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When Towaun Candide-Johnson approached me to do a cover on her project, GAIA, a women-only club, I must admit, I wondered what she was bringing to the table that had not been done several times over. We met for lunch and spent hours talking. What I thought was going to be a 30-minute affair lasted several hours. As we discussed, I bombarded her with questions and my reservations. But I left there believing in her cause because it is a good one, and certainly beneficial for its members.

Truth is, if women could be less judgmental and more focused on helping each other better themselves, our leaps and strides will be insurmountable and unstoppable. If men together can broker deals running into millions in all currencies, there should be no reason why women cannot do the same within themselves. As we all know, nobody can juggle so many balls at the same time like a woman. Nobody understands the complexities of women than the woman herself.

This women-only venture is the first of its kind. There are various Men Only clubs all over the world and they are also very exclusive. So why can’t we have the same for women? It might prove to be quite an interesting journey as the environment is ripe now particularly as women are breaking grounds in their various endeavours.

We should harness more of what connects us as women. There really is no such thing as too much of a good thing especially if it strengthens us financially, spiritually and emotionally. All we just need to do is find the right fit.
The much-anticipated movie "BLING LAGOSIANS" by Bolanle Austen Peters Production recently premiered at the Film house in Lekki and Terra Kulture Theatre in Victoria Island. The movie screening drew top notch Lagosians and celebrity alike dressed to the nines to the dress code for the evening "Eko For Show," which was a true representation of the movie.

The Bling Lagosian movie depicts the ostentatious lifestyle of Lagos high society. It illustrates the flamboyant and over the top lifestyle of a rich Lagos family that is presently living in past glory. Though not as wealthy as they once were, they still maintain the lifestyle of the rich while wallowing in debt. The movie shows the extreme people go to keep up appearances and the harsh realities of the consequences.

The viewers sure had a good time, the storyline, acting skills and high level of production, was evidently on display as loud giggles and cheers could be heard all through the screening.
Eventful Limited, a leading event planning and consultancy company in partnership with Access Bank hosted the third edition of Eventful’s initiative, The Beauty Souk, a niche fair for beauty enthusiasts.

The two-day event took place at Harbour Point, Victoria Point Road, Victoria Island, Lagos recently and had over 2,500 beauty lovers and practitioners in attendance.

The Beauty Souk showcased 71 beauty brands such as Zaron, House of Tara, Terse by K Vera Cruz, BM Pro, Olori Cosmetics, Yves Rocher, Black Opal, Charisma Cosmetics, Oaki Cosmetics, Raw Essence, 123 Naturals and many more. The Master Class sessions handled by top beauty industry icons featured classes on organics, skincare, wellness and hair and this was the highlight of the Beauty Souk.

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THE BEAUTY SOUK 2019
Dear Reader,

Welcome to the WARIF Survivor Stories Series, a monthly feature, where stories of survivors of rape and sexual violence will be shared to encourage survivors to speak their truth without the fear of judgement or stigmatization and to educate the public on the sheer magnitude of this problem in our society. This series was launched in response to the positive feedback received by me from survivors following my cover interview in This Day Style Magazine on the 28th of July, 2019.

We will start with a brief introduction of WARIF and the impact we hope to achieve with this series.

The Women at Risk International Foundation (WARIF) is a non-profit organization set up in response to the extremely high incidence of rape, sexual violence and human trafficking of young girls and women in our society. WARIF is tackling this issue through a holistic approach which covers initiatives in health, education and community service.

WARIF offers assistance to survivors of rape and sexual violence through the WARIF Centre, a safe haven where trained professionals are present full time, six days a week including public holidays to offer immediate medical care, forensic medical examinations, psycho-social counselling and welfare services which include shelter, legal aid and vocational skills training. These services are provided FREE of charge to any survivor who seeks them.

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Sunday. We were all very excited when he came because we were all so close to him; he would buy us sweets and biscuits every time he came to visit us and would carry us on his shoulders and twirl us around. It was always a lot of fun.

