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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

The unbeaten path is scary.

Navigating horizons that have, hitherto, lain unexplored, uncharted, and undefined, demands a courageousness that seems almost superhuman.

The skill set required to navigate unknown waters extends beyond technical know-how. Top of the list is an unwavering optimism that, despite the absence of scholarly texts and established guidelines for success, success is nonetheless ensured. Second is an elasticity that rivals a rubber ball on a concrete wall; pounding again and again against barriers until you hit a weak spot, a hairline crack that reveals a point of entry. Grit comes in swinging as the third requirement, because it literally requires that you swing at the spot until a crazy idea, becomes a crazy plan, crazy hours, and then, just when your sanity is dangerously in question, a not-so-crazy reality.

Often, when we think about out-of-box thinking, it is restricted to the lengths businessmen would go to break the ceiling on financial success. But, in this edition, while we give space to making unexpected moves in commerce, we explore the tenacity that moves us through lifestyles, art, food practices, and culture that pushes the envelope in novel and, sometimes, uncomfortable ways. The existence of free will reminds us that we can design whatever variation of life and living we desire. We can decide to wear multiple hats and strive for excellence under each, play a more active role in what we eat and how it's produced, we can eliminate shame from circumstances beyond our control and reclaim our bodies and expression, and revise our exposure to technology, no matter how trendy, to better fit our needs.

Alásà magazine, itself, lends itself to reimagining what traditional print media can evolve into, the concept of collaborative creation, and the possibilities that come from reviving past ideals and questioning new technology with uncharacteristic rigor. This edition marks the beginning of our journey as co-founders and editors as we embark on our own journey over uncharted waters. The Alásà collective is an experiment in building a project that is sustained by collaboration and community.

We called on our contributors to share unique perspectives and ideas in pieces that push boundaries, and provoke critical thought and conversation. Together, we explore knowing and standing firm in their identities, while shaping lives that better align with self, at the risk of community, wealth, and safety. Your decision to consume this project itself is a practice in trust of us, our collective and the vision to tell our stories in a new and fresh way.

Thank you for choosing to join us on this venture. We hope you enjoy, and most of all, are driven to think more about the expanse that charting the unbeaten path grants us, as you read the Harmattan 2025 edition.

Signed The Editors at Alásà



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THE FUTURE OF FOOD WITH GHANA FOOD MOVEMENT

BY POKUAA NANA AKUA ADU

Food unites us. Across the globe, food and its related value chains hold centuries of history, tradition, and culture in its fibers, due to man's unending pursuit of sustenance. Food tells us about social and economic structures, superstitions, lifestyle, and taste. Wars have been fought over food, but food has also been a source of healing and recovery. The **Ghana Food Movement** describes itself as "an empowering grassroots member network and agency of innovative and sustainable food and agri stakeholders [...] farmers, chefs, scientists, nutritionist, entrepreneurs and more, all highlighting the potential of Ghanaian food." The (Ghana Food Movement) Kitchen, newly opened in 2024, is a concrete manifestation of GFM's mission statements. A warm and friendly environment boasts of a well-staffed kitchen where culinary experiments occur, an Airbnb and various hosting spaces for agents and partners that share the vision for the African food space.

Alásà, in conversation with **Co-Founder and Director, Abdallah Smith**, explored the inspiration, direction, and vision of Ghana Food Movement, and the future of The Kitchen.



What inspired the creation of the Ghana Food Movement?

We as Ghanaians, know the potential we have to make better use of our resources, whether it may be material resources, or the resources we keep at heart. What brought us together was the belief that Ghana has something more to offer. For the original founders, Lotte, Selassie, Etim, Binta, Elijah, it was about taking action; looking at our ingredients, the story they have to tell about the country, and the future of food when it comes to climate resilience, nutrition, and the betterment of our society. Ultimately, Ghana's culinary scene has more to offer. How do we go about bringing it to the world?

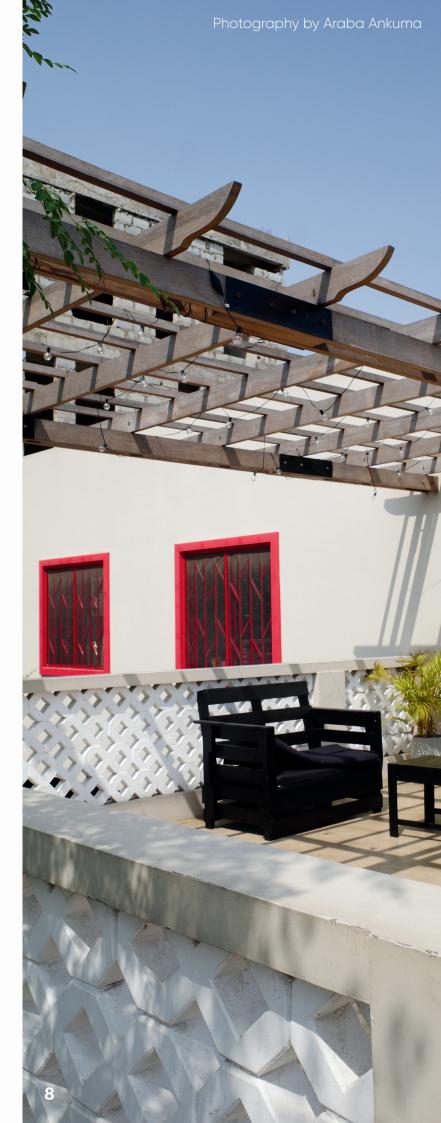
Let's do a sort of culinary advocacy and get people engaged in Ghanaian cuisine in a fresh and innovative way.

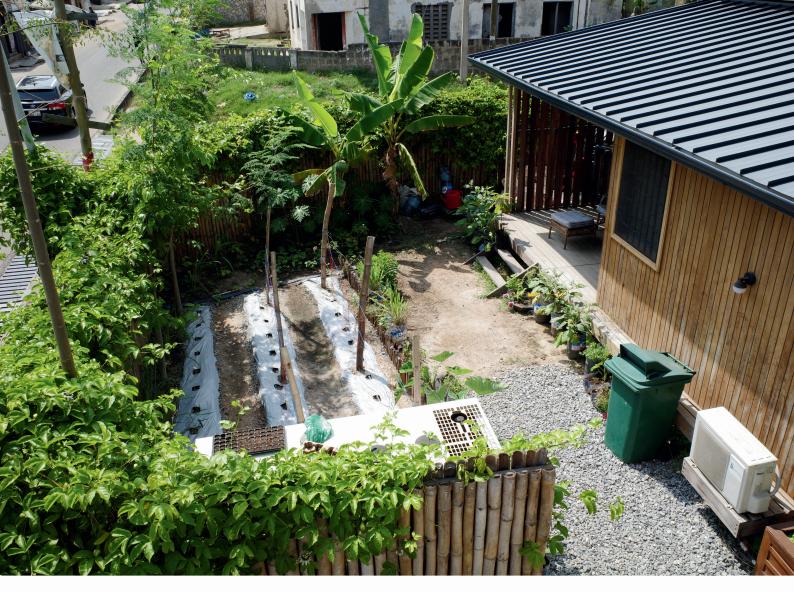
Over the years, how has your vision evolved?

The vision has evolved from just sort of looking at the gastronomy angle, to looking at it at a food systems level. For this reason we really began to build a network of stakeholders across the food value chain, with the idea of connecting dots because of the belief that we know that every other person is thinking alike when it comes to looking at our local ingredients...Therefore the vision naturally evolved from there and began to take more shape of how to now tackle problems in our society through the use of food, such as the huge youth unemployment problem. decided We to develop more programs targeting youth and training along with building their capacity. That's one aspect of how the movement evolved.

Is there a milestone that confirmed the importance of the movement for you and the African food scene?

The kitchen is probably the biggest milestone of the movement, because it summarizes years of work and recognition by donors who money into something that they also see as beneficial to society. The main donor, Tony's Chocolonely, believe in promoting local ingredients, because they want their cocoa farmers to be able to diversify income streams, due to dwindling revenue from the cocoa industry. In addition, support from organizations, individuals, other which has begun to snowball, is a sort of avalanche of milestones.





What makes The Kitchen unique compared to your previous work?

Before, we didn't have a physical space. We had to rely on renting space, collaborating with others, which was very good for the time because it allowed us to build partnerships in the community. But now, we can be a node for developing more partnerships.

The Kitchen is located in Osu, on Lokko Street, and we are weaving ourselves into the fabric of this beautiful, historic neighborhood; hosting cooking sessions with the neighbourhood school, and becoming a meeting place for the Osu street vendors association and all food actors who are about our mission. We're joining with other forces, new and old.

What makes us unique is that we do what we want, tell our stories, make our mistakes and solve them ourselves. It will be our story, with all its flaws and successes.

Can you walk us through some of its key features and what they offer to the community?

There are a few different functions of the space. It has a small demo farm, a fully furnished kitchen, a multi-functional space for different engagements, a bar and an Airbnb. Whether its bringing young food actors into a conversation, merging a culinary experience with market research on a new product, providing a place for live music to meet grills, a book launch, discussions with like-minded people a training program, a crazy recipe, or a lost ingredient, we dey for you.

What kind of people or organizations do you hope to collaborate with through The Kitchen?

Our ethos is collaboration, rather than competition, so we remain open to all types with a shared mission of using our ingredients to transform our situation. One can join as a member, or be part of the network as a company, partner on long term projects or come to us to curate food experiences for themselves or the wider public. Or you can just come to eat. We won't fight you!

If the kitchen had a personality, how would you describe it?

I would describe it as unapologetically Ghanaian. Its soul is Ghanaian and its outlook is, "we don't really give a f*ck". We're gonna show Ghana the way we want to, to the rest of the world, and you can take it or leave it. We are surging with self-belief that our future is local and youth-led.

