

# LAY IT OUT

A MAGAZINE FOR COOL PEOPLE

Issue Six

June/July

2022

## FEATURING

**THE CAT'S OUT OF THE DRAG::**  
In conversation with Belfast's  
Queen Billie

What repealing Roe V. Wade  
means for queer Americans

Marijuana Boom: the story of  
Colombia's first drug trade

The things people do for money:  
The Real Housewives of Dubai

Off the Record: the summer  
playlist

**PLUS ART, POETRY AND MORE  
FROM AROUND THE WORLD**

Love will  
ALWAYS  
win

Welcome to Issue Six of Lay It Out!

In some ways it is a surprise we are here already. It has been a thrill to keep on collecting wonderful articles and art from around the world, and equally thrilling to keep hearing wonderful feedback. Our LIO family may be small, but we are mighty!

Summer is here, heralded by the solstice, and hopefully this is a time for more relaxation, warmth, and fun. Students have fewer deadlines, working from home can be done in the sun, and even if your shift is from 9 to 9 you will still be able to get a glimpse of the sun.

Of course everything is not all pool parties and heatwaves. The world still turns and around it there are fires that need putting out. The abominable shooting in Uvalde, which needlessly took the lives of 19 children and 2 teachers. Where the one mother brave enough to jump in where police would not is now facing legal charges. Another 13 mass shootings in the first weekend of June. In Nigeria, a Pentecost celebration in a church in Owo was crashed by a gunman, and now 40 innocent people are dead. The war in Ukraine rages on— as predicted, sanctions have only destroyed the morale of the Russian people and the Kremlin refuse to back down. Refugees from the war are being raped, assaulted, and manipulated on their way to safety and in a few cases in their supposed refuge. Wildfires in Spain threaten life and home as temperatures in Europe reach record highs, and investigations from BBC Arabia suggest mass migrant deaths in Qatar due to heatstroke are being underreported. The Everest base camp is being moved as the glacier is melting. New Zealand is considering taxing sheep and cows for their methane production in an attempt to do something to stop the continuous roll towards climate apocalypse.

One of the most devastating recent events was the murder of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh— this happened in May, but after we went to press. A bright, intelligent, necessary voice that many believe was deliberately silenced. But it will echo long after death. Her funeral procession, as frustrating as the Israeli government's interference was, shows the impact of her legacy. And it is a reminder of the importance of speaking, writing, and spreading the truth— regardless of the many attempts to suppress it, it will live on.

Across the USA and in certain areas of the north of Ireland, conservatives are attacking drag queens of all people. When faced with serious issues that threaten the entire existences of humanity, I guess a 'man in a thong' (to quote disgraced ex-politician Jolene Bunting) is the greatest threat to focus on... But while these bastions of hate are a real concern and have the potential to do real harm, the communities they attack are much more united and stronger than they probably think. While these people may never fully disappear, they will be outnumbered, and nothing can stop true love and those with open minds and hearts.

Within this issue many topics we cover are not pleasant: the effects of the potential repeal of Roe v. Wade in the United States, particularly for queer people; the persecutions and death of a young queer woman in Kenya; the economic crisis in Nigeria; and the abuse of infertile women by a twisted doctor. But even as these stories are painful to read, and may leave you feeling hopeless, there is something very empowering in them being shared. The people whose stories are being told are being heard. They are not alone. They have us to empathise, remember them, and stand with them either in spirit or literally as we can in our own small ways change the mindsets that endanger others and financially support the individuals and movements too. As different as these stories may be from our own individual experiences, they may help us come to a greater understanding together.

There's lots of cool things happening too. Indigenous cuisine, like that championed by Chef Kalymaracaya, is being popularised and given a continuous life. Black British musicians are getting their recognition, with the proposed Black British Music exhibition at the British Library and the Grime history exhibition at the Museum of London. There continues to be great music released to uplift us and showcase many different cultures and voices around the world. Beautiful art and prose continues to be made, and we are lucky to share some of it within these pages.

So thank you for taking the plunge and picking up this zine and for supporting us. As always, be safe and well. And keep doing your best.



# The plight of the queer community in Kenya

By Judy Bokao

The news of Sheila Lumumba's death hit me hard even though I didn't know them personally. Sheila was a 25-year-old non-binary lesbian who was murdered in cold blood by unknown assailants in their home. According to the autopsy, they had been raped, strangled, stabbed several times in the neck and eyes, and their leg had been broken. Their body was discovered three days later after their colleagues noticed they failed to report to work.

As the death of Sheila continued to go viral on Twitter, a few Kenyans took to social media to share homophobic and vile tweets under #JusticeforSheila which was meant to demand justice for Sheila. It is not uncommon for the Kenyan LGBTQ+ community to be attacked online. Many homophobic people use social media to mock, threaten and insult members of the queer community. Kenya, like many countries in Africa, has criminalized homosexuality and it is an offense punishable by up to 14 years in jail.

It is unlikely that the fight for LGBTQ+ rights in Kenya will be won anytime soon. In a CNN interview in 2018, the President was clear that LGBTQ+ rights are a "non-issue" and that Kenya does not consider "homosexuality a human right". Many Kenyans share these homophobic views and continue to push for a "conservative and religious" society. This has allowed institutionalized homophobia in Kenya to thrive while queer Kenyans continue to live every day in fear of their lives.

After Sheila's murder, a fellow queer friend tweeted "Sheila and I are both 25 and lesbians. I can't rest because I am one statistic away from being this. I can't rest because I know my silence will mean Sheila's death goes unpunished." This is not the first time justice has gone unserved in a murder of an LGBTQ+ person in Kenya. The police declined to talk about the cases citing that it is an ongoing case but the families of the victims tell a different tale.

In Sheila's case, the police claimed to be unable to find the murder weapon only for their cousin to discover the potential murder weapon, a knife, among Sheila's possessions when clearing their home. In most cases, grieving relatives and friends have been forced to carry out basic investigative work themselves. Sheila's family also had to track down crucial CCTV of their final hours. It was only after pressure from the media and human rights activists that the police finally released a statement. They, however, did not reveal much other than the main suspect had gone into hiding and they were working to track him down. The family is still in pain with so many questions but it is an uphill task to get updates on the case from the police officers involved.

Sheila's case is no different from Erica Chandra's, a transgender woman was also cruelly killed last year and her body dumped along the road. She worked for 'JINSIANGU' an organization whose slogan is 'Creating safe space for the existence of intersex, transgender, and gender nonconforming (ITGNC) individuals. Her assailants are yet to be brought to justice and no one is coming forth with any information.

Another queer Kenyan activist known as Joash Mosoti was also killed in his own home. He had been concerned about his safety before the deadly attack but received no help. He was attacked, tortured, and strangled to death by unknown people in his house. His case is still ongoing and even though it has been a year, there are still no answers. Poor police investigation played a huge role in these cases and the murders can get away with their heinous crimes.

There have also been numerous cases of corrective rape especially targeting lesbians. Horrific stories of corrective rape are prevalent in the LGBTQ+ community in Kenya. The situation is worsened because most victims can't report the case to the police. They treat LGBTQ+ people with extreme brutality in police cells. It is not unheard of that some of these corrective rape cases happen with the consent of the victims' families. There is this misguided idea that it will turn the victim into a 'normal' heterosexual person and 'cure their sexuality.'

The transgender community in Kenya also faces social stigma and has no access to affordable healthcare such as gender reassignment-related services. The government continues to reject the change of name application even though the High Court of Kenya ruled favorably on the matter. The police actively harass transgender people who don't appear as indicated in their documents and have sometimes arrested them on charges of carrying fake documents.

LGBTQ+ students in Kenya are also feeling the brunt of the homophobic attitude in the country. In December last year, Education Cabinet Secretary George Magoha called for LGBTQ+ students to attend Day Schools instead of boarding schools to avoid interaction with Non-LGBTQ+ students. This was a discriminatory move against students who are presumed to be or identify as LGBTQ+. Kenyan schools have not been known to handle cases of homosexuality well. There have been cases where queer students have been expelled, heavily beaten, or both. It is hard to find a new school once a student has been expelled especially for being gay. The remarks of the Education Cabinet Secretary led a petition on the Right to Education for LGBTQ+ students in Kenya to be filed and it is set to be heard in court later this month.

Life for the LGBTQ+ community in Kenya is difficult but we have not given up hope that it will get better in the future. The queer community remains resilient and ready to speak up against the social stigma and homophobia they face daily. We know we are open targets for discrimination, and violent physical attacks and have no rights but we refuse to give in to fear and march on calling for justice. It is only through perseverance that we will be able to get the changes we desperately call for. The more we speak out the more awareness we raise and people can finally understand our plight. It is why I refuse to be silent.



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Inside the mind's of international drag kings, queens, and things

## A CONVERSATION WITH QUEEN BILLIE



Queen Billie is one of Northern Ireland's best up and coming queens. With a new podcast, a recent runway win at The Maverick's Thursday Drag Nigh hosted by Mistress Onya Becks, and her debut at Belfast Pride coming up, it seems much like her namesake she's her to conquer! We chatted with Billie about their inspirations, the importance of drag, and what's coming next.

### Hello Queen Billie! First of all can you tell our readers what the significance of your name is?

My drag name is a play on "King Billy" also known as King William III of England. I actually never thought of this name myself. I have had several drag names before I settled with Queen Billie and one day I put a question box on my instagram story and the lovely Blu Hydrangea suggested five or six funny names, and Queen Billie was one. I remember seeing it on my phone screen and I thought, that's the one. I've never looked back since I chose it. The name Billie does have meaning however. My grandfather who I absolutely adore is called Billy. I also absolutely ADORE Billy Porter, Billie Eilish and the icon that is Billie Piper. Billies everywhere!

### Why did you get involved in drag? What about it speaks to you?

I got into drag properly because of COVID in all honesty! I used to play around with make-up from about 15 years old and loved Drag Race, but I never had the courage to do it because I thought being a gay man was enough of a shock to my family. I used to care about other people's opinions way too much. When the lockdown first hit in 2020, I still had to work as I work for the NHS and I started doing drag in my bedroom and set up instagram live videos and performed a few songs whilst getting blocked on WKD (and that's not a joke!) - I then just continued doing it and haven't looked back! It has been the most crazy experience ever, something I never thought I would achieve! My first performance was in October 2021, so although I have done it for a few years now, it's only been since a few months ago I started getting my name around the bars and making a good name for myself. Very proud of what I have achieved in such little time! The thing about drag that speaks to me is being able to make people smile and feel like they have someone to relate to. I only ever want to lift up our community and make it a better place. I find that drag gives me a voice and it allows me to speak for those who are not yet in the position to speak out and be a voice for themselves.

### Drag intersects with gender and sexuality, though it doesn't have to be about these things all the time. Do you think drag has changed your perspective on either of these topics?

Drag has definitely changed my perspective on sexuality and gender big time, specifically gender. I can remember as a teenager I felt like sometimes I was more feminine at times than I was masculine and sometimes the opposite. I often struggled to be comfortable in my male body as I occasionally had thoughts about becoming a woman and maybe being transgender. This I know now, is not completely the case. I still struggle with my sexuality and gender. Whilst I identify as a gay man, I don't fully understand what I am in regards to that. I don't like to label as much anymore but the closest I can sit with is pan-sexual and that's something I am very much learning to accept. In regards to gender, that's a huge cluster of feelings and emotions that may never settle, however, like my sexuality, the closest thing I can relate to is being non-binary but with both. I don't want to fully label myself yet. I may never label myself and that's ok! Labels are not for everyone! Drag has really allowed my mind to explore gender and sexuality so much and I can honestly say, I would probably never have explored my gender and sexuality if it wasn't for drag.

### What kind of performances do you personally enjoy doing in drag?

When I'm performing, I actually really love to lip sync to a song with male vocals when I'm dressed as a woman. Part of this is to do with really loving Queen, David Bowie, Bronski Beat and Dead or Alive. The other part of it is because everybody has different tones to their voice and that needs to be normalised, especially within our trans community. The voice is such a powerful weapon but yet it is one tiny part of us. I also really love to switch things up when I am performing. When I am doing a set, I like to have three songs that have no correlation. Maybe I'll do Queen, then the next I'm doing Mabel, and then I take it to the ballads. I try to display different energies and give a good range to the audience.



Photos courtesy of Queen Billie

Inside the mind's of international drag kings, queens, and things

## What do you hope to explore in the future of your drag? As it's your 2 year drag anniversary, where do you see Billie in 2 years?

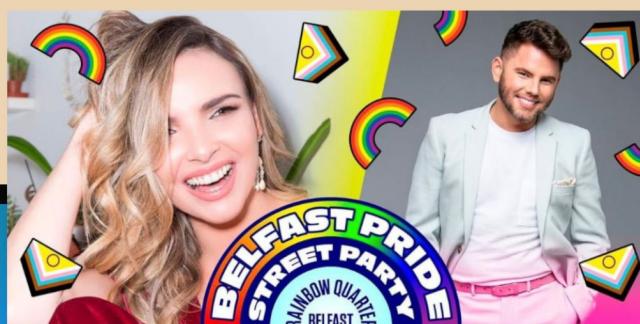
I think the future for me and Billie is bright. Billie is an extension of my personality and isn't just an 'alter-ego', I really do get on like Billie in real life. I just tend to get away with more when I have make-up and a wig on. Whilst Billie is me, I do tend to see Billie as an imaginary friend, a best friend. My mind does turn to Billie for help and I do use her as a coping mechanism in social or awkward situations. I jump into her shoes. Over the next two years I would really love to have my own night somewhere. I do like to take drag as seriously as possible without removing the fun but it is a business in my mind and I do like to keep it professional when it's needed. I would absolutely love my own night, with well-paid guests and to be more myself than I have ever been. Drag Race would be on the cards too but it's not my end goal. I would also LOVE to see myself being an ambassador for people like myself who are struggling. I would absolutely love to do a LOT of campaigning for our LGBTQ+ community here in Belfast and beyond too.

