

# Afro Elite

Spring 2023

The Oscars  
2023 brought  
New Changes..  
For the better  
or the worse?

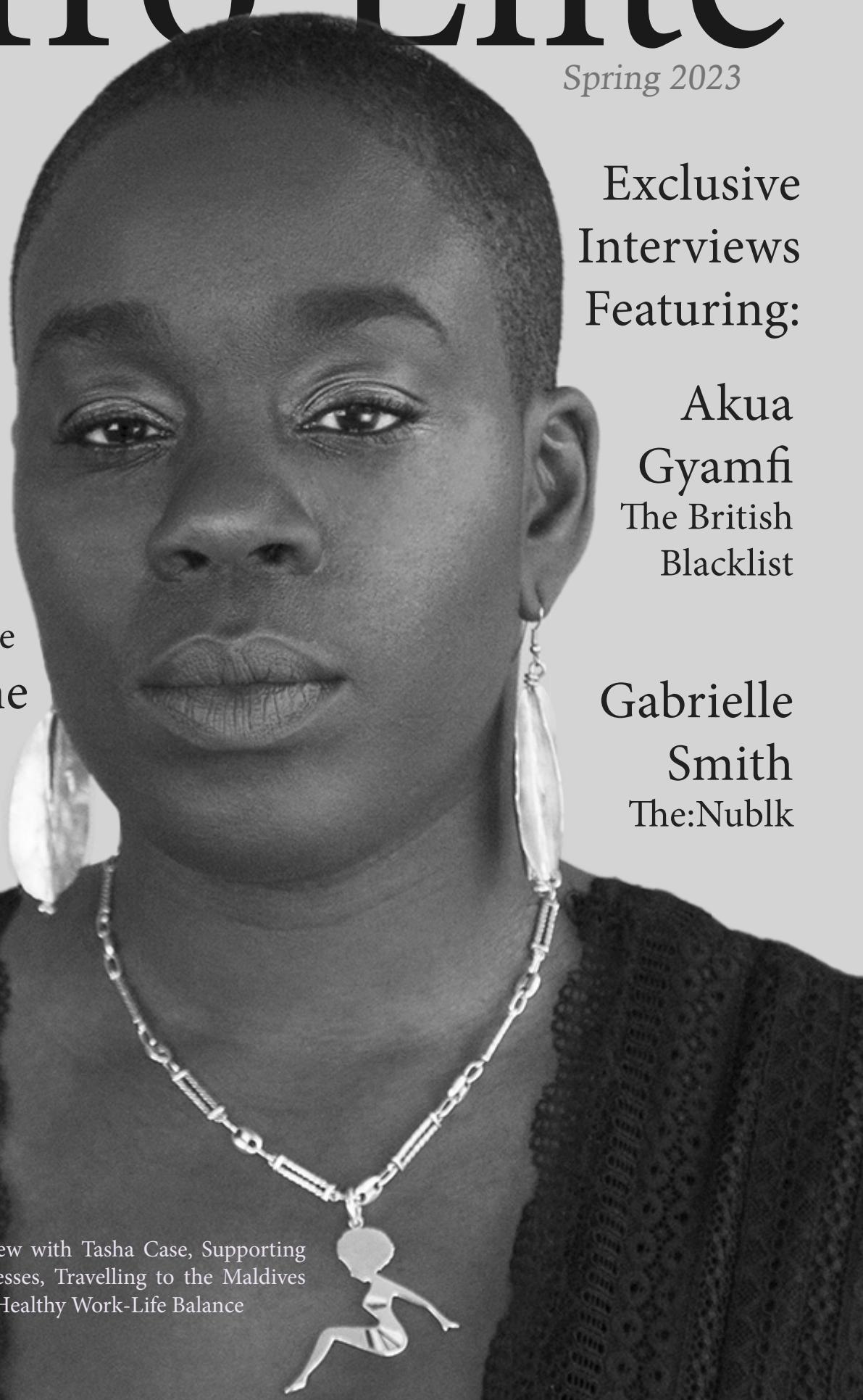
Get a New Style  
Just In Time  
for Spring

