

SHIBOKA Δ

BOS MEDIA & FOR YOUTH, BY YOUTH

SHIBOKA

By BOS Media and For Youth, By Youth

SHIBOKA is the traditional response to the Zulu greeting “Sawubona,” which means “I see you; you are important to me, and I value you.” Shiboka means, “I exist for you.” As representatives of Durham’s Black and brown youth and their allies, we created **SHIBOKA** to spotlight the stories of Black and brown entrepreneurs of the past, present, and future as a statement of our continued importance and value to the community.

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SUPPORTED BY:



PROVIDENT 1898

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Publisher's Note

By Anjanette Miller

Sawubona is a Zulu greeting that means "I see you." Instead of "hello" or "hi," they say "sawubona." But it means more than just the polite acknowledgment of seeing someone. It is meant to recognize the worth and dignity of those you are greeting. It is meant to say "I see the whole of you—your experience, your passions, your pain, your strengths and weaknesses, and your future. You are valuable to me."

When greeted with Sawubona, the reply is Shiboka. This response literally means, "I exist for you," conveying that the person you've met is seen and valued. Both persons are giving their full attention and presence and communicating each other's value and uniqueness.

I first learned about this custom while visiting with my friend (and fellow entrepreneur), Natascia Pereira at Beyu Cafe. I shared this greeting with the Zine staff, and we all agreed that *Shiboka* should be our title. It fits perfectly: *I exist for you*. I see you readers, thinkers, dreamers, and you are welcome here.

The idea of a Zine came about last summer when Audacity Labs hosted entrepreneurship camps for Durham high schoolers. We ate lunch every Tuesday at Provident 1898 to network with the inspiring thinkers and dreamers who co-work there. In the lobby of the NC Mutual Life building stands a sculptural display of the history of that business and how it played an integral role in changing the lives of so many Black residents and families in Durham. As a newcomer to Durham, it is not surprising that this was news to me. But I was a bit surprised that the students, most who had grown up in Durham, knew very little, and were unfamiliar with the significance of that building.

I posed the idea of a Zine dedicated to learning more about the past, present and future of Black entrepreneurship to the students, and they jumped on it. They were thrilled with the idea of learning more about the history of their town, more about who is living their lives by pursuing their passions, and more about how they, too, can carve a path around their dreams.

My job, as I see it, is as a facilitator. It was now up to me to figure out how to make this Zine happen. Since I am not a magazine writer or publisher, I sought out help, found an expert and made a friend: Courtney Napier, the founder of The Black Oak Society. Courtney joined the team, immediately securing all of our hearts with her wonderful storytelling, sage advice and dedication to help the youth find their voice. She reached out to her network of journalists, photographers and artists to come by and advise, share and support the youth. **I exist for you, Courtney.**

Next, space to work. Provident 1898 seemed to be the best spot since it was the genesis of this idea. Every week we would gather under the skylights and soak up the energy nestled in the concrete and steel of that building and channel it into our work. **I exist for you, Tekia, Justin, Peter, and Carl.**

Luckily, NC IDEA saw the value in this project and provided funding. This funding allowed me to not only pay Courtney for her expertise and the printing costs, BUT it also funded stipends for the youth contributors: the artists and writers and editors. This was big! The mission of Audacity Labs is to democratize entrepreneurship. So, to be able to engage youth in an entrepreneurial project, pay them for the work done, and normalize the process of a startup is game-changing. **I exist for you, Sarah, and Thom.**

Finally, **I exist for you, Durham.** I see who you are and who you're striving to be. I see you reaching out to your ancestors for inspiration and guidance. I see you reaching out to your young people who have big dreams and hopes for your future. I see how you welcome growth and change, and I see the willingness to learn from your mistakes.

May we continue to grow as a community, share resources, cheer each other on, and know our best work is ahead of us.

With Love,

Anjanette Miller
Executive Director of Audacity Labs



Editor's Note

By Courtney Napier

Anjanette and I sat down for a get-to-know-you meeting eighteen months ago. We had met by chance while a part of a networking event at Provident1898. Honestly, I was excited about meeting the students. The high schoolers attending the lunch were so thoughtful and wise, and I knew that their “camp director” had at least a small part to play.

After our meeting, I learned that the “camp” was in fact a year-round mentoring program or entrepreneurial-minded teenagers. They worked with local business owners and creatives to develop classes where the students could gain real-world skills, knowledge, and income. They even had opportunities to start their own small businesses.

I was impressed by Audacity Labs, but I was enamored by Anjanette and her talented students. I mentioned that I was a magazine publisher, and I was interested in developing a magazine with her students. She was all in!

The process of creating Shiboka was a learning experience for all of us. We learned both the joys and challenges of working as a group, we discovered hidden gems around Durham, and heard from some of the city's best storytellers, historians, and journalists. Each meeting brought greater clarity to our vision and more fascinating subjects to research and write about.

Shiboka is a love-letter to Durham's next generation of great entrepreneurs and leaders. Each student poured their heart and soul into the pieces they created. Anjanette was there to rally the group when COVID, final exams, and work caused us to lose our energy and focus. The girls pushed through so much to share their artistry with their community. I could not be prouder of what we have accomplished together.

Brava, ladies! The best is yet to come!

In community,

Courtney Napier

Editor-In-Chief & CEO of BOS Media and Consulting, LLC



JAMES E. MCGIRT.