## What advice would you say to other young people in a similar position to yourself in terms of drag/accepting yourself?

If I had any advice for young people in a similar situation as myself, the first piece of advice would be to not rush. Don't rush because other people are ahead of you, don't rush because you think you have to do it by a certain age and don't rush because you need time to develop all of your emotions and feelings. I used to think I was a gay man and that's all I ever will be. I forced myself to believe I was one thing, when I am actually another. I used to suppress my feelings regarding my gender and sexuality and that wasn't healthy. I'm still dealing with that. Whilst being yourself and living your authentic life is the goal, make sure you don't put yourself in serious danger. Let yourself brew for a while and when that day comes and you get to be yourself openly and honestly, it's gonna be amazing and nothing will stop you. As for drag, if you are in a position where you want to start, GO FOR IT! Just be kind when doing so! Remember those drag artists who paved the way for us to do what we do and never be too critical. The performer you see on stage is only a small fraction of who they are and you don't know the full story, so always always always be kind. These are tough times we live in and we need more love!



For more Billie you can find her on Instagram @officialqueenbillie and listen to her podcast 'Smokin' Fegs & Havin' Gags' with Raye the Queen, now available on YouTube and Spotify.



SATURDAY 30th JULY ON UNION STREET

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TINA LEGGS TANTRUM • MISTY FALLS • ROXY TUMBLEDRYER • PAULETTA STILETTA • ROBYN DIAMONDS  
TIFFANY VON TUSSELE • MALIBU PERRY • SABRINA BEWITCHED • SCARLETT MUGLER • MIZ TASTY • PURE BENT • MISS MARY JANE  
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# The blossoming of the Colombian green leaf: an interview with Marijuana Boom author Dr. Lina Britto

by Gabriel Leão

The book **Marijuana Boom: The Rise and Fall of Colombia's First Drug Paradise** (University of California Press, 2020) is a fundamental text to understand the contemporary history and the current status of the drug business. It will be launched in Spanish in August by Planeta publishing house. **Marijuana Boom** covers how in the 1970s traffickers from the Caribbean coast aligned with American buyers made the South American country the main supplier of marijuana for a needy US drug market that itself was mainly propelled by American hippie counterculture. It also laid the foundations for the Latin American country to become one of the main players in the drug trade and later to reign above others in the following decade with cocaine, practically cutting through competition and putting their flags over New York and Miami; in the latter Colombians became part of the scene known as Cocaine Cowboys which would inspire mediatic juggernauts Scarface (1983) and Miami Vice (1984-1989).

In a Skype talk interview with Lay It Out Magazine, **Marijuana Boom's** author Dr Lina Britto, an Associate Professor of History at USA's Northwestern University, talks about the rise of Colombia as a marijuana "Eden", the transition to cocaine, the political games, the legalization of medicinal cannabis and the image of Colombia as some sort of dangerous drug fuelled adventure propagated in media - including from Colombia itself .

**Lay it Out Magazine: Your book approaches how Marijuana was important in the formation of international trafficking from Colombia before cocaine took over. Can you briefly tell us the events that led to this moment in Colombian history?**

**Lina Britto, Ph.D.:** Colombia is known for being one of the main producers of cocaine but what people don't know is that before all that happened, we were the number one supplier of cannabis, "marijuana" in the language of the time, to the United States in a time where the marijuana market in the US grew exorbitantly because of the so-called "counterculture" generation coming to its height.

For a long time, Mexico was the main supplier of marijuana for the US market but because Mexico became the first laboratory of President Richard Nixon's "War on Drugs" in the early 1970's, the marijuana supply from Mexico to the United States got a little interrupted and so this new generation of consumers looked for a new supply. That is one of the first factors that explains why Colombia became such an important place for this new kind of drug trafficking. Since there was an initiative on the part of the consumers here in the United States to search for new sources of supply and because part of the counterculture, the search for economic independence and autonomy was very important.

By capitalizing and making profits in this sort of business and by supplying themselves, supplying friends and supplying others with the weed that they smoked regularly and in great quantities, this became an important economic alternative for the counterculture generation. Hence, we will see that it was one of the first factors.

But there was (marijuana) in many countries, and the consumers were searching for marijuana in the form of flowers, of hashish, of oil, of paste In many countries around the world (information can be found in reports in the US National Archives, the collection of the Department of State ) consumers were looking for marijuana and hashish therefore, Colombia was just one of those countries.

The question for us is: "How did Colombia being just one of those countries become the main supplier by the early 1970's and during the whole decade?" To answer that question, we need to understand Colombian history and what was happening in the country at the time because that is what explains why marijuana became such an important agricultural commodity for export and there are many factors (to discuss). I'm just going to give you a few.

The region that became the marijuana belt of the country is the Northern most part of the Caribbean coast and that region has a long history of production of agricultural commodities for exportation: bananas and many other (products). The former being the most important one to the North-west but there are others as well.

There were traditions, knowledge, patterns, production and commercialization to do this business. The Caribbean coast in Colombia, a region that also has a long history of smuggling all kinds of products, including agricultural products, was going through a very delicate social and economic crisis that had to do precisely with the transformation of the legal economies of agricultural commodities.

Thus, it is in the middle of that crisis that local people- from the 'peasants' who cultivated the weed to the middle classes, upper classes and elites who invested in the business (by promoting the marijuana fields and financing the commercial activities, the exportation operation, and etc.) - they found in marijuana an opportunity to use it like an escape valve to deal with these crises that were happening in the region.

At this point, emerges a combination of all these factors: the business initiative; the part of the hippies and the members of the counter cultural generation here in the US; the "War on Drugs" in Mexico, the forces of the consumers/entrepreneurs to goad and find new sources, to finance and promote these businesses in other parts of the world; the socio-economic crisis in this region of Colombia with a long tradition of producing and exporting commodities and smuggling all kinds of products including agricultural products.

It goes to the point where all these different factors come together to produce the "perfect storm" which was the Marijuana Boom of the 1970's in this part of the country which only lasted a little over a decade. I mean, the business itself lasted for probably two decades but the bonanza, the boom, for about a decade. In the end, it was very transient and not lasting but still opened the door for Colombia to become a drug producer for the American markets.

**LIOM: The 1980's is the time of the Cocaine Cowboys in Miami. The boom of Marijuana from Colombia took place in the 1970's. How was drug trafficking different in those two eras?**

**LB:** They are definitely like two different morals and two different universes. Because the trafficking of marijuana in the 1970s was less centralized. The marijuana economy in the Caribbean coast of Colombia was like a pyramid where you have a lot of peasant producers, at the bottom; then in the middle, a class of intermediaries who connected the producers in the mountain region - people who actually produced the marijuana - with the exporters and the port cities with the connections and the buyers in the United States and also then a very small group of exporters who were the ones who managed to find buyers here in the United States and develop stable relationships with them to the point of later in the game becoming able to succeed in these export operations. It concentrated all the wealth and the profits in very few hands. But still at the bottom it was very wide and gave employment and business opportunities to many people who never had that much before. In the end paradoxical and at the same time democratizing.

Experts at the time estimated that around 150 thousand people participated in the marijuana economy in the 1970's and in the Caribbean Colombian Coast at the time of the boom. That was a big population.

The marijuana business was wider in a social and in a geographical sense. And the American buyers had a very important role in the whole business because they were the importers and without them the Colombian marijuana wouldn't reach the markets.

That is a huge difference than what happened with cocaine later on in the 1980's when in Colombia there were just few networks of smugglers and traffickers importing the coca paste from Bolivia and Peru to refine it while improvising laboratories in different parts of the interior of the country and exporting it to the United States in small amounts but it was so profitable that it was worth the risk. But when we compare it with the marijuana economy of the 1970's, the cocaine economy was more socially and geographically restricted. Later, it became a sort of recovery tool for the nation and covered different regions of the country thus becoming the main regional economy in many parts of Colombia.

What is interesting is that when comparing marijuana and cocaine you see how cocaine traffickers had a more ambitious entrepreneurial vision for their business and they realized that they needed to take over the wholesale distribution here in the United States because that was where the big money was being made. That never happened with the marijuana merchants.

The marijuana merchants were only working on the Colombian side and relying on their American buyers for importation and the wholesale distribution here in the United States. That is not what happened with cocaine entrepreneurs. They began to displace their former associates who were Cubans, Puerto Ricans, white Americans and so on, pushing them out of the business.

It can be said that the whole **Miami Vice** mythology, that came about because of the show Miami Vice, at this point goes beyond the show and became an aesthetic and a mythology to talk about this moment of history in the Americas.

All that is happening in the contexts of these "wars", the Colombians' endgame was to displace their former allies and associates to become the wholesale distributors here in two focal points: Miami in the one hand which was mostly controlled by the people who later on became to be known as the Medellín Cartel and New York, on the other hand, which was mostly controlled by the people who later came to be known as the Cali Cartel.

So, that is a big difference because with marijuana that never really happened. Colombia never really took over the wholesale distribution in the United States but with cocaine it happened. And with that we see a sort of an exponential growth of the whole economy of Colombia as well and an exponential growth of the profits and the profitability of the whole economy because now Colombians were the ones who were receiving the money from the last stages of the whole commercialization chain where the bigger profits are produced.

**LIOM: In many mainstream media products Colombia is shown as a coffee republic, model of Latin American representative democracy and Economic modernization before the rise of drug dealing. Is this portrayal truthful and what role has drug trafficking played in this scenario?**

**LB:** Well, it is true in certain senses, it is not in others, and it is a mythology in another sense. Because if you compare the history of Colombia in the 20th Century with other countries, you'll see a more stable two-party system that had regular elections for President every four years. It passes (the idea) that a constitutional order was happening.

We only had one dictatorship at that point which happened in the 1950's. So, if you compare with other countries in the region both Colombia and Venezuela had a very similar political system. Like a two-party system, very few military dictatorships, though we had a civil war in the late 1940's that ran into the 1950's and that is the reason that we also had a military dictatorship. The military dictatorship was pretending to pacify the country after the most violent years that came after the civil war.

In a comparative sense, you see a certain constitutional democracy going on in Colombia and after the civil war and after the military dictatorship there was an elite pact between the members of the two main political parties, the Liberal and the Conservative, which led Colombia to enter into a phase of rapid economic modernization, industrialization, growth of the domestic market, secularization of the education, public educational system expanded. We see in a way the emergence and consolidation of a middle-class, which points to the idea that Colombia was checking all the boxes of that list of the ideal model of modernization in Latin America.

On one side it is true but on the other it is also a mythology because at the same time Colombia had in many different moments – not all the time – very violent social and political conflicts that made that informal constitutional democracy which was being celebrated to be a reality more on paper than on the ground. Nevertheless, that was the challenge of trying to understand what is going on paper and what is really going on the ground. And on the ground, we see a very restricted democracy that did not allow a third way or a third-party movement to emerge and consolidate, and it was very monopolized by this two-party system which was very selective, and the members of the system had a sort of a monopoly on the State apparatus.

And that context is where we see the emergence of these insurgencies and guerrillas just like it happened in other parts of Latin America as well. But in the case of Colombia there was a distinct difference in vision between rural Colombia and urban Colombia. In rural Colombia we have a lot of social conflicts, political conflicts, and insurgencies arising and taking over in many regions, later with the help of drug money as well.

In the urbanized part we have the city, in which some of this ideal model of democracy was more evident.

There is a mythology in a certain way and a reality in another way. I'll say that it is more paradoxical than anything else because it is true and yet it is a myth at the same time.

**LIOM: How was the research process for your book? Do you believe your life experience as a Colombian had a weight on the final product?**

**LB:** Yeah, obviously. My interest on this topic comes from my personal family life because my father and his family are from the region that became the marijuana belt. And I was born during the tail end of this boom. It has always been part of my childhood life and imagination about the region of origins of my father and his side of our family.

That plays an important part in my curiosity on the topic and helped me when I started doing research because thanks to my family, relatives and family friends, etc. I had access to many people that had very insightful information, that participated in this economy, that witnessed, that has been studying it or that was on everything else.

Plainly being Colombian who has part of my roots in this region influenced me, not just in calling my attention to what topic that was but also on how forgotten, neglected and not really analysed in depth properly, at least not in my opinion. But (being Colombian) also helped me to conduct the field work that I needed because I did a lot of field work and a lot of oral history, I also did a lot of archival research with governmental collections but also with the press, such as newspapers and magazines, with published materials in libraries in Colombia and the United States, a lot of memoirs, and works that were published at the time, a lot of local history in different towns and municipalities, and things like that. I did a lot of work with written sources, but oral sources were very important for me, because a lot of the knowledge about this boom is public knowledge, it is just not written nor preserved in a repository or in an institution. It circulates as folklore, local history, rumours, gossip, jokes and songs as well. Because the musical folklore of the region was a very important source of not only information but perspectives and understandings about what kind of values, visions, moral principles at the time. The political values that prevailed at the time in this region allowed Colombia to become the main supplier of an illegal drug commodity for the United States.