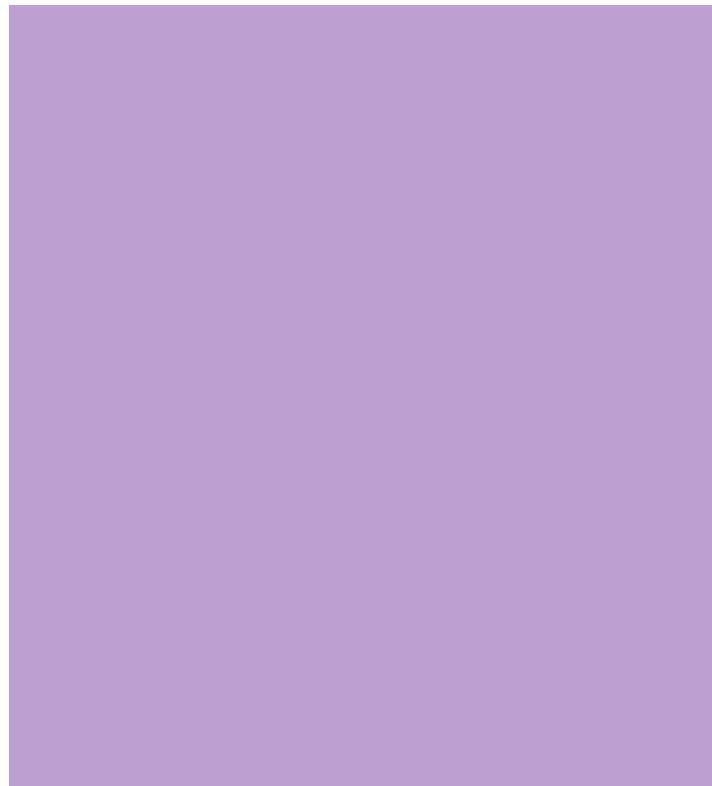
Exclusive  
Interviews  
Featuring:

Akua  
Gyamfi  
The British  
Blacklist

Gabrielle  
Smith  
The:Nublk

Also Inside: Interview with Tasha Case, Supporting  
Black-owned Businesses, Travelling to the Maldives  
and How to Have a Healthy Work-Life Balance





# editors note

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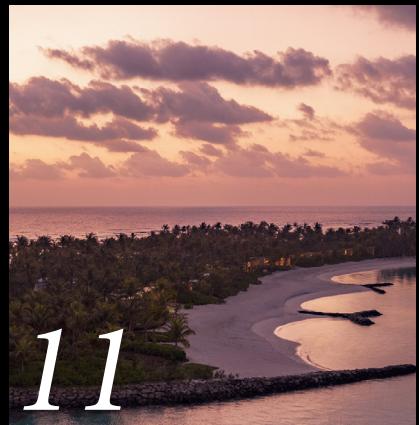
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# Afro Elite

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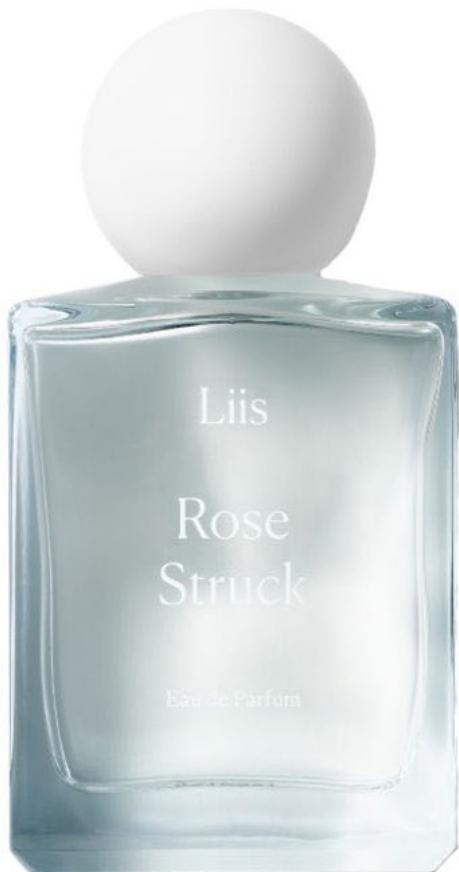


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# The Top 5 Beauty Products You Need for Spring



