of playing iterations of the same character. "If you talk about type cast, I play every role; that is the essence of being an actor, the ability to interpret every role". Fair enough.

There is a throughline in Sola Sobowale's acting. It is big, yes, but somehow still nuanced. In one particularly funny scene in the Wedding Party, her character Tinuade Coker, dances towards her husband, played with equal gusto and fun, by comedian, Ali Baba, in a flirtatious and deliciously funny manner. It's not overdone or overcooked, it's like watching a family video of your mum and dad, still very much in love many decades, kids and life-changing moments later. There's something in that moment that makes you fall for Sola Sobowale yet again. This is a recurring theme with her. It's not always the funny stuff, it can also be the heavier moments, but ultimately, when watching this woman on screen, you will be captivated by her. She knows it too. "People have always loved me and I do not take that for granted."

*Sola Sobowale is just so happy to be here.*

Her gratitude shines through in every sentence not least of all because she says out loud just how thankful she is to have been afforded these opportunities. If she was new to the industry, we'd immediately assume this was media etiquette, but to be a veteran, who has put in the time and effort, and still voice your gratitude at any given opportunity is an interesting thing to note. Sola Sobowale might be surprised at how far she's come but make no mistake, she is very grateful that the people - the viewers and the producers - have deemed her worthy to continue on this journey.

It is truly no small feat to remain a jobbing actor over three decades, let alone remain a popular one; the go-to in many regards, but that is something Sola Sobowale has been able to sustain. She has seen the evolution of the industry into this diverse pool of Nigerian stories that are consumed far beyond the borders of the country. "Now, we are doing things in a better way than we used to. Investors are coming in now more than they did years ago when Nigerians believed in only oil". It's easy for me to think back to the time when certain Nollywood actors were 'banned' from the industry for requesting a salary increase. It's at once remarkable and unsurprising, given the country's attitude towards worker independence, that people - women in particular - asking for better pay were met with such a dismissive solution - a ban. Remarkable because when you truly think about Nollywood's ever-growing impact on Nigeria's reputation and economy, when what the country was mostly known for was the varying levels of crime, it seems only logical that they demand more. "I would say that the creative industry gave Nigeria a name in the international scene. Years back, we were only known for all

manner of vices, but nowadays you travel to the Western world and you see movies from Nollywood and [songs from] the music industry all around the world". Of course, there is still so much room for more. For better. This is something the actress knows, and based on her movie choices over the past few years, it is something that she is truly working towards individually as well.

This brings us to yet another turning point: The King of Boys. The record-breaking film noir, in which she plays Alhaja Eniola Salami, a queen of the underbelly with a promising political future. At almost three hours, the film is an ambitious and incredibly refreshing tale of the underworld, told with admirable performances from every single cast member. Sola Sobowale, breathed

such life into this role it was as though she'd been holding her breath for something like this for so long. To hear, writer-director, Kemi Adetiba, tell it, she knew almost instantly that she was the right woman for the role, "Right from the moment she walked on set, I was like, "Yes! We now have a film!". To hear Sola Sobowale tell it? It was a big shock, a burden that she wasn't sure she could take on.

"I asked Kemi about the character she wanted me to play and when she said "Auntie S", she calls me Auntie S. "Auntie S, you are the King of Boys. You are playing Eniola." I screamed! I couldn't help the tears. I have been around for a while as you know and have featured in multiple movies but this was huge. I was going to play the lead character in this movie; it was a huge responsibility and Kemi was willing to gamble everything in order to give me a chance."

I'm keeping track of how many times Sola Sobowale has

“  
The only way to handle  
[rejection] is to realise that  
nothing in life is permanent.  
The second is for one to place  
their trust in God, and not  
to compare ourselves with  
other people's success story.  
Everyone's time will definitely  
come. A person's destiny  
can only be delayed and not  
changed.”





Black Figure-Hugging  
Blouse And Peter Multi-  
layered, Tulle Skirt- **P.O.R**  
Abaya Lagos By Salihat  
Jewellery- **P.o.r Gbenga**  
Artsmith





Red Velvet and Silk  
Exaggerated Wid Neck  
Wrap Dress- **P.o.r Abaya**  
Lagos By Salihat  
Rings- **Gbenga Artsmith**





Black Figure-Hugging  
Blouse And Pastel Multi-  
Tired, Tulle Skirt- **P.O.R**  
**Abaya Lagos By Salihat**  
Jewellery- **P.o.r Gbenga**  
**Artsmith**



“

I have been around for a while as you know and have featured in multiple movies but this was huge. I was going to play the lead character in this movie; it was a huge responsibility and Kemi was willing to gamble everything in order to give me a chance.”

”

mentioned her gratitude and the way she phrases it. She talks about people *choosing* her or *taking a chance* on her. She talks about being a hard worker and that being a reason why directors, producers and casting directors come back to her. She talks about loyalty and saying yes to her frequent collaborators because those relationships matter to her. There's something quite refreshing about her words and the way she phrases them. Giving credit to every element that has made up her career and not just focusing on her process or how she brought the work to life. The truth is, she knows that she's good. She's proud of her work but she also seems aware of the fact that all that would mean very little if the people weren't betting on her. "My relationship with Auntie S now goes beyond any professional involvement. She is family now. My parents love her. My brothers both have a personal relationship with her. Working with her is always a pleasure and an honour." Adetiba said.

Sola Sobowale is a character actor. It never dawns on you because, again, she steals every scene she is in, but she has never quite been the sole lead of a film, the one to carry it squarely on her shoulders and through to the finish line. In a three-decade long career, *King of Boys*, in more ways than we may note, was a big moment for her. Ask any actor, of any ilk, and this is a moment they either cherish or long for, it is huge. "I'm also grateful to Kemi whom God used to give me a platform to showcase my talent to the world." The actress says. There's that gratitude again.

But her gratitude aside, did she feel ready and able to bring the role of Eniola to life? "I remember her telling me once, "My darling, if you say that I am the one to play this role and you believe I can pull it off, then I'm all yours to do as you please." That trust floored me." She concluded. She believes in herself, yes, but Sola Sobowale equally believes in people's belief in her. That's so rare that it's worthy of note.

Bearing in mind the life-changing role that Eniola Salami was for her, I wonder about how things have changed for women in Nollywood. On the one hand, it is public-enough knowledge that the desire to be a performer in the 80s and 90s (even in

the 2000s, if we're honest) was met with a lot of doubt, especially for women, whereas now, it's almost expected of people to at least dip their toe in some form of performance or entertainment. "Years back, your parents would never allow you go into

the [film] industry because there was this belief that Nollywood was for... lowlives. But today the story is different; today we have parents pushing their kids into entertainment because they now realise that theatre art is equally a noble profession as any profession you have out there." But for Sola, it was always this.

Has this breathed new life into Mrs Sobowale's acting career? Perhaps. Next up she can be seen in the film, *1929*, which tells the story of the infamous *Aba Women's Riots*. It is another film, at least partly created and very largely brought to life, by women. It is another exciting chance to truly shine in a way the audience, within Nigeria and in the diaspora, has not seen yet. She is just as excited about this film, the story of thousands of Igbo women from the Bende District, Umuahia and other places in eastern Nigeria, who travelled to the town of Oloko to protest against the Warrant Chiefs, whom they accused of restricting the role of women in the government. It was a war that cost the lives of many women protestors and is an important part of history being brought to the screen in such a timely manner.

Listening to Sola Sobowale speak is truly an experience. She is a spark. She is animated, in person, and even over the phone. Above all, she is genuine, and genuinely grateful. Gratitude is such an easy thing to forget when life is going your way and successes are pouring down on you, but this is not how Sola Sobowale operates. She remembers that she is not the sole proprietor of her success, she will remind anyone who forgets. In a career that's lasted as long as hers, these moments of gratitude can often be the saving grace for when the low tide hits. "The only way to handle things like this is to realise that nothing in life is permanent. The second is for one to place their trust in God, and not to compare ourselves with other people's success story. Everyone's time will definitely come. A person's destiny can only be delayed and not changed. The key is patience."

*Sola Sobowale can next be seen in 1929, out nationwide, April 19.*



Hello and welcome to

## Style Sketch

a column I started with Genevieve Magazine in November of 2009 and ran till December Of 2011. It underwent an eight-year hiatus but we're back!

Style sketch is a column dedicated to style, with special emphasis on African-inspired fashion, in sketch format. Each month, different fashion designs will be featured based on a particular theme.

*This month, I wanted to focus on power looks for women:*

The first look is the **"Ijeoma"** pantsuit, consisting of a low-cut Ankara jacket with tuxedo lapels, and an asymmetrical, draped hemline, worn over matching, cropped, skinny, Ankara pants.

This look is ideal for the boss lady/CEO, who intends to make a statement entrance. It's a great transition piece- from day to night- depending on styling.

The second look is the **"Azuka"** dress, a low-cut, mini-dress with draped detail at the sleeve and hip and floor-length sash detail. The look is accessorised with a matching turban. This is a statement dress and is not for the faint-hearted but is a great look for cocktails, dinner parties and weddings.

Till the next edition of Style Sketch, remain fabulous!!

Xoxo

*Omonigho Aito-Imonah*

Omonigho is a professional fashion illustrator, designer and creative director of NaijaFashionista Illustrations, an artistic agency that provides fashion illustration services and training to interested individuals and corporate organisations.

More of her work can be found on her instagram page, [@omonighoimonah](#)



illustration: Shutterstock







## X-PRESSION 3X COZY BRAID: 3 TIMES THE SOLUTION TO YOUR BRAID WORRIES

As a woman, looking beautiful and admirable does not always come easy; in most cases, one has to go through some form of pains to achieve that, just so that we might feel good within ourselves and be admired by others. But, the most painful part of it all is the amount of time one spends achieving this. At least, we can do something about that. So, I'm giving my hairstylist a "red card" if she does not get innovative and cut down the time I have to spend in her salon to the barest minimum. How she does that is none of my business, but I could suggest one or two things she could do to save me time.

Take for instance the time I waste just sitting and waiting for her to finish prepping the extension for my braided hairstyles. That will have to stop. Why put me through this, when there are pre-stretched braids such as the new X-Pression 3X Cozy Braid which does not need any cutting and stretching to prep before use.

The weight of some of these braids is another aspect that needs urgent review. Whilst I'm up for long and full braids, I still

prefer the hair extension to be very light and comfortable for me to carry. Again, this is where the new X-Pression 3X Cozy Braid has scored another hit. Though it is packaged 3 full bundles in one pack, the new X-Pression 3X Cozy Braid is super light in weight such that no matter how voluminous or long your preferred braid style may be, it does not put any strain on your natural hair.

What more, the new X-Pression 3X Cozy Braid comes in various colors (be it plain or 2 tone colors) to meet the diverse need of women of different complexion, and that's very important to me because I like to experiment a lot with colors on my hair.

So, you can see that at the end, both my hairstylist and I are the happier for it because we've found solution to our common predicament. That's why I am routing for this wonderful product from X-Pression, the new X-Pression 3X Cozy Braid. Why not give it a try yourself?