Some Simple Songs

AND

A FEW MORE AMBITIOUS
ATTEMPTS.

JAMES E. MCGIRT,

*Author of "Avenging the Maine, and Other Poems," "Some Simple
Songs," and Other Poems.*

George F. Lasher, Printer and Binder,
147-151 North Tenth Street,
Philadelphia, Pa.

The title page of *Some Simple Songs: And A Few More Ambitious Attempts* by James Ephraim McGirt. (From the Internet Archive, Public Domain.)

With the Voice of the McGirts

by Nakia McNeil

James E. McGirt (1874–13 June 1930) owned a magazine in the Jim Crow South. He also sold Black haircare products, becoming a very successful entrepreneur. His business ended up failing after he lost interest in it. His true passion was poetry. This is the last poem in one of his books, *Some Simple Songs: And A Few More Ambitious Attempts*. I am his descendant, Nakia McNeil, and I have responded to this book and the last poem, shown here.

Italics = work of James E. McGirt

*Dear little book, dear little brook,
Thou babbling bubbles of my heart,
Our year together is at an end,
And now we part.
Alone now thou must face the weather;
Roam o'er strange lands. You know not
whether,
To find a friend.
Go cheerful on thy way,
Go chatter out thy lay,
I bid thee now God-speed.
And if someone amid the throng
Should hear and feel your simple song,
And with their cloak of love enfold,
To save thee from the biting cold,*

*My prayer is that you heed,
And give him comfort in his need.*

Dear little book, dear little brook,
Thou passed on spirit of my delight,
Our time together is just beginning,
And now we unite.
Together now we face the weather;
Into the unknown. We know not
whether
To take a fight,
And so I'm glad I found you,
Cheerfully on thy way,
Chattering out thy lay,
I feel your good wish.
I've been waiting amid the throng,
To be blessed with your simple song.
The comfort is consolidating.
I am who you are saving.
Your creator's prayers now met,
His life was not a null set.
Dear little zine, dear little book,
I speak with the voice of my ancestors
when I say how much this means to me



Success In Business

By Ihsan Mohammed



Geraud Staton of Helius Foundation. Courtesy of Geraud Staton

Helius is a non-profit organization that provides training and mentorship for local entrepreneurship to reach a fair living wage. Economic mobility is a serious issue that is present all throughout North Carolina. It locks in low-income households and people living below the poverty line restraining them from moving up the social ladder and increasing their income. In Durham, there are a handful of

non-profit and private organizations that provide entrepreneurs with the resources they need to start, sustain, and successfully lead their businesses. Helius is a unique organization that aims to challenge and attempt to solve the economic mobility issue in Durham and other locations. I had the pleasure to interview Helius's founder, Geraud Staton, to learn more about all that the organization has accomplished as well as his hopes for the future of business ownership for minoritized people.

Ihsan Mohammed: How did Helius start?

Geraud Staton: I started Helius after being in an organization that supported more traditional entrepreneurs. That organization, however, only supported local entrepreneurs that made a large profit in a short amount of time and that excluded a lot of entrepreneurs with amazing small businesses that were either still in the beginning stages of their business and/or needed guidance on how to manage certain aspects of their company. Helius aims to be a one-stop shop for all rising entrepreneurs.

IM: Can you talk in detail about the programs and opportunities that Helius offers?

GS: The Helius Organization has two programs, LaunchDURHAM and Unity Fellows. LaunchDURHAM is a ten-week program that meets once a week for two hours. We usually accept 12–14 entrepreneurs into the cohort, and we have 2–3 cohorts a year. LaunchDURHAM covers concepts such as marketing, researching competition, finances, and strategic planning. By the end of this program, entrepreneurs will have created a business plan for the year. Eligible participants will be able to move on to the coaching program for entrepreneurs to follow the business plan that they created in LaunchDURHAM.

The Unity Fellowship is a capacity-building and strategic leadership development program for non-profit leaders, specifically designed to address the over-saturation and under-development of the Durham non-profit community. The goal of the Unity Fellows program is to train non-profit leaders in key organizational practices that promote long-term organizational stability while elevating key leadership skills that are specifically calibrated to Durham's local context.

IM: What are some businesses that you've helped owners launch?

GS: We have helped with Jeddah's Tea, Wonderpuff, Da Kine's Kava and so many other amazing businesses and organizations throughout Durham. Through the services that we provide, we were able to help entrepreneurs launch their small businesses. and provide post-launch support.

IM: What is your future vision for Helius?

GS: Helius is planning for expansion within NC. We're looking at places like Rocky Mount and Burlington because we know that Durham isn't the only place where social mobility is so low.



Jackie Morin, a graduate of Helius Foundation, celebrates the opening of her cotton candy shop, Wonderpuff. It's located in Boxyard RTP. Courtesy of Jackie Morin. Photographed by Jan Mactal

IM: How can future business owners or entrepreneurs register for one of the programs offered, and What does the process look like upon their entry into the program?

GS: Helius announces application openings and closings on our website and social media. Local entrepreneurs that live within the Triangle can apply. Once an eligible applicant is accepted, they will receive an email that will ask them to confirm their participation in the program. Once they accept the invitation, they will be added to our online classroom and have access to the material". This is the first steppingstone towards entrepreneurship success.

IM: What is one piece of advice that you would like to share with future business owners or entrepreneurs through this space?

GS: Just start doing what you want to do as a business. Sell one plant. Get paid to do one yard. Paint one fence. Start with one as soon as you possibly can.



