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SMOOCHES WOMAN MAGAZINE

**SIGNÉ'S  
KREATIONS**

**THE YEAR  
I SAID YES  
TO ME**

**ASHLEY NELL TIPTON  
THE LOVE YOU SHOW**

**Asking  
Erin's  
Mirror  
DEBUT**

**THE LOVE OF DANCE!  
TROUPE 4THIRTY-TWO**

**COVER GIRL  
BRITTANY  
NEELY**

smoocheswoman.com



**LOVE CONQUERS ALL ISSUE**

WINTER 2021

# SMOOCHES WOMAN MAGAZINE

THE LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR THE CURVY WOMAN

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## IN THIS ISSUE

- 3) A Note from the Editor
- 5) The Love of Dance 4Thirty-Two
- 9) Asking Eri's Mirror
- 12) Britta Neely Cover Girl
- 15) Social Distancing Does Not Mean Socially Isolated
- 17) Self-Love
- 20) Love & Hollywood
- 23) The Relevance of Michelle Slowinski
- 27) Signes Kreatio.
- 32) Yes To Me

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# Love conquers all

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



**CHANTE M. BRADLEY**  
(Fou. der & Editor-i. -Chief)

**T**he ancient Roman Poet Virgil is said to have introduced that saying to the world in 37BC; his main theory being that love can overcome all obstacles. Here we are more than 2,000 years later, in the midst of a global pandemic, praying that this statement is true.

So much has happened in the past year; so much isolation, sickness, death and racial and political unrest. Love has been desperately needed lately to show up and save the day. I honestly believe that love will always be the stronger force. It may not appear that way initially because love is often quiet, subtle yet so powerful. Love does not make the noise that hate does when it devastates and destroys everything in its path, but instead love is quiet and sweeps through with a gentle presence, leaving a feeling of warmth in all that it encounters.

Over the past several months, I had to keep reminding myself that love will save the day, we just need to hold on. We may not feel it now, under the heavy cloak of grief, but love is working its way through all this chaos and will make its grand entrance soon.

It may be hard to imagine but eventually, we will love how we become stronger during this time and love the ones we have left much more. We will see the love standing up together to fight racial unrest, bringing us to a higher level of existence. And we will understand the love of our new political wilderness we have found in the process of making our voices heard.

Stay tuned for Love's grand debut, believe me, it is coming soon.

*Chante M. Bradley*  
Editor-in-Chief

Owner & Founder  
**Charity Holloway**



AN EDITOR'S EXCLUSIVE

Photography by  
**Todd Youngblood**



4

# THIRTY-TWO



Photography by  
**Todd Youngblood**



# EXCLUSIVE

AN EDITOR'S EXCLUSIVE



## The Love of Dance! *with troupe 4Thirty-Two*

Photography by  
Todd Youngblood

**A**t the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, *Smooches Woman Magazine* released an Instagram challenge encouraging curvy women to show us their Big Girl Bounce. We were looking for creative women to come up with their own version of a Big Girl Bounce dance. The contest was inspired to promote a song on the *Smooches* music project titled "The Big Girl Bounce," produced by Grammy-nominated producer Herb Middleton and performed by Will Traxx, "The Voice of New York City." The winner would be featured in a *Smooches* music video alongside Traxx and our former covergirl and model Tiffany Flamer.

The song is a banger that uplifts and spotlights full-figured and curvy women. Not only did the dance group 4Thirty-Two take us up on our challenge, but they went the distance, uploading a fully-choreographed dance video and blowing other contestants out of the water. After I saw this video and their

talent, I knew two things: they won the challenge, and our *Smooches* readers needed to know about the talented group. I spoke with Founder Charity Holloway in January by phone to learn all about the dance team 4Thirty-Two; their origin story, mission and dancing during COVID. This conversation has been edited for brevity and clarity.

### **SWM: Who is Charity Holloway?**

**Holloway:** I am a native of Charlotte, North Carolina, and a marketing professional. I work for an agency as an account executive and by night I own my own business, the 4Thirty-Two Dance Team. So, I am a marketer by day and a dancer by night. I teach dance classes with local studios and manage my dance team. It keeps me busy. I am a family person; I love my mom and family and I love being around them. I love hanging out with friends; I am a competitive person that loves

playing games and watching movies. I would say that I am your typical 30-something-year-old and that dancing is a big part of my life.

### **What inspired you to start the 4Thirty-Two Dance Team?**

**Holloway:** Dance has always been a big part of my life. I danced in middle school and high school and as a dancer I was always typically the bigger one. Even in cheer, I was always the bigger one. I always felt different because I did not have a typical dancer's body and people would treat me differently and be shocked that I could dance and move. They thought I should not be able to move like that because of my size.

I always felt that there had to be other women out there like myself, that felt judged in a similar way. Plus size women who love to dance and just because they are a little heavier they are being judged. Be-



cause of this, I felt there was a need for representation for people like me, who love to dance but did not have a typical dance body.