One Sunday afternoon, right after the church service, as we waited for my mother to finish one of her Women’s meetings, I walked into the toilet and saw that J ohn had followed me in, he was the son of one of the women in my mother’s group and I always thought he was strange. I asked what he was doing in the girl’s toilet but he did not respond. He pulled down his trousers and asked me to touch his penis. I was confused about what he was doing and asked him why? I said I would report him to my mom for playing in the girl’s toilet. Just as I was about to pull him away, my uncle walked into the toilet and saw my hands on him with his pants down, such an compromising position. He shouted at me, I tried to explain that John had followed me in and I didn’t touch his penis. He called me a naughty girl and said he would tell my mom what I do in the toilet. I pleaded with him not to tell her, “he did, I would be beaten severely, I didn’t want that.”

A week later, the nightmare began! Just after I thought Uncle Sunday had forgotten about the incident, he called me to his room and accused me of always playing with boys. He told me “Do you remember your mom has warned you many times not to play with boys? What exactly were you and that boy doing the other day? I need you to demonstrate it to me, otherwise I will tell your mom.” I remember that day it was already 9am, I was scared, cut off, and didn’t know where to turn. I ran to the toilet but he stopped me. He asked me “Do you remember your mom has warned you many times not to play with boys?” I was scared, confused, and I didn’t understand what was going on. I didn’t want to scream because I was afraid he would tell my mom. I didn’t want to get into trouble. I didn’t want to be beaten. He told me to lie down and cover my mouth, I tried to explain that all John told me to do was touch his penis. He called me a liar and asked me to touch his penis. He told me “You are a bad girl and you don’t deserve it.” I begged him not to touch me, I didn’t want him to do anything to me. He told me to stay still and cover my mouth, I tried to escape but he held me tightly. He told me to lie down and cover my mouth, I tried to explain that all John told me to do was touch his penis. He called me a liar and asked me to touch his penis. He told me “You are a bad girl and you don’t deserve it.” I begged him not to touch me, I didn’t want him to do anything to me. He told me to stay still and cover my mouth, I tried to escape but he held me tightly.

I was 4 of five children. My parents did not plan to have five children and so my younger brother was the odd one out. I was always seen as mistakes or burdens. My parents had to work twice as hard to make ends meet for the family; my dad was a construction worker so he was hardly at home as there was always one building that needed to be completed and sometimes, he wouldn’t come home for days.

My mom knew that my dad’s construction job was not sustainable. He was getting older and the jobs were not coming in as often as they used to. So she took a loan from a microfinance bank and expanded their business. This allowed us to have more food and would carry us on his shoulders and twirl us around. It was always a lot of fun.

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We start the series with our first survivor Lola who shares her story of abuse from childhood.

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A collection of proven, insider secrets about how to look thinner without dieting or hitting the gym. You can actually dress to look slimmer just by making a few simple adjustments to your wardrobe. When you dress to look your best you will also look younger.

Whether it is fair or not, your physical appearance is the first thing that people judge you on and you always want to look your best. And why not if you can just follow these few hacks to look good and to create an illusion of a slimmer you.

**Dress to look SLIMMER**

**HIGH RISE JEANS**

High-waist jeans should be on your hit list because they tuck in most of the flab and do a great job of making you look slender, tall, and slim. The ones that are black, stretchable, and stop near your ankle are always a winner. Pitch those straight-leg jeans.

**BLACK BE YOUR BFF**

Everything about your wardrobe has to be black. I understand the love for cool whites and pastels, however, just keep it all dark and black as much as possible.

**LAYER IT UP**

Let me just break this myth once and for all. People think that adding more layers means adding extra pounds, but that’s really not true. Adding layers gives your body definition. Plus it does not give people a direct view of your body. If anything, it is a blessing!

**BODY COMPRESSORS/SHAPEWEAR**

Swear by shapewear; it’s a blessing in disguise. It tames fat around the midriff, hip, and thigh regions effectively. And it also acts as a catalyst to make you look slimmer. Invest in it, and you will be thankful.

**MATCHING SEPARATES**

Matching your separates instead of wearing matching sets is a trick of the trade. Especially colors like black, blue, gray or anything dark.