How does The Kitchen contribute to rethinking traditional food systems and lifestyles?

For Ghana, we have a vision of decolonizing our minds when it comes to food. The current Ghana is aspiring to a certain modern lifestyle. The food system we develop needs to be equitable, have economic resonance, and cultural significance that preserves our society. What we try and do with Ghana food movement, is reshape our traditional food methods, and bring a new element to it that can fit into this new idea and vision of modern Ghanaian society. It is about designing a new West African diet, alongside preserving the old, and having people across groups and ways of life have access to these diets that nourish us, and earth, more than they take away.

What does an alternative lifestyle mean in the context of food and sustainability?

I am a sustainability scientist, I studied that in my master's program, and there's what we call soft sustainability and hard sustainability. The first idea of soft sustainability is doing shallow measures that may address some problems, but don't address the deep-rooted problems of society, which really are the forces that are driving the impact and exploitation of our environment, as well as other fellow human beings. In my opinion we may be looking to do a lot of the soft stuff, but there's deeper stuff that is going on with what we are doing. This is an ongoing conversation that needs to be fairly put on the table maybe on the second or third course after people have had the first course and understood what it's all about when we talk about food and sustainability. So no puns intended, but there you go.

Have you seen any shifts in how people engage with food because of your work?

It's hard to say there's been any shifts in how people engage with our food because we just are not able to monitor what they do outside of our work. We have no way of monitoring that, but for now, what we can say is when people come into our space, they know what they're coming to get.

I'll give the example of us having a khebab night where we offered Ghana chicken, and we offered foreign chicken. And actually, the one that was local was the one which was more patronized and actually sold out way quicker than the foreign one, even though it cost more. So it goes to show that people want to support the economy. They just want the opportunity to be able to make that choice, and we, as much as possible, will give that to them.

What do you think the future of food in Africa looks like, and how do you see The Kitchen shaping that?

I am very scared for what the future of food in Africa will look like, to be honest. A lot of that indigenous knowledge and ingredients are slowly fading from existence, due to many reasons, including commercialization, and land degradation, without us realizing their importance. There is also this wave of agri-business - which is basically saying to the farmer 'The way you make food is not going to feed us. We need big capital, big technology, to feed this growing population.' This is not true. The farmers can feed us, It's about finishing the road, creating consistent channels to sell produce, and working with them. Currently, the discourse is focused on dispossession. My fear is that farmers will become indentured servants to this ubercapitalist mode, coated with the shiny allure of new agri-technology that is substanceless at its heart. There is also that shocking land-use change happening across the continent. Big players are buying large tracks of land and orienting these lands to growing one crop, mostly cash crop, for export. If this cash crop/forex earning/growth economy logic is pushed to its logical ends, it could be fatal. I speak loosely here, so I implore all those who doubt to come find me and lets talk about it.

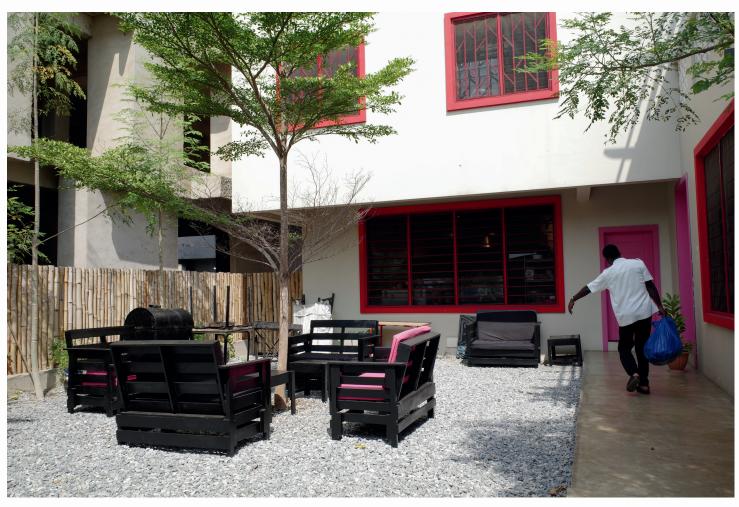
What's the long-term vision for the Kitchen and Ghana Food Movement as a whole?

The long term vision of the Kitchen is to truly become a food education hub. Imagine a place where archives of food methods are available via multi media forms, and recipes are innovated to tell the story of our past and future. Imagine a place where any chef who wants to make his mark can come to this 'mecca' to learn, impact, and then take the knowledge and confidence into the world. With GFM, it would be wider, more system-level. It would be farms that are giving more to the Earth than taking from it, that give more to farmers than take from them, systems of food production that are more decentralized, unique, diverse, and still strongly interlinked. It would be that what ends up on our plate is from Ghana, made by Ghana, that its healthy, its diverse, it nourishes us, and makes us happy. I do not think that is unrealistic.

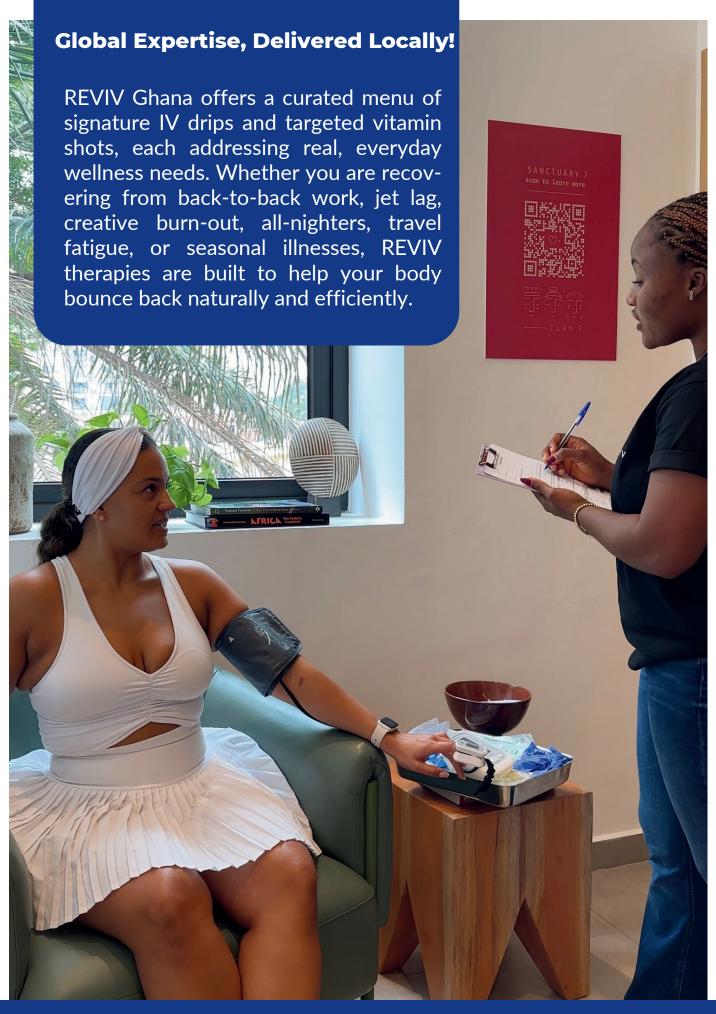
If the Kitchen and GFM could only achieve one major impact in the next decade, what would it be?

To have a continentally renowned young chef program that shapes chefs to be agents of change.









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There is a lot of anxiety that comes with carving your own path and letting destiny lead you. Without the assurances of tried and tested ways of life, it can be difficult to imagine that experimenting with your life in an otherwise linear-leaning society, can not only work out, but actually be as successful as any other venture. *Her Ladyship Siran Mahama*, judge, entrepreneur, mother, and cybersecurity professional, takes life one day at a time, building a career that is anything but ordinary. We discuss what it means to bring structure to passion, and cultivate excellence out of unexpected places, whether bringing order to her community on the bench, championing holistic health through Reviv, or patiently herding the law into the next technological era in artificial intelligence.

Introduce yourself to our readers

I am a law professional with close to a decade of experience across the bar, bench, in business and in academia. Currently, I am pursuing a PhD in Law at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies at the University of London. My research examines how artificial intelligence can support alternative dispute resolution in Ghana, with attention to its legal and cybersecurity implications. Most importantly, I am a mother to an amazing son.

Would you describe yourself as a multi-hyphenate? Why?

Yes, but not in a fancy way. My life just didn't happen in a straight line. I have always been curious; and whenever something genuinely interests me, I pursue it. That's how I ended up with all these different roles.

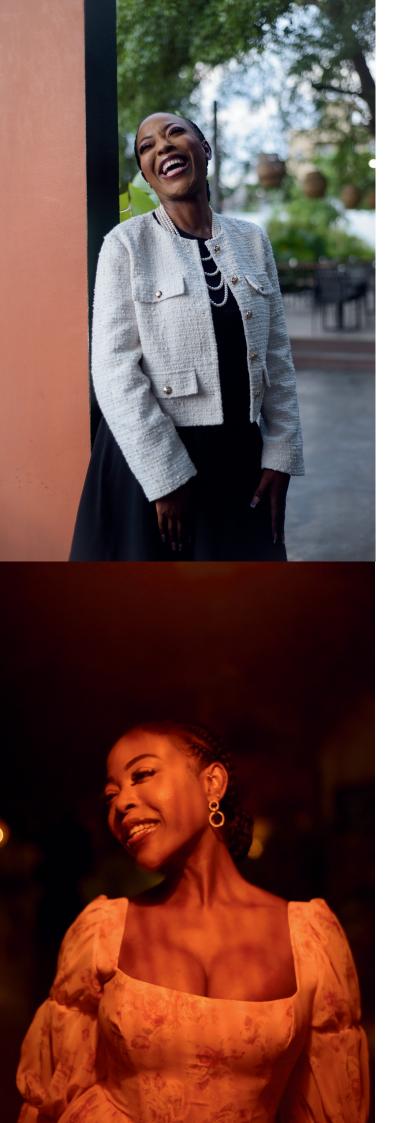
What quality helps you manage all these roles?