Five years ago, there were not many plus size dance groups. So, I was inspired to put something together for plus size dancers; positive images showing plus size women dancing, proving we are not lazy or inactive and we are capable. That no matter what size you are, you can do whatever you want to do. I sat with this idea for a long time, it was in my heart and it was hard for me to get started with bringing this big idea to life. I had thoughts on whether people would understand, appreciate it, and accept it.

Back in 2016, I felt a push that it needed to happen. So, I put a video of me dancing to Beyonce's song Formation and it got a huge response. It had over 50,000 views in one day. People's response to this video confirmed that there was a need for this, and we have been going ever since.

### Who inspires you as a dancer?

**Holloway:** I always loved dance and I can go back to people who inspired me in middle school. People like Janet Jackson, I loved her videos. I loved people who were all around performers, not just singers, like Aaliyah and Ciara. I loved watching their music videos and learning the choreography. But since then, dancing has taken off and because of social media there are so many more dancers [with a platform] like Amari Marshall. She is an amazing full-figured dancer and I love her because she does not look like what America perceives as the typical beauty. There are so many layers when it comes to beauty and what is acceptable, or status quo and she defies that. I love her because she is plus size and so fearless. She is one of the main dancers that got me inspired. However, there are millions more like Amanda Lacount and Jade that also inspire me. Most of the people I follow on my Instagram account are dancers.

### How did you come up with the name 4Thirty-Two?

**Holloway:** 4Thirty-Two is a reference to a bible verse, and people need to know that this verse is the core behind all of this. God is a big part of my life and inspiration, and he put this idea in my heart. The bible verse Mark 4:32 starts off, "Yet when it is sown, it grows up and becomes larger...." I was inspired by a sermon my pastor preached about how when you plant seeds you have to have faith that it will grow. To me it was a leap of faith message: you can plant seeds of what you want to see grow or seeds of doubt. Naming the group after this Bible verse keeps me reminded of why I started the group and keeps me going, especially when times get difficult and when I am dealing with the challenges of managing a business and a group of women with all different types of personalities.

Photography by  
Todd Youngblood



### What is the 4Thirty-Two's mission?

**Holloway:** Our mission is multi layered. We first want to help build confidence in women through the art of dance, because for me, dance changed my life and how I perceived myself. When I dance, I feel more secure, powerful and the ultimate version of myself, things may not be apparent when I am not dancing. We want women to use dance to grow their self-confidence. To help us do this, we do dance classes locally and we travel and produce tutorial videos that can help women get out there, move a little bit and help them feel sexy, too. We want to also advocate for plus size representation in the dance industry, we want to see dancers who look like us booking professional jobs and held to the same standard as any other dancer to prove you do not need to have a typical standard size or skinny body type to be a performer.

### What has been your greatest or most memorable moment with the group?

**Holloway:** Traveling to Italy for free to perform on a TV show. The show is like the show American Idol. The show flew us out because they were doing a segment on representation and they wanted us to represent plus size dancers and the experience was so powerful. This was our first and only live tv performance so far; however, I believe there will be

Photography by  
**Todd Youngblood**



more to come. We also got to travel to Beijing, China. There was a lady there that produced a pageant called Miss Plus Size International and wanted us to come and perform at the pageant. We were flown out there, performed and got to see the Great Wall of China. When I started this group, I never could have imagined that I would get the opportunity to travel the world because of dance.

#### How many group members do you currently have?

**Holloway:** Currently we have 13 members. When we first started, we had over 20 members and I found it difficult to manage. The member count fluctuates, members come in and out since we are all adults and life commitments can sometimes get in the way. But I have a core group that has stuck to me and we have tryouts every year to add new members.

#### What do you consider to be the glue that holds the group together?

**Holloway:** It is everyone's love of dance; at our core we all love to dance. It is also the group's mission because it is a great cause and performing is something we all want to grow in.



*4THIRTY-TWO IS A REFERENCE TO A BIBLE VERSE, AND PEOPLE NEED TO KNOW THAT THIS VERSE IS THE CORE BEHIND ALL OF THIS.*

#### How have you pivoted through this pandemic to keep the group active and engaged?

**Holloway:** I realized that our members have a varying level of comfort. Some do not want to do anything during the pandemic, and some people felt comfortable if everyone wore a mask. What we started to do is function in smaller groups instead of coming together in a large group, rotating around five to six members to operate as safely as possible. We also started having Instagram live classes to teach choreography.

#### What made you enter our Big Girl Bounce Dance challenge?

**Holloway:** One of my group members was tagged in the challenge and she presented it to the group. We were looking for things to stay active during the pandemic and we thought the song was cool because it represented curvy women and curvy bodies. So, I made up a routine and we got together and did it.

#### What are some of your long-term goals for the group?

**Holloway:** One of my biggest visions for the group is to expand it. I want women to feel like they can be a part of this group from all over the world. I want to create a platform that allows women all over the world access to videos or tutorials and allows them to be a part of our mission. Right now, we are more centralized, and we have one group in Charlotte, North Carolina. I will be working hard to bring this to fruition this year. Also, some of us have high-performance dreams and we would love to connect with artists that have a bigger message about body positivity, artists such as Lizzo, and perform on a larger stage to show that representation that we have been fighting so hard for.