Jackie Morin posing with a disco ball. Courtesy of Jackie Morin (photographed by Jade Wilson)

Jackie Morin reflects on her experience at Helius Foundation:

How did you find out about Helius?

Through another alumni, Jeddah's Tea. They spoke highly of Helius, and I figured their program could help better our business.

What are the things that worked with business coaches?

I didn't get a chance to work with a coach other than Geraud and he taught me a lot on how to navigate my small business.

How would you describe the overall experience?

It's been three years since I graduated from Helius, and I still keep in touch with the program because the Helius community has helped many businesses. I would say overall, wonderful.

What was one of the most important lessons you learned from Helius? I learned that my business is for potential customers and not for me. That means creating a product that would compel folks to give you your dollars.

From your personal experience, to whom would you recommend applying to Helius and why? I mean, I recommended Helius to my mother when she was interested in starting her own business. Helius foundation is truly accessible to anyone who has a dream of being an entrepreneur.

There's no
CATALYST

quite like

AUDACITY

Audacity
Digital Collage
by Nakia McNeil (2022)

Where I'm From

By Nakia McNeil

I am from the McNeils, and the McPhersons, and the McGirts,
from fried fish and potato salad.

I am from the calm and the bustling,
the streets of a southern city.

I am from the hands of Duke hospitals
the surgical knives that cut me from my mother

I am from pre-Covid times,
from friends at Southpoint.

I am from introverted complications,
from my messy room that never got old.

I am from, "You know they can't predict the weather here!",
from blankets of snow and canceled school.

I am from video games with my father,
from play fights and real ones,
from drama.

I'm also from therapy sessions,
from secrets.

I am from where brains get picked like vines,
but the sour grapes usually stay
(It gets heavy).

I'm also from decency,

from diversity,
from the Black Student Union.
I am from safe spaces.

I am from opportunities,
from emails and Slack messages,
from the African diaspora,
from sticking together and telling our stories.

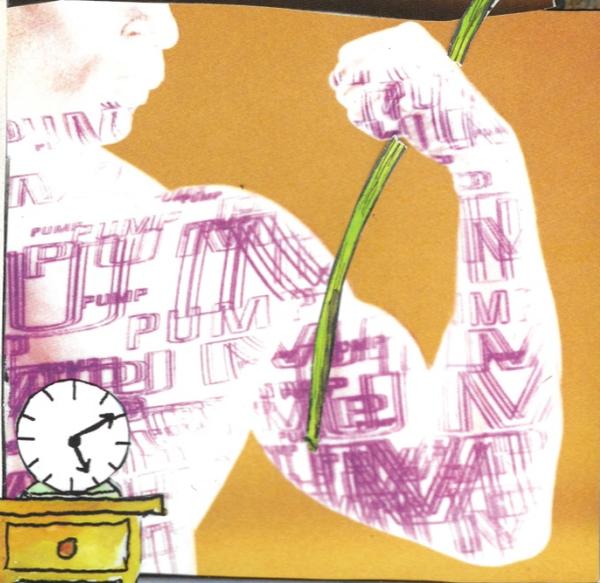
I am from my Lenovo laptop,
from my fingers free on the keyboard.
I am from a mess of inspiration.



The Case for
WHAT REALLY COUNTS
Rethink old assumptions.



THERE'S A STORY TO TELL



FUTURE SELVES



in its round
"Now I
"I se



@durham

WALL ST



Bull City
Collage on Paper
By Anjanette Miller (2022)

Black Entrepreneurs in Bull City

By Cameron Bradley and Nakia McNeil

The city of Durham is filled with tons of Black excellence. We've chosen to highlight these four Black entrepreneurs and their businesses because we believe that work and their stories exemplify the spirit of our community. Our hope in spreading their stories is that these businesses continue to grow and receive more love and support.

It's immensely important for readers to know about the Black entrepreneurs of Bull City because Black people's work is so often undervalued. As a result of this, many of our Black youth are discouraged from starting their own businesses. Learning from these amazing people will hopefully inspire more of us to spread our talent and skills around the world through entrepreneurship. We can see improvement in our community as more Black excellence is being highlighted. And we must continue this trend, because Black people have so much to offer to Durham and we deserve all the recognition in the world.

MARLENA JOHNSON

Marlena Johnson is the owner of Flash and Flare Healthy Hair. Having a strong interest in hair since she was in the seventh grade, she loved how a beautiful hair style made her feel and she wanted to share that. Johnson's passion led her to start Flash and Flare to help her customers reach their hair care goals. The shop has a very inviting, stress-free environment with timely service. For Johnson, being able to start a business also meant that she could help other stylists display their values and skills.

Durham motivated Johnson to continue in the hair industry, and she gives back by giving education and other professional hair care services to generations of women as they've grown up with the salon. She is endlessly thankful to the community of Durham for the honor of serving this beautiful city.



Location and Contact Information

Address: 725 Carpenter Fletcher Road Suite 402
Durham, NC 27713

Email: flashandflarehair@gmail.com
Phone: (919) 908-7206

Most Popular Offerings

Flash and Flare Healthy Hair

- Hair color \$67.00 – \$132.00
- Extensions services \$35.00 – \$185.00
- Relaxer services \$25.00 – \$92.00
- Products by Design Essentials and Its Natural/Influence hair care \$4.50 – \$21.95

JOHN PETERSON

John Peterson is the owner of Equitable Advisors LLC. His company doesn't only cater to the citizens of Durham. The mission of his insurance company is to protect and enhance the financial wellbeing of clients in NC and surrounding states. Peterson grew up in rural North Carolina, where there weren't many economic opportunities. Peterson had the drive to create and sustain a reputable business that not only helps our community but serves as a role model to young Black people who aspire to achieve similar goals.