Being Colombian who has roots in this region was crucial in the kind of book that I wrote. It is informed by all that, by those personal and family history and trying to connect that with national history and regional history and the transnational history of the Americas as well and now that I live in the United States also that plays a part, because I'm a dual-citizen, I've been here for decades; I'm a Colombian American. And that double identity that I have now as an adult also plays a role in the kind of questions that I ask in this book about US-Colombian relations and about US-Latin American relations.

I think my book is very personal in that sense because all the different layers of my identity have played a part in either sparking my curiosity on the topic of different questions and also in allowing me to have access to different sources of information or perspectives from which to analyse this.

**LIOM: Colombia legalized medicinal cannabis in 2016. Did the stigma of the drug business hurt in any shape or form this process? Does it still linger?**

**L.B:** It does. It is very interesting to see how two parallel systems have been going on right now. The legalization process is moving forward and moving really fast with a lot of money from international investors mostly from the US and from Canada, regarding medicinal marijuana and medicinal cannabis. But all the recreational uses continue to be illegal and continue to be persecuted and prosecuted by the State and the judicial and police apparatuses.

It can be perceived as two different systems going on at the same time. Like, on one side the legalization and the regulation of marijuana for medical uses at the point that in July last year the President (Iván Duque Marquéz) signed a decree that even allows the exportation of the flower but only for medical uses. Still the flower itself is very rare. But usually what can be exported are components like oils or what is produced with the cannabis plant. Nonetheless the flower, just raw material with no value added, that is still very rare. And it is used in Colombia but only for medicinal uses.

At the same time, you see the police harassing recreational users, a lot of political activists defending the total legalization of the cannabis are fighting in the public sphere, defying the law and even the police by organizing marches and all kinds of public events, to create an awareness for the need of a more complete legalization or at least the decriminalization.

There are many ideas going on and different sectors participating in, there is a sector of doctors, psychiatrists, social scientists, sociologists, political scientists, economists, etc., that is pushing in their own ways, from an academic or a professional point of view, for a complete decriminalization or legalization of the plant.

But all those stigmas which you refer to in your question are still lingering, in particular when it has to do with recreational uses. In medicinal uses we see that Colombia has been very quick in adopting the new language of cannabis as a panacea. As a medicine that can treat an endless list of medical conditions and diseases. Thus, Colombia has been very quick and by Colombia, I mean the representatives of the State in all these branches and the mainstream media as well as they have been very quick in adopting that language in those perspectives.

But recreational use is continuing to be very contentious and still up for grabs. And what is interesting in the case of Colombia is that any conversation about the decriminalization and legalization of Cannabis beyond medical uses goes hand in hand with conversations about the coca leaf. Because the coca which is the raw material to produce cocaine also has a very large set of legal uses. Not only for the Indigenous peoples of Colombia who have been cultivating, chewing and using coca for millennial times. But also for non-Indigenous people as well.

In the aftermath there is a two-tier system in many levels. On one corner the medicinal versus recreational cannabis but on the other marijuana versus coca.

**LIOM: You've recently been to your native Colombia. How much has it changed from the legalization days to now?**

**L.B:** Many activists are trying to influence the conversation and to change the law. It happens in a very active and volatile situation and at the same time you see a lot of entrepreneurs of medicinal marijuana trying to participate in the new market that this legalization and these new laws have created and to fight against the monopolization of the medical cannabis economy by adding multinational corporations or, to say, the big money, the big capital people in the country.

What you can see is a bunch of small producers really trying to create a more democratic environment in which there is room for everybody but not only for the multinational corporations. When I was there last year, I travelled the country visiting different parts and all kinds of marijuana enterprises. From very technically and scientifically sophisticated companies working on medicinal cannabis. Producing all the kinds of oils, and different kinds of products for the medicinal cannabis market in the United States in Europe for exportation. And also, small peasant producers who are still producing cannabis for the domestic market of recreational users and therefore have to work in the shadows because they are still considered illegal producers. They can still be prosecuted, arrested and sent to jail, etc.

I also visited activists in the cities of Medellín, Bogotá and Cali who are working to change the public opinion. They are coming together in these fairs that they do every few months, in different parts of the country, they are selling all kinds of products like cookies. They are entrepreneurs. Like small entrepreneurs with their small enterprises but trying at the same time to change the public opinion and the public influence in the public debate. It is really very interesting what is going on. Because many different sectors of Colombian society are engaging in this fight to define the new market that these laws have created. And to define how it looks. Are we gonna have another monopolistic cannabis economy? In the hands of these multinational corporations or medicinal cannabis or are we gonna have like a more democratic and open economy? In which all kinds of social sectors can participate at all levels and on all scales?

Those are the questions that are up for grabs, and we still don't have answers because it is going to be through struggles, conflicts and through all kinds of fights that this is going to be defined.

**LIOM: How the legalization of medicinal cannabis can help the livelihoods of Colombians, especially considering the upcoming presidential elections?**

**L.B:** One of the things: the main debate during this presidential campaign has been that the country is going to the next government and whatever that government is, how it will implement the peace accords that the government of President (Juan Manuel) Santos signed with the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) in 2016. That peace accord is not just a matter of government, it is a matter of state policy. But the current government of President Duque has refused to fully implement those peace accords and within Colombia there is a lot of controversy about that but in the international public sphere there is no controversy about it. President Duque was in the United Nations some time ago and was scolded by many countries, including the United States, which is one of his greatest allies, for not implementing the peace accords.

And why I'm talking about this? Because one of the main points of the peace accords had to do with the drug economy and what are we gonna do with drug production, drug commercialization, drug trafficking and exportation of all these illegal drugs. Mostly cocaine but also marijuana is part of the equation as well.

The whole legislation for medicinal cannabis in Colombia is a good chance that can push us to move in the right direction. A direction that many other countries have already taken including the United States but also Uruguay in Latin America and Portugal in Europe have taken that direction proving that is the way to go. It is the way in which we are going to reduce the violence and all the negative effects of prohibiting and criminalizing this kind of intoxicants.

The problem is, as I said in my answer to the previous question, that the kinds of legislation that exist in Colombia right now for the medicinal cannabis market helps the big capital, the big money people: the multinational corporations. Because of the standards they ask for their products, the kinds of financial structures they also request from the people participating in these economies; the financial and banking system in Colombia is not prepared to support small producers and small merchants of these kinds of commodities. Therefore, people are always struggling to find a way to have a small company and a small



enterprise that is legally connected to all the things that they need to be. The accounting, the banking, the financing, the everything. The apparatus that needs to be in place for this economy to be fairer and to be more democratic and open for all is not there yet.

On the contrary, many of these decrees that the president has been signing to regulate this new legal market are favouring or creating benefits and advantages for the people with the big money. One of the things that is in conversation right now during the presidential campaign is: "Ok. What are we gonna do to create a more democratic drug market in Colombia?"

For starters, we need to implement what is in the peace accords and secondly, we need to begin transforming or to continue the regulating of the legal market that exists and therefore move beyond the medical cannabis market to start including and regulating and doing something about other uses that are not just the medicinal uses.

**L.I.O.M:** Do you believe that the image of Colombia associated with drugs will change around the world?

**L.B:** I think it has changed already in many ways. We still have Hollywood and Netflix profiting from all those stereotypes about the traffickers. Not only Narcos because it is more than just that. Obviously, the Colombian mass media as well as Mexican mass media participated actively in this as well. The narco telenovelas are something that we invented. Netflix did not invent that. We did! What I'm trying to say is that we are not victims of people here in the US. We see all those stereotypes and myths being played out as pop culture in the media.

And I'm sure it is going to continue to be that way because they are very profitable, and they sell. But I also think that in terms of the image of the country, Colombia has begun to figure more inside the pop culture in the United States where many of these global products that circulate around the world are designed and produced. The very popular Disney's movie **Encanto** (2021) that was inspired in Colombia and put Colombia in the Oscars is an example. Disney is one of the huge producers of entertainment and of mythologies in the world for generations now. I think their involvement says a lot about the curiosity that Colombia is now sparking in the global North.

On how those stereotypes and clichés that have prevailed for so long have begun to yield and sprung into different kinds of representations, images, characters, and ideas that are being associated with the country.

To close, I think that we are heading to a probably more interesting conversation that is less stereotypical or that is less fraught in those stereotypes.

Marijuana Boom is available via University of California Press at [ucpress.edu](http://ucpress.edu).

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# The future has never been this bleak

by Chikarem Obi

It was a cool evening on a weekday. But I can't recall what particular day it was. Except that the sun was almost fully set and the breeze blew mildly. That was occasionally the case on most evenings, since I started living in my place of primary assignment. That was a health facility located in Agulu, a town in Anaocha Local Government Area of Anambra State, in the eastern part of Nigeria. At that time, I was undergoing my compulsory national service, within a period of one year, starting from July 2018.

The National Youth Service was a compulsory one-year training for graduates before hitting age thirty. But those that had already crossed that age limit before their graduation, they were to be given a document known as an exemption letter. Those below this age limit, were mobilized by their different schools for the program. The one-year program firstly involves a three-week paramilitary training, wherein all corps members were housed in a place, known as the orientation camp. It involves a lot of activities, which are usually more stressful than fun. After the training, everyone to different establishments, known as their Place of Primary Assignment. And this posting, is dependent on the courses studied by the individuals. As someone who studied a health-related course, I was posted to a health facility. There I was to carry out certain responsibilities, which of course included attending to patients, almost on a daily basis. It wasn't always busy and tiring for me.

Nevertheless, work that day was hectic, so I had to take some rest, upon my return to my apartment. Though the 'rest' lasted longer than I planned, but then, it was worth it. The only problem was that I woke up, with my polo soaked in my sweat. We hadn't power then for about a week, so there was no way I could stop myself from sweating. I tried fanning myself with a notebook, but that only provided a very short relief. So, quickly, I got up, unbolted my wooden door, pulled it open and headed for the well-aerated balcony. On getting there, I knew I was in for a welcoming stay, with the cool breeze that greeted me. Leaning on the rusty rail, I looked around, observing all I could see. Few minutes later, Mr. Rufus walked by. I guess he wasn't living far from the hospital because, after the day's work, I would see him stroll pass the hospital. He was the hospital yardman.

"Good evening Sa, " I waved at him. He waved back at me with a smile.

Mr. Rufus usually muttered words which were very difficult to understand. He would occasionally make gestures with his fingers, coupled with a smile. And we tried so much to make something out of his gesticulations and murmurs.

So, after waving back at me, he turned to the mango tree right in front of the main building, with his old sac bag strapped along his right shoulder. For about five minutes, the man kept staring at the tree, which was visibly bearing no fruit as at then. There wasn't even a flower on it.

'This man should have known that this isn't the season for mangoes,' I thought, whilst watching the tired-looking man. After some time, he picked a piece of stone, and threw it at the tree.

*He probably wanted to try his luck.*

Afterwards, he slowly walked away, in the direction he came from. I waved at him, but this time around, he didn't wave back. He didn't even look my way either.

But while I observed his stay under the mango tree earlier, a thought quickly flashed through my mind. It was something I regularly pondered upon and was passionate about.

'Up NEPA!' screamed the kids around my hospital-given apartment.

Power had come back on, after an outage that lasted for about a week or more. Quickly, I made my way back to the room, because I needed to have my mobile phone charged and take my bath too.

Meanwhile, the way Mr. Rufus looked intently at the fruitless mango tree, reminded me of how hopelessly, the average Nigerian youths stare at the future which appears to hold nothing promising for them. In fact, the future in question has never been this bleak.

I remember vividly, older folks around me, telling me of how 400 naira was enough to pay their tuition fees during their university days, in the 80s. But with that same amount today, an adult can barely boast of a comfortable meal. Also, during those golden years, graduates had job offers waiting for them upon graduation. But unfortunately today, a graduate, after spending a minimum of four years in the university, will spend additional one year or more, aggressively learning a trade they never thought they would, while many others engage in menial jobs. The statistics are there to add credence to this report.

From the analysis of the Central Bank of Nigeria in 2003, as reported by Akintoye (2003), the unemployment rate of Nigeria moved from 4.3 % in 1970, to about 6.4% ten years later, with an average population of seventy million people. Currently, Nigeria has a population of two hundred and thirteen million people out of which one hundred and twenty million people are within ages of 18- 64 years old, with a literacy level of 59.6%; according to countrymeters.info. Towards the end of 2021, the unemployment rate of the country plummeted to 33.3%, according to Bloomberg.com. And from calculable trends, it could possibly be more in the later part of the new year.

In almost every corner of Nigeria, schools are being founded and speedily licensed, with little insistence on quality. Each year, thousands of graduates are pushed into the tiny labour market, characterized by an uneven terrain with non-existent level-playing grounds. Acquisition of degrees have largely been reduced to mere beautification of one's status. Little wonder most students go to school, almost sure of not making anything meaningful out of their stay.

Although it isn't all dark here, but the worrisome thing is that the future presents a picture that is so gloomy. Yet one thing that is worthy of note is the little fraction of the population, who like Mr. Rufus, are pushing through the odds, trying to implant hope where it is apparently not in existence. A tiny population, steadily breaking new grounds and making waves and names for themselves and where they come from. That will be a topic for another discourse.