#### What does the group have coming up soon?

**Holloway:** Of course, we are looking forward to the Big Girl Bounce Video. Because of COVID-19, the rest is still to be determined. The numbers are starting to rise again, and things keep getting cancelled because of it. So, right now we will put our focus on building our brand online. We will have to wait to see what else is in store.





## Asking Erin's Mirror: An Advice Column – The Debut

**O**ne day, I watched as my daughter unwrapped a gift. The gift took my attention as it was wrapped beautifully. You could tell whoever wrapped the gift did it with meticulous care and purpose. I've never been any good at wrapping gifts, but I admire the craft. It was an average size box, but the bright gold wrapping and ribbon hinted that there was something marvelous inside. As my daughter unwrapped the gift I started to notice the imperfections of the wrapping papers that moments ago appeared flawless. My daughter didn't seem to care; she just wanted to get to the gift. I noticed how the corners of the package had been tucked and taped so the rough edges were hidden from view. I saw an extra piece of wrapping paper stretched across, as if it had been used to extend further around the gift as the wrapping had been cut too short. I noticed a tear beneath where the big golden bow was placed.

***"She's still not broke!"***

Finally, as all the gift wrapping paper was thrown to the floor, I heard my daughter say: "I got it!" It was a toy she wanted. I watched as this magical fairy fluttered through our living room. I was amazed at the fairy's capability. My daughter watched as the fairy flew sometimes high other times low before finally colliding with the wall and hitting the floor. I watched my daughter pick up the fairy, and examine it. She appeared to be making sure the fairy was ok. She was aware that it had been quite a hard fall. I watched as she looked at the wings, the legs, the arms. I watched as she looked at the face as though the fairy's face would show signs of pain or damage. The fairy was still smiling and appeared ready to fly again. I watched as my daughter took her tiny fingers and spun the fairy wings until it picked up enough speed on its own and just like that the fairy took off flying again to my daughter's delight, I could hear her yelling, "She's not broke!" Throughout the day I watched my daughter repeat the same process over and over again. Each time the fairy would take flight, crash and moments later do it all over again. I noticed after the first crash, my daughter did not seem as worried that the fairy wouldn't fly again, in fact, she trusted that it simply would work as it did after the first time it crashed. My little girl doesn't know she inspired me that day as I reflected on 2020 and thought to myself "She's not broke!"

Just like the gift, we wrap ourselves meticulously with everything we think we should have: the homes, companionship, marriage, children, education, career, businesses, loving family and friends. We wrap what needs to be covered, over and sometimes under extend ourselves. Hide rough edges or bad habits and vices instead of taking the time to fix and straighten out issues we just tuck and tape them down.

I was an elaborate gift wrapping at one point in my life. I presented myself to the world with all my gift wrapping paper, which we call accomplishments. Sure the wrapping was nice, but you couldn't see the actual gift: me. I needed to be unwrapped. It was necessary.

As I was unwrapped, I left my employer (an extended family) after almost 20 years, finally accepting that I'd been in a stagnant position. My marriage began to crumble; my teenage daughter was experiencing severe mental health issues that affected my whole family, my husband and I separated, and I began gambling impulsively. Like the fairy I crashed against the wall, hard! I'm now writing to you from a place of transparency. My purpose is to take you on my journey to a place where we can all be E.R.I.N Strong. Empowered, Resilient, Inspiring, and, most importantly, understand that all life's occurrences -- good and bad -- are Necessary.

Please submit your questions about love, life and everything in between to *Asking Erin's Mirror* via email to [SmoochesWomanMag@gmail.com](mailto:SmoochesWomanMag@gmail.com) and you may see your question answered in the next issue of *Smooches*, where *Erin's Mirror* will give you the advice to snatch your life together.





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STYLED BY: **COLASTYLZME**  
MAKE-UP: **GLAMAM STUDIO**  
HAIR: **SASSY DOLL BEAUTY BAR**





# EXCLUSIVE

AN EDITOR'S EXCLUSIVE

## Smooches Cover Girl: *Brittany Neely*

Brittany Neely is a paradox: a humble model, still blown away by her crowning as the Winter 2021 Smooches Woman Magazine cover girl.

**N**eely, a wife and mother in Winston Salem, North Carolina, discovered recently her love for modeling. So when she saw our video promoting the contest looking for the next Smooches cover girl, she decided to take the chance and enter. In February, the southern belle won and was titled Smooches Cover Girl.

The SWM Cover Girl contest drew the interest of models and women from all over the United States, vying for the chance to be on the cover of Smooches. The contestants were judged on their photos, an essay in which they described why they should earn the title of Cover Girl and the number of followers who liked their contest photo on Instagram. And when the votes were counted and all the scores tallied, Brittany Neely emerged as our contest winner and our official Cover Girl.

We got a glimpse of how determined and creative Brittany Neely was through her very own self-promotion for the contest. She created visual content that was informative and showed her magnetic personality. By doing this, she ultimately secured over 900 likes on her contest photo which gave her the push she needed to be crowned the winner.