I am disciplined, and I don't like doing things halfway. If I sign up for something, I try to understand it properly. I am also good at switching gears. When I am in judge mode, I am fully there. When I am building something else, I am fully there too.



How would you describe your journey from lawyer to entrepreneur to judge to cybersecurity professional?

Honestly, it has been organic. One thing led to another. Law was my base profession. Then, entrepreneurship taught me a lot about people and responsibility. However, becoming a judge grounded me in a different way. I believe that joining the bench has fulfilled my life's purpose. It has enabled me to use my legal knowledge to really make an impact in society. Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence came later. They felt necessary because the world was changing so fast, and I didn't want to be left behind. Now, it all makes sense when I look back, even though it wasn't planned.



What was your introduction to IV therapy?

I tried it out of pure practicality. I tried it during a period when I was constantly on the move and needed something to support my energy and recovery. I was exhausted, travelling up and down, and a google search suggested IV therapy. It helped, so I took it seriously and learned more about it. That's how the whole thing started.

What philosophy do you bring to your courtroom?

Be fair. Be clear. And don't forget that the people standing in front of you are human beings. I try to maintain structure, but I also consider context. You can uphold the law without being harsh.

What's the biggest lesson you've learned in carving your own path?

That your life won't always look like other people's timelines; and that's okay. You have to know when to move, when to pause, and when to pivot. And you need a bit of courage to choose what actually works for you.

If Law, Reviv, and Cybersecurity were parts of your personality, what would they be?

Law: My serious, structured side.

Reviv: My health-conscious, nurturing side. Al & Cybersecurity: My analytical, slightly curious side that always wants to know what's happening behind the scenes.

What do the next five years look like for you?

More learning, more building, and hopefully more balance. I want to build on my work in the intersection of law and technology, grow the things I have already started, and still make room for more.











INSTAGRAM: @MINTSAUZ_ CALL/WHATSAPP: 054484527918





My favorite place to be is on a plane right before take off. Eye mask on, leaning against the window, occasionally gazing sleepily at the tarmac outside, buzzing with anticipation. I'm usually fast asleep before we're airbound, lulled to sleep by the familiar sounds of the safety demonstration (that I definitely always pay full attention to) and the hum of activity as hundreds of people settle down ahead of our journey hurtling through the sky in a massive metal chute. I enjoy the sense of possibility and anticipation that being on a plane brings.

Most of the time I'm on planes, I'm traveling alone. I usually travel solo because being by myself in a new place puts me out of my comfort zone, meaning I'm forced to interact with my environment more, and make new connections. So I end up being adventurous, resourceful, brave, outgoing, and resilient. Plus traveling alone means you don't have to spend time coordinating group chats and staying at that hotel that you don't like, but everyone else does.

Most people see solo travel as this big, daunting feat, so they end up talking themselves out of it. Which is a shame, because the unpredictability that solo travel brings means it can also be incredibly exciting and rewarding. Now, you're probably expecting me to share a list of all the wonderful things I've experienced as a solo traveler to convince you to book your next trip alone, but I'm nothing if not a reliable narrator so I'll share both sides of solo traveling across Africa to balance things out.

Getting a private tour of Coffee Lab, a coffee roastery in Nairobi from Wanjiru, the founder, who quit her corporate job and took up a full time career of grinding beans from her family home; Making friends with a tour operator in Diani, Kenya and spending the afternoon with him eating fresh fish, learning coastal Kiswahili, and debating how the Ghana Black Stars might perform at the next World Cup.



So, how do you feel after reading these stories? Surprised? Dismayed? Slightly terrified? Curious? All of these emotions?

That's normal, but also that's perfect. The beauty of solo travel is you feel all these emotions and still go on the trip anyway and explore all the possibilities.

Enjoy! And see you on the next plane.





Photography and Words by Bright Owusu-Konadu

Standing atop Mt. Gemi after a steady climb was one of the most rewarding moments in life. This hike was unlike any other one I had done in the past. It was a grueling 3 hours hiking from Gbadzeme to Amedzofe to Mt. Gemi and back to Gbadzeme.



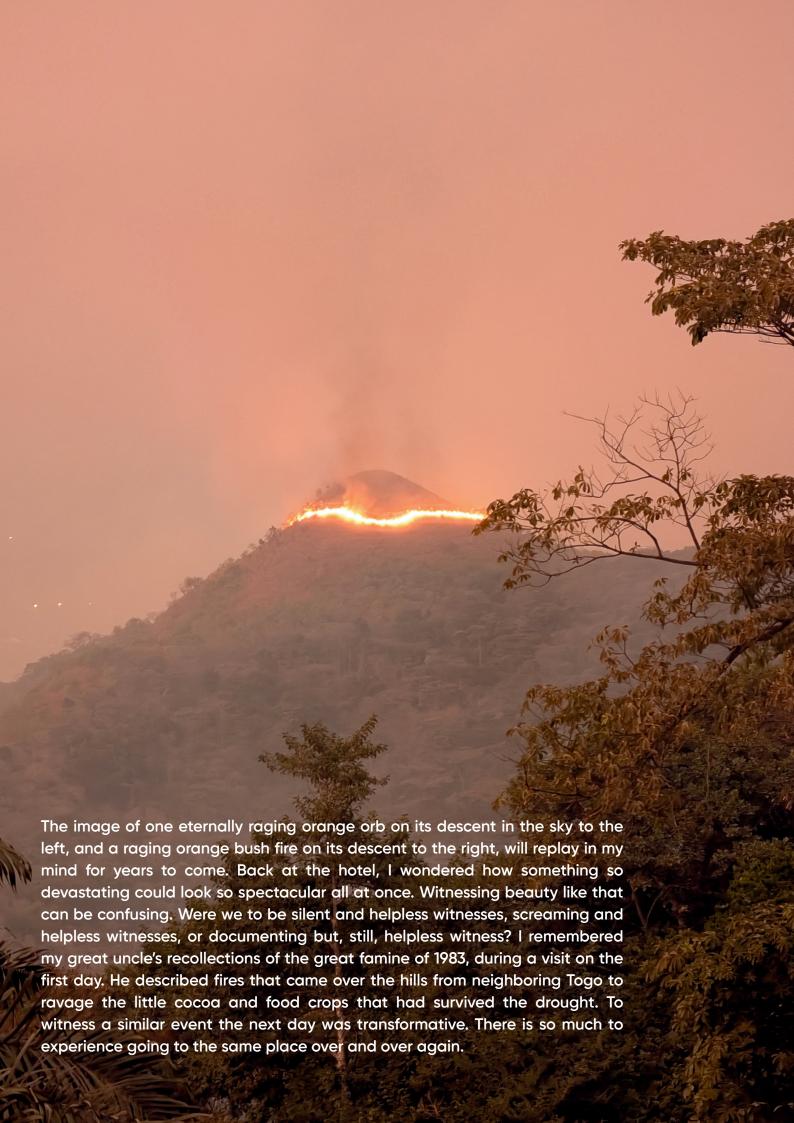
Standing atop Mt. Gemi after a steady climb was one of the most rewarding moments in life. This hike was unlike any other one I had done in the past. It was a grueling 3 hours hiking from Gbadzeme to Amedzofe to Mt. Gemi and back to Gbadzeme. Two hikes up the mountain in one day was a personal record in my almost three decades of hiking Gemi lt felt aood that mountain. accomplishing this feat in my 40s. I had sold my village, Gbadzeme, and Amedzofe as hiking destinations with great many photographing opportunities to my friends, Dominic and Charles. They knew that, if all that failed, they were guaranteed a cool and relaxing break from Accra, at an altitude of about 700m in the highest habitable land in Ghana. The morning hike up was fun and capped with a long photo walk through Amedzofe to capture the sunrise and the waking town. I had agreed to chaperone Charles, a photographer and architect, during which I schlepped Charles' long and heavy telephoto lens, as his new apprentice.

In return, I received a patient lecture on different light sources and how they produced pictures with dramatic effect, using the sunrise as an example. He explained how a rising or overhead sun eliminated shadows and hues, thereby flattening images. The conversation about natural light, seasons and microclimate naturally led to plans for future photo walks, including one in the evening and a future trip during the rainy season. Seeing my village through the eyes of outsiders always brings me joy. Dominic raved about the vistas from our hotel and the serenity of a location in the mountain. It felt like a spiritual encounter, as we sat together and talked about our different experiences that morning. Even the quiet, broken only by a quip here and there, felt more like a group activity than solo introspection. The freshly tapped palm-wine provided by the hotel further fueled these reflections.

The evening's hike was dramatic in comparison and, consequently, more rewarding. Dominic joined us this time and was impressed with the sights. Charles went about setting up; to replicate shots he missed as a result of the harsh morning sun. I busied myself with negotiating a lower charge for entry to the hiking trail. I smugly reminded the young volunteer guide that I was a native of the land and had 30 years' experience hiking up Mt. Gemi. This earned a chuckle from the folks at the ticketing office. Charles rolled his eyes. Everyone cheered the resulting rebate.

The harmattan dryness and haziness was more severe than the day before, when we arrived at Abraerica Hospitalities. It also produced a spectacular sunset. The dust in the air refracted the sunrays just so, touching the snaking valley road and the Volta Lake, in the distance, with gold. The dryness was quite insistent, with accompanying plumes of smoke, giving the pictures a distinct effect. A crescendo of crackling sounds accompanied the smoke that was soon impeding a clear view of the horizon and towns we were photographing.