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## THE NEST

by Bon Le Bon

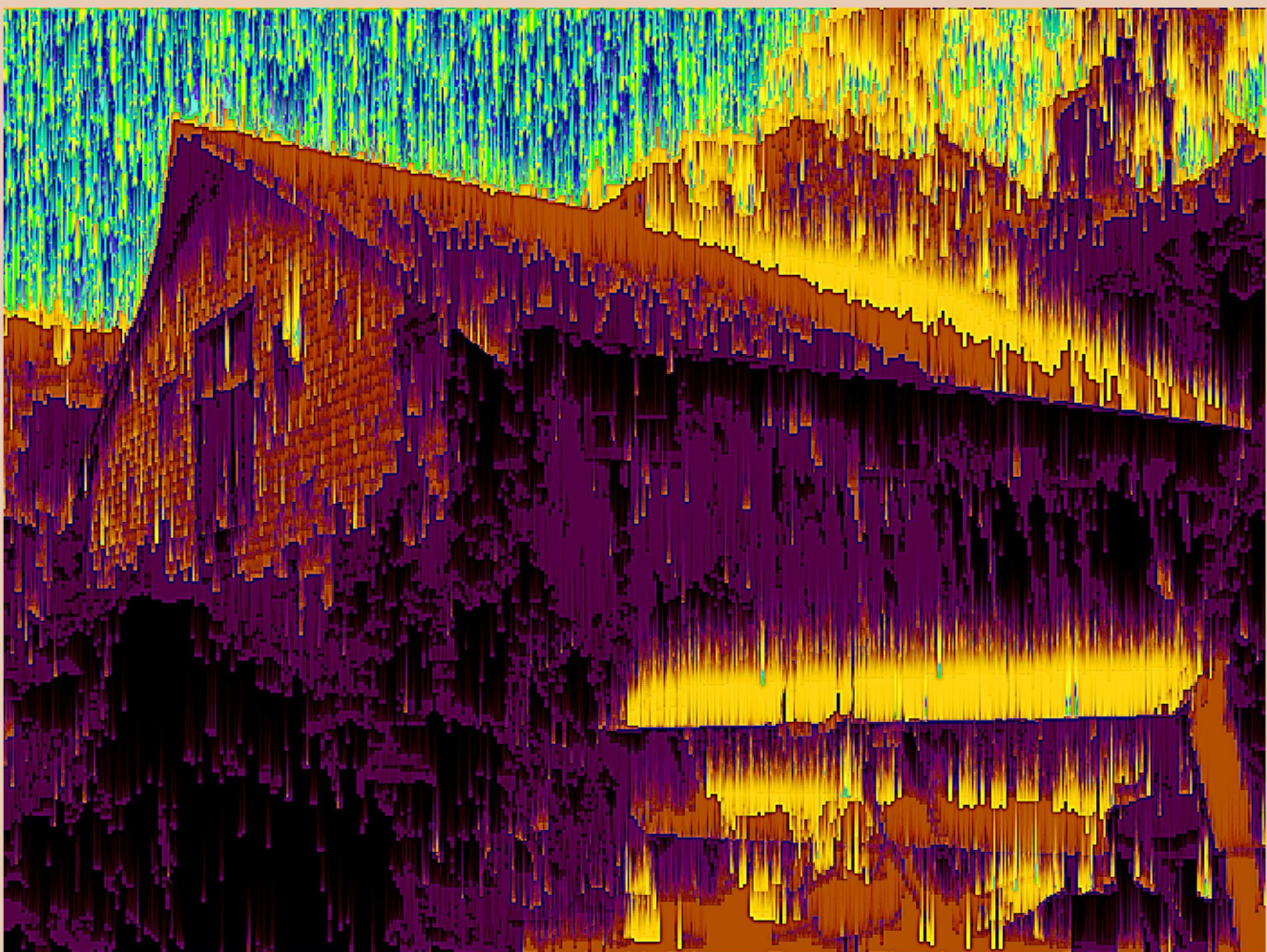
I should have fled long ago  
Broken wings or no  
Yet I stayed in the nest  
Till I tripped on its edge

Air rushing round me  
Slicing my feathers

As I realised  
I never learnt to fly.



By Ayesha Quereshi @ayeshazq\_arts



By Phracker @Phracker2Art

# 'Our Father' shows the lack of respect for infertile people, once again.

By Katie Alexander

This month, Netflix released one of their latest documentaries titled **'Our Father'**. The programme shares the horrific story of nearly 100 Americans who have the same father - their mother's fertility doctor.

Yes, you did read that correctly. A registered fertility doctor took advantage of people's vulnerability and desperate desire to have children. As someone who has, thankfully, never suffered from infertility, I cannot imagine the pain. But, I can empathise with their longing to have children.

Research continues to show us that those struggling to conceive are more likely to also suffer from poorer mental health. With reports showing that infertility can lead to thoughts of frustration, guilt, hopelessness and worthlessness. Instead of being a medical professional, Dr Donald Cline violated the trust his patients had in him when they were at their weakest.

Not only is this a major breach of trust, but it also begs the impression that those suffering with infertility are less worthy than others. Or, that their consent is less valuable than those who can conceive naturally.

The story begins in Indiana in the 1970's at Cline's fertility clinic. He was a well-known member of the community, but he was also well-respected in his role as a practising Dr. In fact, many of his clients travelled all the way from different states across the states to receive his care.

After hearing the successes of this artificial insemination and in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatments, it's no wonder so many individuals and couples felt hopeful in his care. This was until 2014, when Jacoba Ballard decided to take an at-home 23andMe DNA test. When the results came back, she had seven half-siblings listed.

At first, Jacoba assumed there had been a major mix up in her DNA, but the truth was much more frightening. After reaching out to her new found relative, Jacoba began unravelling the mystery that had been ongoing for nearly 40 years.

When seeking fertility treatment in the 70s, Jacoba's parents had received IVF treatment from Dr Cline. While Jacoba's mother was reassured that her husband's sperm would be inseminated, it was actually Cline's.

Since 2014, Jacoba and a number of other siblings have been fighting to highlight the injustice done by Cline. Cline himself even admits he used his own samples, in place of sperm donors or male partners' sperm, "sparingly". To this day, 94 half-siblings have been found through at-home DNA testing. All of them are biological children of Donald Cline.

While the documentary continues to press Cline's obsession with religion as the reasoning behind his actions, I don't believe that to be so. Yes, I believe religion can certainly influence an individual's life choices, but having faith does not make you a good or bad person.

Instead, we all have choice and freedom to do what we believe is right. In the case of Cline, he was a middle aged, white man who got away with these atrocious acts purely because of the powerful position he found himself in.

Moreover, due to his renowned publicity within the community, Cline was very clearly well liked and admired. To some extent, his complete lack of care, integrity and morality once again demonstrates a subconscious disregard to infertile men and women. While this kind of exploitation would be considered vile in any case, it does suggest that Cline subconscious ideology of infertile people is less than those who are fertile.

While there are so, so many questionable and down-right disgusting factors within this story, I think it's important to put the victims first. Too often when we learn of horrific acts we automatically highlight the actions of the perpetrator, but in this case, the families affected are just as, if not more, important.

I cannot imagine how traumatising learning of this situation was for Cline's biological children, their parents and surrounding family. Millions of Americans have taken at-home DNA tests since these were launched in the late 200s. While some people may just be curious to explore their heritage, other's do use these services to contact long lost family members.

What is different in this case is that some of the individuals taking the DNA tests believed they already knew who their biological parents were. Many couples attended Cline's clinic and believed their own samples were being used.

There's so many layers of trauma. Jacoba has loudly voiced her struggles with coming to terms that Cline is in fact her father. But, Jacoba's mother stated that the worst part was having to explain to her husband that Jacoba was not his biological child.

Despite long efforts from the siblings and their parents, there has been no legal standing to charge Donald Cline with any kind of misjustice. If Cline were to physically punch someone, he would be charged with assault. But, he cannot be charge with sexual assault for inseminating female clients with his own sperm. Even if these women were unaware of what Cline was doing, and obviously did not consent to being inseminated with his semen - Cline has not broken a law.

In fact, to date Cline has only been charged with two counts of felony obstruction of justice for lying during the police investigation. When found guilty, he recieved a \$500 fine and two suspended sentences - meaning he served no jail time.

This obviously raises huge questions about how the US legal system views those seeking reproductive control. With Roe v Wade recently being under fire, I cannot help but see how little society cares about infertile, pregnant or anyone of reproductive age.

Moreover, the fact Cline is walking around as a free man clearly highlights the lack of justice or punishment for violating reproductive autonomy. While prosecutors at the time did not deny that Cline's actions were a clear sexual violation, they also made it very clear that Cline did not sexually assault or rape any of his fertility patients.

Yet, his patients did not consent to the fertility treatment they received. Whether these women were told their partner's sperm would be used, or a sperm donor's, they were not aware it would be Cline's. Surely, a lack of informed, sexual consent is precisely what validates sexual assault?

While the story of 'Our Father' is a relatively unique situation, the violation of an individual's ability to choose the circumstances under when, how and by whom they become pregnant are not. These are basic rights of freedom and choice. His actions are that of an individual in a position of power, while they violate the rights of those in the most vulnerable situations.

This, once again, shows a deep lack of care and respect for those using medical treatments to try to conceive. The lack of consequences to Cline's actions does raise questions as to whether the outcome would be the same for fertile individuals.

The fact that US police forces would be willing and able to charge Cline, or another doctor, for sexually assualting a fertile woman, but cannot do the same for infertile women says a lot about our perceptions of those who need fertility treatment.

Cline retired from medical practice in 2009, so there is no knowing how many more biological children could be found. There are also 44 other known fertility doctors in the US who have abused their powers in the same way. Yet, still no legal justice for any victims.

# The Bold Type: Friendships can't be a quick fix for all Millennial problems

By Udisha Srivastav

I am a feminist and a millennial woman. Given these parameters, it would have been wrong of me not to check off the progressive feminist show, **The Bold Type**, from my to-watch list. The series, which has its four seasons available on Netflix India, is about three millennial women in their twenties who work at a women's magazine. Sounds like fun, eh?

After I finished watching the show, it was hard to pick my favorite character out of them, and as feminists allies, we don't compare women anyway, do we? But it would be no sin if one finds a particular character deeply relatable— that is just human nature.

Well, here is something about the show that wasn't at all relatable for me: the portrayal of millennial friendships and its presentation as a quick fixer of all issues that millennials face. It is not to say that the show's choice of the problems wasn't genuine. The feminist show has its comforts and discomforts to lend to the viewers, but one thing that always got my goat was the redressal mechanism of all millennial problems.

To say the least, this inseparable group of three best friends is so fulfilling in itself that they don't need to peek anywhere outside in search of any solutions. They seem content with each other. But here is a reality check: It is not how the problem-solution method operates in real life, and any rational individual would agree with that. It is suffocating to find that these women can go to their same set of friends, share their problems, and boom ----- their hearts feel light, and problems vanish. The next issue comes in, it enters the same trajectory, and the cycle repeats endlessly.

The women characters - Jane Sloan, Kat Edison, and Sutton Brady - are intrinsically different from each other in all possible ways. As referred to by her besties, Jane is a writer and is a 'Type-A'. She has known right from the beginning that she wanted to be a writer, and here she is, living her dream job at the organization whose voice she always considered her older sister. Did I mention she loves checking things off her to-do list? The second character, Kat, is a Black woman who loves social media. While she is an expert in the medium's power, what she is still learning about is her sexuality. And finally, we have Sutton, who works as an assistant, aspires to be a stylist, and experiments with a career as a designer. Again, if a commonality exists between them is that their careers revolve around the same workplace, and they are, of course, BOLD. Yet, somehow, Jane and Sutton, who are both heterosexuals, can empathize with Kat as she struggles to own her space on the gender spectrum and encounters heartbreaks. Likewise, the other two (who are themselves dating millennials at all points) are successfully able to lend relationship advice to Sutton, who is in a relationship with a 40-year-old man.

The question is: Isn't it too unrealistic to have a coterie of friends who are always ready to temporarily forget about their problems and are just all ears to you? How likely are we to listen to and agree with our friends who give us a suggestion or maybe a pep talk when they themselves hold no such expertise and experience on the matter? Or is it possible that we always agree to the not-so-well thought out, instant solutions that we receive from our friends? A sensible answer to the above questions is a 'NO.' Still, this is how the women in the show get their problems solved, for real.

Millennials undergo different challenges, opportunities, and experiences that are often unforeseeable. Besides, there is an inherent uniqueness to each problem; how we react to them and how we wish to handle them at separate intervals may also vary. Therefore, in essence, the source of problem resolution can't be the same set of humans every time. And what about conflict of interest between friends? Following this, do our bestest besties need to know about every aspect of our lives, every emotion that we experience, and whoever we spent last night with? I don't think so.

If one limits socialization and doesn't leave a window for anyone to get too close, the people around them would be too concentrated. This way, the number of people they could approach to speak their hearts out to would also be limited. If we wish to soak in as many experiences and learnings, this is not how we must direct our lives. Pragmatically, under challenging circumstances, what actually works is having many different credible sets of opinions and suggestions so that one can make an informed decision about choosing a particular way(s) of resolving their issues.

Also, what about us as individuals? Do we wish to be surrounded by just our besties all the time? I wonder what happened to adulting, spending time with oneself, being vulnerable sometimes, not expecting too much from anybody, building your network, and so on.