We caught up with Neely; our newly titled Cover Girl, after her cover

photoshoot for SWM to dive deeper and find out who Brittany Neely really is?

### WHAT MADE YOU ENTER OUR SWM COVER GIRL CONTEST?

**Neely:** When I saw the contest promotion on [former Smooches Cover Girl] Tiffany Flamer's Instagram page, I figured I would give it a chance.

### HOW EXCITED WERE YOU WHEN YOU DISCOVERED THAT YOU WON THE CONTEST?

**Neely:** I was completely blown away, because I was not sure it would be good for me, with me being new to modeling. I felt there would be so many more experienced and talented models entering, and I would not have a shot. So, I was so excited and overwhelmed when I found out that I won.

### WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU GIVE TO WOMEN WHO ARE AFRAID TO STEP OUT OF THE BOX AND GO AFTER THE THINGS THEY WANT OR DREAM OF?

**Neely:** I would say go after your dreams and whatever you want because you do not know what the outcome can be. Just like with this contest, I was not sure what would happen when I entered; but I decided to take a chance and look what happened: I won.







PHOTOGRAPHY: **STILL SHOTS PHOTOGRAPHY**  
STYLED BY: **COLASTYLZME**  
MAKE-UP: **GLAMAM STUDIO**  
HAIR: **SASSY DOLL BEAUTY BAR**

## WHAT MAKES YOUR SOUL HAPPY? WHAT THINGS DO YOU LIKE TO DO?

**Neely:** I love traveling, shopping, and spending time with my family. I have a small family and was raised by my mother, stepfather, and grandparents. My mom is my rock, and I do not do anything without her. It has always been me and my mom and she holds a special space in my heart. I genuinely enjoy my family and spending time with my husband and son. Being a mom is so rewarding.

## WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WANT TO MODEL?

**Neely:** My cousin Erica Gray started a hair company out of Atlanta, and she asked me to be a hair model. I did not know anything about modeling, but I did it because I wanted to support my cousin and her dreams. So, 2019 was my first time ever having a professional photoshoot. I was nervous and did not know what to do. She told me to just be myself... I did not think I was a model, but I did it for her. I always joke with her and tell her she started this mess. And when I won the contest, she said "Oh, I thought you said you weren't a model, and now you are going to be on the cover of a magazine."

## WHAT HAVE YOU DONE SINCE 2019 AS IT RELATES TO MODELING?

**Neely:** Most of the photo shoots since then have been with [Gray's] company and the photos that I submitted for the contest, were photos from her shoot and my birthday shoot. I am still trying to find my way, but I do know that I enjoy being in front of the camera and working to educate myself and connect with the right people.

## HOW HAVE YOU GOTTEN TO THIS CONFIDENT VERSION OF BRITTA-



## NY? WHAT STEPS HAVE YOU TAKEN TO BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE?

**Neely:** Do not make me cry now, I tend to get emotional when I talk about this. Four years ago, I decided to have [weight-loss] surgery. I was almost 300 pounds and life turned for me. I had always been a confident girl and loved myself but there was always something missing. Always being the biggest person was an issue for me. My health was not the best; I was suffering from high blood pressure and I saw myself spiraling out of control. I was afraid because my family had a history of suffering from chronic conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes. I made the decision to have the surgery because I gained 110 pounds after having my son. I must admit it was the best decision I ever made. The person that I am now was always there but this gave her the chance to wake up. Before the surgery, she was buried, suffering from depression and going through a lot of different things. If I had to compare myself from then to now, I would say "who

is this person?" The old me would have never gotten in front of a camera. My health is better, and I am no longer dealing with those medical issues.

## HOW DID YOU ENJOY YOUR COVER GIRL PHOTO SHOOT? WHAT EMOTIONS OR FEELINGS DID YOU HAVE BEFORE OR DURING THE SHOOT?

**Neely:** I enjoyed it thoroughly. I prayed and worked out before the shoot, so I felt good. I looked in the mirror and said how blessed I was to get the chance to be on the cover. I am hopeful for more opportunities. I am so happy I took a chance. I feel like this is the start of something great.

## NOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN FEATURED ON THE COVER OF SWM, WHAT OTHER MODELING GOALS WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH?

**Neely:** I would love to do fashion, model plus size clothing from clothing companies because I love to get dressed up and look good. I would love to work with an agency that can help me learn what I need to do to succeed in the modeling world. I want to make sure that I make the right decisions and learn the inside of what to do and not to do.

## BESIDES MODELING, WHAT OTHER LIFE GOALS WOULD YOU LIKE TO ACCOMPLISH SOON?

**Neely:** I have a lot of things I want to do. I want to pursue nursing and become a nurse practitioner. That has always been near and dear to my heart because I have a heart for caring for people and I also want to start my own business.



# SOCIAL DISTANCE, NOT SOCIAL ISOLATION

## How to stay connected in a pandemic

BY DEJA BRADLEY  
SWM YOUTH EDITOR



**I**n March 2020, the country — and most of the world — shut down for two weeks to clean. Or so we expected. Nine months later, Covid-19 is still here, and worse by some measures, despite slowly increasing vaccine availability. A two-week deep cleaning turned into a “new normal” — one that required us to separate for safety.