£132

## *Liis' Rose Struck Eau De Parfum*

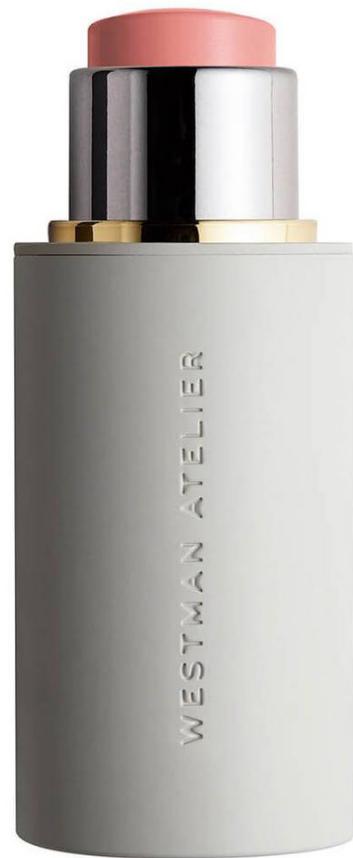
What do you think of when you think of spring? The sun's rays, dewy grass and budding vibrant flowers? The sweet scent of lavender, vanilla, roses and green tea? Inspired by a rose blossom encased in ice, Rose Struck Eau De Parfum (Roses Restless for Spring) turns its back against the sun with its own cool and refreshing citrusy rose scent. Blended with earthy matcha tea, cassis and tangerine, you'll feel as if you were walking in a dew-soaked rose garden.

1

From the wondrous love affair of Gucci Westman and Westman Atelier, this blush stick is fawned over by beauty editors. Apply this on your cheeks, lips or lids and watch as it effortlessly melts onto you like a kiss from a loved one. It's a fast and easy-going blush that's ready for you whenever you need it. After applying it it'll leave you feeling as soft as a Petal (or Chouchette, Dou Dou, Poppet, Minette or Bichette if you prefer different shades).

*Westman Atelier's Baby Cheeks Blush Stick*

2



£35

Whether you're relaxing by the ocean shores or walking to the board room, you deserve to feel good in your own skin. With how many products are out there, it can be difficult to choose what suits you. Here at Afro Elite we want you feeling your best, so here's our recommendations.



£68

Despite the quality and brand behind it, this concealer quickly faded from the public eye. Despite this, our beauty editors champion this concealer like no other. Lasting from morning until night, this concealer perfectly disappears into the skin with no creases or flakiness. It hides dark circles, dullness and acne blemishes like no other. If you're happening to be by the refreshing waters, this concealer is even waterproof. When it comes in so many different shades, why hesitate?



£27

5

*Dior's Backstage  
Face & Body Flash  
Perfector Concealer*

### *Gisou's Honey Infused Hair Oil*

Made from Gisou's very own Mirsalehi Bee Garden, their honey infused hair oil coats your hair in perfection. Whether you use it for pre-styling, finishing a hair mask or for overnight treatment, it'll leave your hair healthy and strong and can even be used to repair damaged hair. Feel your silky and shining hair as you toss your head and worries to the clouds.

3

4

Recommended by numerous beauty editors, celebrities and influencers, The Rich Cream is a staple of beauty culture. This nourishes your skin and washes away wrinkles and darkened spots, leaving you with smooth and even-toned skin. Noted for being the all-in-one skincare solution, it even provides protection against dry climates and free radicals. Its rich texture will leave your skin soft with afterglow.

### *Augustinus Bader's The Rich Cream*



£225

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of March history was made. As she walked up those noir stairs in her honey coated dress and stood front towards the crowd, Ruth E. Carter was awarded Best Costume Designer for Black

Panther: Wakanda Forever. This marks the first time a Black woman has ever won two Oscars.

Her previous Oscar for Best Costume Designer was awarded in 2018 for her work in the first Black Panther film. She's also worked on Spike Lee's "Malcolm X" and Steven Spielberg's "Amistad", both of them getting her Oscar nominees. Other works include Lee Daniels' "The Butler", Ava DuVernay's "Selma" and the reboot of "ROOTS." She also planned and created costumes for highly renowned celebrities such as Oprah, Denzel Washington, Eddie Murphy and even Jerry Seinfeld for the "Seinfeld" pilot.

The first Black woman to ever win an Oscar was Hattie McDaniel in 1939 for the Best Actress in a Supporting Role, she was also the first African American to ever be nominated for an Academy Award. Halle Berry also won Best Actress in 2001, making her the first person of colour to win the award.