Growing up in rural NC also exposed him to a lot of people who did for themselves. Peterson was inspired by a book entitled *The Miseducation of the Negro* by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, which emphasized how important being self-sufficient was for Black people. He also got to see how much good he could do for the community around him as a business owner. He carried the memories of his mother cooking for the well-being of others, and his father fixing the neighbors' cars for free into his adulthood, which shaped his business values. In his words, "Giving back was something that was instilled in me before I could even understand what it was."

Location and Contact Information:

Address: 3201 Beechleaf Ct, Suite 450,
Raleigh, NC 27604

Phone: 704-540-3000

Most Popular Offerings:

Equitable Advisors LLC

- Retirement
- Life insurance
- Investments
- Articles on finances (annuity, investment, etc.)

DAVION COUNCIL



Davion Council is the owner of Soulful Beauty Supply LLC. Council's inspiration originates from his drive to provide the community of Durham with natural beauty care products that are good for people's skin and hair. He saw a unique opportunity as demand for beauty products was high. He was able to get started through a lot of thorough research. Council also believes that starting a business is important for building generational wealth and for controlling the impact you can have on your community. He believed that Durham was the best place for his business to thrive.

Soulful Beauty Supply is for youth, by youth. Its very affordable products are tailored for students, as evidenced by the many NCCU students who support it. Council

also emphasizes that if you're looking to start a business, you should be prepared and have confidence in a business plan, and definitely go for it!

Location and Contact Information

Address: 2220 N Roxboro St,
Durham, NC 27704

Email: soulfulsbeauty@gmail.com

Phone: (919) 220-7115

Most Popular Offerings:

Soulful Beauty Supply LLC

- Black owned products such as, tgin, Kaleidoscope Hair Products, and Mielle
- (tgin- 11.95-17.99) (Kaleidoscope Hair Products \$19.99) and (Mielle \$12.99-\$16.00)
- Wigs and hair extensions \$5.99 - 146.99
- As I am product line
- Earrings/Jewelry \$10.99- \$17.99

MATTHIAS PAYTON

Mattias Payton is the owner of Jasper and Gold LLC. The mission of his business is to promote healthy living by providing the community with 100% organic and tasty beverages. The beginnings of Jasper and Gold surfaced when Mr. Payton began seeking more holistic drinks. When he couldn't find good teahouses in Durham, he started making his own tea creations. People loved his drinks, and soon his prospects began asking him for teas with specific medicinal properties. Thus, Jasper and Gold was born. He now specializes in herbal infusion.

Owning a business was important to Mr. Payton because he wanted to be a great leader who fostered a good work environment for his employees. This stems not only from his poor experiences with management, but also the desire for adventure and financial freedom. Most of all, he hopes that the people he's impacted feel inspired to live a healthier life, and to follow their own dreams, wherever they may take them.

Location and Contact Information

Address: 600 B Foster Street
Durham, NC 27701

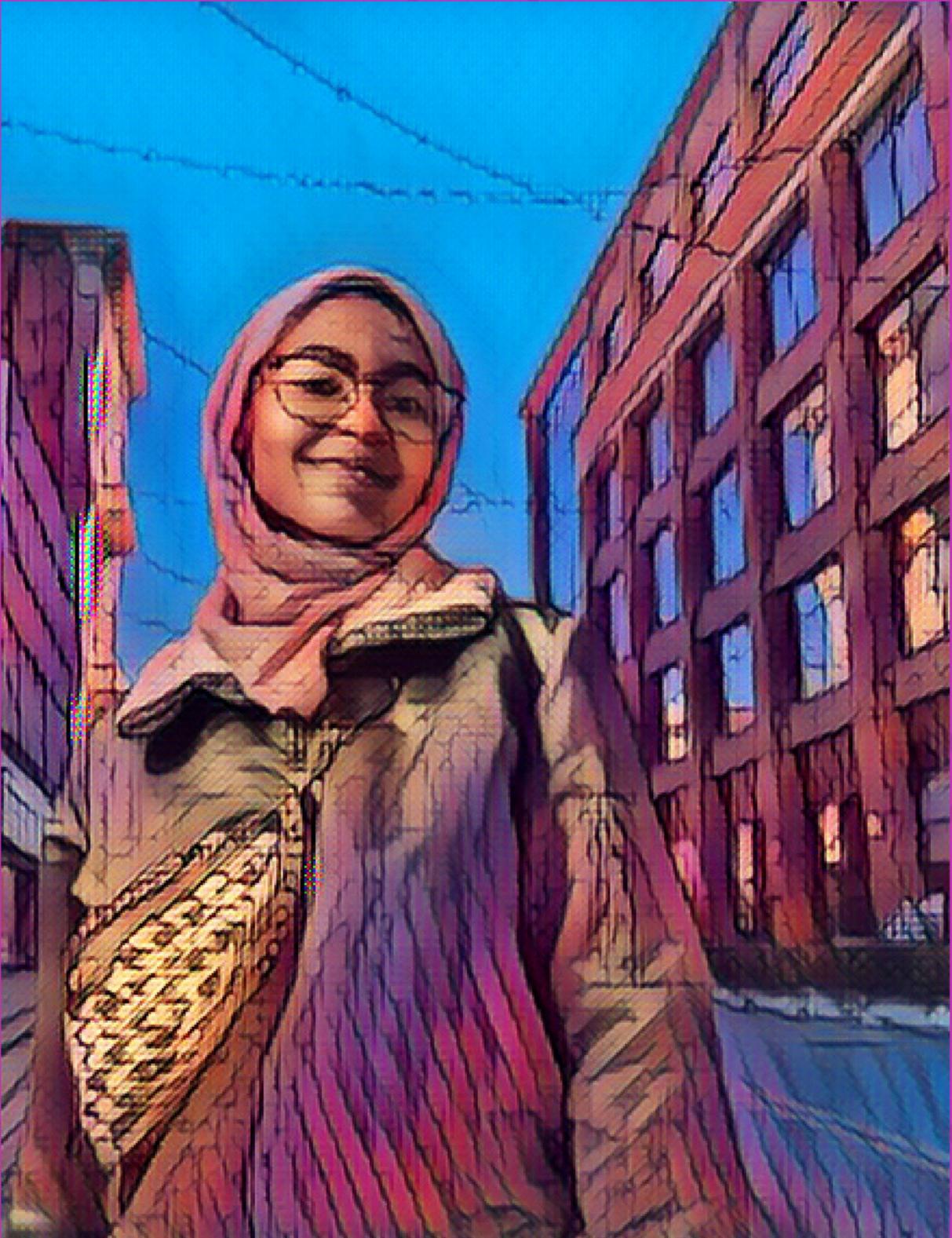
Facebook: @MiaJasperGold
Phone: (919) 348-9127