Notably, **The Bold Type** isn't the only show that seeps into impracticality. If anything, it is an extension of popular culture's trademarks that tends to present things as either too simple or too cool. While the complexities, interconnectedness of storylines, and binge-worthiness of pop culture shows hook the viewers, their detached representation of a modern lifestyle, success pathways, etc., often put them off.

Here is an example: Popular culture endorses round-the-clock hard work, sleep deprivation, unhealthy eating habits, and sometimes being non-compassionate and rude as necessary to become insanely successful. Its effect on viewers is such that it leaves them often wondering and mostly believing in such a portrayal. But guess what? Popular culture heightens reality, and it is too simplistic to be close to the truth.

**The Bold Type** attempts to deal with a diverse set of issues that millennials encounter - work-related, relationships, mental health, medical complexities, sexuality, etc., which must be appreciated. But, it so far miserably fails in providing solutions to them. Realistically speaking, the show sometimes feels too convenient to accept or embrace gullibly.

While the fifth season is yet to be premiered on Netflix India, I hope it brings a breeze of fresh air rather than an absurd representation of millennials' friendships and how women should always look up to their all-time closest friends to seek their life's solutions.

Besides, pop culture must stop jinxing the idea of modern millennial shows and their representation of various aspects of people and their lives. Else, the on-screen portrayal of millennial women operating in the face of challenges and problems runs the risk of never being original and holistic.

**The Bold Type** is available to watch in the US on Hulu and Amazon Prime.



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# 'The things people do for money': looking at the Real Housewives of Dubai and the dangers of correlating value with wealth.

By Bon le Bon

The infamous trending TikTok song reflects a universal truth. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Dubai— of course, it was the even more infamous 'Dubai porta-potty' video which led to the song trending. For those with a sensitive stomach, stop reading. It involved a wealthy man using a young woman's mouth as a toilet for an extreme bout of diarrhoea. At least that's what I assume it was, as I cannot for the life of me bear to watch it.

Now the famous or infamous (depending on your perspective) Real Housewives franchise has premiered their latest series, the **Real Housewives of Dubai**. The franchise has always sought to exploit or promote the lifestyles of the rich and glamorous in cities across the world, usually in North America, and this new series may be the crowning jewel in terms of showcasing luxury and 'the American dream.'

Most of the housewives are Black women and entrepreneurs, with the model Ayan having coming from a tiny village in Kenya and has now become one of the most successful models in Dubai— the first Black supermodel, in her words. Caroline Brooks divorced and took no money, determined to get success for her son, and worked for her current success herself. These are admirable examples and I as a white person do not want to take that from them. However, the correlation of success and wealth is an idea that hurts so many including Black people, by keeping them enslaved to the idea of a hierchal and unfair system..

"I love money and the way that money make me feel". The prominent lyric of the song played over the footage of the beautiful Caroline B walking through some glamorous hotel in Dubai, telling people that women there are hustlers who have to be bold to get what they want.

"If you think money can't buy you happiness, you clearly haven't been to Dubai" states Nina.

Ayan, successful and beautiful as well as intelligent, introduces herself in four languages to tell the audience "how fabulous and badass bitch I am"

'Everything is one phone call away' says Lesa Milan, who is very down to earth, aside from the fact she orders \$1,200 of ice to cool down her pool.

Sergio professes Caroline Stanbury is the love of his life, despite the fact she cannot pronounce his surname. Underpinning this romantic moment is their dog peeing on the bed. Perhaps coincidentally, perhaps not, Caroline S is worth approximately \$30 million.

Caroline B talks of building an empire as many business people do. It is a word, just a word, but the connotations are disturbing. While we talk about post-colonialism, I doubt such a thing exists. In terms of our minds, we are still subjects of empire. Perhaps even as far back as the Roman Empire. We cannot conceive of a world without one person or one people having power, at the expense of others. In our personal lives, we must be the sole possessors; we must have a great house to call ours, beautiful cars to be our transport, expensive things to state our status, and measure our importance and power by our commodities and wealth.

Wealth is powerful and can be a sign of success. Wealth can be of benefit to others, by giving them fair employment and providing security. Philanthropists have changed people's lives for the better. But wealth is a dangerous and is used more often than not to hold soft and hard power over people. The 'porta potty' video shows this. Seducing young women with gentlemanliness, gifts and nice dinners, lulling them into a fantasy that then turns extremely dark. Promising them riches in exchange for debasement. Of course, the women can say no— but it's a lot harder when they believe to have established a relationship with a 'nice' man, and they have flown them out to a country they are unfamiliar with and taken them to a venue that is in the man's realm of control. It's especially hard when money is something you need, and wealth is something you are supposed to gain at any cost.

The Dubai Housewives series had been criticised before airing, even by the die-hard fans (aka the members of the BravoRealHousewives subreddit), but in a poll taken just before the first episode aired over 800 over them voted they would 'definitely' be watching it. The allure of the gold is too much for many to resist. While if they are illegally watching the show doesn't directly profit, it is still providing attention to a show that is a soft tourism ad. I agree with many of the commentators that you may as well boycott all of the Housewives shows, rather than draw the line in the sand at this one, as every series features at least one tax-frauding/telemarketing scammer/embezzler and notorious racists. Yet as one comment outlines, there is a slight difference between the corrupt and corruptible United States and a country where "only 10% of the population are considered actual citizens with some freedoms they pay for, while the other 90% are slaves or indentured servants. There are mass executions/government prohibited homicidal homophobia, celebrated beatings of women, women who report rapes or kidnappings are often arrested or disappear."

An alternative view of Dubai was presented in the **Slaves of Dubai**, a 2009 documentary. It shows how vulnerable people in countries such as Bangladesh are recruited under the promise of a contract that allows them to pay back the recruiter then being able to pay their families from their significant salary. Sometimes they pay for the 'privilege' of working in Dubai, which allegedly includes their Visa fee and flights (of course it is illegal for the company to charge their own workers for the Visa fee). The price paid by the worker can go above £2000.

In reality, the workers arrive in Dubai, have their passports taken away, and realise they are earning between £120 and £160 a month for 6 days a week, 12 hours a day labour. That works out as around 55 pence an hour. Even the recruiters do not always know what situations they are sending people to. Some of the living conditions include two toilets and a shower to be shared between 45 people. And even if their passports were returned, they would not have enough money to go home. So they must work out their whole contract.

The cynics may say these men who go to work should be more savvy— surely they know any legit job wouldn't demand this amount of money from them? But think about your own knowledge of workers' rights; can you truly say your boss definitely provides you with everything you legally need, Gives you all your breaks, ensures your safety? Most people aren't aware of their full rights, or if they are then they are forced to overlook these mistreatments because they need their jobs. So in these smaller towns and villages, where the need for money is high and the education on rights is low, it is easy to understand how so many have gotten tricked into signing up.

The companies themselves say it is the responsibility of the workers to be cleaner. That the piles of unflushable sewage due to a lack of running water is actually because these South Asian workers are dirty. The government investigate sometimes and they suggest the companies should improve, sometimes putting down a heavy fine. But no further action is taken. Thus leaving the workers to suffer physically and mentally, for as long as they are able to without becoming too sick or worse. Many have committed suicide to escape their situation, with over 110 Indian workers committing suicide in Dubai in 2010.

Commentators on this documentary suggest it is British owned businesses that are part of this exploitation— perhaps true in some if not many cases, but it is the government that allows this oversight in favour of foreign investment and the desire to establish themselves as a mega city. Of course there are probably hundreds of undocumented workers in the UK being exploited, and in the United States many incarcerated men are used for slave labour— to the extent that many argue the slave trade has never ended, due to the racially charged laws and disproportionate arrests of Black men. It is suggested that, because labour is still allowed as part of prison duties, many Black men are either imprisoned for minor misdemeanours or intentionally set up to provide more 'manpower' for these kinds of operations. I personally believe this is the case, but I accept many may not be convinced that such organised cruelty could be going on under their noses.

It is disheartening that thirteen years after the documentary, and after so many articles challenging the regime and human rights of Dubai, that shows continue to air which claim Dubai is a super city which provides great opportunities for everyone, regardless of nationality or gender. The show itself has a disclaimer at the start stating: "The views, information or opinions expressed in this show belong solely to the individuals displayed and do not represent those of Emirati society as a whole." But this will not be enough to dissuade people desperately in search of a 'Promised Land' of wealth and opportunity. And this will lead more people to follow the path that could lead them into disillusionment at best,

and exploitation at worst.

The idealisation of wealth has spilled over into many other subtle areas of life. Swathes of women on TikTok promote the sugar daddy lifestyle, saying if a man is going to fuck you over (or even beat you), it would be better to happen at a luxury resort while wearing diamonds rather than in a shitty diner wearing Target. Sure, it probably would be easier getting screwed over if you have tangible assets to then go build you own life with. But they are not talking about getting this wealth for themselves— they are going to be treated until they are discarded. This comes from a long history of extreme misogyny in our society and the disenfranchisement (literally and metaphorically) of women. I understand the desire to get as much as you can while the going is good, and to not get your hopes up by trusting in a man.

The attitude leaks into other, more normal dynamics, however. Videos stating 'If a man isn't taking you on X amounts of dates a week/month/year, drop him', or 'you should never have to pay for your own food/drink/anything when you have a man'. A joking TikTok about 'when my BPD bestie starts dating another man that can't afford his own condoms' is probably more a dig at loser men who are using excuses to be unsafe sexually, sure. But the idea of a poor man being the 'bottom of the barrel' is very classist and unfair. For a start, why does it matter which one of the relationship has money? If you feel uncomfortable dating a poorer man, because men should have money, unpack that. If your man thinks he should have more money than a woman, then you don't want to go out with a misogynist anyway. If you have enough money for yourself, why does it matter if your boyfriend doesn't? They can survive the way they always survived before you, you can keep your own money, and you can be happy. If you only go on dates to the park, watch a matinee movie, or make dinner in your own home, why is this not a sign of effort and desire to connect? A thousand dates at a fancy restaurant do not make up for a lack of friendship, intimacy, and real love. It is dangerous to be the partner with money either side, and you have to be careful you aren't being exploited, but there is nothing wrong with dating 'poor' people.

There's nothing wrong with being 'poor' as long as you can meet your basic needs. Now of course plenty of people struggle to do this, which is unfair and we have to keep fighting for this to change. But the idea that people who don't have savings and can't afford to do lavish things are less desirable or less interesting humans to get to know is disgusting. Especially as society continues to become increasingly divided by wealth. It is fun to watch people spend excessive amounts and live an exciting life as a way to escape the mundane reality of 'normal' life. But it's jarring to see lavish lifestyles, needless excess, and songs saying "let's go spend this money, cause we've got too much of it" while people starve. If you have to spend it, why not make a better choice than a needless jumpsuit or pumps?

Maybe it's too easy to point the finger at Dubai; it's a foreign city, with foreign housewives, and while all the terrible things associated with the city and country happen all over the world, it's easier from the west to look over there and see these problems, and believe that it is contained within that one place. Unfortunately, wherever there is too much money in one person's hands and as long as societally money is needed and revered, there will always be abuse, manipulation, and exploitation. And while the series can put a glossy shine on the reality, the darkness beneath the surface cannot be contained forever.

**For more on Dubai and how to help workers there, visit [Amnesty International](#) and [Adopt-a-Camp](#), which works with migrant workers in the UAE.**



The 'Real' Housewives by Bon le Bon

# The trans masc/trans fem problem; or why I dislike being called 'trans masc'

by Isaac Thomas

When I was first really coming into myself as a gay trans man at seventeen years old, I referred to myself as "femme." Almost immediately, one of my online friends at the time messaged me to scold me: femme was a lesbian-only word. I accepted her criticism and referred to myself occasionally as fem, but overwhelmingly disassociated myself with the concept.

Of course, I know now that this isn't true. While "butch" and "femme" are both words that are heavily associated with aspects of lesbian culture, they are also both terms used within ball culture. Traditionally, a butch queen is a gay man, while a femme queen is a trans woman. However, this concept of placing boundaries around words so that only a select group of people can use them was mainstream in online queer spaces. According to this kind of thought process, words have to have clean delineations. No ambiguity can exist; multiple meanings are discounted, as well. Everyone must fit in neat boxes and exist separately from each other.

Similarly, a new kind of terminology had arisen for trans people. Gone were the days of transsexuals and transvestites, and of FTMs and MTFs; now, everyone was simply transgender, and of those who were transgender, everyone fit very simply into either "trans masc(uline)" (the more "inclusive" term for FTM) or "trans fem(inine)" (the more "inclusive" term for MTF). The inclusiveness aspect was twofold: one, it de-emphasized a trans person's assigned sex at birth and placed the focus on their actual gender; and two, it explicitly made room for people who do not necessarily identify as a man or a woman, but are still transitioning in some facet.

As a person who was assigned female at birth and is in the process of a legal and medical transition, I would thusly be considered trans masc. However, the longer I transition, and the longer I spend around spaces designed for trans masculine people, I find myself increasingly alienated and frustrated from the term. Similarly, discourses surrounding the existence of "trans masculine" people (and trans feminine people) tend to collapse our experiences into the same general notion: that trans AFAB individuals are moving towards masculinity, and this operates identically for all of us, and trans AMAB individuals are moving towards femininity, and that operates identically for all of them.