No one foresaw that nights out at the club would turn into Instagram Verzuz battles and birthday celebrations would move to zoom, but here we are. Though the pandemic has caused physical isolation, there’s a growing focus on the importance and value of building and maintaining relationships and community support systems. This pandemic has forced us to become more creative when it comes to staying in touch with others and relying on their support in such an unprecedented time. Here are a few fun ways to keep up with relationships and maintain bonds while we help each other get through this time.

### Friends, how many of us have them?

If you’re a member of Millennials or Gen Z, your social media feeds may make you feel crazy for following the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to stay inside and social distance. Some feeds are sprinkled with videos of raging club parties and house gatherings; and photos of influencers and celebrities on tropical islands. If you find yourself choosing to side with the CDC, you may have found creative ways to keep relationships alive. If you are struggling with this, here are some ways to still feel close to your friends, even if it is through a screen:

**Virtual Game Night:** You can play all of your favorite in-person games such as truth or dare, Karaoke, and even Heads Up. Gather your friends or family on the platform of your choice and let the game night begin. Adding a Virtual Game Night to your to-do list will definitely bring fun to your new normal.

**Virtual Paint and Sip:** Grab some friends, some wine, and of course, a canvas and some paint. There are many step-by-step YouTube tutorials on painting, just like if you were in person. Find one, like Bob Ross, and immerse yourself in the art.

**Virtual Bingo:** You and your friends can gather online, generate an online bingo board, bet money and play to win the prize. It may seem unconventional to play online (everything is unorthodox right now anyway), but who doesn’t love a chancewin some money?





or gathering. Use this time to look forward to getting out of this pandemic with the people you love. Create a planning committee so that way everyone can get involved with the planning.

### **Creating Memories, Virtually:**

Even though it's not in person, keep the tradition alive or even start a new one. Plan a virtual talent show (even if it is in those matching pajamas), and have those game nights you usually have, just socially distant.

**Stay in Contact:** Still continue to celebrate those monumental moments. Birthdays, baby showers, graduations and weddings still deserve to be celebrated, even if they are virtual or just a short drive by.

All in all, while we have to social distance and restrict gatherings to slow the spread of COVID-19, distance does not mean isolation. Take this time to still keep those relationships with the ones who mean the most to us. Yes, it is not the most ideal situation, but it's necessary. I know it seems like a year of our precious lives have been ripped from us, but with God and science, we will be back to gathering soon.

## **Dating in a Panny (Pandemic)?**

While some ladies may hate the term "talking," now really is the perfect time to get to know a person. Even though Facetime takes away physical intimacy, let's all thank Steve Jobs, because although we aren't with them, we can still feel close.

**Getting to Know Them:** Here is the opportunity to dive deep into those tough questions, and gauge those red flags. There are some apps like "The And" and tonight-letstalk which suggest open-ended questions to let you get to the good, probing conversation without wasting time.

**Virtual dates:** Being separated doesn't mean you still can't add a spark. You can plan a wine tasting, cook together, or even have a movie date. These things allow you and your boo to still build experiences while protecting one another at the same time.

**Conversation with a Purpose:** Are conversations becoming mundane? Are you finding that your conversations result in silence? It might be time to switch things up. Together, you could pick a podcast or YouTube video to watch separately in your free time, then later come together to discuss. Doing this will keep the conversations fresh and new.

## **We Are A Family**

Most of us have not seen family members in one location since the start of this pandemic. Following the rules of social distancing means that we have forfeited normal family traditions that many look forward to each year. No big Thanksgiving dinners, no matching pajamas and gifts, and most importantly, no hugs. Here are some ways to keep those traditions, just with a twist:

**Plan it:** Now would be a good time to start planning beyond the pandemic, maybe a family trip,



# SELF-LOVE IS TRUE LOVE WITH ASHLEY NELL TIPTON'S

## *The Love You Show*



BY  
EMMA MEDEIROS

Even women who are record-breaking, ceiling-shattering, and history-making feel self-doubt. Ashley Nell Tipton, the first plus-size winner of Bravo's Project Runway, took those feelings and flipped them on their head, launching *The Love You show*, a weekly podcast and YouTube show with her manager Andrew Bisaha.

While not a certified health professional, Tipton is keenly aware that many of her fans struggle with the same fears and anxieties she faced for years, especially during this unexpected time of separation, uncertainty, and isolation we've all been thrust into with the COVID pandemic. After each episode, viewers not only learn that they are not alone but walk away with practical, actionable advice on how to love themselves.

Smooches caught up with Tipton to talk about her definition of self-love and how she practices self-care and self-love during the pandemic.

### HOW DO YOU DEFINE SELF-LOVE?

Accepting and loving yourself just the way you are.

### WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO CREATE *THE LOVE YOU SHOW*?

I realized that people were always reaching out to me wanting to know why I was so confident and centered. I realized that becoming that way was a 5-year journey that I could share with others!