Popular Products and Services

Jasper and Gold, LLC, specializes in herbal tea infusions.

- Tropical Berries and Hibiscus \$15.00
- Royal Sweet Tea \$15.00
- Lemongrass Mint \$15.00
- Cinnamon Spice Oolong \$15.00





WHEN **T**HE **S**UN RISES

“The Sun Rises”

Digital Collage

By Anjanette Miller (2022)

When the Sun Rises

By Ihsan Mohammed

Part I

No Sign

From hanging high

Close the sky, sun, and stars

Where I can hear the birds chirping their morning gossip

As the sun warmly and fondly greets me before its rays kiss

the Earth's surface Without an invitation, a flashing yellow

light, a warning about tomorrow I fall down from the peak

Yesterday faded away in the thin air

Past turned into memories, for me to hold on

Today am being questioned, understated

By ones who spent their day admiring and daydreaming

About my value, role, and importance

They spent the nights sheltered under my wings counting shooting stars
Today I'm labeled as a waste space, ugly... dead leaves
How is my worth today any different from yesterday?

Part II
They're oblivious

I survived the harsh, cold, and dry winter winds
Crushed by the rough soul of your dirty shoe
I survived the pain of your cold hand grinding the life out of
my precious soul
Turning me into microscopic atoms lost in the vacant dark
sky
Even then after you labeled me dead leaves
I still believed I was alive and valuable
Winter winds grew stronger as my skin turned into a
midsummer drought
As the gusty wind grew bolder day by day
The cold spread all over my body like a plague
demolishing my strength
Time stopped
Nights turned pitch black as I spent them in solitude

In the past, I spent my nights with the
Moon among the stars, sharing and telling stories
There was no sunlight that will warm and revive my crumbled skin
In the past, the sun's rays and I were like covalent bonds
Separated at sunset and reunited at sunrise
There was no passer that would admire the ravishing, green leaves that
decorated covered my body like a veil
In the past, humans would spend hours under my shade, running all around
me to capture my beauty, little humans would ask their parents about me,
“Wow how did this tree become so big and tall?
Will I ever be like this tree?”
All memories from the past
But I believed that it will all come to an end, that the sun will rise up again

Part III

The meeting

One day when the stretched rays of the sun reached out to me
When I was deep in the woods stuck to the core of the Earth
It found me among all the other dead leaves and delivered a message to me
from the
Sun
The rays whispered to me softly, “Hang in there, as we shall meet at sunrise
again and shall never become separated.”

Comforting and reassuring I felt

It's been a while since I felt that way, wondering if it was all a dream

If my desperation and need for change, comfort, and affection led to
my hallucinations

But I was desperate and eager for change, so I believed

I wanted to go back home over there at the peak where my
comfort rooted,

I will come back stronger, reclaim my power, disregard the weak
opinions of passers

Whom discard and shame my precious leaves that once bewitched
their minds I looked dead, but I am the reason life still goes on

Because now I know my value

I will survive

I will win this battle

I will move on and rise up

To enjoy the kisses and hugs delivered by the devoted rays of the Sun

To write letters to the Moon about my journey

To make memories with the blooming flowers that once were dark sharp
thrones

I was not alone, I was not abandoned

I was too distracted fighting my own battle with the winter winds

Now is time for me to bloom

Have fun and prepare for my next battle

Creative Project Description

The inspiration for my poem, "When the Sun Rises," came from the following three poems by Nikki Giovanni:

- "Crutches" (1970)
 - Theme: Deep wounds are harder to heal and rise back from.
 - "Emotional falls always are the worst and there are no crutches to swing back on" (last stanza).
- "Ego Tripping" (1978)
 - Theme: Empowering readers to have confidence in themselves because they are worthy
- "I am so perfect so divine so ethereal is so surreal I cannot comprehend except by my permission" (last stanza).
- "The Rose that Grew from Concrete" (By Tupac Shakur feat. Nikki Giovanni, 2000):
 - Theme: People never feel or see the pain one is enduring, they never know how hard the healing process is.
 - "Provin' nature's laws wrong it learned how to walk without havin' feet" (8 stanza).