For decades the Oscars has been predominately White. There have been countless times where Asian and Black creators have been side-lined in favour of 'safe' and sanitised stories, whether that be the award wins or the many White people in charge of the academy. This year has been fundamental for changes within the oldest awards ceremony. The stage for this year's show was completely led by women, specifically production designer Misty Buckley and art director Alana Billingsley. Michelle Yeoh became the first Asian woman to win Best Actress for her performance in Everything Everywhere All at Once, in total the film taking seven Oscar awards.

While this was a leap towards more diversity and inclusivity for the Oscars, there will always be more room to grow. We still need to see more women and Asian and Black people as nominees, more of us in positions of relevancy. The change is slow and gradual, but this year proved its undeniably happening.

In Carter's Press Room talk, Carter mentions her hardships when becoming a costume designer and pays homage to her mother, who recently passed:

# The Oscars 2023 Proves that Times are Changing

*"I pulled myself up from my bootstraps, I started in a single parent household. I wanted to be a costume designer. I studied. I scraped. I dealt with adversity in the industry that sometimes didn't look like me. And I endured. So I feel that this win opens up the door for other young costume designers that, you know, may not think that this industry is for them and hopefully they'll see me and they'll see my story and they'll think that they can win an Oscar too."*

# DIOR



30 Montaigne  
Avenue Bag



# Akua Gyamfi

The founder of The British Blacklist, the award winning media outlet for BAME professionals in entertainment. Akua was also a renowned hairstylist, working for high profile magazines such as Vogue. She's won multiple awards herself (The Mercury Studios Business Award in 2022 from Women in Film and TV Awards, UK and the Diversity Badge of Honour in 2023 from the Girls on Film Awards).

## How did you get from hairstyling to script writing to journalism?

So my journey started in a hairdressers, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do for a full time career but I was always good at doing my friends' hair in school so I thought that would be the easiest thing to do. I left school without a clue. Went to college without a clue. Ended up working in my Aunties hair salon for a bit, then went back to college. But when I left again I was unsure as to what to do, so I ended up working in a hairdressers. Then I had my daughter so decided to change careers and did a media course, as part of the course requirements you had to apply for University, so I chose to do a Journalism degree. After graduating I worked at a music channel, then the BBC. Alongside this journey I'd help my friend who was a filmmaker to edit his scripts, and in doing that I became a script consultant. (I wrote a few scripts for myself, but I mainly helped him and others 'fix' their scripts) I made one short film with a friend who worked with me at the BBC, it was an anti knife crime film called After Effects.

## Why did you stop your successful hairstyling career? Where do you think you'd be if you didn't?

I stopped my hairdressing career because I got pregnant and thought that I wouldn't be able to continue doing fashion shows and music videos that required long hours if I had a baby, so I made the decision to change careers. However I didn't stop doing hair during my re-education, or when I was working at the BBC. I still did fashion shows, I had personal celebrity clients as well. I just stopped working in an actual hairdressers. I actually stopped doing hair on the side when The British Blacklist became too big to juggle everything.

## What's your favourite medium in the entertainment industry to work in? What's been your favourite job?

I really enjoy interviewing and getting to know talented people, so my happy place is interviewing. However, I really miss the hustle and bustle of doing hair on a fashion show. When there's 30 - 40 sometimes 50 - 100 models and they all need their hair done, and

there's no time and it's always panic stations. I love the intensity of that.

## How do you manage everything (The British Blacklist, S.O.U.L Fest, your podcast and panel discussions)?

I have to have a very organised diary. That's really it. Because I'm living all my dreams at once I have no choice to just do everything I can. So, a tight diary is necessary.

## How has the landscape changed for Black women over the years? Do you think there are more opportunities for us?

There are definitely more opportunities. It's a hard one for me to answer because I've not really met any obstacles that I can say happened because I'm a black woman. I've always had the mindset that I'm just going to do it anyway. But in general, there are definitely more opportunities, but it would depend on the industry that you're attempting to work in. Some industries are more welcoming to women, and people of colour than others. In the arts there are more opportunities for sure, but there are also issues with seniority. Across the board the higher up you go in the arts the less people of colour there are. That's still an ongoing battle, but every so often someone makes a change so it is happening.