# THOUGHTFUL WAYS TO CELEBRATE YOUR MUM BEYOND MOTHER'S DAY

-Racheal Abiriba

Every year, without fail, and despite knowing ahead of time what the last Sunday of March signifies, some of us find ourselves in the same predicament: What should I get my mum for Mother's Day? How do I show my love? Admittedly, it's quite easy to get stuck. What do you give the woman who's given you so much? So this year, why not try a different approach? Ask yourself, If I were a mother, what would I want for Mother's Day? What would make me feel special? If you're stuck too, here are three things most mums would love for you to do, on their special day but also beyond it:

## Quality Time

If you are all grown up and living in a different house, State, or Country from your mother, a gift she might love more than that bouquet of flowers, a cakes or perfume, is you. Gift her with a surprise visit. You will both love it.

## Offer To Help

If your mum juggles a career with being a mother, wife, grandmother, friend, and everything in between, chances are, she's tired and would appreciate a restful break even

if for just a day. This Mother's Day, relieve mum of her usual to-do's by making it your responsibility. Help her catch up on something for work.

## Write a Heartfelt Letter

Poems and letters are not meant for just your significant other. Ever heard the phrase 'something homemade means more than something bought'? Hearing how you feel about her might be the best present. Honour your mum with your words this Mother's Day.

## Get Her A Meaningful Gift

Whether it's a special piece of jewellery she's had her eye on or her favourite snacks, a thoughtful gift reminds your mum of how well you know her and that you're thinking of her. What does your mom love? Be creative.

So yes, Mother's Day is a day specially dedicated to the very special women in our lives, but how about we find ways to offer these gifts more than once a year? Think about how you can hit one or all of these four Rs - giving her the gift of re-visitation, relief and reassurance, and showing her you remembered. Sometimes, even just because.

Illustration Art- Fred Mathews



# MY SISTER THE SERIAL KILLER

*With a title so arresting, **My Sister the Serial Killer**, can only be a Nigerian helmed novel. This dark comedic novel by **Oyinkan Braithwaite** has been one of my 2018 literary highlights, partly for the brilliance of its writing but also for the beauty of its cover image. Having seen images of the cover, I was unprepared for the glory of viewing it in person. There is a richness to the cover - the brown of the woman's skin gleaming against a black background offset by striking neon green writing is even more interesting when you notice the knives reflected in the shades on her face.*

There are layers to the cover that unfold as the novel does, leaving me wondering which of the sisters the woman on the cover is supposed to represent. Or if in fact, both sisters have been captured in a single image. This is because Braithwaite's protagonists are quite spectacular. They manage to be somewhat predictable while also being laws unto themselves. On the surface, each character lives lifestyles stereotypical to their perceived outward appearance. The older sister, supposedly blessed with passable looks, flourishes in her career as nurse while the younger, wildly beautiful sister is both fashion designer and prolific dater. However in the confines of their shared secret, neither appearance nor profession matter.

Looks, particularly beauty or physical signs of affluence and its ability to cloud reality is one of the major themes within this novel. The sisters, outwardly, are from a highly wealthy background, residing in the mansion built by their deceased father. It quickly becomes clear that their home is more mausoleum than mansion. Secrets and shared trauma shape the sibling relationship

in ways that can and does appear to outsiders as a jealousy driven relationship, based solely on the belief that the less conventionally attractive sister, desires the beauty of the other.

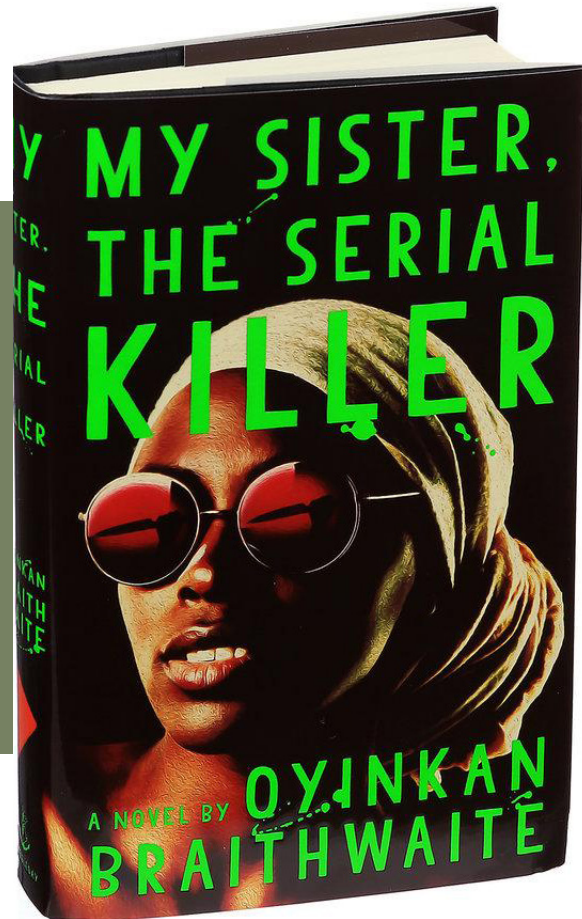
In many ways, it is interesting to see how beauty and lack of are advantages in their own right. The way it shapes, particularly masculine perceptions of female ability. For many years, people failed to believe women were capable of being serial killers, in fact much of serial killer profiling was done around men with analysis of female serial killers developing later as a different study.

Ironically, research shows that women serial killers tend to kill people with whom they have some personal relationship, it is therefore fitting that the novel starts with Ayoola having

"dispatched" her third boyfriend.

A narrative centred around murder(s) should not have such wondrous pockets of mirth.

Braithwaite, using an exasperating hospital staff, overzealous yet inept police force and a host of men with ironic saviour complexes,



weaves humour into a novel that is also crime and psychological thriller. The lack of fixed genre, unwillingness to bow down to the confines of literary groupings, instead choosing to tell a story so engaging in its adept telling of situations that can only happen in Nigeria.

Essentially, I cannot wait for the conversations across social media channels and book clubs that will ensue once this book is widely released. This is a book that had me quickly searching for another soul fortunate enough to receive an early release copy to gush about the brilliance of the book whilst also dissecting the characters of this colourful fictional world. *My Sister the Serial Killer* is contemporary, literary genius and Oyinkan Braithwaite has been added to my one to follow list.

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HERE'S THE THING...

# Everybody Blow Your Trumpet...

week dedicated to musical theatre; from picking the right songs for an audition, right down to how to walk into an audition and own the space without apology. An audition, much like any job interview, already has you on the backfoot; you are nervous; you really want/need the job; you go in already feeling the immense pressure of having to put your best self forward and sell an idea of this best self to strangers. So when my Music Director, Paul Knight, instructed us all to walk into the makeshift audition space, one by one, and say with all the gusto we could muster, "Hello. My name is... You can send everyone else home because I'm what you're looking for." I was stressed. My insecurities flared up immediately. How could I utter those words truthfully when my mind only offered me this: "Umm... Hello. My name is Sonia. If it's not too much to ask, could you send everyone else home because, maybe... I- I'm what you're looking for?"

It should come as no surprise that the guys in the group all marched in with the machismo that had been afforded to them from birth, while some of the girls - myself included - had a bit of a tougher time making those words sound believable. In my case, it took me about 10 tries. This is a very sad thing to admit. My self-esteem, based on damage caused by societal doctrines and many voices, singing a chorus in my head constantly, had turned me into a self-non-believer.

A few months back, I stood in front of the mirror before my first day on a new project, and I said these words out loud until I believed them: "Hello. My name is Sonia. I am the right person for this job." It only took me four tries to get there. It's a start. I walked into the location for the project and with that chant going on in my head, did what the people who hired me believed I could and what I too, believed I could.

Hello. My name is Sonia and I'm no longer afraid to blow my own trumpet.

to be, do or say "too much" so as not to hurt the ego of men. You say this enough times and the woman caves in response. She becomes silent; apologising if she is ever, "too much" for the men present.

I spent so much time apologising for who I was because at every point there was some Nigerian uncle or aunty there to point out the things a lady must never do, say or be. I had absorbed so much of this "advice" from school and life alike that the very idea of acknowledging my highs became a massive internal struggle, which I often lost to silence.

**"I SPENT SO MUCH  
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AUNTY THERE TO  
TELL ME ALL THE  
THINGS A LADY  
MUST NOT DO, SAY  
OR BE."**

To look at myself in the mirror and like what I see has taken a lot of work. To quiet the voices that tell me that I am not enough, physically, mentally, in career or otherwise, continues to be a battle. But one thing I realised I had the power to do, was awaken my voice. These voices can be deafening but my voice can still be louder. Towards the end of my time at drama school, we had our Music Week, which was a whole

**t**here is an often apologetic element incorporated in the way young girls are brought up, not just in Nigeria but throughout the world. It creates boundaries that, if crossed, must be apologised for, speaking "out of turn". some might call it. It places society at large, as well as one's immediate environment, and the men in it, as the apex, the governing body that approves and condemns the rules of womanhood, (because if these things are to be believed, there are very specific rules). What's always been very interesting, is how different the rules, if they exist, are for boys.

When one is brought up within the strictness of such a governing body, to exist and colour within the lines, one finds that they sing an apology chorus for every thought, action, omission or appearance that goes against the doctrine. We are apologists. Many women are now realising this and working quite hard, even in the face of the condemnation from society, to undo decades of damage to the psyche. We are too afraid to stand tall, and blow our trumpets.

A woman is often told that she shouldn't earn more than her male partner because it creates an imbalance. The man is made to feel less than as a result of this and this can in turn cause problems in the home that will be blamed on the woman. Girls and women are often told not



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of **TVC NEWS**

First with Breaking News

TVC NEWS is a Nigerian 24-hour television news channel that recently re-launched their brand with the plan to become one of the leading media and entertainment companies in Nigeria. We sat down with News anchors, **Veronica Dan-Ikpoyi**, **Azeezat Olaoluwa** and **Ngozi Alaegbu**, to discuss field reports, the company's new agenda and more.



**First, Veronica, I want to start with the interview on the Dapchi girls you recently conducted; you mentioned it had a lot of similarities with the Chibok crisis. What was the biggest take away for you?**

**Veronica:** The Dapchi kidnap showed that not much had been learnt from the Chibok incident. An attempt was made to secure their release but the fact that Leah Sharibu is still in captivity has raised concerns about the kind of negotiations that occurred. Also, the manner in which the Dapchi girls were kidnapped where it was reported that troops were withdrawn from checkpoints and questions as to who ordered their withdrawal were yet to be answered, rekindled the talks about political undertone. The barrage of criticism coming from the commentariat showed the level of embarrassment the federal government suffered. It's a PR disaster, the sort that calls for everything that can be done by way of damage control and crisis management especially for a country that prides itself as the giant of Africa.