Altogether theme:

Giovanni wants to tell her readers that healing takes time, the process should not stop them from losing confidence and or gaining strength.





Now Now hear hear this. this. this.

They Stole Our Jobs

By Ihsan Mohammed

Djamila Bakour is an Algerian Immigrant and the owner of La Recette Patisserie, a North African pastry shop in Durham. She graduated from NCCU in 2016 with a Food and Nutrition degree but had a hard time finding a job. Fear of unemployment and feeling stuck with unfulfilling job opportunities drove her to decide to start her own business.

Ali Talat is a Sudanese Immigrant who opened Golden Pizza and Subs in 1996. He already had a successful first career as the co-founder and General Manager of TriStar, the first cargo and airplane company in the Middle East. Despite this historical achievement, Talat was exhausted. His work at TriStar involved renting cargo and planes and translating language. "It was a lot of labor and very complicated," he confessed. His next goal was to become (according to Talat) a "Pizza Man."

Their visions of the American Dream couldn't, in many ways, be more different.

After visiting the United States several times alone, Talat and his family immigrated in 1995. While he didn't want to recreate the company, he had created in Sudan, Talat knew he couldn't work for anyone else in America. "I told myself if I want to stay in America, I must have my own small business," he explained. "Having a small business is less complicated and more personal."



Djamila Bakour holds a plate of her pastries as she smiles into the camera. Courtesy of Djamila Bakour



Ali Talat stands in front of his restaurant, Golden Pizza and Subs. Courtesy of Ali Talat

Bakour also started her home business from a personal perspective. She shared, "I asked my parents why they immigrated to the United States, and they said, 'For our kids.' They wanted better opportunities for us." Bakour's parents were accomplished teachers back in Algeria. Still, they left their successful careers behind so she and her siblings could have a better future. One of the driving purposes of her business is that she wants to take care of her parents and create generational wealth for her family.

Both Bakour and Talat have different visions for the American Dream, but what aligns them together is that they both decided to achieve it by owning their business. Bakour confessed, "Deep inside, I always wanted to start my own business and be my boss."

Bigger Risks and Greater Challenges

Immigrants' journey to start their business is different and more complex compared to the course an American would take. Immigrants face internal and external limitations that make achieving their vision of the American Dream more difficult than native-born Americans. These challenges include language barriers, America's complicated economic system, understanding the wants and needs of customers, and lack of stability due to immigration status. In addition to all those challenges, there were difficulties unique to the industries in which they are a part.

Communicating with the customer and understanding their wants and needs is the core of any business. "I knew the language of the restaurant, and that's it," Talat explained when reflecting on the problematic language barrier between him and his English-speaking customers. "My eldest daughter, who was 11 or 12 then, used to answer the phone for me at my first restaurant." The English language is not the only skill many immigrants have to learn or relearn. People unfamiliar with American culture must also learn about the different communication styles needed to run a business in the United States smoothly.

Bakour shared her experience with another important skill—building her customers' trust. Before transitioning to a desserts and pastries business, she started her business journey making Mediterranean *Savior Pies*. She and her husband had an arrangement with a local Durham restaurant to set up a table outside and give customers savior pies in exchange for their feedback.



Bakour baking in an industrial kitchen, while surrounded by Algerian pastries and ingredients. Courtesy of Jmaila Bakour

However, it didn't go as anticipated. It was winter, and customers were in the mood for something warm, yet the Bakours didn't have the tools they needed to heat the pies. "Trust takes a lot of communication and coming out of your comfort zone," Baker explained. "It's not easy, and it took me a while to do." After studying their market by listening to what the customers wanted, the Bakours were able to build core trust and began to grow their customers sustainably.

It takes time to know what your customer wants and plan how you will best meet their desires. Talat enthusiastically shared, "My first Golden Pizza and Subs restaurant was in Greensboro near North Carolina Central University, and 70% of my customer base was college students. It was great for most of

the year, but the sales were often low in the summer. I decided to expand my target customers. I stopped delivery services because I wanted customers to come and visit my restaurant. More customers came to visit my restaurant and get the whole experience as a result of stopping the delivery service for two years."

Against All Odds

In 2008, nearly a decade after the first Golden Pizza and Subs opened, a roofing company accidentally caused a mass electrical fire in Talat's first restaurant. In addition, heavy rainstorms were in action, flooding the restaurant for three consecutive days. This devastating day marked the start of many new obstacles he had to face and endure. Talat boldly recalled, "The fire and flooding wrecked everything in the restaurant. I was going to restart from this very first restaurant if my insurance company paid for the damages." When Talat called the insurance company, they informed him that they canceled his policy two months ago for payment issues. He hired a lawyer to help him with the case, which cost him a lot of money. Soon Talat realized that it



The sign for Golden Pizza and Subs. Courtesy of Ali Talat.

was a lose-lose situation and dropped the case. In a last-ditch effort, Talat asked the insurance company to clarify with the building owners that he did not break the lease but that his evacuation resulted from the fire and flooding. "I did that so they don't give me a mark against my credit history that could stop me from opening another restaurant," he explained.