### DO YOU EVER HEAR FROM VIEWERS ABOUT THE IMPACT OR VALUE OF YOUR SHOW? WHAT IMPACT DO YOU HOPE YOUR SHOW WILL HAVE?

Constantly, I never know what Andrew and I will say that will resonate with the audience. There is something for everyone no matter where they are on their journey.

**WHAT SKILLS DID YOU LEARN FROM DESIGNING THAT HAVE TRANSLATED TO YOUR NEW ROLE AS A PODCAST HOST?**

Thinking of the end result, being open to making mistakes, changing when needed, collaboration with others.

**DO YOU PLAN ON EVENTUALLY HAVING GUESTS ON THE LOVE YOU SHOW? IF SO, WHAT SPECIAL QUALITIES WOULD YOU LOOK FOR IN THEM?**

We do! Point of views that align with our messaging.

**WHAT'S BEEN YOUR FAVORITE EPISODE OF THE LOVE YOU SHOW SO FAR AND WHY?**

The Tim Gunn episodes. Andrew and I think ultimate freedom is the freedom from other people's opinions of us. Those two episodes do that!

**CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT A TIME THAT SIGNIFICANTLY SHAPED THE WAY YOU SEE OR DEFINE SELF-LOVE?**

Looking in the mirror and seeing the "negative" results (skin hanging, etc.) of my bypass surgery and loving that image because I know my health was worth it! In that moment I realized there is nothing wrong with me ....just the way I am and prefer to be.



**HOW DO YOU PRACTICE SELF-LOVE AND SELF-CARE?**

Constantly learning, dedicating me-time, evolving....knowing there is a next-step, relaxing, hanging with friends.

**WITH COVID AND ONGOING CIVIL UNREST, MANY ARE STRUGGLING MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY. WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SOMEONE WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH SELF-LOVE IN THIS MOMENT?**

This is truly the time for introspection. The change can be even more dramatic when circumstances in our lives are "tough.". Our negative patterns and lack of discipline are more pronounced and obvious. Not

so easy to "hide".

**TELL US ABOUT THE COLLECTION OF MASKS THAT YOU RECENTLY LAUNCHED.**

I think about my masks as individual creations with the capacity to make a difference. We went from making pretty masks with different fabrics to making statement masks where we knew we could make a difference. We also knew we would lose half of our customer base but realized staying true to our values was more important than \$\$\$\$.

Follow Ashley Nell Tipton's journey at

[www.ashleynelltipton.com/](http://www.ashleynelltipton.com/)

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# Love & Hollywood

HOLLYWOOD COUPLES SHOW THERE'S MORE THAN ONE PATH IN LOVE



BY  
**SETORIA KEY**

**R**elationships come in many forms. Celebrities are known for trying new things in dating and marriage and tossing out conventional and monogamous relationship standards. Several Hollywood couples have reportedly blurred the traditional expectations and boundaries of dating and marriage. They widened views on the variations of love as they brought their private lives into the mainstream arena.

Celebrities have often influenced the lives of their audience. Relationships are no different. As we enter a new decade, many couples are pushing the boundaries of what it means to be committed to a partner, or partners.





Over the past 20 years, Will Smith and Jada Pinkett Smith have been under the microscope of the public eye, constantly working to show the strength of their love and marriage. In recent years, they've worked to prove that their love is stronger than ever, despite being in an unconventional marriage arrangement. Although being criticized by public opinion for their atypical marriage, in 2013 Pinkett Smith mentioned that instead of an "open" marriage, they have more of a mature relationship.

*"Will and I both can do whatever we want because we trust each other to do so. This does not mean we have an open relationship; this means we have a grown one."* **Pinkett Smith said in a Facebook post.**

"Even the word 'wife,' it's a golden cage, swallow the key. Even before I was married, I was like, 'That'll kill me.' And it damn-near did. So why wouldn't you share what you've been through, when you see that other people are out there, trying to figure this crap out?" She went on. "We decided to make it public because it's part of the healing. I feel like if we don't have a real understanding about it, I don't know if interpersonal relationships are possible."

While Will and Jada Smith are one of the most prominent couples to show the diversity of monogamy, they're not alone.

While some hide their mistress, in fear of getting caught in an entanglement, actor and stand-up comedian DeRay Davis had two live-in girlfriends. He showed his "three-lationship" homelife for the first time on the 2016 Oxygen reality series, *Living with Funny*. On the daytime talk show *The Real* in November 2017, Davis talked about his relationship and said that they're very comfortable because he is very open. Davis is the father of a teen-aged daughter. He went on to say that he is not a player, that he'd rather they marry each other, and he'd just be with both of them. Before dating the pair, Davis and model Claudia Jordan were said to have ended their relationship because he "had too many" women, according to Jordan.







Niecy Nash popping up married in an Instagram photo nearly shut down the internet. Nash is a comedian, actress, television host, model, and producer. While her marriage to singer, songwriter Jessica Betts came as a surprise to some, Nash said her union was a “going into herself, not a coming out.”

In the September 2020 issue of People Magazine, Nash said, “[My marriage] has absolutely nothing to do with gender and it has everything to do with her soul ... She is the most beautiful soul I have ever met in my life.”