**Azeezat, you had the opportunity of being the first journalist that was granted an exclusive interview with President Muhammadu Buhari after his election in 2015. What sector(s) of the economy do you reckon requires a greater attention by the government?**

**Azeezat:** Security, education and the health sector require urgent attention with security topping the list. The primary role of any government is to secure lives and property. Insurgency, kidnapping, armed robbery, banditry, herdsman-farmers' clashes, cultism and many other security problems must be solved. For any economy to thrive, for foreign direct investment to grow, the nation must be secure. There is no time to waste; the President has to start working on the composition of his cabinet before the inauguration in May.

**And Ms Alaegbu, you have been in the media for quite some time, what would you describe as the major contrast between broadcasting when you first started out and the present.**

**Ngozi:** I grew up listening and watching

seasoned broadcasters on radio and tv, they were my role models and the go-to people when I needed to get correct pronunciation of any word. Broadcasters in the 70s, 80s, and into the 90s were not just pretty or handsome faces, they understood their role as news anchors and brought a lot of glamour to broadcasting and were highly respected but one can hardly say the same for the industry today where proliferation has to some extent led to lowered standards.

Broadcasting is one of the best jobs in the world. The deregulation of the media in Nigeria encouraged different or divergent views to any issue, allowing the audience to make informed decisions; be it politics, economy or society as whole. Many young people who would have had to compete for jobs in just one network like the NTA are able to find alternatives and even more credible platforms where their talents can be displayed. And more women have come to the industry unlike in the past where it was male-dominated. And it almost seems that women are taking over the industry.

**In recent times, the diverse voices of Africa have begun to tell its many stories; from fashion to arts and music. What role does the media have to play to ensure that the danger of a single story narrative is avoided?**

**Veronica:** The media has always been a core influence in the political, financial, business, music, fashion and art structure of Africa and continues to be that. There is still a lot of work to be done. Currently, African journalists, especially at TVC News, understand that we have a crucial role to play in helping to change that narrative, share stories written by Africans and portray African stories in a positive light. There is more to Africa than crises and poverty. At TVC News, for instance, we recently relaunched our brand with the plan to become one of the leading media and entertainment companies in Nigeria. The changes made at TVC News are about more than just aesthetics and marketing positioning statements; they go to the very core of the radical transformation which we have embarked upon since TVC Communications was born in 2017. We have to offer something different, something which

is attractive to a sophisticated audience and something which literally stands out from the crowd, Nigeria and beyond.

**How has the dissemination of information changed over the years for TVC?**

**Ngozi:** TVC News has been a real innovator in Nigeria [and that's] something we are very proud of to this day. Our positioning statement of being First with Breaking News isn't just a tagline, it is a major promise to our audience that TVC News will be your to-go channel for any big development as it unfolds anywhere in Nigeria. To fulfill that commitment, we have recruited and mobilised correspondents, bureau and technical teams across the country to ensure that within a very short space of time, we get any major story on air and that's what separates TVC News from other news networks. We have invested heavily in live satellite technology and in our people, which we have based right around the country, thus enabling us broadcast live anywhere at any time.

**One can say that digital technology has fundamentally altered the nature and function of media in Nigeria. How progressive would you say TVC is in terms of catching up with this digital growth?**

**Azeezat:** This issue is not just peculiar to Nigeria; it is a global phenomenon. Competition engenders efficiency and in turn enhances growth and development when it is well harnessed. These are well-tested paradigms; anyone, whether an individual or a corporate entity that fails to adapt in line with contemporary trends, whether in technology or innovation, will be left behind. The media is no exception. At TVC News, we have made considerable investment in both facilities and personnel to ensure that we remain best-in-class at service delivery. The recent upgrading and unveiling of a news studio fits into this mission. A principal consideration is to harness the benefits of evolving technology and innovation to meet client satisfaction; both in terms of front-end or back-end service delivery, our approach to innovation and creativity will remain topnotch. Bet on this. We are part of the technological evolution you refer to, and will remain so.

**TVC News available on the following channels**

DSTV Channel 418 | GOtv Channel 45 | Startimes Channel 307



ONEONONE

# IBRAHIM SULAIMAN

THE MAN OF MANY TALENTS





*IBRAHIM SULAIMAN is a man of many talents. The actor, architect, graphic artist and choreographer, who is perhaps best known to ardent Tinsel fans as Damini White, has since become one of Nollywood's new favourites. In a brief chat with VIVIENNE BELONWU, he talks about his early days as Capt. Quest, meeting his wife, actress, Linda Ejiofor and his career.*



**What was growing up like for you?**

Growing up in Kaduna was very tranquil. Over there, we do not experience traffic like we do here; there is a low cost of living but relatively high quality of life. I was a quiet child outside but extremely energetic and playful at home. My siblings and I were born a little less than two years apart, so we were really close. My mum worked two jobs so she made sure she spent every available moment with us, especially on the weekends and Friday afternoons when she got off work at 1pm. We weren't rich, but we were comfortable.

**You have an impressive CV; choreography, architecture, graphics and acting. How easy or difficult was it for you to balance all your talents and interests the way you have?**

My mother read a lot. Both fiction and otherwise and she had a sizeable library. So I got my appetite for text from her and consumed books voraciously. My curiosity, made me seek further information on stuff I read about in her books so I think that formed a base for being quick to assimilate new information. So as I grew older, I met talented people and learned from them.

**When did acting enter the scene for you?**

December 2016. I was more interested in writing and possibly directing someday. I guess as they say, "there are many paths to the market".

**...and we can see what market you happen to be in at the moment. Tinsel was your debut acting gig. What made you decide to audition?**

A couple of my friends asked me to show up for a reading, and seeing as I had that day off, and was actively looking for a new challenge, I thought, "heck yeah!" So I went in, did the reading and for reasons I'm still unaware of, I got the call back. I was so pumped!

**So when did you realise you wanted to pursue it professionally?**

I must say from my first day on set. It just seemed like there was so much to

learn, so much to explore. Man, I was sold!

**And through it you found love. You mentioned you'd been friends with Linda long before you two decided to date. People always say that a person knows from the beginning, was that true for you? Did you always know that she was your One?**

Some guys get lucky, so they know immediately. For me, I knew she'd always be "my guy", but I had no clue we would end up together until much later in our friendship. It was a bit of a surprise for me, to be honest, and it took a lot for me to finally tell her how I felt. Omo. See tension!

**It's been such a joy to see you in more roles, like your character, Sadiq, in Up North. What drew you to the role?**

A few things actually; the positive portrayal of girl child education, the non-violent conflict resolution, the fact that we often find purpose far away from home if we look hard enough and of course, my character's motivation to better himself just so he could have a better chance to be with the woman of his dreams.

**What are the key qualities a script should possess to make you want to be a part of bringing it to life?**

Ha! This is a tough one, because art is subjective and artists are closely tied to their emotions. But, generally speaking, I'd say a story has to have a heart. If I read it and it doesn't make me feel something, I'd struggle. That for me won't do.

**I remember the time you were an Ambassador for Malta Guinness. The Soul Quest crew and their dance moves! You and your crew were such great performers. Are you still in touch with that part of you?**

To be honest, those were, like, the most fun years! We were just a bunch of final year students/fresh grads who wanted to dance whilst telling stories on stage, and we enjoyed every moment of it. Yes, I still choreograph and teach. Haven't performed in a while though, waiting for the right platform to suit up for again. (Laughs)



# CHILLIN' WITH

*From her early days at Channels TV, to co-creating The Spot on EbonyLife TV, multiple freelancing jobs across the continent for CNN and many others, LAMIDE AKINTOBI is a force in the media space and highly versed in her craft. The daughter of Laolu Akins, the legendary music producer of the 80's; Lamide sheds insight on her career and the stereotypes attached with women in the media.*

-VIVIENNE BELONWU-

## LAMIDE AKINTOBI

**Your passion for journalism is quite evident in the manner in which you work. Going down memory lane, was media always your career choice?**

I started off as a pre-law major at University. After one semester I knew I wasn't going to like it, but I took a few different electives, one of which was a Radio & TV module. I actually was convinced I'd end up in radio, and when I moved back, I applied to a radio station, but it didn't pan out. Then Channels TV came along.

**So that wasn't planned, how did you realise your passion for it?**

Journalism in the strict sense, especially as practiced in Nigeria, is not a "sexy" job. It doesn't always pay well, and you have to be dedicated and a hard worker. I truly enjoyed working as a news anchor and producer, and I had fantastic colleagues at Channels, like Betty Dibiah, Joke Rogers, Ijeoma

Onyeator and so many others, who were my newsroom family. John Momoh was the best boss, and I say it all the time that my time at Channels really molded me, and even when I was tired or frustrated with the people, or the schedule, I really did enjoy the work. A lot of it was also self-driven. I believe if you choose to do something, you should do your best, and when you can't, or when you lose your passion for it and the work starts to suffer, you should leave it until/unless you regain your passion.

**What are some of the negative stereotypes that you have had to deal with in the course of your career?**

When I started working on TV, I didn't know there was a stereotype that female news-anchors/presenters are supposedly 'easy'. Luckily, I have quite a no-nonsense personality, and it's usually quite apparent very quickly that I don't have time for nonsense. Other than that, I think the things I deal with are the things

other Nigerian women living and working in Nigeria deal with; a culture and system that, more often than not, disrespects or disregards women, no matter the age, class, tribe, religion, etc.

**You have been involved in a number of projects both nationally and internationally. What influences your decision to go after a project?**

Different factors: what types of stories are being told, what value the stories can bring, whether I think I can do a good job as part of the team bringing it to life, and of course, money. As much as a project may have lofty goals and all that, at the end of the day, I'm also a creative entrepreneur with bills to pay, so any work I do needs to be worth the effort I bring to it.

**As a member of the media, what would you say is the responsibility of the information providers in ensuring that a more diverse spectrum of beauty is shared to the public?**

I think there needs to be a more robust and inclusive way to share information, and it must be intentional. Any media house (in the traditional or modern sense of the word) needs to make the effort to reflect the world as it is. The same goes for creative media folks - film-makers, writers... The world is evolving, and there are more avenues for people to get a glimpse into different cultures and experiences via the Internet, so it's every storyteller's responsibility to reflect not only their own reality, but to dig deeper and show all the types of beauty that exist in our world, and outside our own lens of privilege. Changing this impression must be intentional too, by assessing and improving hiring practices and taking more chances on fresh faces.

**What project are you presently working on?**

I'm always working on something. I have a growing media services company called 'Something Special Media'. Apart from that, I'm taking another stab at producing a documentary on Nigerian music - I started working on it years ago, but stepped away from it, and I've taken a couple of documentary courses to help redirect and revisit. Most recently, I've started a free newsletter geared towards people who are interested in the media industry, sharing info, tips and giving back a bit.

*Follow Lamide on Instagram and Twitter: @lamide\_a and visit her website, lamidelive.com*

Photo Credit: Kola Oshalusi



# LIFE ISN'T PERFECT BUT YOUR HAIR CAN BE



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# ALL WOMAN!

So, I was at a shoot recently and a couple of work friends were making fun of a fellow colleague who was feeling under the weather. One of them said “You see yourself, do you know you may be pregnant after ditching us on valentine’s day” Apparently, they had all made plans to have a girls night out after work but sick friend got flowers from her husband at midday and immediately said Hasta la vista to the plans.