**PROPORTIONS**

Wear a loose shirt or a top with fitted trousers works in your advantage. You could also try the opposite, but make sure your midriff is your pain area. Also, body-hugging dresses add to your bulk. If you want to look slimmer and taller, avoid prints with horizontal prints, be it big or small. Vertical print dresses with deep necks are your go-to if you want to look slimmer and taller. And patterns like A-line cut or a pencil skirt can seal the deal for you.
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Available to salaried customers only
When and why did you come up with the GAIA concept?
I think that even as a corporate executive I tried to test the productive genius of women in a male dominated environment. Sometimes, we are torn between doing our duties and to defend our space. After I left that space the idea seemed to grow wings. My instinct and the developing environment made the idea compelling. Now more than ever, women need spaces to connect with one another and encourage each other to grow and make business deals. The birth of GAIA – a members only business and social club for women in Lagos was to fill the yawning gap for a bridge the business connections gap currently experienced by Women in Nigeria. This birthed “GAIA” (meaning “Mother Earth”), a Women-Only Members Club based in Victoria Island.

Why do you think women have issues of lack of trust with each other?
Instead of viewing other women as competition, I’m creating an exclusive space that reflects the style, energy and way of life of the modern woman. A high-tech connection hub for business and relaxation and especially the Gen X’s to overcome that blockage so that we can do more together.

What is the Club House going to be like?
It’s an unassuming building, organized as a cozy Club House set on three floors. It will have a restaurant and bar, members lounge & bar, conference room, small meeting rooms, Wellness area which comprises a fitness room, steam room and massage room, and a few other interesting function and consulting rooms.

What is required to be a member?
Membership is by invitation referral (by a member) or application with an application process which takes around three weeks to turn around.

How much does it cost and what are the benefits?
A membership application fee of N500,000 is required. The annual membership fee is N500,000. The community service fee is N100,000. The club fee is N100,000.

Why do you think women have issues of lack of trust with each other?
Women tend to be less trusting of each other than men which can sometimes hinder their collective experiences, connect and relax – who knows where this will lead?
Instead of viewing other women as competition, GAIA is hoping to change the conversation and encourage women to see fellow women as potential business partners, collaborators. We are already friends!

Why do you think women have issues of lack of trust with each other?
They are often socialized to have their back up to avoid being taken advantage of. And while Women’s Clubs have also been around for centuries, in recent times issues of inequality have caused women to think of ways to uplift and support each other.

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I am very much of the view that all women have an equal vulnerability to gain each other’s trust. If you’re not willing to show this side of you, how can we be sure that you are being authentic and that you are someone I can trust to do business with or introduce to my contacts.

What have you learnt so far since GAIA began?

First lesson is that even when you think that you usually have at these dinners? How regularly do you meet and what does it entail to participate? The dinners usually attract a diverse group of women that we have in GAIA. The others are French Club, Book Club, Travel Club, Film Club Gourmet Club and the Arts & Culture Club. The Business Dining Club is primarily for decision makers (“Business” members, C-suite executives, other senior professionals & senior public servants) to meet and further engage, engage on topics of mutual interest, enjoy a good dinner; listen and learn from a guest speaker and from each other. Sometimes people just engage in discourse around a topic of interest. Ultimately, the plan is to align with the GAIA Vision by creating an ecosystem for members to know and trust each other enough to collaborate beyond the dinner. When that we collaborate, we can do bigger and better things. The first dinner was hosted in August (on the last Thursday of the month) and is attended by 20-25 women.

Are you partnering with any other initiatives to better compliment the Club?

Yes – we are always on the lookout for “partners” with whom we can collaborate to further explore the areas in which our dinners don’t cover. We are building our network of women around us. We have collaborated with a Women Investing Impact Network (WIN)? (founded by Faolach Ambrose-McCann) and for the first time this year to commemorate International Women’s Day – “Balance For Better”. WIN is established to enable growing women leaders discover their best self, focus on opportunities achievable impact and success. Having been part of the conversations between GAIA and WIN, we agreed to jointly host a panel of discusson the above with an emphasis on entrepreneurship and how to find your passion and purpose. Mentors, participants, making individual promises is to lift and support each other, knowing that they are part of a collective and thereby making impact in their individual spheres of influence.