In what felt like a sneak attack, we were suddenly assailed by a bush fire ravaging the peak of the hill just a few miles from Mt. Gemi! It was as beautiful as it was devastating to behold. We abandoned our other photographic interests in favor of the fiercely raging fire, mostly out of concern for our safety but, also, intense curiosity. Soon, our cameras were pointed in the direction of what looked like a living ring of fire encircling the crest of the hill, cutting a path of burnt shrubbery in its destructive path. We watched the fire creep up the hill from the windward side, top it, and loudly descend into the valley towards the Vane township. Our initial curiosity was soon replaced by apprehension and wonder.



My Experience as a Ghanaian Sex Coach and Media Personality

Navigating the Uncharted Territory of Sex Education

By Ami Shikah

It's hard to put into words how it feels to be in a space that is so new, so uncomfortable, and yet so necessary. I'm Ami Shikah, a certified sex coach, author, and media personality. I've made it my mission to break down the walls of silence surrounding sex and sexual health in Ghana, but there is a kicker. Ghana is a very conservative country where sex is considered a taboo topic, and yet here I am, putting it front and centre. In a society where discussing sexual health and pleasure feels almost like committing a crime, openly addressing such topics on social media, radio, TV, in my book Hot Sex Everyday, and on my podcast, Sex and Sanity, has made me both admired and misunderstood. Let me tell you, it's been a wild ride. But it's a journey I wouldn't trade for anything because it's led me to one clear conclusion that someone needs to have these conversations, and I've found my place in doing that. This article is my chance to share how I have navigated the uncharted territory of sex education in Ghana, and how, despite the backlash, I've made it my purpose to educate, empower, and impact the lives of others in a way that's changing society, one conversation at a time.

The Beginning: Finding My Passion for Sex Education

I didn't just wake up one day and decide to become the voice of sex education in Ghana. It all started when I was an undergraduate at the University of Ghana. My roommates were active Planned members of the **Parenthood** Association of Ghana (PPAG) club, and every Wednesday evening, we'd gather for meetings on the stairs beside the Central Cafeteria. During these meetings, one person would be on the 'hot seat,' and the rest of us would throw questions about their sex life at them. It was eday, real, and raw. But what stood out to me most wasn't just the fun conversations; it was how we followed them up with deep dives into serious sexual health topics, from HIV prevention and STIs to safe abortion practices and contraception. The club wasn't just about these meetings, though. We organized sex education programs, offering HIV testing services and inviting people living with HIV to share their experiences. During these meetings, one person would be on the 'hot seat,' and the rest of us would throw questions about their sex life at them.

It was edgy, real, and raw. But what stood out to me most wasn't just the fun conversations; it was how we followed them up with deep dives into serious sexual health topics, from HIV prevention and STIs to safe abortion practices and contraception. The club wasn't just about these meetings, though. We organized sex education programs, offering HIV testing services and inviting people living with HIV to share their experiences. One couple we invited had one partner who was positive and the other negative, yet they had children who were HIV negative. In addition, we distributed condoms around campus, educated people about safe sex, and conducted surveys and discussions about emergency contraception and people's active sex lives. Through all of that, I noticed something important: people were embarrassed to talk about sex. They'd shy away from answering questions, but their responses made it clear they were sexually active. Here in Ghana, where shame often knowledge, I could trumps see how desperately people wanted to get the facts about their bodies and their sexual health, but just couldn't find a way to do it without the fear of being judged. That's when I knew my journey was destined to go against the grain. I felt a deep urgency to break the silence and create a safe space for these important conversations.

Taking it Further: My Commitment to Sex Education

In 2017, I decided to start blogging because I love writing. I needed a niche, something I could talk about endlessly. I thought, "Who else in Ghana, or even Africa, is blogging about sex?" That was when I remembered how much I loved sex education. I enjoyed doing it in university, so why not continue? I began posting articles on my blog (amisdiaries.com) about sexual health, safe abortion, and related topics, but soon realized I needed to take things further.

I became an active voice on social media, especially on X (formerly Twitter), to openly talk about sex and break the silence. In 2019, I launched my podcast, Sex and Sanity, with the GoldCoast Report (GCR) Podcast Network to promote sexual literacy. The podcast allowed me to have meaningful conversations and reach a wider audience. In 2021, I started hosting my radio show, Simmer Down, with Guide Radio, which I absolutely loved because it gave me the opportunity to expand my platform and connect with more people in Ghana. The call-in segments were especially impactful, with people excitedly sharing their experiences and asking questions about various sexual health topics. I would answer their questions and invite guests to join the conversation. At this point, I knew I wanted to help people even better, so I decided to get formal training. I pursued an advanced postgraduate diploma in Global Sexual and Reproductive Health Management. Then, I took my journey even further by completing my sex coach training and earning my sex coach certification. I also wrote my book, Hot Sex Everyday, to show people how limitless the possibilities are when it comes to exploring intimacy in and outside the bedroom. In the book, I mentioned 365 activities, one for each day of the year, to encourage readers to explore new experiences with their partners. For each activity, I gave detailed instructions to help couples explore them in ways that deepen their connection, add variety, and boost the health of their relationships. I have continued to make media appearances, write, and do everything I can to keep the conversation about sex going.

Going Against the Grain: The Challenges I Faced

If you live in Ghana, you know how hard it is to break free from the cultural chains that hold us back from having honest conversations about sex. I mean, in a society where even married couples struggle to openly talk about their sexual desires, doing what I do comes with a lot of challenges.

First, there's the stigma. I've dealt with my fair share of harsh criticism. People have said and assumed all sorts of things about me: "You're promoting promiscuity," "You must be a sex worker," "You're addict." The a sex misunderstandings have been endless. I often felt like I was constantly battling to explain that sex coaching is not about doing the deed, but about teaching others understand, embrace. and enjoy their sexuality. It's about guiding people to shed guilt, shame, and confusion, and empowering them to make informed decisions about their sexual well-being. Then, there was the backlash from my own family. When my parents first heard about my chosen career path, they feared I was stepping into dangerous territory. They thought it was somehow wrong and that I was opening myself up to scandal and judgment. I had to sit down with them, explain the value of what I was doing, and show them the positive impact it could have on people. Over time, they've begun to understand and embrace it, but it remains an ongoing journey that requires a lot of patience and compassion. Publicly, I've faced endless judgment, from slut-shaming to personal attacks online. People constantly assume things about me based on what they don't understand. It is sometimes emotionally draining, but I keep going because I know this work is more important than any social commentary. I know that the need for sexual health education in Ghana is too great for me to give up on.

The Rewards: Impacting Change and Shaping Society

On the flip side, my journey has been incredibly rewarding. Slowly, over time, I've seen a shift. The messages I receive daily from people who have learned something new from my social media, podcast, radio show and TV appearances, or my blog posts motivate me to keep me going.

People reach out to me often with questions they've never been able to ask anyone else. Additionally, I've lost count of the number of times people have told me they tried something I said on a show or mentioned in my book, and how much they enjoyed it. I have sex coaching clients (couples) who have been able to transform their marriages and improve their sexual experiences because of my guidance. I remember meeting one listener of my podcast, who told me how our conversation on sexual health and intimacy helped her and her husband reignite their passion after years of stagnation. That, right there, made everything worth it. It's not just about the positive feedback, though. It's also the tangible changes I've seen in how people approach their bodies and relationships. I see more people embracing their sexuality confidently, without the fear of shame holding them back. I've empowered individuals to take control of their sexual health (whether enjoying sex, learning about contraceptives, or simply communicating better with their partners). Every person who learns something they didn't know before is a small victory, and the more victories we have, the closer we get to creating a society where sexual health is not a topic shrouded in secrecy but one that is embraced, understood, and valued.

Looking Ahead

My mission to educate, empower, and normalize conversations around sex is far from over. There's still so much to explore, from deepening our understanding of sexuality to creating more spaces where people can embrace their desires without shame. As we keep this conversation going, I encourage you to own your sexuality. Embrace it fully: its complexities, its joys, and everything in between. It's time to let go of judgment and celebrate the beautiful journey that comes with understanding who we are in the most intimate ways. Together, let's continue to create a world where sexual health, pleasure, and self-love are the standard, not the exception.

Stay sexy!



A hit song doesn't just slip quietly onto the airwaves.

It experiences a full-blown metamorphosis. Whether it's Moliy coaxing dancehall basslines into a global pop hit or King Paluta proving that hiplife still packs a punch, there's a rhythm to how these records are born, and ultimately crowned. Every big song has a phase, where inspiration and nascent creativity meet technology and, sometimes, pure audacity. In this precious incubation period, artists decide with producers whether to keep things genre-faithful, or experiment with a fusion vibe. Moliy, already somewhat known for "Sad Gurlz Luv Money", took a bolder step with "Shake It to the Max". She confirmed, "I don't think I've done dancehall until this moment so it was definitely intentional." King Paluta, on the other hand, stayed rooted in hiplife the way your uncles remember it, crafting "Makoma" with afrobeat undertones to create a sound that felt both familiar and fresh.

Even before the influence of social media, the viral songs we loved always had their own it factor. Be it the deepest cuts of vulnerability in love (Ms. Whitney's 'I Will Always Love You'), the heights of irreverence (Sisgo's 'Thong Song'), or songs that perfectly tap in to the trends of the time, every hit song owns itself before the masses embrace it. If a song has any potential for virality at all, the next step is early adoption. This is when the die-hard artist or genre fans and niche communities circulate snippets among each other directly, or via social media. DJs play their roles too, spinning the track at clubs and events. Whether they wield this influence fairly among great new releases or via payola is an ongoing debate.

Due to Moliy's admirably relentless promotion of the 'Shake It to the Max' teaser, over 235,000 TikTok videos of dancers executing the simple dance moves started to make the rounds even before the official December 2024 release. ing Paluta's "Makoma" travelled in a different way, dominating WhatsApp groups among older Ghanaians, a demographic which grew up with hiplife love songs and appreciated a song made for wedding receptions.