There was something in their narration that caught my attention. So initially, sick friend wasn’t included in the plans because everyone just thought. Well she’s married she’ll have obligations. But, on hearing all the fun activities planned for the night, she said “Why don’t you guys want to include me. You’re discriminating because I’m married right so I can’t come?”

That statement made me feel a certain kind of happy. Happy at the fact that on a day like that, rather than brood about singledom these babes decided to just



## Styletitude

Photographed by- Demilade Solesi for Tej D studio. Make-up- Ravishin Beauty

sunnies to covet now.

**Neon** anyone? Well it’s back and might I add, in very refreshing form.

Enjoy my **Editors Pick** of the Autumn winter runways. I still can’t believe there will now be fashion weeks without **Karl Lagerfeld** who I’ve been reading about in magazines my whole life. Sad.

**GO BIG** or go home, is the mood for now, as seen in this month’s fashion editorial. Don’t be afraid to make bold decisive choices because overtime, these will sum up the essence of what kind of life you live. So, stop playing small and embrace all of YOU!

On that note...Happy Women’s Month!

*Love and Light*

*Afeoma Odogwu*  
fashion@genevievemagazine.com



• have fun. Literally chose themselves...because  
• trust me everywoman has that one shrimp in  
• the corner, sometimes several, who society  
• while I was growing up thought us was ‘better  
• than nothing’ and so on a day like this it would  
• be a case of ‘just call him so you’re not alone’  
• and so I’m grateful to this same society for  
• pushing women to the point of unlearning these  
• unfounded facts and just enjoying themselves .

• Speaking of enjoying one’s self, **the Shea**  
• **Moisture Nigeria beach** day was litt! Lots  
• of recognisable faces, very chilled vibe, games,  
• dancing and lining up for freebies. We had a  
• blast as seen in the photos. And let it be known  
• that at the party **Denola Grey** encouraged  
• and cheered me on as I tried doing my first ever  
• whiskey shot. Lol

• Just in case you’re also planning your own day  
• in the sun, and wondering what to wear, **Beach**  
• **bunny** has you covered.

• **Wear-Pon** shows us how to use dressing up  
• as ammunition while **Baggage claim** and  
• **For- Sight** show us the hottest arm candies and



# GO BLG!

We're navigating the complexities of being female in these times, as graphic prints meet concrete, lace and sheer meet huge awnings and bold colours meet avant-garde head pieces.

**Creative direction and styling-** Ifeoma Odogwu

**Location** Lekki Peninsula

**Photographed by** Seye Kehinde

**Make up-** Nonso Tobias Ugwueke for Zaron

**Fashion assistant-** Tosin Abiodun

**Wardrobe-** Jzo, Samuel Noon, Abaya Lagos by Salihat and Lady Beellionaire Luxury

**Headpieces-** Urez Kulture

**Shoes and Jewellery-** HF CLOset

Damask print Jacket-  
Jzo available at **The Republic N14,500**  
Wide brim velvet hat-  
**Urez Kulture P.O.R**





Jacquard crepe oversize  
jacket with denim pocket  
Lady Beellionaire  
-N50,000

Black lace high waist  
trousers- Lady Beellionaire  
Luxury- P.O.R

White tulle head piece worn  
on the wrist- Urez Kulture  
P.O.R





Mustard oversized trousers  
- Abaya Lagos P.O.R  
Damask print Jacket-  
Jzo available at The  
Republic N14,500  
Wide brim velvet hat-  
Urez Kulture P.O.R





White sheer collapsible wide  
brim hat- **Urez Kulture**  
**P.O.R**

Jacquard 'mixed emotions'  
patch work skirt- Samuel  
Noon available at **The**  
**Republic N30,000**





Red velvet front slit  
dress with exaggerated  
sleeves- **Lady  
Beellionaire Luxury**  
**N70,000**  
Red velvet cone hat-  
**Urez Kulture P.O.R**





Checkered print mini dress  
with bell sleeves and key  
ring neck detail **N45,000**  
Matching oversized Jacket  
N60,000 both **Lady**  
**Beellionaire Luxury**  
Lilac embellished half moon  
head piece- **Urex Culture**  
**P.O.R**



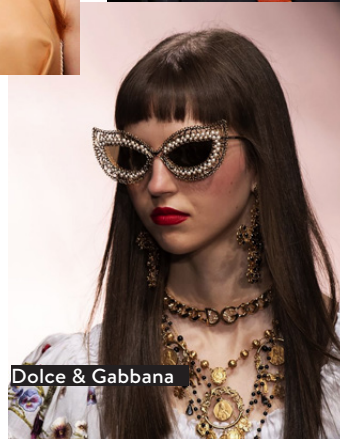
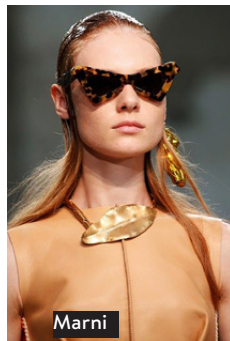


Jacquard Crepe Ivory  
Jacket with exaggerated  
Structured pleated  
sleeves **and** Flared  
trousers. **Both Lady  
Beellionaire Luxury  
N80,000**



# FOR-SIGHT

Sunglasses are the ultimate summer essentials, not just for the required sun protection but also to complement your look in the most flattering of ways. Ethan Aku and Tosin Abiodun



The narrow retro frames have been a cool girl vibe for several months now. These futuristic lenses may not offer as much sun coverage as it's counterparts but they are trendy. They've been spotted on numerous celebrities as well as on the runway at shows like Burberry, Fendi and Moschino. The classic aviator gets an update with rounder lenses. These laidback styles are very much still in play and have been showcased by Emporio Armani and Max Mara.

Diamonds are every girl's best friend indeed and designers like Dolce & Gabbana, Miu Miu and Givenchy are latching on to this literally eye-catching trend for the summer.

Cat eyed sunglasses are bringing your grandmothers style, back out on the street with so much class. As spotted on the runway of Valentino and Christian Siriano.

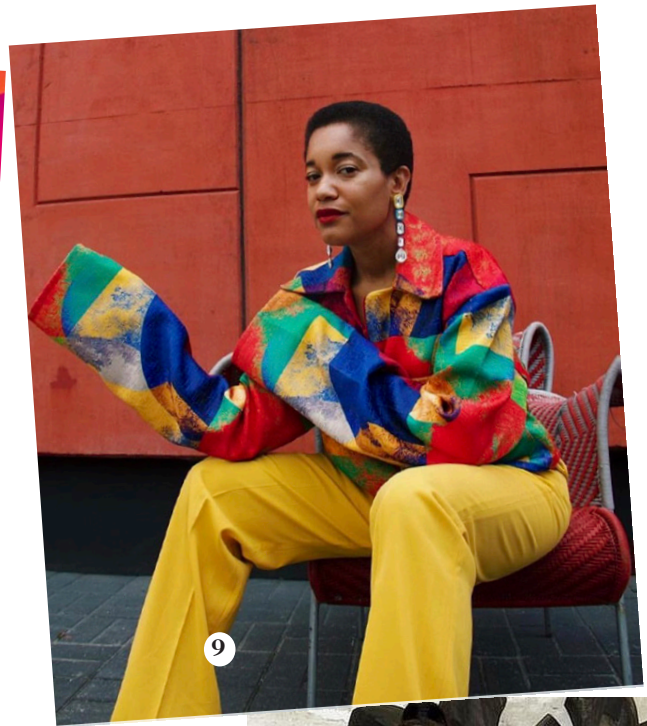
Despite the thin sunglasses dominating the fashion world, there's enough room for big things ahead as the shield sunglasses are making wave this season as seen at Rick Owens, Acne Studios, Gucci, Mui Mui, Tom Ford, Stella McCartney and many more. These sporty mirrored lenses often seen on skiers, are taking the streets due to well...glamour in oversized proportions!







# Neon APPROVED

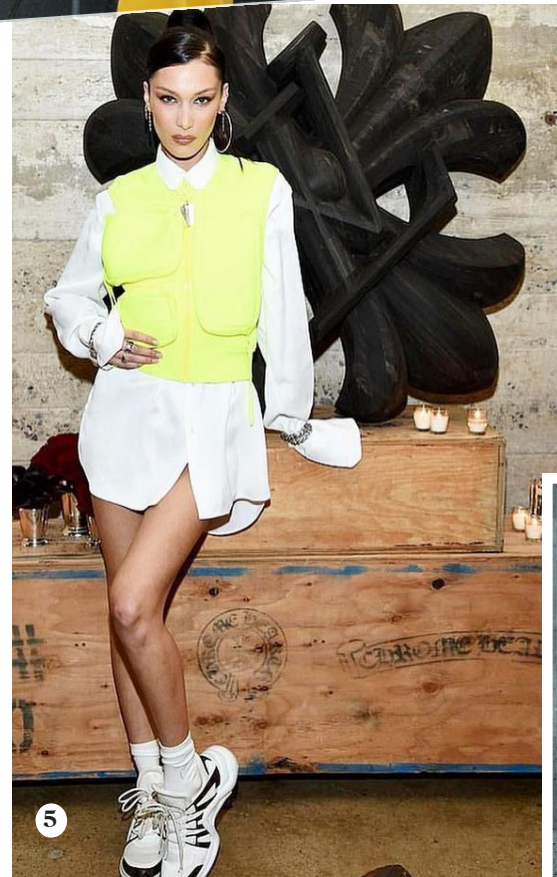


Last year was vastly dominated by minimal silhouettes and neutral colour palettes but as we know, fashion is ever changing and this season, designers are serving an opposing look with eye-catching hues on the runway and off the backs of our favourite celebrities.