In 2010, Talat sought to open a completely different restaurant than the destroyed one. He found his current location quickly, but it took time for the owners to make a deal. Three years later, the owners decided they wanted to rent instead of selling their building, and Talat submitted a new offer. It took months for the owners to reply.

Ali Talat lost hope and started working as a taxi driver. One year later, the owners gave him a call accepting his offer. "I worked so hard to get here," Talat explained. "I worked seventeen hours a day, every day for four years. I only had one employee because I didn't have money to pay anyone else."

Then he strongly emphasized, "When starting a business, a person must be patient."

Bakour faced unique obstacles with her home business, now a cake studio. She said, "I started my home business in my small kitchen. Then, we upgraded our business by moving to a new location with a larger kitchen after some time."

Bakour and her husband, Fadi, are currently working to open a La Recette Pastissiers cake studio and bakery in Durham. However, on March 14th, they posted the following on their Instagram page:

"A couple of weeks ago, Fadi and I had to make a very challenging decision. We decided to push the grand opening, and it was not a fun reality to face. We projected the grand opening to be in mid-March but, because of financial circumstances, the project is not complete".



Bakour is standing in her industrial kitchen between an elegant wedding cake and a red KitchenAid mixer. She is attentively stirring ingredients in a silver bowl. Courtesy of Jmaila Bakour

Upscaling a home business by opening a cake studio is Bakour's next journey in the business world, complete with new experiences and challenges. One of the challenges she is currently facing is funding to complete her cake studio. In another Instagram post, Bakour announced that they are starting a Kickstarter campaign to offset the cake studio's high startup and remodeling costs. The funds from the campaign will help her

vision for La Recette Pastissiers become a reality. Bakour explains, "I want to make our bakery and cake studio a warm and welcoming space for all of us where we all come together. There we can have necessary conversations or relax together as a community."

Whenever human encounters an obstacle in their path, they face two vivid options: either push through and keep going or turn back and give up. We all have similar experiences in our own lives. These options are difficult decisions for immigrants in the business field, but, in the end, they don't give up.

Never Give Up

Before Talat started his first restaurant in 1996, he had moments where he yearned for his previous high position at the company. Looking at his apron, he recalled a critical moment while working at Golden Pizza in Greensboro before becoming a business owner. A manager from the cargo company unexpectedly visited him at the restaurant during a short visit to the United States.

He remembered in detail, "The manager came to the restaurant with an expensive formal suit and a strong scent of cologne. The man looked very clean." Meanwhile, Talat was wearing his apron covered in dough dust. He asked his boss, Ali Deb, for a thirty-minute break to talk to his visitor.

The manager, in great shock, yelled, "What are you doing? You're wearing an apron?"

Talat replied, "And what is wrong with that?"

The powerful man said, "No, man!! You are Talat Ahmed Ali, the general manager of Tristar!".

Ali then replies to him, "This is exactly how I felt the first two days when I wore this apron. "Then I saw Ali Dieb, who owns ten stores, personally deliver a seven-dollar meal. The customers would tip him, not knowing the person delivering the food owned the restaurant that made their meal." While customers often met the multi-store owner Dieb this way, they never knew it was him. Talat then strongly adds, "There is a Sudanese proverb that says, 'walk naked in a country that is not yours.' Because nothing is shameful, doing something wrong is what is called shameful".

Talat's story was the most heart-moving part of our interview.

Bakour also shared her experience with giving up. She said, "I believe [immigrants] are wired differently. When we see an opportunity, we have to think it through". She admitted that there were moments she wanted to give up and get an 8-5 office job. Then she would remember how her parents left the comfort of their careers to pursue something more extraordinary. "That's

why I have to keep pushing myself," she explained. "If I have low moments, I cry or do whatever I can to calm down. But I have to get up and keep going."



The front facade of Golden Pizza and Subs boasts colorful signs advertising calzones, gyro, and salads. Durham's flag waves between the first sign, and the large red and white one proudly displaying the restaurant's name. Courtesy of Ali Talat.

Behind every small business is a strong support system. Over the years, Dieb went from being Talat's boss, then his business partner, and now his dear friend. Dieb joins Talat's family as his core support system. For Bakour, her husband Fadi, family, friends, and community give her support. Having a support system that includes a locally based family is a privilege inaccessible to many immigrants. Both Talat and Bakour have become that support system for other immigrant entrepreneurs by sharing valuable advice gained along their journey as business owners.

Talat's message to any immigrant is, "If you worked in a high position or owned a company before coming to the States, you need to forget that life. This process will help you start from scratch. If you are not willing to develop this strong mentality, you will not be able to succeed in any job — big or small. For you, this is a new world, a new system, a new everything."

He also shared advice for all future business owners. Firstly, have a reliable income source to open and sustain their business for the first three months. During that time, entrepreneurs "should go without looking at the sales they have made."

Then, aspiring business owners need to ensure that their credit history is strong. Credit history depends on rent, utility bills, et cetera. "[Lenders] don't look at how much you have in your account," he said, "but they look at how honest and punctual you are with paying your bills." He also suggests future business owners rent their property from individuals, not the bank. A bank will charge interest over time, increasing the initial payment rate. "Make your payment plan short, so you can get it done sooner with less interest while improving your credit history."