## If you could say anything to any aspiring Black women out there, what would you say?

*Believe in yourself. Don't put your gender, or your race ahead of what it is you want to do. It does not matter that you're a black woman. It matters because you ARE a Black Woman. Your blackness, your woman-ness makes you important. Not less than, not unworthy. Remember that we're the most powerful, and powerful does not mean that you never cry, you're never vulnerable or insecure, it does not mean that sometimes you need help, or sometimes you need a break, or sometimes you're a very nice person. All of that is you being you, a beautiful human being.*

# HAIR STYLES



## ... With a Twist

Tired of high maintenance hair? Well sailing from the shores of Miami are Passion Twists, an effortlessly gorgeous look that has become more popular as the flowers bloom for spring. It's currently being worn by influencers and celebrities alike, including the famous singer and entrepreneur Ciara.

Designed by Kailyn Rogers to be easy to maintain but glamorous, this curly and silky hairstyle will stay perfect for weeks

to come. Wear in shoulder length for protection, shorter for a quick installed bounce or with accessories for added colour and class.

But passion twists aren't the only style in fashion. Colours like red, brown & blonde and the ever-popular ombre are enjoying their time in the sun. Long sideburns are also making its debut with short hairstyles such as pixie cuts and side-parted bobs.

# Taking \_\_\_\_\_ a Maldives with The Ritz-Carlton

*You let out a yawn as you wake up in a cushiony lounge chair, taking in the view of the ocean and the flushed sky. You step out of your overwater villa and faintly smell the restaurants nearby, the tantalising Lebanese grill and delicious Asian food trailer. After you've eaten your fill, you find yourself walking to the spa for a relaxing massage...*

In the private islands of The Ritz-Carlton Maldives, the possibilities are endless. Head into the famous Art Collection, learn photography from seasoned experts and take your own frame-worthy pictures or go kayaking around Fari Islands' azure waters. There's so much to do once you're there, but you can always breathe a sigh of relief in the spa and return to your spacious villa for some good rest.

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THE RITZ-CARLTON®

The Fari Islands is a private island with three tropical areas to explore. Dine in the multicultural restaurants and bars, exercise your skills in one of the tennis courts or attend one of the many activities hosted on the island. There's even the nearby Fari Marina Village stacked with a beach club, live music, more dining options and designer stores.

But this doesn't have to be a solo adventure. Make this a wonderful experience for the kids with the Ritz Kids Club that includes playgrounds, video games, napping pods and a kids' pool for them to sink their teeth into while you relax by the shores. And for the romantics out there, there's no better place to propose or have a honeymoon on than here.

There's even special holiday events such as the ones for Easter and Eid. Learn about the sweet art of chocolate making, attend the Easter gala dinner or grab your homely hazel baskets and hunt for Easter eggs with the children. For Eid you can marvel at the Kasabu workshop featuring art from Kasabu Gethun, let loose in the belly dancing workshop and feast on a delicious Bedouin barbecue.



# Gabrielle Smith

The founder of the:nublk, a platform that's shaping the future of Black creativity. Originally starting out as a personal blog in 2008, the:nublk has platformed emerging creatives turned prominent creators and hosted multiple culturally impactful events. The site is mainly run by Gabrielle A. Smith, but has frequent collaborations with others.



**How has it been managing the:nublk?**

I recently decided to bring the:nublk back after an extended hiatus so the last few months have solely been on planning what a return looks like and also restructuring the old blog into an archive. It's been challenging but in a good way!

**How has it been balancing it and being a creative consultant?**

I'd say this time around I've been more strategic with finding a balance/prioritising running the platform alongside my full-time job. When I first started the then blog, there was some structure to it but it was mostly for inspiration and very much a learning experience as I was doing most of the design, interviews, etc myself. Collaborating with other platforms and having guest bloggers definitely helped in terms of being able to share responsibilities required.

**The:nublk originally started out as a blog, did you ever think it'd grow to be this big?**

Not at all! I started the:nublk a few years after I graduated from university and the question of how a person's heritage impacts the work they create was one I'd started to think about. My design curriculum and tutor's knowledge was fairly limited to mostly European design influences so the:nublk was really an exploratory personal project for me to find other creatives with a similar experience to mine and also to find out more about the Black designers and creatives I didn't learn about – there were and still are so many!