Once early adopters lay the groundwork, notoriety follows. This is where things get interesting, and, sometimes, a little messy. A viral song needs more than just catchy hooks. It craves celebrity co-signs, or a controversial moment that captures the internet's fickle attention. Moliy secured a slew of remixes featuring Skillibeng, Shenseea, Sean Paul, etc., propelling "Shake It to the Max" to over 100 million combined streams and certified gold status (500,000 units sold in the U.S.) by July 2025. This targeted marketing also led to the track topping the Billboard U.S. Afrobeats Chart (No. 1 for 10 weeks) and dominating UK Afrobeats playlists. Late on the train, local giants (Stonebwoy, Samini, Edem, etc.) unofficially submitted their remixed renditions, driving more conversation. The rise of "Makoma" felt more organic. A teaser video, dropped five days before the single, set social media ablaze. Within the first week, "Makoma" racked up a million streams on Audiomack and shot to number one on Apple Music Ghana. The video was released two months later to some public grumbles over his use of a light-skinned, mixedrace woman over a more representative, darkerskinned co-star for a song celebrating homegrown Ghanaian love and beauty. Of course, this controversy piqued folks' curiosity about the song. After the rush of attention comes maturation, when a record seeps into the zeitgeist. You hear it thumping out of trotros, blaring in boutiques, and folded into viral moments.

Moliy's track landed on Spotify's Songs of Summer and Global Impact Lists for 2025, earned A-list radio rotations in the UK, and inspired countless remixes and dance videos. King Paluta's video surpassed two million YouTube views within weeks, cementing "Makoma" as a street anthem. 'Makoma' also crossed into the diaspora, becoming one of the biggest Ghanaian songs in the UK in 2024, with Paluta performing it at the Ghana Party in the Park to an incredible reception.

Behind the scenes, technology has quietly fanned these flames. The rise of affordable smartphones and faster internet across Ghana made it easier than ever to record, share, and react. Platforms like TikTok, Boomplay, and Audiomack no longer just distribute music; they predict it. Their algorithms detect which clips are spiking in popularity and reward songs with more visibility. Even Al plays its part. Spotify's predictive models flagged "Shake It to the Max" as a likely summer smash before Moliy's label officially started their global push. Virality can be spontaneous - like a bolt of lightning out of nowhere - or a relay race. Someone writes a banger, early adopters sprint to claim it, and DJs and media outlets pass the baton. Tech platforms amplify the signal, and, finally, the masses pick it up. In the journey from concept to cultural staple, every phase matters. Incubation shapes the soul of the track, early adopters give it credibility, controversy and co-signs provide fuel, and mass adoption makes it immortal.

So, the next time you hear a song spinning from the roadside speaker or dominating your playlist algorithms, remember it didn't happen by accident.

It happened because an artist dared to create, fans dared to believe, and a whole ecosystem of technology, curiosity, and old-fashioned hustle dared to push it into the limelight.



Everyone Has A "Green Thumb"

Even in Urban Spaces

By Rebecca L.A. Collins

Urban concrete jungles might seem like an unlikely place to cultivate a garden, but the truth is, anyone can grow their own food, even in a bustling city. What began as an accidental adventure in our own home soon blossomed into a journey of discovery, resilience, and a newfound connection with nature. My partner Tom and I, city dwellers prior gardening experience, embarked on this adventure in 2020. During the pandemic, we saw how risky it was to depend entirely on external sources for our food. At a time when we didn't know if we would ever come out of lockdown or have the same access to food as before, we decided to start our journey toward growing our own.

We first tired sweet potatoes: a hardy plant that gave us our first small harvest, sparked a fire in us to grow more. We also accidentally grew a tomato plant by discarding kitchen wastewater containing tomato seeds onto a patch of poor soil. To our surprise, a plant sprouted and grew. Although it never bore fruit, it was yet another spark. Coming from mothers who grew food at home long before social media offered quick tips and tutorials, we knew that nurturing a plant was about more than just following rules. It was about tapping into generational wisdom and adapting it to our modern, urban reality.

From Frustration to Flourishing

Our initial excitement was soon met with setbacks. Purchased seeds failed to germinate, leading to what we jokingly refer to as "Gardener's Disappointment Syndrome". Eventually, we discovered our seeds simply weren't viable. Instead of giving up, we chose to more about the fundamentals gardening, and of course, to get better seeds. Tom immersed himself in the study of soil composition, compost making, and innovative techniques like square foot gardening, which was a perfect fit for our urban setup. This prompted us to turn to raised beds and container gardening.







Practical Tips for the Urban Green Thumb

Urban gardening offers a few accessible paths for beginners:

1. Start Small with Store-Bought Plants:

Ignite your passion for growing food is by nurturing a few plants purchased from a garden store. We started with herbs, which gave us the confidence to eventually grow food from seeds.

2. Try DIY Container Gardening or Raised Beds

If you're ready for a hands-on approach, assess your available space and try container gardening. Choose one or two plants to start, perhaps even using seeds from market-bought produce like tomatoes or peppers.

Appropriate Containers: Repurpose old pots or buy new one, just ensure they have drainage holes. For larger plants like big sized tomatoes and peppers, use bigger containers; for herbs, smaller ones will suffice. Alternatively, raised beds function as larger containers. Aim for at least six inches of soil depth to support healthy root growth. You can also start seeds in a seedling tray before transplanting them to their permanent home. This has a few advantages, but not all plants prefer this method, some thrive when directly sown.

3. Before you plant, ensure you have the essentials:

A Good Soil Mix: You can opt for pre-mixed soil from garden shops or create your own by combining one part sand, coco peat, and compost. This blend has been our reliable foundation for raised beds and container gardening success. Once your container is filled with soil, sow your seeds, either scatter them on the surface or plant them in shallow holes, cover lightly with soil, and water immediately. Seeds crave moisture, so daily watering is key until they sprout. As they grow, you'll need to adjust watering schedules and may want to add a layer of mulch, coco peat or dry leaves work wonders in retaining soil moisture.



The true magic of urban gardening is in the transformation it brings. Beyond the practical benefit of fresh, organic, home-grown food, it offers a unique connection to nature that can deeply enhance your well-being. Tasting food you've nurtured with your own hands provides unmatched satisfaction, something store-bought food can't replicate. A Sustainable Step Forward.

Today, urban gardening is more than just growing food, it's a sustainable choice. By cultivating your own garden, you reduce reliance on large-scale agriculture and help lower the environmental footprint associated with store-bought produce. It's a gentle yet powerful reminder that sustainability can start right on your balcony or windowsill. Whether you're trying something new or embarking on a fulfilling journey of self-sufficiency, remember: every gardener starts small. With the right information, a bit of experimentation, and a lot of passion, you too can discover the joys of urban gardening and perhaps even develop a deep, personal connection with the natural world. Embrace the process, and let your urban garden be a testament to the fact that everyone truly does have a green thumb.

Rebecca and Tom can be found on Instagram and Tiktok (@livingsustainablywithus), as they document their experience living and urban farming in Ghana.





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We Force Shame on The Poor: It's Time For That Shame To Change Sides



By Pamm Takyiwaa

I open and close my fridge with the ease and seriousness of a politician at election time, reading his 4 years of 'work'. I peer inside, expecting-what, exactly? A testament to my good choices? Proof of my competence? Or maybe somebody did something that I can claim as my own. But unlike a politician, I am feeling ashamed; I should have prioritised food and grocery shopping; I should definitely not be spending money on jalapenos and garlic butter if I have no eggs or vegetables. I am ashamed of my finances, food choices, and options, and wondering why I'm craving... bacon. I am ashamed that I think bacon is a luxury item. This is the gut-wrenching shame of personal failing. And it's a lie. I haven't felt shame in a long time. I mean genuine, gutwrenching guilt and emptiness that comes with regret and self-hate. I have worked hard to feel less regret, self-hatred, and chase completion instead of perfection as often as possible.

It's a simple and delusional affirmation that I am capable and 'allowed' to make mistakes, take a wrong turn here and there, and be able to return to myself when this happens. Because all that is now possible is because of what once wasn't. But the shame attached to poverty is different. It is not merely internal; it is relentlessly external. Shame and humiliation are central to the poverty experience. So I say 'shame must change sides' as I snack on my peppers. Shame must change sides when I sit down. And again, as I walk out my door to buy some eggs.

Shame Must Change Sides (2024) is made popular by 71-year-old Gisele Pelicot, whose husband, Dominique Pelicot, drugged her repeatedly over the years, so he and others could assault, abuse, and rape her. This is not a phrase to remember for nonsense, but that's the thing; poverty is not nonsense. Being poor isn't just about lacking material resources; it's also a deeply emotional and often painful cycle of shame, anger, and hope.

Poverty is pervasive and affects millions worldwide, yet attributed to individual failings or moral deficiencies. Millions of people can't all be lazy and unambitious. Poverty is primarily a systemic problem, rooted in structural inequalities and systemic failures. Think Ghana, a country where 24.6% of the population is multidimensionally poor, and lack education. Like many other developing countries, access to quality education is often limited to those affluent backgrounds, denvina opportunities to individuals from marginalized communities. (1) Socioeconomic disparities, often exacerbated by (2) historical injustices and (3) discriminatory policies, create a system where some individuals have significantly greater access to education, healthcare, employment, and other essential resources. This inequality limits the ability of individuals to escape poverty, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage. It doesn't get any better after this.

Good governance, transparency, and accountability are essential for creating an environment that fosters economic development and social justice. What we have is corruption, a lack of transparency, and frustratingly inefficient institutions at every turn. And when we do get it right, we immediately deregulate or privatise. How do you become economically stable when every single system is designed to keep you poor and available for cheap labour?