“I was not suppressing my sexuality my whole life.” She added, “I love who I love. At one point in my life, I married twice and I love those people. And today I love this person. I've done everything I wanted to do on my own terms and my own way. So my choice now in a partner has nothing to do with who I've always been. It's a matter of who I am in this moment.”

Celebrity couples have taught us many things when it comes to love – no matter how unorthodox some relationships may seem: love is love, and true love will always stand the test of time.



# THE REINVENTION OF MICHELLE SNOW



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## A Letter for Bold Curvy Women

Dear Queen,

It's Official! God gave us his very best when he gave us you. Look at you precious, juicy, sweet and courageous. Those strong thighs rub with fire as your passion is relentlessly called upon to warm the world. Your thickness shows that you are both durable and not easily broken. May your smile radiate a big as your roaring laughter. Women all over pay to have the jiggle that graces you so beautifully. While your thickness is what they see, what rests beneath is much more paramount. Your mind is a wrecking ball. You crush weakness, poverty, doubt, and the noise of the doubter. Rise Queen Rise! May you today and everyday, Wake Up Winning...Again!

#FaithUp #LivingEpistle

*Michelle Snow, is the Platinum Connect & Vision to Performance Coach formerly known as "Career Coach on Duty". Michelle is a Philanthropist, Award Winning Coach, and the President & Executive Consultant of the multiple companies and the new non-profit "Grow Together Snow Foundation". Michelle originally piloted as an entrepreneur in the year 2010. At the time, the primary concept was slated only for young adult mentoring in Professional & Leadership Development. After launching, the unthinkable ignited. Suddenly, Michelle found herself fighting for her life as she was incapacitated with the shocking diagnosis of Sarcoidosis. Her walking and standing ability was minimal. Public speaking was only a distant memory. The disease caused unbearable pain. Doctors told her that she would "be fine" in 15 or 20 years; by then the disease could reverse. Michelle spent much time in prayer. She held on to optimism and hope...in six months, Michelle Recovered! Today, Michelle and her companies continue to stretch its borders. She's an expert in Leadership & Professional Development for educational institutions, corporations, businesses and community. Michelle is recognized by FORBES, Philadelphia City Council, Philadelphia Department of Commerce. She's endorsed by SCOOP USA and Funtimes Magazine. She's recognized by The Philadelphia Tribune, Philadelphia Magazine, and more.*

*Michelle's passion is best expressed in her personal mantra, "Grow Together". Your #BestConnect2021*



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# A sitdown with Signé's Kreations

BY  
**LATONYA SPATES**

**B**ianca Word is as bold as the press-on nails she styles with delicate flair. Word opened her business, Signé's Kreations in May 2020, when the pandemic was in full swing and the country was seeing rising Covid-19 cases. As a full-time mother and entrepreneur, her love for her work and her customers shines through in each set of customized and expressive nails, which she makes in the hopes she will uplift women and encourage them to feel good about themselves.

*Smooches* sat down with Word to discuss self-love in these unprecedented times, building a business during the pandemic and what to do when you're in a self-love rut.



**What does self-love mean to you? during the pandemic?**

Self-love is the meaning of providing self with unconditional love through self-care and self-acceptance, unapologetically. Self-love begins with you and ends with you, hence the word self. When we begin to love our true self we are teaching and showing others how we should be treated.

**How do you stay motivated, in order to motivate other people,**

Honestly, I still find it shocking to hear that I motivate people and I never take it for granted; so truthfully, that is my motivation to keep going and to continue to speak my truth. When people reach out to me on social media and let me know that I motivate or inspire them, it puts a smile on my face because I love relating to other women and being their reason to also keep going is a reward in itself. This pan-

demical has taken a toll on everyone, whether it be physically, mentally or financially, and motivating each other during this time is a huge aspect for us to bridge the gap when one may feel alone or defeated at times.

**What would you tell a woman who struggles with self-worth, especially during the pandemic?**

I would tell her to go look in the mirror and just stare at herself for



about 5 to 10 minutes and repeatedly say, "I am worthy!" until she truly believes it. Yes, this may take some time for you to truly believe it, but the more you say it, the more you will begin to believe it. If the tears start to roll down, then let it all out. I need all women to know that we are worthy and deserving of all things; let no one's unpopular opinion change your mindset of that. I would also advise her to write down at least 10 compliments to give to herself and read them every morning before starting her day. The only validation you need to feel worthy comes from self. Never allow someone else's compliments to determine your self-worth. Anything with self is a process and will take time, so it is okay if you need a reminder every once in a while because honestly I recently had to remind myself of everything I deserve.

### **What standout moment in your life inspired you to create your business?**

My inspiration started when I decided to stop wearing acrylics. I wanted healthier nails, but I still wanted to wear the cute, colorful and blinged-out designs on my nails. Plus, we all know females love getting their nails done, especially when we add some length to it. I started practicing my own designs and when I would wear them out in public, people couldn't believe that they were press-ons and not done at a shop. Bingo! That was my standout moment and with some motivation from my friends and family, I put my entrepreneur hat on and put in work.