How do you intend to win the confidence of the women to “create a trust circle”?

Any woman who has attended a GAIA Dining Club or other mini clubs so far, is, I think of welcome to be a member of the GAIA Dining Club. Secondly, I have never really been one that thrives in large group discussions and I felt that working for a while and one day I decided to name these groups “women that work” for a while and one day I decided to name these groups “women that work” – so I promptly let it up and found that it’s a name from Greek mythology meaning “mother earth” – I named it after my mother and so on, in the being of woman. This was absolutely spot on since we are strong, we are essential, natural and non-threatening and no matter what we do – we remain feminine. Tell us about the Business Dining Club of GAIA? What goes on there? How many women do you have with the largest network on earth and that you know everyone, you’re not even scratching the surface. I have not only come to meet a diverse range of incredible women but have been blown away by the ecosystems that they represent and building them. I have also learnt that unless you have a conversation with someone about what she actually does, you can’t really know what she does and if you don’t know, you may be missing out on some synergy that could build something of indelible impact and most importantly, I have learnt that women DO love the company of other women when there is no judgement or ego involved – when women are being vulnerable and authentic. It is DYNAMIC!

How did you come up with the name of the club? What does it mean?

I had not called it – it was gifted to me by my husband who is a highly cultured, widely read and learned gentleman. I had been trying to chart women’s clubs for over a century and this name is essentially the power of love “i love you” – and so I promptly locked it up and found that it’s a name from Greek mythology meaning “mother earth” – I named it after my mother and so on, in the being of woman. This was absolutely spot on since we are strong, we are essential, natural and non-threatening and no matter what we do – we remain feminine.

What categories? For the moment, there are three main categories – Main Member, Millennial Member (30-35 years old) and Experienced Member (for expatriates who are living and working in Nigeria for a temporary period of five years or under). There is also the Out of Town Member for the Main and Millennial Categories. Just as a sample, the Main Member category will today, pay a one-off joining fee of N1.25M and an annual subscription of N50k per annum. The large sum is on joining. Thereafter no such fee. The other categories have lower rates. Out of Town Members also of nature cannot use the Club as often as In Town members.

Is there any age limit for entry to membership?

We did indeed. Most men – not all – have the largest network on earth and that you know everyone, you’re not even scratching the surface. I have not only come to meet a diverse range of incredible women but have been blown away by the ecosystems that they represent and building them. I have also learnt that unless you have a conversation with someone about what she actually does, you can’t really know what she does and if you don’t know, you may be missing out on some synergy that could build something of indelible impact and most importantly, I have learnt that women DO love the company of other women when there is no judgement or ego involved – when women are being vulnerable and authentic. It is DYNAMIC!

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Do you not feel these women empowerment programs have been over-shadowed?
People have been talking about fashion and it's a delight for me to see and be part of, now I am back in Nigeria.

What makes GAAI stand out from the others?
GAAI believes in the power of women connecting and uplifting each other, tremendously, needless to say, why I am so strong advocate to this! This past March, GAAI and I, was Women inspiring impact network (WAIN), collaborated to celebrate International Women’s Day. The formalable panel we convene included - Dr Oyin Edeyemi, Fisayo Aluko, Kofa Akinwunmi, Yvonne, Hyde and Bidemi Zakariayu. We have trail blazing, discerning women who are able to select a quality group of professionals, instead a refreshingly open atmosphere, where there is none of the usual backbiting and gossiping but rather on the quality of offerings?

At the time you decided to launch this, what was your personal goal for it? For me, it was basically all about creating the next generation of fashion entrepreneurs through fashion.

So, what does the institution look for in students while admitting them? I believe GAIA is for genuine love and passion for fashion.

What are the valuable life lessons you learn from the other fashion Institutes?

What is your number one fashion rule? When it comes to personal style, there are no rules.