Maybe you're a woman, and you layer this with gendered discrimination. Girls of school-going age are disproportionately affected by the lack of gender equality in Ghana's educational system. Practices such as child marriage, child labor, inadequate training of teachers, our collective inability to accommodate girls' menstruation, and hidden costs of sending children to school mean fewer girls are enrolled in schools.

This is not new; I have aunts who dropped out brothers could continue their education. It is a devastating trade-off that is never presented as such: their future for his. And yet, today, these same women continue to be the primary caregivers for their very own brothers and their children. Women's education is treated as disposable; women's labor and economic subjugation are not. This is not unique to Ghana; it is a global blueprint. ulerWe cannot shame people out of poverty because poverty is not a character flaw. It is a complex structural failing. Attributing it to individuals is not just simplistic; it is a deliberate strategy. Convincing a society that poverty is both shameful and deserved is the key mechanism for maintaining the social, cultural, and economic forces that perpetuate widespread, generational poverty.

It is time to stop asking, "What did you do wrong?" and start demanding, "What was done to you?" We must invest in equitable resources, strengthen social safety nets, and build truly accountable institutions. We must force the shame to change sides—away from the vulnerable and onto the systems that keep them that way.

My empty refrigerator is not a moral failure.

It is evidence.



UNPLUGGED IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL

MEDIA

by Mame Adjei

I've been trying to get my friends on board with the idea of me going "dark" on socials. can only reach me landline/emails", kind of dark. We laugh about it and move on, but I know they know I'm serious. Of course, some friends hate the idea more than others, but I just don't believe we should have our phones attached to our 24/7. It's unnatural and unhealthy, if you ask me. Of course, this is all my opinion and, while I haven't done as much research as I would like on the matter, we could go through my train of thought together?

Gratification", defined "Instant by positivepsychology.com as "the temptation, and resulting tendency, to forego a future benefit in order to obtain a less rewarding but more immediate benefit", is an ever-evolving phenomenon that I believe social media has "crashed" humans face-first into. I am of the opinion that instant gratification has a way of "corrupting" the human psyche by stunting the resilience that forms from people experiencing rejection delayed or gratification. When people know that they won't always get what they want, as soon as they want it, it builds character; almost like muscle. Much like strength training, where you have to break muscle down in order to recompose it, it is important to exercise resilience in the face of rejection. If you don't use that muscle, you lose it. Why is it important for us to build resilience?

I believe it is an important factor in human evolution, giving space for flexibility, creativity and innovation.,

Innovation is, especially, a necessity for humanity's survival because life is a game of trying to stay alive and much of today's lifesaving technology is as a result of that innovative instinct. Instant gratification atrophies your mind's "muscles", because if you're getting everything you want, as soon as you want it, there will be no need for resilience. Individuality has also suffered at the hands of chronic social media consumption. There is evidence of a "follower" mentality, having witnessed countless examples of virtual dogpiling, in a bid to "fit in" and avoid ostracization by larger society (made larger by the worldwide web). In my opinion, this is a result of continuous exposure to external chatter and opinions from all over the world, without as in depth an understanding of one's own feelings. In settings where individuality is discouraged and, at times, picked at, the necessary personal exploration to figure what we actually think and feel, and if we have that thought/feeling in common with other people, is hindered.

This theme was fully explored in William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies', a book about prepubescent boys stranded on an island who turn to savagery and violence. In the book, the descent from rational thinking and consideration of others to actual violence and murder was but a few steps down. The negative feelings of the antagonist [jealousy of the protagonist, and insecurity translated through the lens of fearmongering and anger] easily infected the other boys, perhaps because they were also jealous of the protagonist, but mainly because they were afraid to become victims of the violence that was occurring towards the more individually-Another minded boys. thina - 1 overconsumption of social media has created is emotional contagion

This is the most anyone has been exposed to the thoughts and emotions of this many people at once in the history of mankind. Even on a subconscious level, an effect of scrolling down an infinite feed, of angry, sad or even anxious thoughts is that, over time, one tends absorb them into one's to own subconsciousness. lt takes immense discernment to be able to decipher between one's own thoughts and those which have been "inherited" from the internet.

We have even experienced the opposite end of the spectrum, which is seeing the overly curated happiness online that can cause one to feel discontent with one's own life, or exist in a bubble completely removed from the realities of life. It is significantly harder to have healthy emotional reactions to life events when only the most extreme emotions are consumed on a daily basis, served by powerful algorithms.

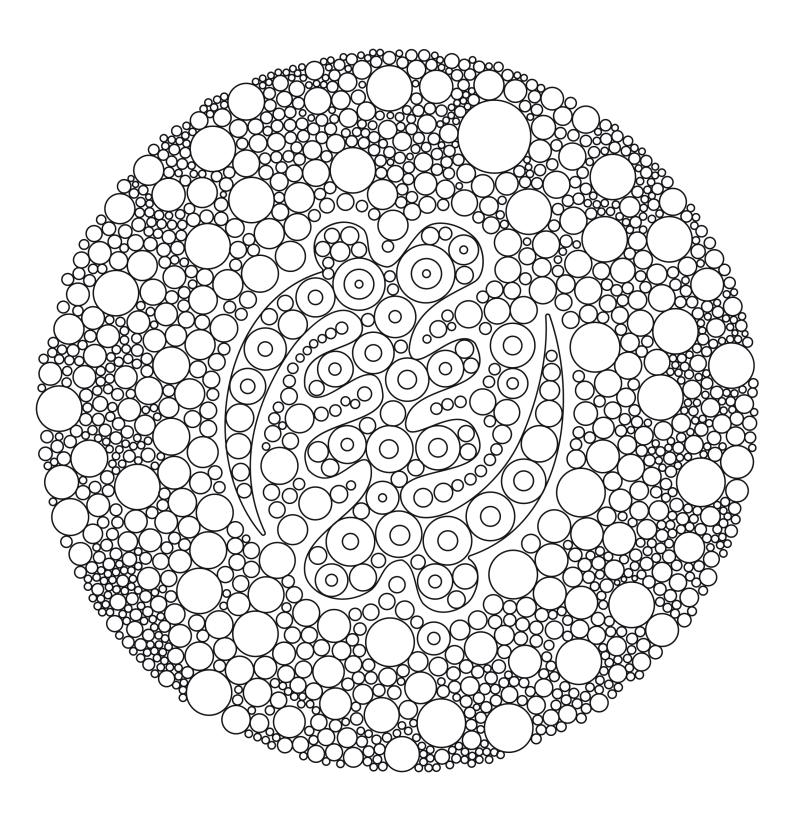
My final point with regards to my qualms about social media is the access information. The internet is anarchy and no trustworthy body is fact-checking anything. Don't get me wrong. Knowledge is power and, increase freedom of speech, low-cost access to information and equitable platforms for unrestricted dialogue and debate is social media's gift to mankind. However, wisdom must accompany knowledge. Human beings do not know everything, no matter what we might think. Even in what we know, we do not know its full depth. It has always been important to factcheck information against objective facts that have been tried and tested by numerous people from varying parts of the world. These days, in a frenzy for virality, less time is dedicated to this exercise to establish what is fact from what is merely opinion, or even unadulterated Havina lies. access information without taking steps to adequately understand, and process, before sharing said information can actually do more damage than good.

I remember in 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown, there was a lot of information floating on the Socials about what Covid is, what caused it, and how it could be avoided Despite the World Health treated. Organisation's attempts to supply information, was drowned out false narrative. Fearmongering also prevented us properly processing information, because there was uncertainty everywhere. There were days where my phone was attached to my hand, while I obsessed over the many potentials that could happen to my loved ones and I. As a result of my own fear, I often struggled to ascertain what was true from what was not. It's very easy to spiral, despite the wealth of information, if you don't know what you're looking at, or even know what to question.

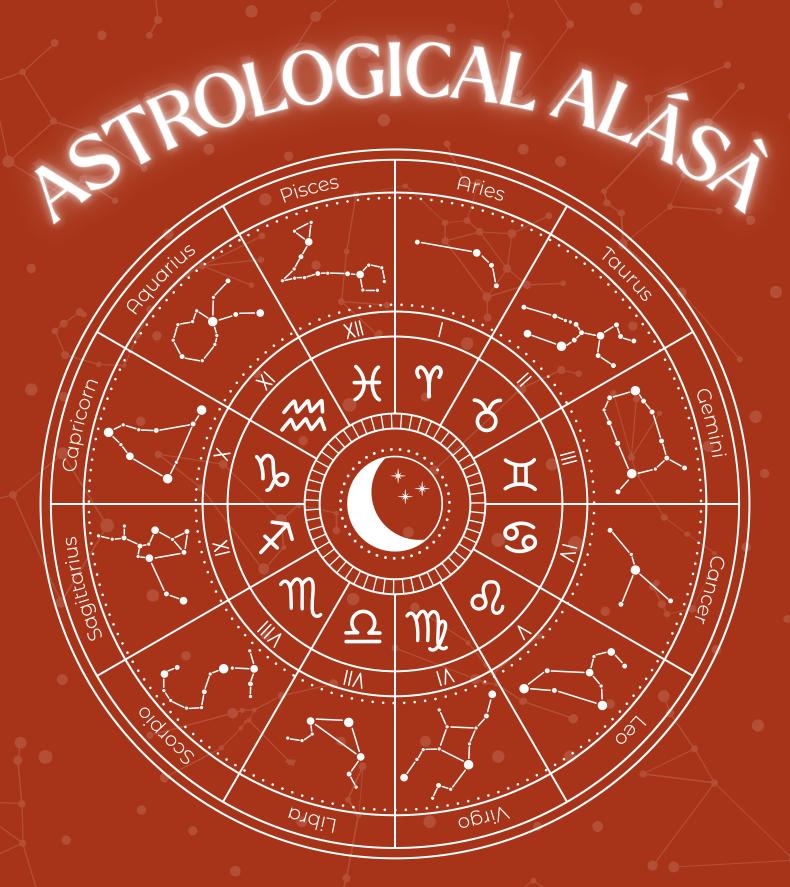
I had to push past the fear to read extensively and use rationale and logic to determine which information would be useful in such a scary time. Information should not be shrouded in secrecy that only a select few can access, but on platforms like social media where nuance is removed from phrases and tone is often misconstrued, it is important that people know where to go for real, vetted information, and not take a virtual game of Chinese Whispers as fact. Social media is like kelewele. It has many benefits and makes us very happy. The speed of information technology has drawn us closer to loved ones, broken global cultural barriers, brought and varied information to our fingertips and supported innovation that we couldn't fathom 20 years ago. However, too much kelewele is bad, especially if you have cholesterol issues or an open cavity, and so the same applies. Too much social media will do you no good, and I make the case that we all need to be online less











The year 2025 has been a landmark year for many reasons. Trade wars, geopolitical conflicts, these have all shaped 2025 in big ways. This energy of big transformations, conflicts, and turbulence will carry over in 2026.