Every time I come across a Black designer's work I always wonder how having a broader and more inclusive design education would have impacted me and also what the:nublk would have looked like or if it would have existed in the same way.

**The:nublk has had many collaborations, what would you say is your favourite one?**

This is a difficult one, I don't think I have a favourite but I will say that collaboration has been one of the pillars of why Thenublk exists and really speaks to the importance of community that I've found in building and running the platform. Many of the creatives I've had the opportunity to collaborate with since the very early days of the:nublk have become close friends and also peers who have gone on to create and share some really impactful work in the world.

**How has the landscape changed for Black women over the years? Do you think there are more opportunities for us?**

I've noticed a shift in how discussions about and by Black women are taking place much more openly than they were before. Particularly the role in which Black women-owned digital platforms post-2014 have really made a strong impact in the media landscape. There are definitely more opportunities for us and think the great thing I'm seeing is that we're not waiting to be given permission but are creating for ourselves.

**If you could say anything to any aspiring Black women out there, what would you say?**

*There are people out there waiting to see the things you want to create.*



# Supporting Black-owned Businesses



“Balance is key. You can’t do your best work, if you’re not showing up as your best self. Invest time in yourself. That’s a part of your business, too.”

Made by a mother for (new) mothers, Ebi produces high quality wellness essentials made to support women before and during pregnancy. Cleanse your skin and hair or sink into the waters with The Oil, Robbins’ personal favourite. Made with plant-based ingredients and with Robbins’ academic background, you can rest assured knowing you’re being well looked after.

# *Ebi*

*By Breighl Robbins*



“There are more people who need to see it, experience the life they dreamed of, and know that it’s possible for them.”

Famous for her Yummy Skin Blurring Balm, Danessa Myricks has become a household name in beauty. Being a self-taught makeup artist known for her unconventional ways of using products, her brand focuses on multi-purpose products and experimenting with makeup. For Myricks, the best part of her work is the love and appreciation she’s gotten from underrepresented and ignored groups in the beauty community.

# *Danessa Myricks Beauty*

*By Danessa Myricks*

# Afro Elite

*Fashion, beauty, lifestyle and travel **for** Black women **by** Black women*



*Looking for stories **about** you? Want the latest fashion and beauty trends that fit your hair, your style? Even today it's hard to find content **about** and **for** us. We at Afro Elite showcase Black women's own achievements and help each other.*

*On the move? Download  
our **Digital Edition***

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*@AfroElite*



# Tasha Case

The community & engagement lead of Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit, Tasha has been part of the organisation since 2019 and was nominated for the Bedfordshire Police Community Cohesion Awards the same year. She was previously part of the Stop and Search Scrutiny Panel and set up the first hate crime reporting centre in further education.



## **Why did you choose this career path?**

I don't think I chose this career path, I think the career path chose me. I remember from early stages in my life I wanted to be a drama teacher and I did a lot of performance and acting growing up, went to drama classes. I went to theatre college in London and went to university, my undergraduate is media performance, but then throughout university experience I started helping a lot of people and supporting my peers and it just took me on this journey.

## **How does your work affect you mentally and emotionally?**

Ever since the pandemic work has affected many of us mentally, physically even. But in our field of work, working with young vulnerable people and vulnerable communities, it can really impact you mentally because of the type of circumstances and situations that some of these young people and their families are facing. It can be quite heavy. You're talking about child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation and perpetrators who were once victims. It's quite a lot and if you're not careful you can carry that with you home, especially since a lot of us are working from home.

It has from time to time made me feel a bit overwhelmed and a bit tense. Luckily we do have support measures in place that support us with our mental wellbeing and we've got support services, not just for the people we support but for ourselves as well.

## **Do you ever face hardships with this job? How do you deal with it?**

In many jobs people face hardships and I think for me personally as a young Black female I've found that there's many challenges, not because I'm not qualified to do the job but because for some people they're quite shocked that there's a Black person in this position and, make it worse, a woman as well.

I'm very fortunate to have a director who looks like me. She's a Black woman who I imagine faces similar challenges as well, but when you've got somebody within your work environment who goes through similar things but they're in a position of direct change, it makes

it easier. But it has been challenging over the years.