**Ethan Aku**



1. Ashley Graham in Cristian Siriano
2. Jeremy Scott SS19
3. Marc Jacobs SS19
4. Cushnie Et Ochs SS19
5. Bella Hadid in Loius Vuitton
6. Le Specs
7. Moschino SS19
8. Beyonce Performing in Versace
9. Tamu McPherson in Orange Culture



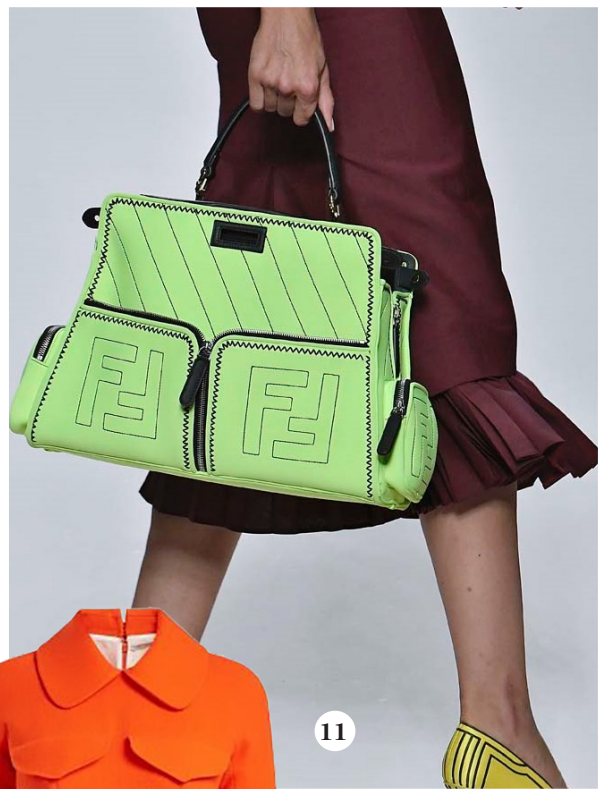




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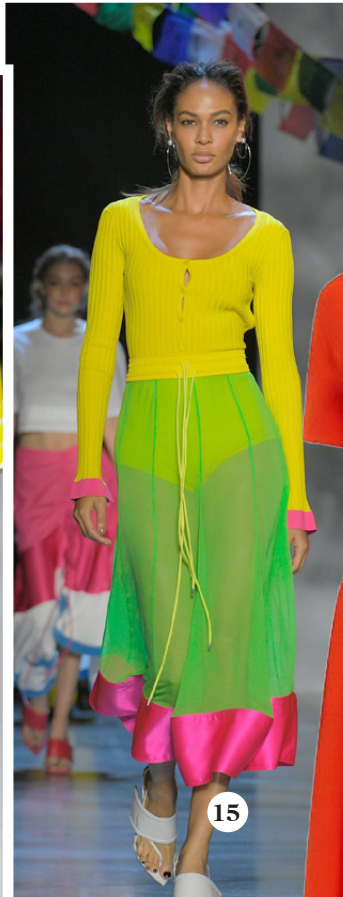
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3



7



15



15



2



12



17



15

- 10. Chanel Iman
- 11. Fendi SS19
- 12. Christian Cowan X Giuseppe Zanotti Fall 19 heels
- 13. Prada SS19
- 14. Prabal Gurung SS19
- 15. Milly SS19
- 16. Emilia Wickstead
- 17. Versace SS19



1



# Fall To Pieces!

## EDITORS PICKS

(Fall 2019 runway)



Moncler X Pierpaolo Piccioli X Lemlem

Undeniably a major highlight of Milan Fashion Week, these epic puffer gowns, a collaboration by **Moncler**, **Pierpaolo Piccioli** and model **Liya Kebede**'s ethical brand **Lemlem**, is an editor's dream and will be remembered for a long long time.



Christopher Kane

An interesting take on the full skirt that is definitely far from basic. Cropped at the right length and form fitted at the waist, again **Christopher Kane** shows us why he's a genius.



Emilia Wickstead

**Emilia Wickstead**'s London Fashion week showing was reminiscent of **Audrey Hepburn** and 50's royals like **Grace Kelly**. Retro inspired conservative midi dresses are some of the most sophisticated pieces to wear.



Fendi

**Gigi Hadid** walks the runway in one of the final works of **Karl Lagerfeld** for the **House of Fendi**. Isn't it crazy that we now live in a world without this iconic, now legendary designer? The warm mustard and transparent silk organza are very feminine, sophisticated and just the right amount of 'risque'



Also pictured, is a brown perfectly suited jacket with clean tailored lines, juxtaposed with logo tights and that enormous bow. Hands down one of the most memorable looks I've seen on the runway. **Fendi** has my heart.





Marc Jacobs

Ferragamo

An updated pajama style pant suit in sleek Grey, seen at **Ferragamo** is the ultimate chic outfit. Especially love the fluid tailoring and the fact that it's minimal edgy and bold all at once.



**Marc Jacobs** also offered colour blocking for fall in an oversized cape ensemble that is very Handmaid's tale meets Sansa Stark.



Marni

Yes yes yes to colour blocking and in the fall too. This is definitely a bright addition to the season's mostly understated tones as shown by **Marni**



Oscar De la Renta

White is always in as we know and yes more feathers please.... of the expensive kind. This offering by **Oscar De la Renta** is perfect for the red-carpet.



Major aquatic vibes were in play as the **Mary Katrantzou** showing took place. Like though a mermaid escaped to land. Texture check, colour, grading, floral elements.. check!

Peter Pilotto



Wearable Art best describes this pastel oversize coat as seen at **Peter Pilotto**. Guessing it will be worth every penny. The patch work print is in your face and less overpowering at the same time.





Prada

Proenzer Schouler



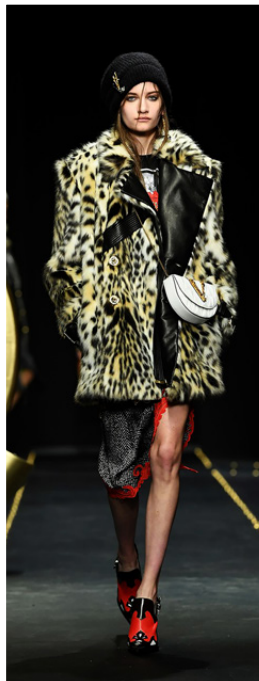
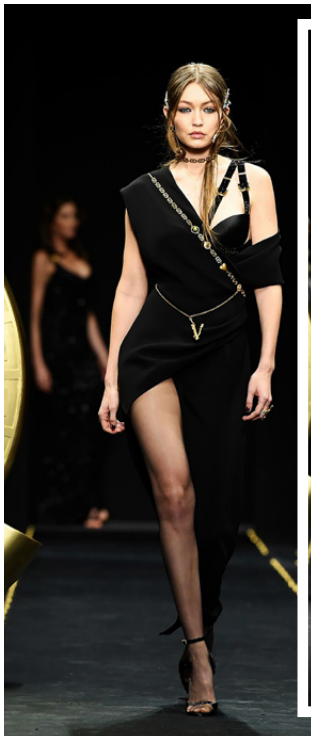
Tailored, straight to the point and fuss free is how I would describe these looks by **Prada**. The perfect additions for a successfully curated capsule wardrobe that works.

Love **Proenzer Schouler's** take on this edgy dress with a somewhat abstract high glam factor that also features sportswear inspired mesh.



Victoria Beckham

**Victoria Beckham** again cements herself as the queen of daytime chic. I can almost see an influencer strutting the streets on London in this look, coat loosely hanging. It's a yes for me!



Versace

Proenzer Schouler



If you saw American crime story, then this dress sparks a memory of the original iconic dress that was created in 1993 by **Gianni Versace** himself and worn by **Donatella** to the **Vogue** 100th anniversary a night that saw her influence being somewhat cemented in Fashion. Now in 2019 the brand borrows elements of a leather bralette insert, thigh high slit and asymmetric cut. Very Dominatrix and not for the faint hearted.

It's here and definitely not going anywhere anytime soon. Animal print to me is something you somewhat have to embrace. Personally, I tend to embrace it in small doses, However, sometimes it just hits me and I fall in love. Love the different textures of fur and leather on the **Versace** one here. The exaggerated lapel also does it for me.

A monotone leather ensemble in a rich plum was seen at **Zimmermann**. I think what's most interesting here is how the biker chic look deviates from the more familiar tans and blacks to this oh so pipping hue. Yes please.





# WEAR-PON

Quite a number of people ask “Do clothes really make the woman?” I firmly believe clothing has the power to influence a person's confidence and show distinctions; signify power and class, reinforce standard roles within society and carve out new identities on its fringes. **Tosin Abiodun**

Dressing right should be a lifestyle. Realise that what you wear makes a huge difference on not just how you are thought of by others but more importantly on how you feel about yourself. Think back to that job interview or event you went all out to look good and how you felt more confident and ready to take on the task of landing the job or networking at that social scene.

In fact, there is a scientific term to describe this occurrence and it is called “Encllothed Cognition”. It is defined as the influence clothing has on an Individual's cognitive process. In simpler terms, the clothing we decide to wear can have an impact on the way we think and feel.

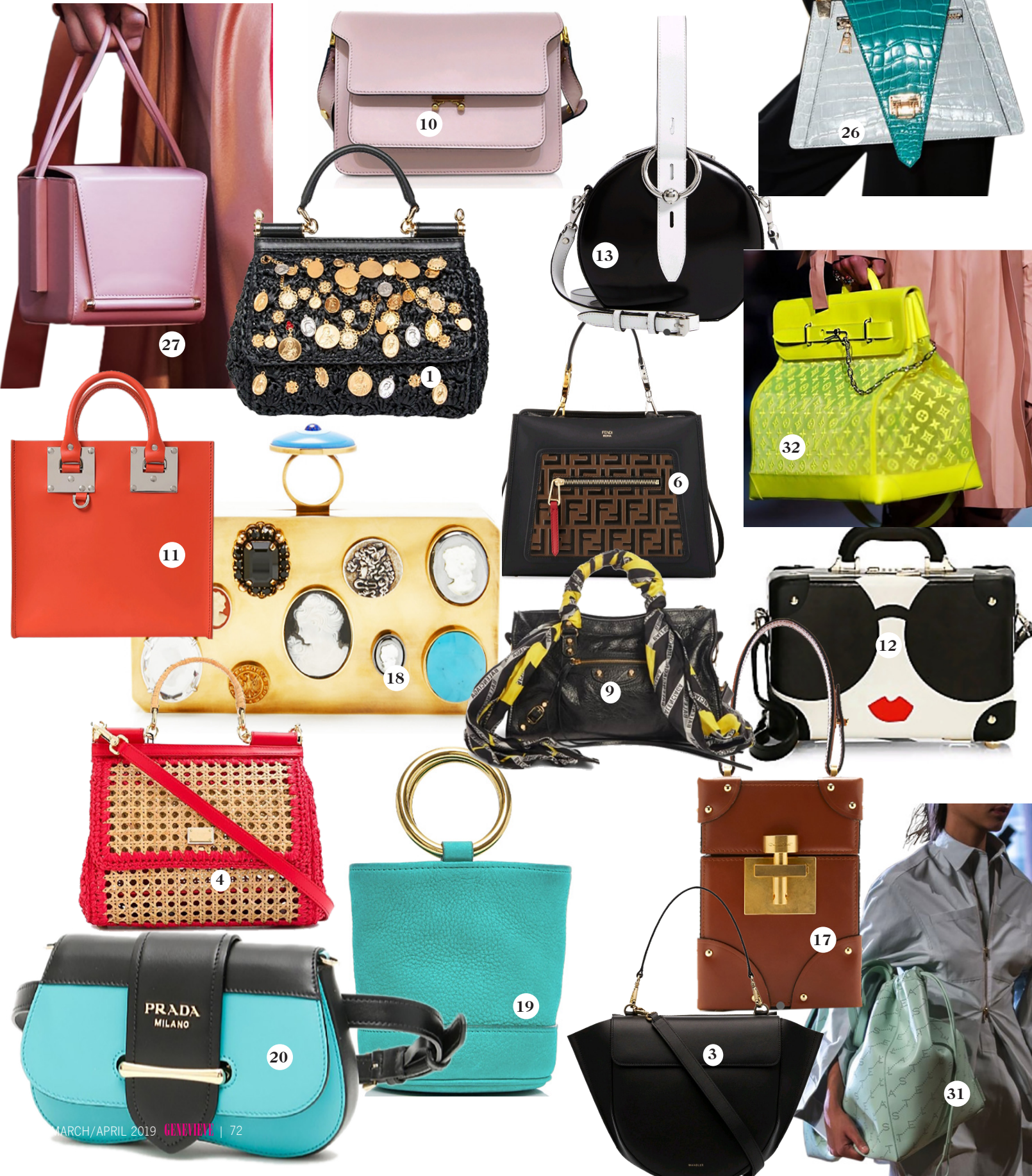
We all know dressing well takes extra effort but let's face it! When you don't look good, it changes how you carry yourself and also the way you socialise so by all means, dress well at all times even when going across the street because it boosts your self- esteem. Not that you will be “inconfident” without a good outfit but looking good gives off that “I can conquer the world” feeling that is often times required to smash your goals even if just for the day!