Reading by Tiffany Soulbird

Astrology of 2025

2025 has challenged us on both personal and collective levels. Whenever a planet enters a new sign, that planet's energy takes on an entirely different flavor and with the slow moving outer planets all moving to zero degrees of a new sign, the changes will be lasting and apparent. Zero symbolizes all kinds of new beginnings. It's extremely rare to have this number of planets moving into a new sign in the same year.

This has resulted in shifts in energy all over the world, shifts that actually started late 2024.

In January 2025, Saturn- planet of rules, laws, and boundaries- entered Aries, followed by Neptune later in March. Saturn and Neptune in Aries have challenged the illusions we have around law and order. Saturn in Aries brings about more conflicts while Neptune in Aries will bring the energy of assertive spirituality and bold creative expression.

In June, Jupiter also went from Gemini, to Cancer, where it feels at home and exalted. Jupiter in Cancer can also bring increased focus on the home and ancestry.

Transformational Uranus entered Gemini in July, signalling a worldwide upshift in technological advancement that will last until Uranus enters Cancer in 2032.

What is special about the astrology of 2026?

If 2025 brings the first rumbles of intense change to the world, then 2026 is the increase of those rumbles. Many planets are moving from slow and deep water and earth signs, to action oriented air and fire signs. This means an acceleration of change in the world, and this change is for the purpose of our growth.

Neptune and Saturn Return to Aries: Spiritual and Creative Personal Revolutions

As of the time of this writing, Neptune and Saturn are both moving backwards in retrograde into Pisces. In February 2026, Neptune will move forward into Aries again for good for the next 13 years. Themes of disillusionment, assertive spirituality, and bold creative expression will be highly active, though within limits because of Saturn's restricting influence. Aries is the sign of individuality and leadership, thus spirituality and creativity will be more characterized by those traits. Now is the time when your own unique connection to God/the Divine, and your creative world will come into focus

Uranus Moves to Gemini - Electric Waves of Change

Uranus is in brief retrograde back to Taurus, but in February it will move forward again, then move permanently into Gemini until 2033. This transit is very significant for the world, because Uranus represents technological advancements, social justice, and advancement of society overall. In Gemini, there's an emphasis on communications and open-minded exploration and these themes will be big for the next seven years. However, Uranus will also be in a supportive trine to Pluto, which represents death, change, and rebirth and signals massive regenerative changes in the way we live in the world. In other words, the future world is already underway. Change always comes quickly when air signs are activated. Keep yourself grounded by spending time in nature, remembering to laugh and not take life seriously.

Jupiter in Leo: Expand Your Sense of Self

Jupiter will be entering fiery Leo at the end of June. Jupiter will bring its expansive energy to this sign, and the ways personal identity and creative fire influence our lives.

While Jupiter in Leo encourages us to express ourselves boldly and creatively, it is opposing Pluto, which is looking at the broader overview and what needs to change for the society at large. This transit will teach us how to balance our individuality with needs for social advancement.

Pluto Leaves Retrograde

Pluto will be going direct on October 15, 2026. This transit will be deeply felt, since slow-moving Pluto takes a long time to stop and go direct. Pluto brings destruction but also rebirth and this energy will be very prominent during the latter part of October, as we begin to see outmoded societal standards being challenged and reformed. At the same time, Pluto in Scorpio is a rather impersonal transit; more than individual humanity, it sees what must be done on a massive scale and gets it done. Kindness, mutual respect, expressions of love and expressions of creativity will be more relevant now than ever.

What to Look For in 2026?

- Opportunities to express yourself uniquely even when restricted
- Reflections and reconsiderations about the role of technology in society, followed by rapid reforms and advancements
- Taking care to demonstrate humanity and not lose that humanity in an age of rapid technological progress.
- The opportunity for African ways of life to be held up as an example of communal and creative living with human heart, as the rest of the world marches forward into tech development.

These transits give a general overview but each person will be affected differently and in more specific ways, depending each individual's birthchart. If you would like a personalized reading reach out to me at <u>TiffanySoulbird@gmail.com</u>. All the best as we navigate these transformative times together.



Dear Alásà Council,

I'm in my 30s living in one of the major cities in Africa. I am fortunate to have a traditional corporate job with great perks that help me stay a little bit more than afloat, as long as I keep the frivolities moderate.

However, I'm extremely unhappy. I dread going into the office every day, spending hours replying countless emails and dozing off in endless meetings. I feel stagnant in the role and, if I'm honest, my talents are wasted here.

I have considered starting over and pivoting towards new career paths. The world has changed since I left school and I feel that there are so many more options to explore that will get my blood pumping with excitement again. I know that with hard work, I could make even more money than I do now, while feeding my passions. The lure of having control over my schedule is also quite potent.

The problem is... I'm spoiled. I have become accustomed to a certain standard of living and walking away from this job will mean adjusting significantly while I find my feet in any new venture. Going back to school, starting at entry level in a different industry, or investing in a start-up can mean not only losing my current salary, but potentially depleting my savings. This concern has delayed making any serious moves towards building my dream career. However, the more I think about the potential gains, the more attractive it all looks.

My question is: How can I have the best of both worlds when I do take the leap of faith. I'm only mildly delulu in that I acknowledge things will change financially, but what practical steps can I take to make sure it won't be as devastating while I set myself up?

Thanks for your help,

Ο.

Dear O.

First of all, well done for having all these plans for yourself. To keep it simple & short, I'd say there's no such thing as the "right time". Sometimes you just have to take a leap. That being said, I think you can plan to have some things in place, by way of saving.

For instance, maybe having a year's rent/utilities saved away. Saving up for tuition in the event that you do want to go back to school. Find out what your options are at your job once you elevate your resume, like if you can come back at a higher capacity. Just anything you believe promotes your general security. If you're ready for school, then start applying so you can actually pursue the plans. Whatever you decide, you'll never be wrong anyways so you really have nothing to lose.

And if you have a good support system, lean on them as well.

I hope everything goes well.

Signed, M.

Dear O,

This is quite the conundrum. I infer from your note that you've narrowed your options down but I want to offer a different perspective, maybe a midpoint. You may be in a unique position that is worth exploring. But you have to have a plan. Have you done a lot of public-facing events that allow you to be known as the expert and leader that you are? Have you avoided taking up space where you will create the network that would convert into a future hiring into a significantly senior position where you have more flexibility and money?

I have observed a consistent trend of people doing a lot of public-facing events that allows them to be known as experts and leaders in their field. In doing this, they have managed to take up space and move into more interesting positions with even better conditions of service. Needless to say, there is merit in starting anew. Going back to school or starting a company of your own. You must be prepared for the 'entry level' start with whichever of these two you settle on. They will equally test you but with persistence they will be rewarding.

В

Dear O,

Thanks for writing in. To start, if you are taking care of only yourself, I'd say there is room to experiment. The question is in 'the how'!? Personally, I highly recommend taking some calculated risks. Can your emergency fund cover your costs for a year in addition to whatever you need to invest in the start up? For example, are there alternatives to using your savings to bridge those startup costs?

Secondly, and maybe I should have started with this: If a job does not inspire or grow you, by all means please look for another. Thirdly it would be wise to think through the other barriers that you will encounter as you venture out. My other question to you though is, can the dream be built through any other means - take over/acquisitions etc? What are other start up founders in the space you're interested in saying about the path to success here?

As you remarked, being in a position to make this choice is a privilege and it would be great for you to reflect on whether there are any other advantages or blind spots to your privilege that you can factor in. Let us know how you are getting on and what you decided.

Warmly, L

Dear O.

I want to preface this by saying there's no wrong way to go about this, except if you don't make a clear plan for yourself. Laying out a timeline, projecting what the next few years would look like financially, will minimize the surprises. Note the most important parts of your current lifestyle and prioritize them, with estimations of what it would cost you to fund them.

My second piece of advice is to "call a friend". You are not the first to stand at these same crossroads and you won't be the last. Ask other people who have made these moves for practical steps they take - grants, cost-saving techniques - to at least smooth volatility in income.

Finally, lean into it! You've mentioned that you are aware of the changes to your bank account and are likely gearing up for it. The sooner you get started, the sooner you'll have a realistic picture of your new life. The transition does not have to be drastic. You have the advantage of having the skills and experience that make you successful in your current role, but also carry into your new endeavors to ensure success there too.

In the grand scheme of things, for what you may initially lose monetarily, the tradeoff - peace of mind, better work-life balance - could be worth so much more!

Wishing you the best of luck!

P.