## **Did you ever expect to become the Community & Engagement Lead for BVERU?**

No, I'm very grateful! When I was approached to be a part of BVERU (Bedfordshire Violence Exploitation Reduction Unit), I was approached to head up the youth service which was the youth intervention specialist team. I enjoyed it but I didn't see me moving out of that area, I thought I'd just be there perfecting and developing the area and the work that we do. But when I was approached by the director and the manager and they felt that my skillset has developed and leans itself to this position, I was taken aback but very happy for this experience. And I'm enjoying it, I like meeting different groups of people and supporting them and putting them in touch with different services to support communities. I'm happy but didn't expect it.

## **How has the landscape changed for Black women over the years? Do you think there are more opportunities for us?**

It's increasing! I think on the surface it would appear that there are more opportunities, but then it's the challenge once you're in those opportunities. I think the landscape has changed massively, you just have to look on the TV you're seeing a lot more Black women representation on TV. Loose Women is the main one for me I love it, especially Judi Love and Brenda Edwards. But I think when we're in these positions we face another challenge, we've got past one issue of the initial representation but we're waiting for things to evolve still. So yes it's a good thing, but unfortunately we don't share the same positive experiences as our White or Asian counterparts as Black women. Things are changing, there are more opportunities, but with those opportunities still there's some challenges.

## **So you say there's still a long way to go?**

I think there's still a long way to go. I'm in this position and there's people who are higher and representing, but I know there's still challenges that hold them back. Sometimes it feels tick-box and tokenistic.



If you could say anything to any aspiring Black women out there, what would you say?

*Own your seat at the table. Own your seat. If you've worked, you've studied, you've committed to being in the field that you're working in, don't be there thinking "can I sit at the table anymore?". Own your seat at the table, keep going, keep being positive. Keep supporting other women as well. I think a lot of people do things solo, support each other because sometimes you can't do it alone. And pass the baton on, once you get there pass the baton on.*

# Own Your Seat at the Table

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*INTERVIEW*

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# How To Manage your Work / Life Balance



A healthy work-life balance is important no matter who you are, whether you're the CEO of a company or a freelancer. Overworking yourself bleeds into your social life and can lead to isolation, tiredness and feeling stressed out. Us at Afro Elite have collaborated with professionals to give you top tier advice about how to manage your work-life balance.

First off, a healthy work-life balance can vary from person to person. It's not about literally halving your time between work and life but rather feeling content about both parts of your life and not stressing about one or the other. It's extremely easy to find yourself normalising working long hours or being under extreme stress if you do it for too long, which is why breaks are important. Depending on a few factors this may be harder to maintain: caring responsibilities, health difficulties or having higher up positions are a few examples.

The first step is to pause. What's causing you stress and unhappiness? How is this affecting your work and personal life? What are you prioritising and what are you losing out on by doing this? The majority only reflect on work when a major life event has happened but looking back on it all is a crucial step towards a healthy work-life balance. After that, consider how you feel. Are you fulfilled or resentful? You can only make informed decisions after you're aware of yourself.

Now what needs to change? Is working longer hours worth less time spent with your family? Is it worth your social life? Consider alternatives to what you're currently doing, this can vary depending on what the issue is. There are some things that can't be changed but you should focus on what can be. What will work with your new priorities?

The last step is to finally make the changes. It depends on your individual goals and what you want for yourself. It can be asking for more flexible hours or taking advantage of your annual leave.

Here are a few more tips that can help you on your work-life journey:

- ◆ Know your rights. Understand your contracts, work hours, sick pay and parental leave. Whether you're mentally or physically disabled, your employer should make reasonable adjustments to suit your needs.
- ◆ Speak up if your work feels too demanding. Take proper breaks like a half an hour for lunch, if you can get out of the workplace it'll feel even better.
- ◆ Prioritise what you're working on and evaluate time spent on less productive work. Work smarter, not longer.
- ◆ Separating work and home is crucial and can significantly help with a healthy work-life balance. If you work from home then create a routine, have a dedicated workspace and relax when your work for the day is complete.
- ◆ Keep track of working hours over weeks or months, this gives you a broader view of your work-life balance rather than with singular days. If you're able, assess your balance with a colleague.
- ◆ Exercise, eat well and spend time with supportive friends to reduce work-related stress. Spending time with family and friends can also majorly help. Schedule time together, talk to them as you do chores and fix up the children and make every second count if there isn't much spare time.

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