# BAGGAGE CLAIM

The season's chicest arm candies. **Tosin Abiodun**







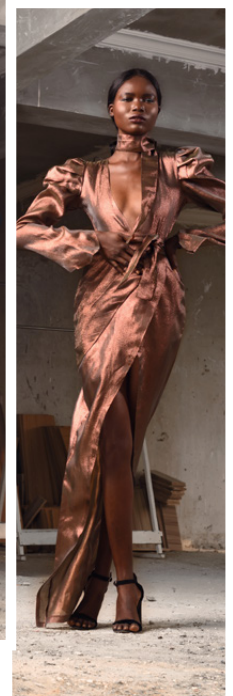
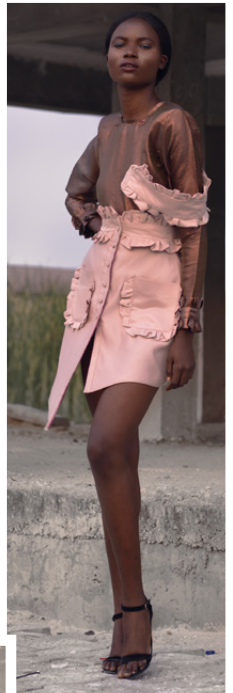
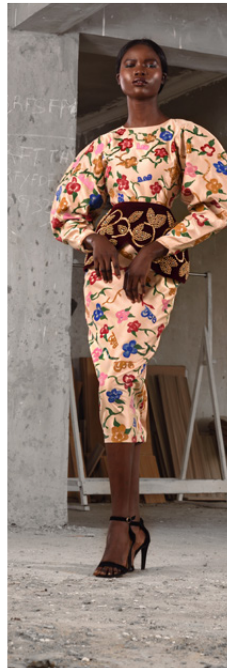
1. Dolce and Gabbana Black Sicily Bag in Crochet Rafia
2. Danse Lente Brown Johnny Mini Cone Tote
3. Wandler Black Medium Tote
4. Dolce and Gabbana Red Straw + Rafia Handbag
5. Ganni siltstone bag
6. Fendi
7. Marc Jacobs
8. Burberry Yellow Satin Pin Clutch
9. Balenciaga bag with a scarf handle and lambskin leather
10. Marni Pastel Pink Trunk Shoulder Handbag
11. Sophie Hulme red Square Tote
12. Alice + Olivia Stacey Face Vanity Case
13. Rebecca Minkoff Black and white circle bag
14. The Volon Colour Block Leather Shoulder Bag
15. Benedetta Bruzziches
16. Sensi Studio Blue Woven Bag
17. Oscar de la Renta
18. Oscar de la Renta Cameo Brass Minaudiere
19. Simon Miller
20. Prada
21. Givenchy Pocket Bag
22. Marni
23. Dolce & Gabbana Semi-transparent Sicily Bag
24. Michael
25. APC drawstring belt bag
26. Louis Vuitton
27. Roksanda Pastel Pink Cube bag
28. Rejina Pyo polka dot Tote Bag
29. Marni
30. Emporio Armani White snake Skin printed Cross Bag
31. Stella McCartney drawstring Duffle Bag
32. Louis Vuitton





# NEW IN- LOOK BOOKS

There's lots to love this season from **Sevon Dejana's** offering of intricately crafted metallics, structure and glamour to luxurious silks and tribal influences from **Woora** and vibrant on trend styles for everyday of the week by **Becca Apparel**. Enjoy



**Sevon Dejana**  
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#### Wooraw

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#### Becca Apparel

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## SHEAMOISTURE PAMPERES GUESTS AT ITS SHEAONTHEBEACH ULTIMATE BEACH DAY PARTY

SheaMoisture's Ultimate Beach Day Party was an unforgettable experience for guests who attended the event. Landmark beach was transformed into a pop-up beach club featuring great food and drinks, chill vibes and Instagram worthy decor. Hosted by Eku Edewor, the sold out event treated over 300 people to the SheaMoisture Lifestyle Experience.

SheaMoisture lifestyle range of products are available at US comparable prices at the following partner retailers: Youtopia Beauty in Lekki Phase I, Perfect Trust Cosmetics (outside Lagos), Essenza (outside Lagos), Tresses by Koyinsola Vera Cruz, Kemi Lewis Salons, Make Me Salon, Next Cash 'n' Carry and Prince Ebeano Supermarkets.

Follow us on Instagram @SheaMoisture.Nigeria and on Facebook @SheaMoistureNigeria to learn about all the fun things we have planned for the rest of 2019 and to get early access to our events.





# LIFE'S A BEACH!

Ready for some fun in the sun? Whether you are going on a vacation, date, or just spending a lazy day by the water, These stylish off-the-coast looks will cover the A-Z's of beach bunny. **Tosin Abiodun**



Kelly Rowland



Johanna Ortiz



ASOS



Flat lay



Fendi

Farfetch



Julia Clancey



Eric Javits



ASOS



Marysia



Flat lay



Masscob



Chloe



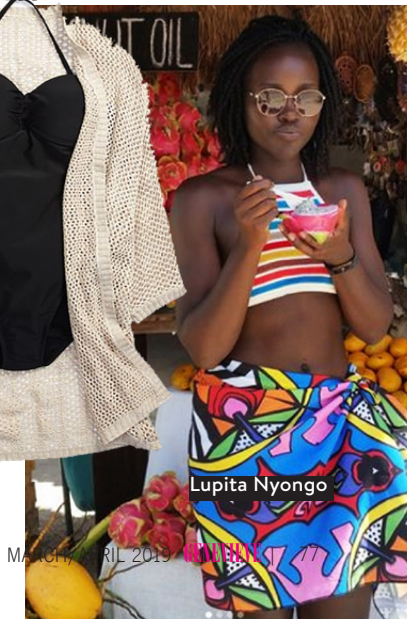
Flat lay



Flat lay



Lupita Nyong'o



MAY 2019



*Marching to the beat of his own  
drum... in killer shoes!*

# DENRELE EDUN

**Denrele Edun** is a burst of positive energy, we know this. But in addition to that is a strong-willed man, who, through countless criticisms, has remained unapologetically true to himself. Denrele is living his life and urges the world to do the same! In this interview, he shares his views on toxic masculinity, building a brand and lessons learned. -VIVIENNE BELONWU



**When you made the decision years ago to live beyond the limitations of gender. Was it a deliberate move to build a brand?**

Firstly, I like the fact that you have used the word “brand” because I’d quickly say the keys to a successful brand are; self-definition, authenticity, accountability and relatability. I started professionally on TV in 1994 and there was no form of social media back then. We didn’t own a television either so there was no way I was privy to information from the western world. It naturally came as a result of just trying to be different. I could remember one casting I went for back then for a famous brand; I was selected out of the entire crowd [because] of the way I looked. It was more of an industry that accepted me at that time.

**You have described yourself as a sexual outlaw; as you get older, do you feel a shift in your sense of identity?**

No, because I am what you see. I’ve been labelled all kinds of sexual [things]. At first, when people threw [those labels] at me, it did hit me, especially in school when people would yell, “gay!” at me or hurl stones at me or bus conductors would push me out of their buses. I was a culture shock to a lot of people. They just couldn’t place me and oh! How they tried! Though it hurt, I paid no attention to it and when I started working for Soundcity, I didn’t want any of those vibes to flow into my work space. I didn’t want any form of sexual orientation to be attached to my work; I wanted people to just appreciate my art, so I coined the term, ‘Sexual Outlaw’ and when someone asked me what that meant, I simply replied; “it means my sexuality is free flowing like a fluid”. Suddenly the media became frenzied with all sorts of news about me. All manner of stories were carried about me by soft sell magazines and blogs. It didn’t go down well with my employers then.

**What happened with Soundcity?**

Ah! That period, I made every headline and it always started with, “Denrele the Gay Presenter...” I could tell Soundcity was not comfortable with that as a brand. I equally tried on my part to keep it at bay but when that Charly Boy incident came up, I knew it was the final straw. So basically it’s not that I’m trying to create a mystery around my sexual orientation, I think it’s something I would write about because growing up, I had a fair amount of attention from both sexes. I believe, however, that who you go to bed as, is different from who you go to bed with.

**In terms of non-conformity, do you feel the need to protect yourself from people who may not understand you based on**

**the image you present them with?**

Growing up, it wasn’t even about protecting myself but more [about] protecting the people around me. I lived in an extended family house where everyone, except my parents and siblings, thought I was mad. I was the cursed one; the strange kid who would never amount to anything. As a result my family suffered for the path I chose. The need for me to protect myself did arise because beneath all the thick skin and bravado, I’m still a human with feelings just like the next person. But the truth was that I had no one to run to, I was the one everyone came to with their problems instead! So I learnt to protect my sanity the best way I could and the rest, I left it up to fate because at the end of the day, it is what it is.

**Let’s talk about toxic masculinity and society’s expectations that a man must be a certain way simply because he is a man. What are your views on that?**

In my case, the toxic masculinity does not only arise because I am not dressed the way a quintessential Nigerian man dresses, but the fact that I might just ‘infect’ the next person. That said, I think we have over-flogged this issue of masculinity in Nigeria. I understand we are Nigerians are, to an extent, still conservative about a lot of things. However, we should just allow people express their individuality in the manner in which they deem fit for them. If some people see clothes as a medium to express themselves, let them be by all means. I think we just need to draw the lines between self expression, self individuality and going overboard with it.

**In a world where society expects us to act or live our lives in a certain manner, you have unapologetically remained true to yourself. How are you able to achieve that?**

I know my story and how far I have come better than anyone else. Simple! People only see the glory and not the journey. I lived in a family house where I, my dad, mum and siblings, had to share one room. We couldn’t use the toilet because it was out of bounds; I always had to do my business in a nearby bush. It was a shared kitchen and sometimes we would get back home from school and find someone had spat into my mum’s pot of food. It was hellish, but all of these things strengthened me. I’ve had open confrontations in the past. People have walked up to me and said despicable things no human being should hear but I have never allowed it to change me. I would attribute that strength to my mum, who, being a foreigner, came to Nigeria with my dad, stayed in a family house with family members who wanted nothing but to frustrate her. She still had to fend for her family by

holding down five different jobs as a teacher. My prayer each day is the one of sincere gratefulness to God who through me, has raised my family from poverty. Tell me, why would I want to live my life to please anyone when living the truest version of myself has brought me thus far?