There are immediate problems with this framing that, for some inexplicable reason, aren't apparent to most people. Namely, the trans masc/trans fem dichotomy reinforces a very white and cis binary notion of gender and how it manifests itself, especially for transsexuals. While it might be fair to call a butch lesbian who's on testosterone "trans masculine," as she is transgressing gender in a decidedly masculine way, I find myself less and less comfortable with being labeled "trans masculine," as someone who becomes more and more feminine the longer I'm on T.

While I do find some kind of kinship with trans masculine people and the trans masculine identity, I do also feel largely isolated from those spaces, as well. More than once I have run into a trans man complaining about trans masculine as a concept, as it includes people who don't explicitly identify as men. Likewise, I've seen trans men complain about gender nonconforming FTMs, as we are too feminine and obviously trans to relate to the lives of the straight and stealth. I've been accused of invading trans spaces and making it harder for trans people to be accepted by broader cis society. I've been accused of faking my transsexuality, even though I've known for virtually my entire life that I am trans, so much so that I was a textbook case of gender dysphoria in children.

I do not bring these trans men up to shame or ridicule them. I understand the pain associated with never being taken seriously, and the desire to relate to others that are similar to you. And yet, at the same time, my existence as a femmy, gay FTM is regularly devalued, ignored, and treated as deviant and threatening.

While I respect the usefulness of trans masculine as a term for certain people, it does not work as an umbrella term for all FTMs. It presumes that transness for FTMs always looks masculine, and transness for MTFs always looks feminine. And while this is largely true for many people, there is still a significant group of trans people — particularly the transsexual dykes and the transsexual fags — who remain unaccounted for in this very binaristic, cisnormative view of gender. Specifically, this terminology unintentionally posits that transitioning away from femaleness requires a rejection of femininity, and transitioning away from maleness requires a rejection of masculinity. For a trans woman to be masculine would render her a man; for a trans man to be feminine would render him a woman.

Why reinforce this concept of gender? If transness innately challenges cisnormativity, then why ascribe femininity to womanhood and masculinity to manhood? I am a trans man, in that I am modifying my body in a way to present as a man to society, but the pushback I feel is much less related to my masculinity as it is my lack thereof. If trans people are already treated as second-rate citizens when they meet all the requirements of being respectable citizens (that is, cis-passing and normally straight), then what happens when you're trans, gay, and gender nonconforming? The fact that current transphobic rhetoric in political spaces in the media hyperfocuses on the idea of the auto-gynephile (which specifically refers to lesbian trans women) should be telling enough of where gender nonconforming gay trans people fit in the grand scheme of things.

I reject the notion that I am trans masculine, because I have never accurately been represented by it. I am not masculine, and that is where the problem lies. According to the cis people and trans assimilationists I have run into, I am a faker; I am a predator; I am a rapist; I am a confused little girl who wants to be special. Their remedy to this for years has been ridicule, harassment, and threats of violence. And yet, I am not trans fem, either, because trans fem, too, has been boxed off to refer specifically to MTFs. Never mind that I find myself regularly relating to butch trans dykes more than anyone else. Our labels cannot bleed into each other, for some arbitrary reason.

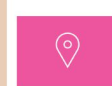
As it stands, I do not feel animosity towards those who use trans masc and trans fem, nor those who continue to use it after reading this. However, I do encourage deeper thought about the existences of gender nonconforming trans people, particularly those of us who are gay. The relationship I have with my sexuality and gender is complex and largely enigmatic to straight society, and I know this is true of most, if not all, gender nonconforming gay trans people. Liberating trans people requires a divorce between manhood and masculinity and womanhood and femininity. In its place, we must celebrate however individuals choose to express those identities for themselves.

This article was first published on Medium.

For more of Isaac's work, follow them here: [genderqueered.medium.com/](https://genderqueered.medium.com/)



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# What the Roe v. Wade overturn means for the queer community

By Christine Kinori

The Roe v. Wade leaked draft decision has indicated to many Americans that their right to access comprehensive reproductive health care is on the brink of being stripped away. This is understandably a women's rights issue but it also affects members of the LGBTQ+ community including transgender men, non-binary people, and queer women who get abortion services regularly from reproductive facilities. The consequences of the overturn go beyond immediately restricting abortion access. It is a pivotal decision that can lead to more rights especially those favorable to the queer community being stripped away.

LGBTQ+ liberation and reproductive justice are entwined. The right to access abortion, the right to make crucial decisions about one's life, and health care including abortion are fundamental to the ability of LGBTQ+ people and everyone to be able to live their lives. This is at risk should Roe v Wade be overturned.

Planned Parenthood has been a safe space for many LGBTQ+ people. They offer important healthcare services that should not be taken away. This is overtly concerning especially to the transgender community. Stripping away their access to abortion will exacerbate the disparities they face and force patients to travel to face doctors or providers that they've never met and don't know that may misgender them.

Trans and nonbinary communities are already reluctant to navigate reproductive and preventive health care services. It is hard for them to access non-judgemental care and in some states, they are unable to access gender-affirming care. The overturn will make it worse and will instill more fear among the trans and non-binary communities when it comes to healthcare. They will further delay or try to avoid getting medical help.

Forcing anyone to be pregnant is already traumatic but it will be harder for trans people because of the gender dysphoria they will suffer. Some trans people do get pregnant and need an abortion. The trans community has already been fighting many anti-LGBTQ+ bills that are specifically targeting them but there is greater imminent danger to trans rights in a post-Roe world.

At least 18 states have "trigger laws" to ban abortion if Roe is overturned. This means that the impact on abortion access would be immediate in these states.

The overturning of Roe v Wade poses an imminent danger to the LGBTQ+ community by leaving critical civil rights laws vulnerable, such as cases that granted Americans the right to same-sex relationships. These cases include Lawrence v. Texas and marriage equality Obergefell v. Hodges. Both rulings are partially based on an interpretation of the 14th Amendment. The overturn will open such cases for discourse on the validity of their ruling as they are not covered in the constitution and are not "deeply rooted in United States history." Many other LGBTQ+ rights such as marriage, children, procreation, and contraception are not in the Constitution.

As President Biden has stated, the decision to overturn Roe v Wade on the basis that it is not explicitly stated in the Constitution is dangerous. President Biden said, "It would mean that every other decision related to the notion of privacy is thrown into question. It could threaten a whole range of rights ... and the idea we're letting the states make those decisions, localities make those decisions would be a fundamental shift in what we've done." The President specifically spoke of his concerns relating to contraception and the legality of same-sex marriage. His concerns have been seconded by many legal experts who are afraid that Republicans will see other rights as "up for grabs." and that it will not stop only with the abortion rights.

If we use the logic they are trying to use in justifying the overturn, our rights will simply begin and end as is written in the constitution. All, if not most LGBTQ rights cases are built on this idea of equal protection and substantive due process. They are not necessarily covered in the constitution because they were just recently decriminalized. This means that we can't count on the legitimacy and validity of the court in protecting civil rights for everyone.

As we have always done in history, we fight our oppressors. We need to understand the depth at which lives are being threatened. This is not just about stripping away our rights but as well as our dignity as human beings. The overturn of this law will be catastrophic and will set us back years of progress in LGBTQ+ rights.

It will single-handedly open up a can of worms related to legal arguments regarding the 14th Amendment and its application to the 14th amendment. This is not a single attack but an all-out war on all civil rights. We should keep in mind that reproductive rights are LGBT rights and we can not be silent on the adverse effect the overturn will have on the mental and physical health, socioeconomic status, and right to marriage of the LGBTQ+ community.

As a community, we need to mobilize our resources and fight back with our voices because they will not come for only our abortion rights. From the local to the federal levels we need to donate to abortion funds that provide important resources and voice out our disdain for these legal attacks. Don't think you are safe. If privacy is not constitutionally protected, and rights to bodily autonomy and personal health care decision-making are being threatened, what makes you think you are safe?

For abortion resources in the United States please see some of the organisations listed below:



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**1-888-493-0092**  
M-Fri 10-1am, Sa-Su 10-6 EST



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(U.S. Pacific Time)  
Weekdays 3 p.m. – 9 p.m.  
Saturdays 1 p.m. – 9 p.m.  
Sundays 3 p.m. – 7 p.m.



**Pro-Choice Ohio**



**reprocare**  
(833) 226-7821



KANSAS ABORTION FUND



**inedana.com**

**West Alabama Women's Center**  
535 Jack Warner Parkway  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35404  
(205) 556-2026  
(800) 616-2383

**NAF Hotline**  
**1-800-772-9100**

Monday - Friday 8 am - 7 pm EST	Saturday & Sunday 8 am - 4 pm EST
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**NAF Referral Line**  
**1-877-257-0012**

Monday - Friday 9 am - 5 pm EST
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chicagoabortionfund.org

# Chef Kalymaracaya's uphill battle to restore Indigenous cuisine in Brazil

## An interview by Gabriel Leão

Chef Kalymaracaya Mendes Nogueira is from the Terena Indigenous Community from the Mato Grosso do Sul state, in Midwestern Brazil. The first Indigenous person in her country to achieve the position of "chef". Kalymaracaya made it her mission to propagate Brazilian Indigenous cuisine which has been whitewashed as many aspects from Indigenous culture from the mainstream society.

With a degree in Tourism and Gastronomy and a Post-grad in Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture, Chef Kalymaracaya has led her skills to TV shows and foreign lectures in Mexico and Colombia, always employing preparing the meals of her ancestors.

In an interview with Lay It Out Magazine, Chef Kalymaracaya talks about her upbringing, the obstacles to assert herself in the gastronomic society and how much Brazil owes to Indigenous peoples when it comes to food.

### **Lay It Out Magazine: From your first childhood you already helped your grandmother in the kitchen. How has this activity influenced your interest in Indigenous cuisine?**

Chef Kalymaracaya: Since I was a young child, I already helped my grandmother, my aunt and my mother to prepare the food. I was that one always around the kitchen, willing to learn and curious. I already walked through the woods after some fruits from the Cerrado (a vast tropical savanna ecoregion in Brazil).

I found the art of turning ingredients into food very beautiful. My grandmother is my major inspiration in following this path of the art of cooking and I wish to pass forward to the younger generations this knowledge that her, my mother and aunts taught me.

### **LIOM: How was your journey to become one of the first chefs from Indigenous heritage?**

CK: In the college where I graduated, the students needed to do some tasks, at this time I had the good idea of bringing some meals from my community. They had a good response. At the time I already loved Gastronomy and I thought that I could represent my people in this area.

It was then that I started to fight with all my strength while many folks still told me "No" right into my face, and I heard a lot of "Nos!"; and even if they painted me as a crazy woman I wouldn't ever give up.

That is the reason why I studied, that I graduated and went through all the Gastronomy studying programs in my city. When it was all said and done, I had the degree and ended up facing unemployment just holding by a thread the dream of "representing my people."

I went under a lot of bad stuff not to mention prejudices!

Then along came the internet age, I joined social media and wrote to a Chef I watched on TV telling my desire to propagate Indigenous gastronomy; his name was Chef Fabio Cunha. He told me he lived in João Pessoa city, in the state of Paraíba (northeastern Brazil), therefore I couldn't work for him. (Though) It was exactly what I wanted, a famous chef to support me.

In the end he introduced me to his friend Chef Paulo Machado who asked me about my situation at the time. Finally in January 2015, I met Chef Machado. At the time I took a photo with him and a video, he posted them on his social media and people started to notice my work. From then on, I have invitations to be part of national and international events.

### **LIOM: What is the relevance of Indigenous cuisine to Brazilian cuisine?**

CK: I'm the only Indigenous cook in the country, when I mention that, I affirm the fact that I'm a trailblazer in what I do. For instance, I use Indigenous headgear, ornaments and face paint and so on. All part of the Indigenous culture.

It is very important to propagate the Indigenous gastronomy in other parts of Brazil because I'm the only one and people know very little about this cuisine which happens to be so important to Brazilian history.

### **LIOM: Besides being a chef, you have a degree from Tourism and Gastronomy school and a post-grad degree in Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian History and Culture. How does academic knowledge help in your work as a chef and as a representative of Indigenous cuisine?**

Indigenous cuisine values native goods, it is a natural cuisine. Without much seasoning, where there is no right or wrong. For example, it relies on what you are cooking in the kitchen.

Indigenous people don't have appetizers before the main meal, so what would be seen as appetizers can be the main meal. In order for us to understand this rich cuisine first we have to let go of the French techniques.

For starters, Indigenous gastronomy doesn't have to keep up with meat temperature. In fact, we have well done meat and nothing comes raw. Another fact is that in Brazilian Indigenous cuisine we don't eat rare meat.

We have amazing ingredients such as: Castanha do Pará (Brazil nut), Mel de Jatei (Jataí Bee Honey), Palmito Guariroba (Guariroba palm), Bacuri fruit, Bocaiúva (Grugru palm), Saboró Corn, Guavirá fruit, Venison (meat of a game animal), Freshwater Fishes, Sweet and Bitter Cassava (Alpim and Mandioca), Sweet Potato, Yam, Purple Yam, American Taro, Three-Leaf Clover, Coffee Pod, Grugru palm oil, Nasua's fat, Wild boar and others.

The main characteristic of my recipes is keeping it a contemporaneous cuisine where I work without losing the essence of the meal. For example, when I prepare the meal called "Hî-hî" (cassava balls covered by banana leaves) I don't add salt or sugar, I try to make it more sophisticated in what is following the meal, in this, I preserve the recipe essence. The scholarly knowledge just helps in the general picture as I try to make the meal look better for the eyes in the end.