Bakour had a specific message for immigrant women. "To any woman who left her hometown and is trying to start a journey here, you have already taken the first step. So, if you were able to leave your comfort zone, your family, and your country, you are capable of accomplishing something huge in your life. Don't sell yourself short!"

Women can often compromise too quickly and lose themselves in the process. Bakour encourages women to know their worth and surround themselves with a robust support system." Bakour's message to future and current business owners is to remind them that they are also customers. "You've been in their shoes before," Bakour explained, "so you can use that perspective to help you build that customer trust."

We are leaders.

We are innovators.

We are creatives.

We are change-makers.

We are community builders.

We are dreamers.

We are Immigrants.

STAFF favorites

Businesses That We Love

SNACKS

- Wonderpuiff
- Pincho Loco
- Cocoa Cinnamon
- Jasper & Gold
- Childish Nomad Desserts
- So Good Pupusas

SERVICES

- Crissy Shined Nails
- DJ Big Fella
- Kompleks Creative
- Bull City Dental
- Loving You Quietly
- Dark Bunny Creatives

SHOPPING

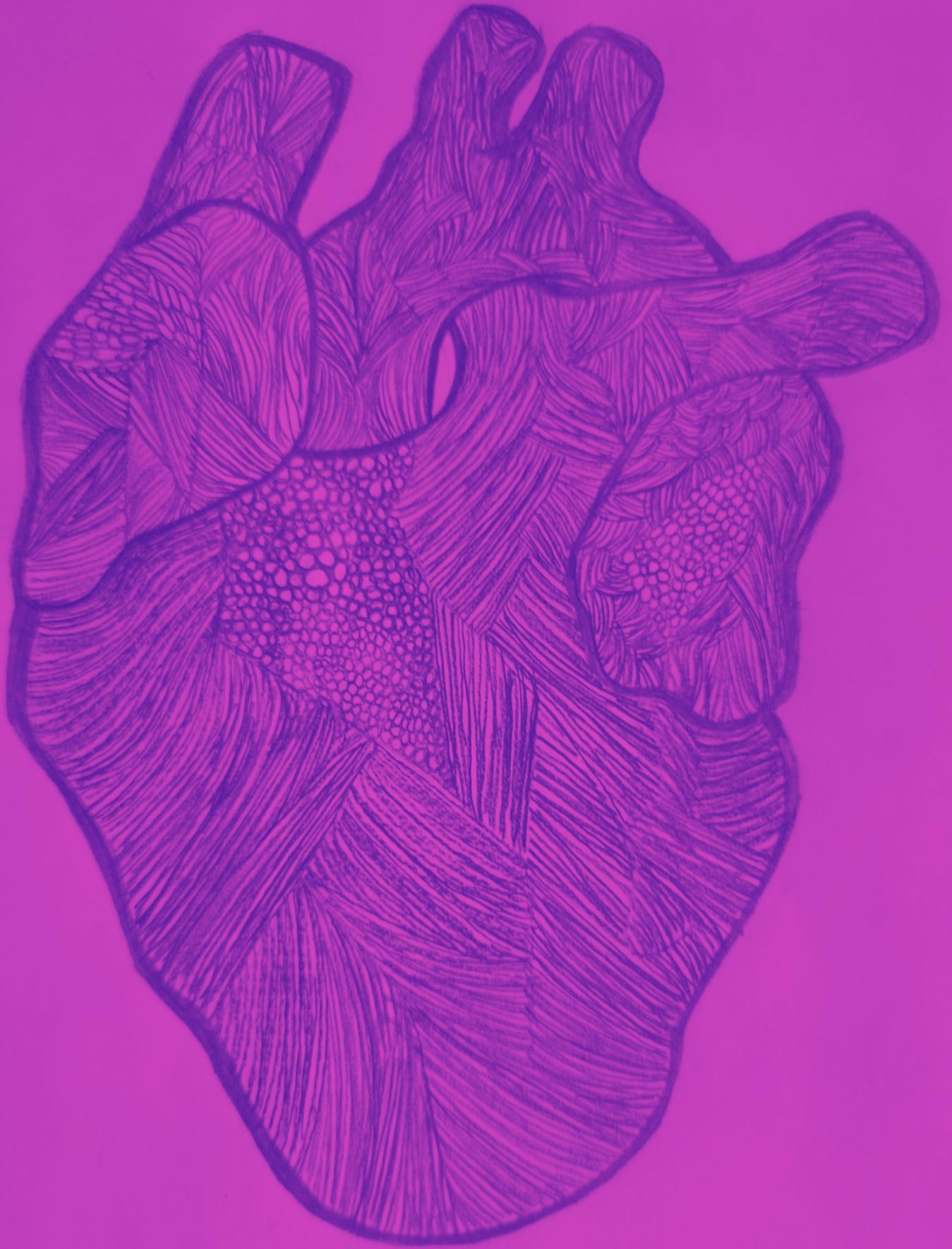
- Legacy 318
- Humility Clothing
- Graffiti Panda
- Lena Grace Designs
- Candy Crystals
- Bougie Bum

BEAUTY

- Jamae's Skincare
- The Barbee Shop
- Just Like Kandy
- Pore People
- Rhythm Wigs

WELLNESS

- Cazimi Healing
- Black Moon
- RHODA Generation
- Empowrd Co.
- Clover Joy



WE ARE THE YOUTH

Pencil Sketch by Ihsan Mohammed