POETRY and other pieces

NANA'S WISE WORDS

by Oye

Faa ni obuu le le, no shaa bo.

The river you do not respect is what carries you away

The river you underestimate is what pulls you under

This Ga proverb comes readily to mind whenever I am asked to name a Ghanaian proverb. It translates as 'the river which you do not respect is the one that will pull you', evoking the everpresent danger of being dragged under and then out to sea by a seemingly calm river or estuary. The Gas are coastal, traditionally fishing folk, and many lives are lost annually from their communities to the strong, unpredictable currents and variable depths of rivers, especially at estuaries. And so, this tracks.

In conversation,a Ghanaian colleague shared that when she hears the proverb, Castro the Destroyer, the legend that gave us Toffee, African Girls, and Adonai (May he rest in peace) comes to mind. His mysterious disappearance in 2014 vindicated many a Ghanaian mother for their paranoia surrounding water. For me, I am reminded of my sweet mother prompting me with the same proverb (and level of foreboding) to go and study, when I had an exam on a subject she felt I was underestimating.

In my adulthood, the saying, and implied advice, has stayed top of mind. Don't underestimate a subject. Don't underestimate a competitor. Have a healthy fear of 'water bodies'.

I have been led to wonder what the Twi equivalent would be., No one around me could tell, so we had to go to our elders. A friend's mom offered: "¿da wo nan ho, wo'ampɛ. Ekɔ da w'ekyi a na wokofa", an interpretation that reflects more of the positive side of the proverb. This meaning tends more along the lines of "the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone", a reminder to appreciate what you have while they are there with you and not after they are gone.

Both proverbs warn against underestimating others, whether their strength/impact, as in the Ga version, or their value, as in the Akan version highlighting the danger that may befall you when you do so, the Akan version focuses on the value you may miss out on.

This perspective underscores the raison d'être of this section. Our proverbs and aphorisms are pregnant with lessons, historical and geographical contexts, and more. And it is important that we document these for a time when we are not here.

Shalom.

HAUNTED

By Ria Boss

I've grown accustomed to the blood.

The taste of metal in my mouth.

I think I'm biting myself every time I choose you.

I think I'm fighting myself, every time I choose you.

I still choose, I'd choose this pain over being alone again.

There's cuts and bruises and my eye is black,
I'm fighting a ghost that doesn't love me back.
And yet here I sit, ouija in hand, I keep summoning the
ghost back.

Please haunt me.
Possess me.

The bittersweet pain of your love keeps me tethered.

I don't know what else exists but this.

I've never known anything other than this.

So I call you back, when the clock strikes 3.

And hope to God that you'll possess me.

LONGING

By Ria Boss

I think I've grown tired of hope. Hope is a liar.

Hope keeps us bound to the notion that happy endings exist. That a fairytale of a life is attainable and that in the end, the good shall prevail.

Ridiculous no?

When have the good ever been rewarded? When has your goodwill turned into a good life?

fuck it I'm angry.
Aren't you?

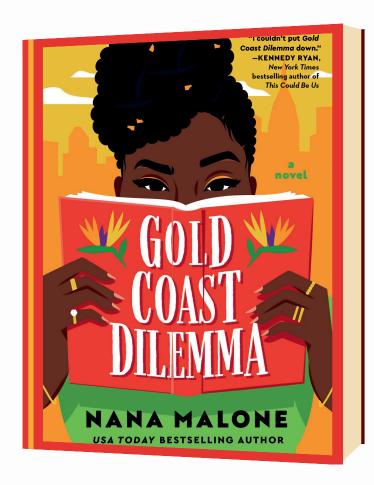
Where has hope led you darling?
Chasing waterfalls?
Butterflies?

chasing the high of the first time every time?

It was a lie wasn't it.. that feeling.. future bright? Dim.

I know I've grown tired of hope.
Holding breath, biting lip,
I can almost taste it.
The memories flood back,
As good as it felt, it was real.
The longing?
The hope made it real.
I guess I just miss you.





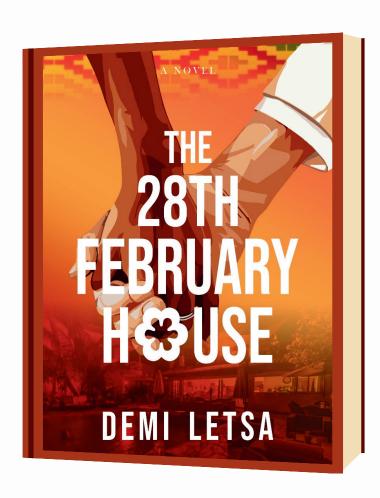


In what has been described as "Crazy Rich Asians meets Ghanaian high society" USA Today bestselling author, Nana Malone weaves a romantic story about a Ghanaian American heiress faced with the dilemma of choosing between culture and a love connection. At an opulent publishing party, Ofosua Addo meets Cole Drake for the first time. Their flirtatiously witty exchange culminates in a kiss that etches a permanent mark on both their hearts. But Ofosua's identity as a Ghanaian heiress comes before Cole. She loves the vibrant traditions of Ghana's Gold Coast, and her hand is already promised to a man that even her overbearing mother loves. Yet, when her big Ghanaian wedding transforms from a fairy tale into a spectacle, she's thrust into a whirlwind of heartbreak and self-discovery. In the midst of it all, Cole enters her life once again, under circumstances far different from their magical first encounter. Can Ofosua and Cole's rediscovered spark overcome the weight of tradition?



Adinkra Coloring Book by ghcoloringbook

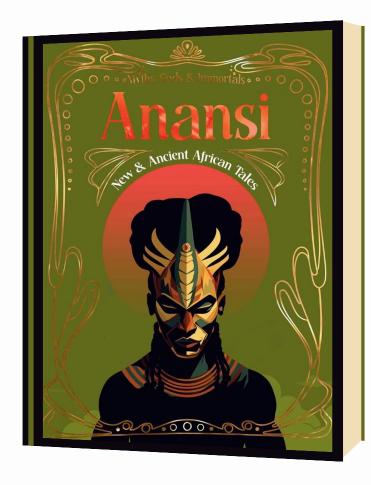
Childhood nostalgia and Akan heritage is captured in this colouring book. Well known Adinkra symbols are reconstructed into 26 pages of beautiful kaleidoscopic designs begging to be filled with colour. The appeal of this book is the opportunity for creative expression and cost-friendly therapeutic activity, with detachable pages to share with friends and family and frame when coloured in.



The 28th February House by Dr Demi Letsa

Dahna Norman had always known and honoured the story of the brutal killing of her great-grandfather, one of the ex-servicemen shot on 28th February, 1948, in colonial Ghana. However, when she uncovers her great-grandmother's diary, Dahna begins to see the past and herself through new eyes. Zachary Imray, a Kenyan sculptor running from his grief, arrives in Ghana seeking solace. But he is tied to that same history by blood. His great-grandfather was the British colonial officer responsible for the 1948 events.

The 28th February House is a moving story of love, legacy, and the courage to face the past.



Anansi: New & Ancient African Tales (Myths, Gods & Immortals)

This anthology contains a collection of many Anansi stories across West Africa and the Diaspora, most of which are nostalgically familiar to any Ghanaian. Whether the story is set in a fantastic past or in a sprawling city of the modern world, Anansi eternally foments schemes that are dark, funny and always clever. The book demonstrates celebrates the ability of oral history to endure and travel across time and location, and offers comfort. wisdom and collective worldbuilding. Anansi: New & Ancient African Tales (Myths, Gods & Immortals) is a beautifully bound book in a series of timeless stories, destined for the library of any serious collector of anthologies and folklore.

THE PLAYLIST by JB

ARTISTS TO LOOK OUT FOR



Anabel Rose

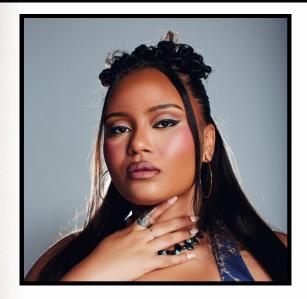
Anabel Rose gives a lot of Neo soul with atmospheric alté vibes. It gives a lot of whimsical dancing by oneself or with friends at the beach.



Jiire Smith

Jiire Smith, the Music Major at NYU Abu Dhabi with a hauntingly beautiful voice taking you on a soulful R&B trip. With songs such as Celebrate and his latest **Baby You Are a Diamond**, Jiire reminds you time and time again that he's one of the best you've heard in a long time.

ARTISTS WE MISSED



Moliy

I told you so last time that Moliy is going to be an artist to pay more attention to. Don't act like you haven't heard Shake it to the Max and the various remixes with the likes of Shenseea. Our girl bagged a VMA nomination and is the Billboard Africa Hitmaker of the Year (2025).



Gyakie

She recently reminded us why we shouldn't forget her. Her **Days Pass By** single cover channels all the nostalgia of the 90s Ghallywood/Nollywood VCD covers, and I, for one, am excited to listen to what she has for us in her forthcoming album.

ARTISTS WE MISSED



Mellissa

After a short hiatus, Mellissa gave us two bangers: Tattoo ft Blackbonez and Catch Me If You Can. She's back with *Goodboy* (Kweku) featuring Moliy, Joey B and Chopstix. A romantic song set to a fun, danceable mid-tempo beat about a couple declaring their devotion while requesting loyalty from each other with funny innuendos about "eating banku".



Monaky

Monaky is not new to the scene and if you are clued in you've likely heard his baritone on Chandelier making the rounds on TikTok. He's on track to getting the attention he deserves. The Suitor should definitely be on your playlist if you like his style.



Keys the Prince x BXUJII

They put out an iconic video for their collaboration **gbe mi de be** set in a Black beauty supply store dressed in rich aunty boubous. You know you have landed at a bona fide Gen-Z owambe when this song comes on.

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