### **LIOM: Do you believe in the legacy of Indigenous peoples to the Brazilian diet is acknowledged?**

CK: No, a lot has been lost!

Recipes, knowledge... After the Portuguese came here, they were able to impose many of their habits so Cuisine and Culture were lost and are still forgotten. The Purutuyes (white men) almost destroyed everything from my culture. Brazil doesn't eat the original cuisine of my ancestors. Sadly, what our country has is a diet imported by the white man and the industries.

### **LIOM: How have you been received in gastronomic meetings in Brazil and outside? Which countries have you visited?**

CK: People are highly interested in this sort of gastronomy and our cuisine roots as much of it is lost in time. About the reception in events, I can say that Indigenous cuisine is well received.

I have lectured in Santa Cruz de La Sierra, in Bolivia to 800 students and once in Acapulco, Mexico.

*Aynapo Yakoe!* Thanks a Lot!

# How we got ready-to-eat meals

By Sonali Roy

Ready-to-eat meals belong to the processed food industry that employs the transformation of agricultural products into food or engages with one form of food into other forms. The processing activities involve several other steps that make people taste accessible, safe, and tasty food. Today's most popular motto is achieving the maximum within least of time. The advancement of growing societies necessitates preparing for long-lasting and affordable food quickly so that time does not haunt us! Here lies the importance of food processing. But, food processing is a gradual movement owing much to our ancestors dating back to as early as 9,600 BC that included the civilizations like Mesopotamia and Egypt mostly incorporating simple methods of cooking, drying, smoking, salting, pickling, and fermenting. Marion Nestle Professor of nutrition, food studies, and public health, emerita, New York University puts, "Foods have always been preserved with salt (e.g., fish), sugar (jam), and acid (pickles). Later came chemical preservatives, and then industrial processing—corn into corn chips, for example." Some businesses also crush seeds for extracting oil, and churn milk into butter.

As time changed, these methods developed in other nations like Peru, India, China, and Greece. Historically, the evolution of food processing is marked by transitional socio-economic changes. The dominating transitions are as follows: when hunting and gathering modified to settled societies with agriculture and livestock farming; the industrial Revolution; market liberalization, global trade, and automation.

The first one developed about 10,000-15,000 years ago and led to much dependence on dairy, grains, and cereals based diet. Moreover, the trends of fermentation and baking emerged. The oldest archaeological evidence suggests that brewing beer and bread-making date back to 13,000 and 14,000 years respectively. This evidence is also indicative of the beginning of cheese-making in Europe around 8,000 years ago. Additionally, food-storage & preservation became popular. Preservation with salt started with the prehistoric European and Chinese societies during the Neolithic period of around 5,000-6,000 BP. Since then, salt became the most important for preserving food. Milling technology developed throughout the European middle ages as bread became an important every-day meal. It is from that time that white and dark breads became trendy among the rich and the rural people respectively in Rome. Dark breads were consumed by mixing grains and legumes with vegetables.

The Industrial Revolution during the 18th and 19th centuries modified food processing with the use of electricity.

The introduction of steam and rolling mills for producing refined flour as well as the improvement of techniques of food preservation also brought food processing to the next level. The 19th century also brought the food processing methods of pasteurization and canning. Pasteurization was developed in the 1860s by the French microbiologist Louis Pasteur. Named after him, Pasteurization is particularly important for juices and milk liable to bacterial infection. Pasteurization applies heat and kills microbes, but affects neither of the nutritional quality and taste of the food. It is for pasteurization that we are capable of storing food for long term and transporting them worldwide.

Around 1810, a French chef, Nicolas Appert started experimenting food preservation by using heat, glass bottles, corn, and wax, and The House of Appert or La Maison Appert became the first food-bottling factory in the world. Afterwards, the advent of WWI and WWII popularized canned food because of the demand for cheap, long-lasting, and transportable food for soldiers. The 20th century rolled on with many other processes including spray drying, evaporation, freeze drying, and the use of preservatives, artificial sweeteners, and colors, which have paved the way to the growth & development of the packaged food industry. At the same time, the uses of newer kitchen appliances and technology broadened the opportunity for the processed food to be a part & parcel of modern life.

The population of the late 19th and early 20th centuries suffered from severe micronutrients deficiencies caused by the refinement of grain milling that included the separation and complete removal of germs for expanding the storage capacity of flour. The 1940s enjoyed the reintroduction of the lost vitamins and minerals during processing of grains though leading to recurring efforts for boosting up food processing in respect to health benefits. Hence, the national authorities banned several unhealthy snacks and beer that allowed illegitimate advertisements and claimed utilities for health.

As time flows, another potential & influential transit for food processing is the exploitation of sustainable and efficient food sources that ensures high quality food production for the growing population of the world. Purposefully, food processing led to several changes over time. Industrially processed food, which is highly powerful, often arrests the attention through added sugar, salt, the bulk of lower micronutrient, and higher calories. Meals prepared at home or those minimally processed usually don't show the presence of those, or maybe in smaller quantities.

People of the early and middle Pleistocene also used to food processing. The time-frame captures the more or less consecutive appearance of Homo genus that featured the increasing brain and body in contrast to the earlier Australopithecines. An expanded resting metabolic energy calls and the increased bend towards the necessarily increased dietary energy accompanied the anatomical evolution. There also reigned the non-thermal food processing like pounding, cutting, grinding, and sun-drying etc. alongside the reasonable amount of animal-based food. The then food-menu was not raw, but minimally processed. Anatomical specifications are required for digesting the raw food- of the jaw or the digestive tract, which humans lack in; instead, they prefer cooked food. Moreover, while cooked, grains, pulses, legumes, and other plant-based foods gain more nutritional value. The regular use of fire in the northern latitudes dates back to some 400,000-300,000 years. That approximate time indicates that the Neanderthals occupied most parts of south-western, Central Europe, and Asia, and they used fire to cook. They also used a wide range of plant-based food added to their regular menu through cooking. The plant remains dating back to 50,000-60,000 excavated in the Middle Paleolithic sites in the Near East suggest that legumes topped as the highly consumed plant food during that time.

The southern and western parts of Europe witnessed a surge of legume consumption for their nutritional and filling traits. Legumes carry good storage properties after they get dried. At the same time, they have many agronomic benefits that can include the rhizobial nitrogen fixation. Isotope analysis of the Greek-Byzantine civilizations exhibits that legumes and pulses played a vital role in the staple food industry that could enrich the lives of people of the time-frame during the 6th and 15th century with carbohydrates and proteins. The medieval period experienced the mixing of pulses with other grains that enjoyed a bend towards some dark bread. And still today, pulses and legumes contribute much in meeting the daily energy-intake of proteins and micronutrients worldwide. They also help with fertilizing soil and rotation of crop production. It was up to the middle of the 19th century that Germany flourished with beans and legumes- these were equally important for them as rice and potatoes. But, pulses suffered a lot with the technological improvements of mills that enriched the flour quality- pulses were thought to be a 'poor man's food'. Nestle explains, "Food processing makes foods shelf-stable and ingredients can be bought when cheap. That makes them cheaper on average than other foods." And still at modern times, beans and lentils are considered to be full of digestive constraints thus leading to barriers. Besides, pulses need longer time to get dried, which adds to objections that nowadays, more ready-to-eat alternatives are available, which are more convenient to consume.

Consequently and most unfortunately, the middle of the 19th century till today, there has been a decrease in the legumes and pulses consumption, especially in the Western populations that raised scientific concerns. Nestle states, "I'm guessing consumption is way down. Maybe now that venture capital is interested in plant-based meat alternatives, it will go up again in the form of pea and chickpea protein, for example." The traditional Mediterranean diet can promote good health and reduce the mortality rate of cardiovascular disease. That is why many got attracted towards this trend since the 1980s. Besides, pulses and legumes can contribute to balanced diet. Hence, several efforts have been made for raising public interest, for instance, for increasing fruit and vegetable consumption alongside pulses and legumes, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations campaigned in 2016, the International Year of Pulses.

The increasing consumer calls for foods that are gluten-free, non-dairy, and vegan, promoted to the launching of various food products, which focus on either of whole legumes and isolates fractions as ingredients. Needless to say, such products often relate to a considerable amount in food processing as recorded by Australian food market launches. But, how far you can obtain the nutritional values from pulses depends on the processing techniques applied. Notably, you can digest proteins with the mild thermal and non-thermal processing; these can also lessen the activities of the antinutritive factors in pulses. If you soak and cook pulses, it could lead to the loss of many water-soluble compounds. At the same time, soaking and cooking can reduce the proteins up to 10%. Roasting engages with edibles of higher protein quantity. Protein concentration and digestibility of proteins can go high with germination and enzymatic processing. Phytic acid in pulses can chelate calcium, magnesium, iron, zinc, copper, and manganese and thus give rise to adverse effects at higher concentration. But, during germination or fermentation, such effects can be inactivated by phytase. So, there are various thermal and non-thermal food processing techniques that involve with various pulse products and whole grains to food ingredients. A considerable amount of nutritional values in plant-based diet can increase if wheat and other cereal products go alongside processed legumes and pulses that can promote protein concentration and quality at the same time.

In the current scenario of the increasing global population especially in low and middle income countries, it is a very tough job to anticipate the future implications of and developments in food processing because the systematic processing for high quality nutritious food up to a certain period of time may create a dominating issue. Processing has already tried new biotechnologies for using substitutes for proteins and other nutrients as well as the development in innovations of food though time is needed to expand consumer acceptability of such innovated foods to be included in daily diet. But, still today, as compared to the innovated foods, traditional foods like legumes and pulses hold on greater significance for their health benefits and that they can help with providing low-cost dietary proteins and micronutrients. Benefits particularly associated with type 2 diabetes and obesity can much more attract the socioeconomic importance in respect to legumes consumption. Additionally, legumes are more in line with ecology. These can serve as the alternative to animal-based proteins. If you replace common cereals with micronutrients and fibres, you can address to the insufficiency of iron, folate, and zinc that would surely bypass strenuous industrial fortification. It is believed that the nutrient density of balanced diets can be improved by serving at least 100 grams of beans and lentils together per day those regular global pulses consumers can reach out to the level.

So, as the techniques for food processing are concerned, there are also some old methods including sun drying, chemical preservatives, and jam & pickles preservation etc. alongside the current methods in use today. But, what technique you should choose always depends on your requirements, monetary status, and how your body reacts to those.



Photo of Marion nestle by Bill Hayes

# MYKAELL RILEY AND THE BLACK BRITISH MUSIC EXHIBITION

by Simon Coates

In January, this year the British Library announced a new project. Masterminded by Mykaell Riley, activist, senior lecturer in music at the University of Westminster and Director of The Black Music Research Unit, the initiative will look at the history of Black Music in the UK. All of it. Or at least, going back to the time of John Blanke, a trumpeter in the Tudor courts and the first Black musician to appear in official documentation. Blanke can be seen in the 1511 Westminster Tournament Roll, a sixty-foot long painting created to celebrate a pageant commissioned by Henry VIII. Riley is well-positioned. Not only did he head up the 2018 Bass Culture project that examined the influence of Jamaican music on British culture through exhibitions, he's also a founder member of legendary British reggae outfit, Steel Pulse.

The range and ambition of the Black music history project is admirable. The fact that the British Library houses a world-beating archive of UK music and related ephemera makes it achievable. "We can't change the past," says Riley, "but we can use history to impact the present and influence the future". Riley's Bass Culture project set the tone. He assembled a group of researchers for the project, and they worked with a team at the British Library to put together a series of exhibitions and performances. One of the programmed discussions reunited Viv Albertine, author and original member of hugely influential punk band The Slits, with Dennis Bovell, renowned British reggae figure and producer of The Slits' debut album, 'Cut'.

The research for the new project won't just highlight the importance of Black British music in contemporary culture, it will stretch back over five hundred years. And this is a story that needs telling. Steel Pulse's 1978 album 'Handsworth Revolution' included 'Ku Klux Klan', a track that relates tales of the venomous racial hatred exacted on young Black men in the UK more than forty years ago. In 2022, racism in British society is on the rise again. In a recent study, statistics aggregation organisation, Statista, noted that there were over 92000 racist incidents recorded by the police service in England and Wales over the 2020 to 2021 period, compared with 78900 for 2018 and 2019. The charity Mind has said that, despite having a higher prevalence of mental health issues, Black adults have the lowest mental health treatment rate of any ethnic group in the UK - at 6% compared to 13% of white British adults. The coronavirus pandemic revealed a culture of mistrust of the UK's health services in the minds of our BAME population. A 2020 UK government survey showed that 64% of Black people do not believe that their health is as well protected by the NHS as that of white people.

The Bass Culture project was, naturally, a crucial part of Riley's investigations into the impact of Black culture on British music. Was he happy with how it turned out? "Broadly speaking, it was successful. It was considered a triumph by the community it depicted. It profiled the importance and value of their contributions on a scale they and the music industry had not previously witnessed. The project also successfully communicated this message to high art spaces and academia. The project didn't achieve all I wanted it to, but it positively illuminated the subject area". So, the work continues.

Several British cultural organisations say that they're committed to addressing the problem of racial inequality. However, new diversity policies can appear half-hearted and piecemeal. "I think organisations such as the BBC are making efforts to profile diversity," says Riley. "But it's also evident that some of these efforts have resulted in nothing more than PR. That said, there is a tide of change. Visibility behind the camera or the mic is happening, but in the boardrooms where the decisions are made, there is still a lot of work to be done".