**Do you ever confront any of these people who stare or have a judgmental look on their face?**

First, you have to have the ability to categorise how people look at you. I’m a body language expert so I know how to discern the looks from disgust, to bewildered, hate and judgmental. Most times I just make a joke out of it and then we end up taking pictures and laughing. But whenever I’m out of the country, the reception is entirely different! Just walking on the streets of New York landed me an invitation to a fashion show. On getting to the reception, Beverly Johnson (First African American model on Vogue cover) invited me for her reality show. My sister just like that!

**About that, I often wondered why you haven’t left the country yet.**

My sister if I tell you I haven’t thought about that in the past, I’d be lying o. However, I believe I’ve made it work here and will make it work again and again. I’m not saying I want to force myself down the throats of Nigerians o! *Ejo e ma binu*, but I think I’ve worked [too] hard to just let it go. Let’s face it too; the country has helped me a whole lot.

**How do you put outfits together with the shoes? Especially the shoes!**

It’d shock you to know that most of the shoes I have are all gifts. As a matter of fact, everything I’m putting on right now is a gift. I’m like a walking freebie. (Laughs). People who appreciate the outlandish, but would never try it out [for themselves] always get these items for me. When I was shooting the Lip Sync Battle in South Africa, Puma sent me their newest Fenty stiletto!

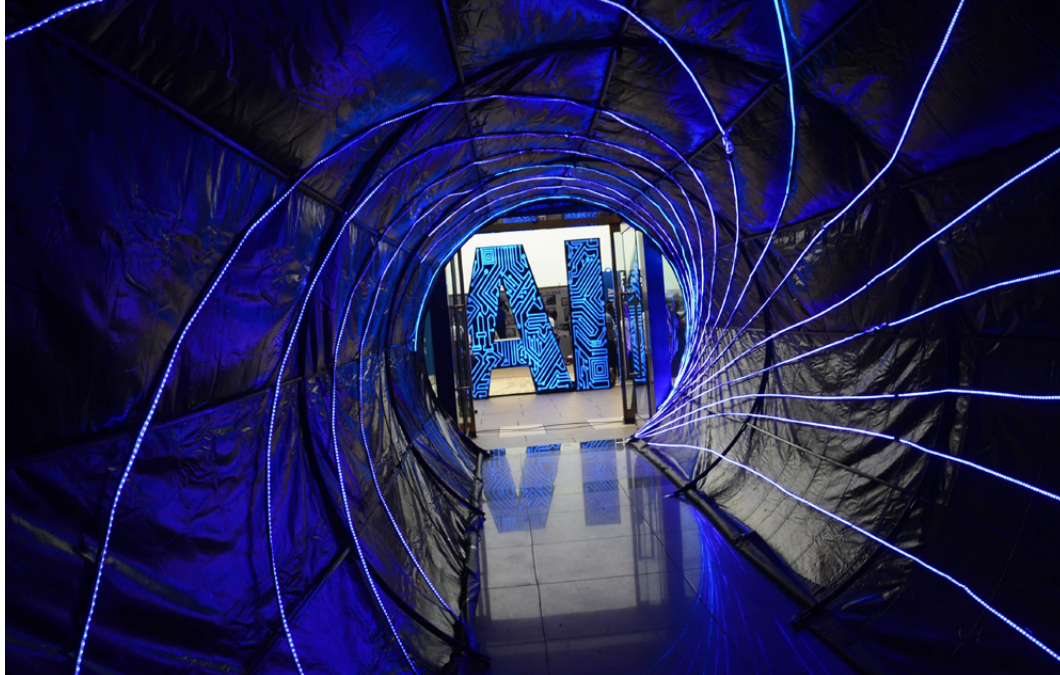
**For someone who has successfully built a space for himself in the entertainment industry, what is your message to humanity?**

Love! Love more, give more, listen more, care more, forgive more, and tolerate more. When people learn to abide by these basic rules, the world will be a much better place for you and me and our generations to come.

**What would you love to be remembered for?**

I want to be remembered as the guy who lived by those principles.





## #CAPTUREMOREBEAUTY: THE FANTASTIC JOURNEY IN UNVEILING THE NEWEST SMARTPHONE SENSATION.

From teasing Nigerians by facilitating the Lagos Photo week to hosting a one of a kind launch of a revolutionary smartphone. From partying with MTV Base to embarking on a tour that showcased the beautiful sights of Dubai and Seychelles and finally a partnership with Radisson Hotel and FilmHouse Cinemas to give four couples a memorable Valentine, the Camon 11-series by TECNO definitely had an amazing entry into the Nigerian Market, allowing people to capture more beauty.

It's safe to say the last few months have been an exhilarating ride for fans of TECNO mobile since the introduction of the Camon 11.

We are definitely looking forward to the next device from Africa's largest smartphone maker, TECNO Mobile.











# “IT’S CUSTOMER SERVICE”

## MY NIGHT WITH STRIPPERS

- Racheal Abiriba

Nigeria’s nightlife is booming and most of this growth can be accredited to the vibrant club life in major cities such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt. There is no shortage of clubs in these cities, and despite the predominantly conservative, moral and religious mindset of the country, the added spice of stripping has led to the rise of the strip club. RACHEAL ABIRIBA went on an adventure into the lives of the prime ‘commodity’ of this growing industry... the Strippers.

As I walked into the club with my friend \*Dan, my mind was filled with questions. Unlike other club-crawlers and thrill-seekers, I was headed to a strip club on a beautiful Thursday night, not for the thrill, but for work. I was to interview some of the dancers. I am not an undercover journalist so I must admit to being quite excited about my first experience in the field.

My excitement lasted until we were forced to park some distance from the club thanks to the sheer number of cars occupying every parking space in close proximity. It was a clear indication of the number of people who were in there.

“It’s a Thursday night for God’s sake! Don’t these people have to go to work tomorrow?” I thought as I navigated the dark street while praying that the combination of the bumpy road and my stilettos wouldn’t throw me face flat on the floor. My village people would love to see that I’m sure. The neon lights and mysterious, dark vibe surrounding the club’s 1-storey exterior alerted me to the fact that I had, indeed, arrived at my destination and it was time for me to work. “It’s showtime!” I said, more to myself than to Dan, who then replied, “Yasss boo! We’ve got this!” I’d filled him in on my undercover assignment, so it was a much-needed encouragement that restored my initial excitement.

As we scanned the dimly-lit, crowded room for a dancer to talk to, the first thing I noticed was the smell- a particularly potent combination of sweat, perfume, cigarette smoke and shisha fumes. The latter two provided an ever-present cloud, which made it increasingly difficult for my lungs to find ‘clean’ oxygen. I quickly suggested to Dan that we take our search on the move, hoping to find some source of fresh air as well as a stripper.

We had almost made it upstairs when I spotted ‘her’; she danced with a charming, almost shy smile playing on her lips. I must have gripped Dan’s hands too hard because he screamed ‘What?!’ and immediately followed my eyes searching for the cause of my excitement. She was a beautiful, curvy, dark-skinned girl towering at almost 6’1 thanks to her strappy 6-inch heels. She had on a provocative black lace bralette and a red and black plaid skirt that barely covered her derriere. She looked comfortable and happy in her environment.

She was cleaning her legs with one hand while holding wads of cash tightly to her chest with the other when we approached; it must have been a good payday judging by her smile. \*Janet, as she later introduced herself, was indeed beautiful but that wasn’t what caught my attention; she had intelligent eyes, ‘street-smart’ eyes, eyes that had seen a lot. I knew not to beat around the bush with her, so I went straight to the point, introduced myself and told her what I had come for.

She looked at me for what felt like 10 seconds before she said “You’ll need to pay me N5,000 to dance for you while we talk, a private place where you can hear me talk will be better, you will also need to buy a drink you can share so the bouncers won’t be suspicious, and you have to promise me that you will not put my name in your work.” I agreed and let her lead us to a quiet ‘private room’ where three men and a girl were receiving dances while another dancer worked the pole in the middle of the room. They barely reacted to our entry.

When we were seated, Janet began giving Dan a lap dance while she talked about coming to Lagos from the South-South with a friend, a small bag, and a promise of a sales job, which turned out to be a prostitution job on the streets of Adeola Hopewell (or any other Victoria Island street where rent and enough money to send home to her family could be made). “That time was tough but I always knew that God was bringing better things. I couldn’t go back [home] empty-handed so I stayed and did what I had to do.”

Then a chance incident where Janet was brought to the



strip club by one of her 'clients' changed her life. "I drank too much that night and went to use the restroom where I met \*Sandra, a dancer here. I told her that I used to dance in Port Harcourt and would like to dance here. She told me to come back in the morning and ask for the Manager." An interview, in the form of pole dancing, and a lap dance later, Janet was told to expect a call, and a few weeks later, her life did change; "I now have a better paying job, a better house, enough money to send home to my family and start a business". There was pride in her voice. She was proud of her achievements.

By this point, we'd built some rapport, so I felt comfortable asking her how she felt about being a stripper.

"It's like every other job. People come here to get what they cannot get in any ordinary club and we give it to them. It's customer service. It's more secure than when I was on the streets. I get more respect here, and if any drunk person tries to disrespect or rough handle us while we are working, the bouncers are there to fight for us. There was nobody to fight for me on the streets," she said while trying to change her position on Dan's lap.

When asked about the treatment she receives from the clients at the club, she replied simply- "it's good". Seeing that she wasn't going to elaborate, I had to rephrase the question, "How do the men who come to the club treat you?", "Ahh! They are okay. It's normal for men to misbehave when they see a girl that's half-naked. Some of them try to ask us out but we know that it's 'highness' that is causing it. But many of them are big boys. All these big boys from Malaysia and different countries. When they come like this, we dance well for them so that they will give us tip. Sometimes they give dollars. They are really good. They just come to enjoy themselves and we give it to them. It's customer service." She said again. "When is the best season for you to make money?" I asked. "Anytime. No calendar for all these things," she replied, "but December is always sure. All those big boys always come back for Christmas so money used to fly that time. We even have more dancers that period so that nobody that wants lap dance or pole dance will wait for long." So, what's the highest tip she's ever received? "\$600 Dollars. It was a girl's birthday. I gave her a serious lap dance and she put the money in my bra."

On whether her family know what she is doing in Lagos, she admitted that they don't. "I have made enough money to start a business and they think it is the only work I am doing. They don't need to know everything because they are strong Christians and will feel like I have disappointed them. Nigerians are very religious about anything that concerns nakedness. I don't want them to start judging

me."

As Dan's dance came to an end, I asked if I could speak to another dancer. She said I could try but no one would be as willing as herself since they were all working. I paid and she sashayed away, still with that lingering shy smile. I had done one interview, so, emboldened, I went in search of another stripper. I felt calmer now, more comfortable and confident enough to walk around unaccompanied.