## **Signes\_kreationsllc**

### **Self-motivation is something many people are struggling with during the pandemic. Can you talk about the importance of Signe's Kreations during this time? Have you had to switch up your work during the pandemic?**

I actually started Signe's Kreations in May 2020 ... so honestly I haven't had to switch too much as of yet. However, since my business is hands-on when it comes to measuring for accurate sizing, the pandemic puts a strain on that because had it been before the pandemic my customers would be able to do in-person measuring at different events and pop-up shops. This is why I decided to add a sizing kit so that the customer is now able to see how each nail will fit each finger, to their liking. [My business] was at a high when salons and nail shops shut down. Even though we were stuck in the house women still wanted to be fly and flashy, so my business definitely benefited from that. Also being able to switch

up your style when need be and not having to wait for your next fill-in appointment was a major plus. I will say, this pandemic has truly been a blessing in disguise in certain areas and me starting my business is definitely my favorite.

### **After the pandemic people may need a lot more TLC. What is on the horizon for you and Signe's Kreations?**

Me and Signe's Kreations will continue to flourish and build more networking opportunities. One of my many goals for my business is to own a small [brick-and-mortar] shop so that my customers can come in and enjoy all of what Signe's Kreations has to offer. Signe's Kreations has some more heat for the people, but you know I can't spoil the fun just yet.

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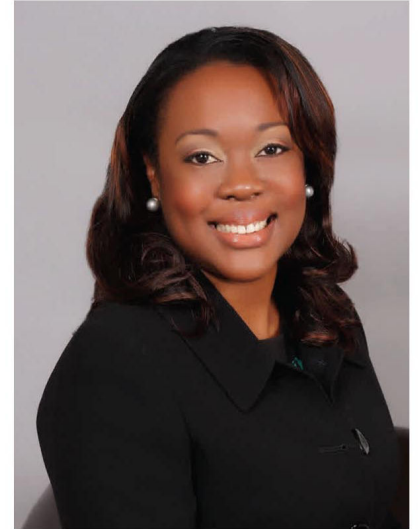
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# THE YEAR I SAID YES TO ME:

## Where I could have found hopelessness, I discovered love in a pandemic

AN ESSAY

BY  
**DR. RENITA L. SEABROOK**

**O**n the first day of 2020, I found myself on a hotel veranda in Jamaica with my usual cup of coffee, gazing out at the Caribbean sea, reflecting on the year that had just passed; my successes, disappointments, and some goals unfulfilled. I remember thinking, "This 2020 year will be better, different. New year, new you." I dug into my beach bag and pulled out my trusty journal, excited to scribble. The cover of the journal read "BIG Thinking Precedes GREAT Achievement." I cracked open the journal to the first page and wrote: "Today is January 1, 2020, a special day, as 2020 represents for me the symbolism of 20/20 vision, perfect and clear vision. I plan today to write out my yearly dreams, my goals, and create my vision board of key areas of my life that I want to achieve ...Let the journey begin."

The symbolism of that year and that day made me smile; my spirit was energized. Three months later, the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

During the pandemic, I found myself sitting still, trying to figure out how to thrust myself closer to my goals. I had so many goals to complete, so many dreams to see come to fruition. I reflected on the vision board I created at the beginning of the year. As I sat in quiet, I began to question myself; have I done all that I want to do in life? What makes me happy? What held me back from achieving my secret passions? Why did I place certain parts of my life on pause? Through the stillness in my apartment, someone emerged in my life; I began to see Me, the wholeness of Me. One morning I looked at myself hard and long in the mirror, and asked myself, "what about me do you see?" Then it struck me. I finally had an aha moment. I finally found a new love: me. I wanted to take the time to learn and relearn about myself. I pulled out my trusty journal and began to jot a list, letting the creative juices flow, of what would bring me ultimate joy that I've denied myself or been denied, such as starting



my own fitness studio despite being plus size. While I wrote out my thoughts, I remembered I purchased two books back in 2018 that I had not read yet: *Year of Yes: How to Dance It Out, Stand in the Sun and Be Your Own Person* by Shonda Rhimes; and *Yes! The Prayer God Loves to Answer* by Don Nori Sr.

The *Year of Yes* gave me the courage to say yes. I read it following the list I made on New Year's Day. What resonated with me most was when she said, "I was mentally present," which inspired me to be mentally present, and aware of my thoughts and positive mindset. In my Yes, I felt empowered and began to explore big thinking. I attended masterclasses and workshops by people including Iyanla Vanzant and Lisa Nichols, which focused on being purposeful and intentional with my passions in life, protecting my mind every day.

More importantly, I learned the art of the pivot; to pivot past my fears and doubts and push through by prayer. The book, *Yes! The Prayer God Loves to Answer*, emphasized even further to go deeper in my prayer life, to pray audaciously and boldly, daring to ask God for the impossible in my life. What I found again, the wholeness of me, repeatedly saying "Why not me?" Through the inspiration of the Word of God, countless audiobooks and books, I have found me, me that is determined to focus on and truly walk in my greatness. The me that is fully represented in my totality and beautiful form. The me that said "Yes."



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