Along with his time in Steel Pulse, Riley formed The Reggae Philharmonic Orchestra in 1988, remixed Björk, and is a regular consultant and panellist for projects that examine Black music in the UK. In 2017 his Black Music Research Unit instigated the 'State of Play: The Grime Report', the first-ever study to focus on the public's attitude to Grime music. Among other findings, the report showed that the majority of Grime fans discovered new music and artists via traditional routes - television, buying physical product and downloading - with 46% citing radio as the listening format of choice. Perhaps providers like Spotify aren't quite the force they claim to be. What does Riley think about streaming platforms? "There's no escaping the effects of streaming. The greedy and unfair music industry is nothing new, but streaming services have taken this to another level," he says. "The profit-driven AI playlist is not a friend of new music or young musicians and, arguably, this technology has decimated as many income streams as it has created. The technology to challenge streaming is already here. So, whether it happens via NFTs, or by enhanced virtual merchandise packaged into digital music portfolios that are controlled by musicians, this imbalanced exploitative situation will change".

**The Black British Music Exhibition plans to be shown at the British Library in 2024**

## PLACES TO BE

by Bonnie Shawcross

### Grime Stories: from the corner to the mainstream

Museum of London, from 17th June

A fresh and illuminating show exploring the historic rise of grime, featuring newly commissioned films, illustrations, and personal artefacts from the pioneers of grime. It also recreates graffiti from the walls of Jammer's basement where 'Lord of the Mics', a series of scene-changing rap battles, took place.

### Seismography of Struggles: towards a Global History of Critical and Cultural Journals

MACBA Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona, from 9th June to 25th September

Exploring the history of revolutionary pamphlets and journals, their significance worldwide and their impact, this is a real treat for any politically minded revolutionary or anyone interest in cultural artefacts. Presented via two films in an audiovisual installation, and a following montage of manifestos, this intersection of historical and social research with art is not one to miss.

### Myriam El Haik: Please Patterns

KW Institute for Contemporary Art Berlin, from 23rd June to 15th September

Showing solo and collectively since 2008, Myriam El-Haik uses many mediums to convey her art and music, but nowhere better is it concentrated than in her performances. Of French Moroccan descent, her background inspires her to convey themes without words-- through simple patterns, shapes, and music. Patterns in particular seem a major focus of her work, as the name of her Berlin Biennale suggests, and it will be exciting to see how her vision will be realised.

# OFF THE RECORD

By Bon Le Bon

Midway through the year, it seems a good time to look at what we have so far, so to speak. There have been many 'iconic' releases this year which have received lots of media (and TikTok) attention, such as Harry Styles' 'As It Was', Charli XCX's 'Beg For You', and Kanye West's notorious 'Eazy'. However, here's to the underrated releases that deserve as much accolades and attention if not more.

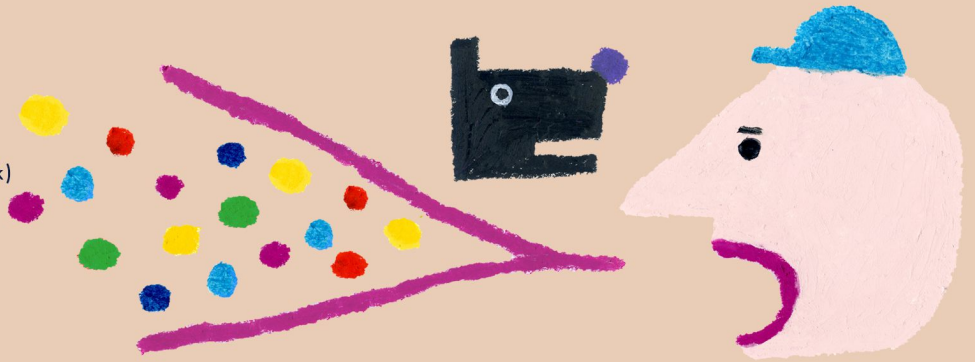


Illustration by Yoshiko Hada

## THE SINGLES

### FOR SUMMER ENERGY

KIMINO HABURASHI - Maharajan  
Ubriaco Di Te- Dargen D'Amico  
Reguine tass - Wally B. Seck and Viviane Chidid

*These three songs have very different vibes and styles, from Japanese pop to Senegalese Mbalax but all give warm uplifting energy and good tunes.*

### FOR INDIE ROAD TRIP VIBES

Hometown - Elephant  
Papраста - Flash Voyage  
Bare Bli Elsket - Ka2

*Alternatively I call these 'FIFA playlist vibes' but I don't mean that as an insult. All have beautiful guitar tones, and a dreamy energy that suggests a fleeting sun that we have to enjoy in the moment.*

### FOR THE GOTHS WHO STAY INSIDE

Desespero - Lost Lenore  
Heaven - Zviet  
Hollow - Espectros de Shibuya

*South America is dominating the new wave/goth/synthwave at the moment, and these songs show exactly why. Each song creates exactly the forlorn atmosphere of a gloomy castle or a dark industrial ruin you may need to escape the bright beach.*

### FOR THE HOT TUB PARTY

Steamroller - Anish Kumar  
Toxic - Ibro Deli  
Detaje - OTTO

*These songs scream backyard house party from sunset to midnight and on. Guaranteed to make you groove, they are straight to the point- get dancing!*

### FOR THE SCREAM ALONG

Choose Your Fighter - Nova Twins  
Middle of the Night - Rain Paris  
Ten, Kur Tu - jauti and Monika LIU

*Rock is for every season, and angry exuberant yelling never loses its relevance. Some amazing female vocals and perfect hard guitar create a great emotional valve if the heat gets too much.*

## THE ALBUMS

### Three Dimensions Deep -Amber Mark

Amber Mark is a 28 year old American singer-songwriter with Jamaican and German origins. Featured on Paul Woolford's 2021 single 'Heat', this put Mark into the public consciousness (at least in Britain) and her first full length album more than exceeds any expectations. Showcasing her exceptional voice, she also reveals an experimental streak and existential focus after suffering loss. Blending Afro- Caribbean drum beats, dream synths, electric guitar solos and even sitar riffs she creates something international and relatable to everyone yet deeply personal and reflective of her own life experiences. **Standouts:** [What It Is](#), [One](#), [Turning Pages](#).

### Happiness, Guaranteed - Mansionair

An Australian trio, **Mansionair** have been around since 2014 and their debut album was only released in 2019. For their sophomore record, they kind of put everything in-- from indie rock, to chill house, to dreampop-- but as the title says, this means anyone and everyone will find something to like. It still has a continuous 'brand' to it and consistently shows talent that will surely continue to flourish and refine their signature sound. **Standouts:** [A Little Lost](#), [Happy Now](#), [Next High](#).

# MASSACRE

By Saqib Manzoor

It was a chilly morning of February. I would usually wake up in early morning but that day I woke up at 10 AM in the morning. When I leaped out of my bed. I stood in front of the mirror. As I looking at my reflection. Realizing it beheld the laziest person while I lit a cigarette even before washing my face. I contemplated over my frivolous existence. As I rubbed my left eye while I felt my throat burn due to the heavy puffs and drags. I was lost in a thought of when I had started smoking. I had always hated it. It's once I slid into message box of a chain-smoker. I asked his posers 'What made him smoke? Did he find bliss and tranquility? And, his answer was "Yes, an ephemeral bliss and tranquility." I typed and mumbled while lying in bed.

I took my first drag and puffed out the smoke inside my dark room and outside the window, in cherished ambient. Then the urge became an addiction and since it been it and solitude, my companion.

I was motionless and meanwhile, outward vociferation shook me off. I heard so many disturbing and loud human voices. There was an outcry, hollering, and shouting among men outside.

"Saw it, fast." One man yelled.

"Pull it! Pull it! Take this son of a whore down!" Later, another hollered.

I wondered whom they called this. Out of curiosity, I swung open my window and peeked out to see whom these men had made a scapegoat. I was frighten when I saw they had tied a rope around the soft neck of speechless, still creature- an old tree, a teacher and friend of mine for years. They were about to behead it and chop it into pieces. They performed this task while grinning and with loud laughter as they openly in a world of rules, regulations, and laws; pierced my heard and shattered it. The tree was hapless to be born in a world of callous humans with ugly smiles, grins, faces, and most of all hearts.

I overheard a conversation between two persons who were pupated spectators.

"At least, it'll be uprooted today. I'll breathe a sigh of relief today." said an old man.

"For sure, it's a hurdle. I was so worried that it might fall upon the roof of my home and damage it." Replied man in his 40s.

How could they forget all charm, relief that this tree brought to us?

Maybe, it's a human nature when anything stops to profit, they get rid of it and call it "hurdle in their path" which seems so cruel. I was helpless. Helpless that I couldn't confront them, murderers. What would have they done if I had? Maybe, murdered me too. After all they are humans, ones who are strangling and slaughtering humanity without remorse.

A tree that's a musician, storyteller, and abode of roving storytellers was being taken down. It had created soothing music for me and being like me across the seasons. It would rustle and reverberate like the sound of rabab of one's beloved. It would strip down, give away fake and be naked in a world that lives in pretense, pretending to be moral and pious. It did not give a damn about it. Maybe, it did what it loved. Fallen leaves and then trampled mercilessly would tell tales. Tales that we humans never told or do not want to tell.

I loved its nakedness. How it would stand still in a world that bring torments, taunts, heckling for ones who try 'tobe themselves'. Ones who do not conform in their vicious rules and regulations.

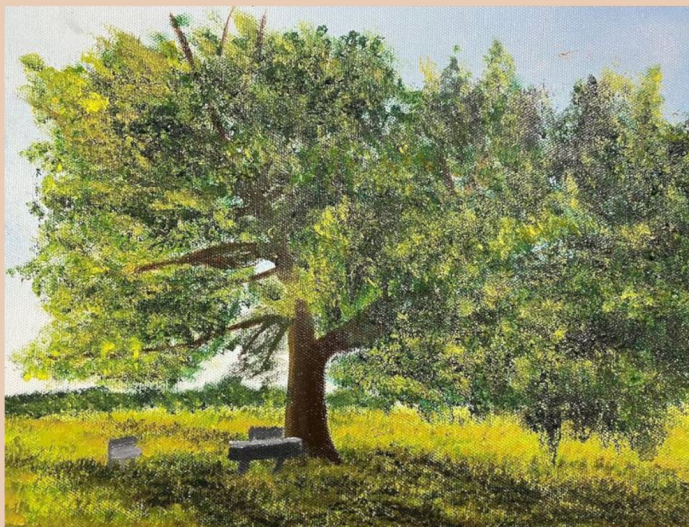
I would say; trees live together without any envy, enormity, and atrocity for one another. That is why, I believe they do not have dramas (funerals) at the end. They do not have any remorse.

The tree was a home for bird who would have arrived from distant places. They would then narrate stories by chirping, stories of peasants, workers, elites, ones who pretend to be pious and of all they would feel pity for lovers of these places. I used to contemplate over it 'lovers across the borders do not have different destinies but same fate' I reckoned always.

Here, abode of thousands of more musicians, storytellers, roving creatures. It's down. We cruelly did that without even contemplating over it. What would be the dire consequences?

The tree flumped on the hearth. Those who had slaughtered the tree cheered and celebrated its murder. Amid this clamoring, I only heard the lament and wails of the tree when it fell with a thud on the ground. The bird flew always in a haste as they lamented, upend of their home. The downfall of the tree, penetrated into my heart like an arrow. Stories and songs were lost in thin air.

Will they return to my place? Maybe, they did not deserve audience like us. For whom they sang songs plotted their massacre while pretending to be jolly listeners. They carried out a massacre. Perhaps, my place has fallen in a slumber.



Art by Ayesha Quereshi

# untitled

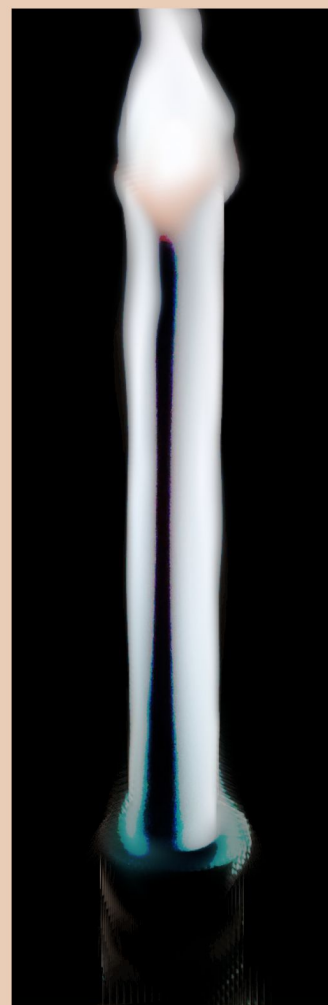
by yossi

the fluorescence pistol whips me;  
a snarling smack to the jaw  
to rid every last ounce  
of the psyche-housed pseudo profoundness

there's nothing poetic in the clack of a litter claw,  
or the criminally underpaid hand that clasps it.  
nor is there meaning in the miasma of grease emanating of the  
ever-buzzed outlet that looms ahead.

there are teens,  
and ticking engines,  
and me,  
scouring my notes app for some semblance of fervency in a fleeting  
thought i've pledged to expand on.

and honestly?  
it's all really rather fucking mundane.



Light by Bonnie Shawcross



What if the male ideal was gay? by Bon Le Bon



'Marsha' by Patricio Fidenza

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