A light-skinned girl was dancing on the longest pole I'd ever seen. She had taken off every piece of clothing she had on, save for her red panties, which also came off a few minutes later to the wild cheers of her audience. Despite her total nudity, she looked happy to be dancing. Her set ended andm , like clockwork, another stripper in a white jacket and black dominatrix-style lingerie, stepped on the stage and began cleaning the pole with tissues in preparation for her performance. The whole thing flowed effortlessly and got me thinking, "do they choreograph their sets and emotions like actors performing on a stage? Are they really as happy as they look or is it all an act?"

I went back to the private room to let Dan know that I was alright as I had been away for too long. I saw him nursing a drink while a stripper gave him a lap dance. Apparently I wasn't missed. Go figure! So, I went in search of a drink and looked around properly for the first time that night. It looked like a regular club: bar serving over-priced drinks, predominantly red décor, neon coloured lights everywhere, well-dressed clientele; the only deviation were the bright lights illuminating the strip pole.

I had barely sat back down when a bouncer approached me to ask if I wanted anything. "Yes," I said confidently, "a dance. But I want a girl who can talk to me so I don't fall asleep." Dan's girl immediately offered; I wasn't interested in a dance, but she was there already. The bouncer laughed and walked away.

A while later, she stood up, adjusted her leather bralette and fringed skirt, and turned in my direction. "Lord God! What have I got myself into?" I thought in a panic. I quickly told her to give Dan another lap dance while she talked to me. \*Sandra reluctantly agreed and asked if I was a newspaper journalist. When I told her I worked for a lifestyle magazine, she looked puzzled and asked "why are you writing about a strip club for a lifestyle magazine?" Understanding her confusion and discomfort about talking to me, I tried to put her at ease by explaining that I was writing about the people who dance at strip clubs not the club itself. She seemed to take her time dissecting my reply and we were quiet for a while as she danced. After a few minutes, without any prompts

from me, she began talking about being in a dance group before she started attending the University of Lagos and how she had to quit because most rehearsal times clashed with her lecture hours. She needed another source of income to pay for her education and the only thing she knew how to do was dance. She approached several establishments looking to work evenings and received offers to join them as a dancer. The offer to become a stripper was more attractive so she took that. "Have you ever regretted that decision?" I asked. "Never" was her quick reply.

"Aren't you afraid that your peers or lecturers will see you stripping and judge or shame you?" She smiled before she answered, "I was worried about that at first, but I'm not anymore. We are all doing our different jobs to survive. This is my job for now. I don't intend to do this all my life. I will be graduating [from the University] next year and I will relocate from Lagos and hopefully get a good-paying bank job. This is what I am doing to survive for now. As long as their judgment won't pay my bills, they can judge all they want."

Remembering my earlier thought about choreographed sets and emotions? It turns out I was still curious about that. She laughingly replied, "Sometimes. When I dance and they like a move, I note it and do more of it." I pressed further, "but are the emotions really what you feel at those times?" She replied, "Hmmm... how will I say this? As much as we are dancers, we are actors. We do what's necessary to keep our customers entertained. They are paying to be entertained; we have to make it worthwhile for them."

Dan's lap dance came to an end, we paid and left. On our way out, I caught another glimpse of Sandra dancing on a lady while a man sprayed some money on them. I smiled because I knew that Sandra, with her thick skin and pragmatic view of life, would be just fine.

Walking out of the club, I looked at the faces of the different strippers knowing that they all had different stories to tell. My earlier discomfort was now replaced with a better understanding; they were all on their own individual journeys and though some of them may have initially loved dancing, it was now mostly just a job to many of them. Having finally escaped the hazy inside, the first slap of cold air across my face brought me to the realisation that I was tired, hungry, and grateful that I could almost take my stilettos off. As we got back into the car, I turned to Dan with only one thing to say, "Please, wake me up when you get to my house." And with that, I reclined my seat and slept off.

*\*All real names withheld.*



## Around the World with...

# AMIN AMEEN

### EVERYTHING NA ART

*Engineer by day, content creator, curator and digital influencer by day and night, Amin Ameen, the brain behind online community, Everything Na Art, has built one of the most engaged and engaging digital communities. It was a no-brainer to invite her to share the world through her very creative eyes.*

Over the years, I have found myself travelling around the world for a myriad of reasons; the one standard is my love for learning. Each of the places I have visited lately,

whether locally or internationally, have truly taught me more about myself than the city itself. Over the last couple of years, I have visited: Havana, Cuba; London, England; Paris, France; Cape Town, South Africa; Manaus, Brazil and Barcelona, Spain, to name a few. I took a piece of each city back home with me to the United States. I want to focus on Cuba, South Africa and France.

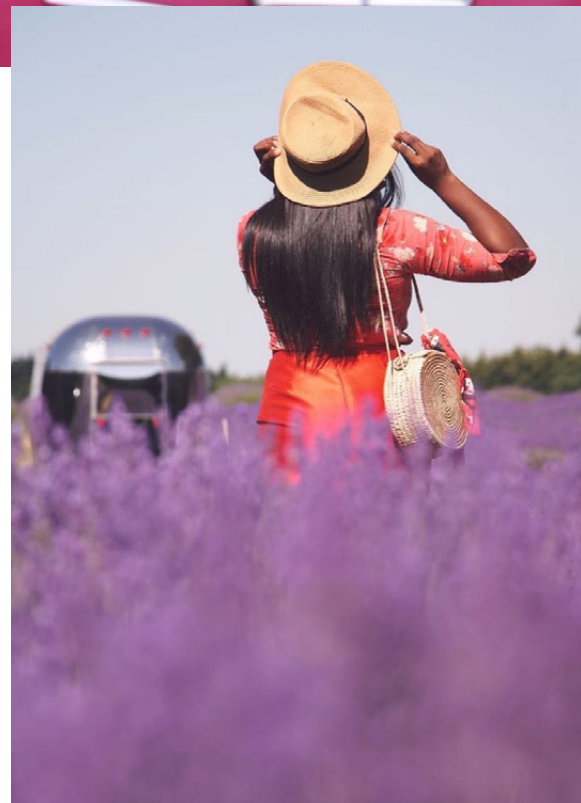
#### HAVANA, CUBA:

I was determined to make it to Cuba; Especially before the American travel restrictions kicked in from the Trump administration in the fall of 2017. I took a short trip to Miami with a friend and we made the short journey from Miami to Cuba. Visiting Old Havana felt like I jumped into a time machine just at the

culsp of an Industrial Revolution. Everything was frozen in time. The 1950's to be exact. Old American classic cars everywhere, so much socio-economic-political history, the realisation that the American economic embargo had a major impact on this vibrant city was heavy. If not for Obama re-establishing relations with the island, I wouldn't have been able to visit Cuba. Thanks 44. Cuba was beautiful. The food was amazing and culturally, I felt completely alive.

#### CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town is another city that will always have my heart. The history, the culture and the beautiful mountainous landscape and architecture is unforgettable. I also went on a helicopter ride, which is by far the most intrepid thing I've done while travelling. I truly enjoyed the conversations I had with the locals about apartheid and the







unbroken chains it still has on race-relations in the society. My greatest joy is to connect with human beings from different walks of life. It is an intangible experience.

## PARIS, FRANCE

During my first visit to Europe in 2016, I decided to do a mini European tour from London to Paris and it's been an annual tradition ever since. It's the best way to have a two-in-one trip. I took a two-hour train ride into France from England. Paris is now one of my favourite cities to explore and create art. Paris is so calm. I always feel at peace when I am there. I mean, sans the obligatory Eiffel Tower visit, you will find that Paris is quite tranquil. I was very pleasantly surprised to see so many West Africans in Paris mainly from Nigeria and Senegal. Paris became home again.

Travel, in many ways, is a transition for the mind and soul; an unorthodox and informal understanding of the world around me. Travel is also an unlearning experience for me as I often drop the misconceptions and preconceived notions that I had about the country I am visiting. I truly leave more educated with each trip.

Follow Amin on Instagram:

@EverythingNaArt

And on LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/AminAmeen](http://www.linkedin.com/AminAmeen)





## PARMESAN CRUSTED CHICKEN BREAST

Parmesan Crusted Chicken Breast, or Chicken Parmigiana, is a popular Italian-American dish, which consists of chicken breast covered in tomato sauce. In this case, the chef substituted the tomato sauce for a mushroom sauce. It is a main dish served with either salad dressing, French fries, pasta or rice as a side dish.

### Chef's Profile



Name: Chef Jolly  
Place of Birth: Yenagoa  
State of Origin: Bayelsa  
Occupation: Executive Chef  
Educational Status: Hotel Management  
Working Experience: 19 Years

### INGREDIENTS

- Chicken breast - 200g
- Rosemary leaves - 2 sticks
- Olive oil - 1 tot
- Vegetables (Carrots, cabbage, green beans, marrow)
- Mushroom - 5 pcs
- Black pepper powder
- Whipping cream - 1/3 cup
- Garlic powder - 1/2g
- seasoning
- Basmati rice - ½ cup

### RECIPE

- Slice the chicken breast, season and marinade for 2 hours
- Grill afterwards on low heat for about 15-20 minutes
- Prepare your basmati rice to be used as a side dish
- Wash and slice the vegetables, add water, olive oil, salt and sugar and simmer briefly, then pour in a colander to drain.
- To prepare the mushroom sauce; in a pan, sauté chopped onions, garlic, black pepper, seasoning, mushroom and olive oil. Stir and while it simmers, add the whipping cream and stir to blend.
- Garnish with fresh rosemary and lemon leaves.



## BARHOPPER



# Maison Fahrenheit

Located in the heart of Victoria Island, Lagos, **Maison Fahrenheit**'s interior, swathed in soothingly modern palette of brown, white and grey, is all about the colours. The bar, located at the rooftop with a lovely view of Adetokunbo Ademola street, and the distant hues of Oniru Beach, is spaciouly draped in white furniture that provides a calming space fit for relaxing and unwinding.

Downstairs, cradled in a nook and bathed in deep blue and green, the restaurant as its own distinct look that is somehow both traditional and modern. Wherever you choose to place yourself when you visit, you're guaranteed one thing, a laidback experience. So here's what we recommend to go with the mood:

### GRILLED FISH WITH ROASTED PLANTAIN

The grilled fish served with sautéed garlic and tomato sauce, and bole for its side dish, is a popular delicacy for southerners. Nothing prepares your belly for an iced cocktail quite like a spicy dish.

### MAISON BRICKS

The signature drink is a strong one, made with Angostura bitters, cinnamon and whiskey. It's both refreshing and guaranteed to give you a kick, if that's what you're after!

### DEEP BLUE SEA

If you're after something more subtle, this mocktail is a good bet. Made with fresh orange juice, and mint leaves and sugar, the drink remotely tastes like palm wine. The mint leaves provides a sharpness in contrast to the sweet taste of the orange juice and the sugar. For a bit of an edge, you have the option to add tequila to the mix.

Maison Fahrenheit is located at 80 Adetokunbo Ademola Street, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria.







**Pre-stretched**  
**3 bundles in 1 pack**  
**& Light feeling Braid**



**3X Cozy Braid**



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