What's your number one fashion tip?

Having said that, I understand the implicit challenge therefore it’s about diversity or inclusivity.

PEACEHIDE

Peace Hyde is an award-winning producer, TV Host, Motivational speaker and activist. She is the Head of Digital Media and Partnerships as well as the West African Correspondent for Forbes Africa. In her current role, she is responsible for creating digital platforms on revenue and audience growth initiatives as well as the editorial board for the African region.

She is the creator and producer as well as the host of two leading flagship talk shows, Forbes Africa’s My Worst Day with Peace Hyde, the only show that speaks to Africa’s Billions and Forbes Women Africa’s Against the Odds on the CNBC Africa channel on DSTV reaching over 60 million households in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2018, she was shortlisted from a pool of 30,000 African leaders to be part of the 200 inaugural Obama Foundation African Leaders, a recognition that highlights her remarkable work with her education non-profit initiative, Akin Higher, which has built over 3000 businesses for grassroots entrepreneurs and created opportunities for millions of unemployed youths in Africa.

Peace’s work has been featured on CNN, Forbes, Black Enterprise, Huffington Post, Daily Mail, Fox News, Essence and many more. She was named as one of the United Nations Most Influential People of Africa under 35 in 2017. She also sits on the judging panel for the prestigious Chivas Venture Fund, which awards social entrepreneurs with up to $2 million in investment funds.

Meet Princess Kelechi Oghene, an ex model and fashion lover who runs a fashion academy with the aim of educating and empowering women.

In this interview, she lets us in on offerings at The GMTY fashion academy and why it stands out from other fashion schools.

What was the motivation behind The GMTY fashion academy?

I am very passionate about fashion and it’s literally what I have done my whole life. My mum was a seamstress, most of my siblings too, it is everything I do and I all want to do!

Who is it for and what are the offerings?

At GMTY Fashion Academy, we train students to become not just fashion designers but also fashion entrepreneurs. We are committed to creating the next generation of fashion entrepreneurs. It is a successful driven company well known for creating solutions for women, girls and youths through skill acquisition in fashion.

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TREND TO TRY Oversized TAILORING

Oversized tailoring can be a tricky skill to master, as there’s such a fine line between chicly shapeless and unflatteringly baggy. Fear not, here’s a quick lesson in slouchy tailoring to get you started.

HOW MUCH IS THAT ITEM WORTH?

The young lad’s excitement know no bounds. His chest inflated with joy, adrenaline pumping through his veins, his voice carried at the loudest octave he could muster to let everyone know that he was special, for on this day, in an unbelievable throng of human bodies jostling and positioning for a glimpse, a touch or a photo op, with by far the biggest and most famous heavyweight champion their shantytown has seen, if of all people, had been singled out for favour. The Champ, on a whim that only he can explain, took off his self-branded, customized face cap and handed it to him. Only him!

An iconic collectors item on his head, the lad made sure any and everyone he saw knew with no iota of doubt, whose face cap adorned his head and how privileged he was to own it. An invaluable collectors item had just received and the possible range of opportunities it presented to young man was endless so I was intently interested when another national icon, aware of the inherent value of the merchandise offered to buy it off the lad. “Sir, I don’t want to sell. Just bless me today” was the young man’s response, an answer I thought showed he cherished the symbolism of the collection over the fleeting gratification of money. The cap, after all had just got him talking to one the the lands foremost comedian and entertainer and only God knew where next it would take him.

The Lord of Heaven and Earth, at Creation, made all men equal in His sight but after the great fall, all men are no longer born equal even though they spiritually remain created equal. The circumstance of life dictates what we would hold valuable and the importance we attach to men and things. As I settled to marvel at the uncanny intuition that the lad had to what the item could unleash in his life, an offer, the equivalence of $80/- was presented to him and before I could blink, it was accepted and the deal was done. To the one, living at $1/day, it was the deal of a lifetime, to the other, an icon collector of iconic items, it was the deal of a lifetime. Who was better off I wondered? Only time would tell.

May we have the wisdom to value what is valuable and hold dear to what is invaluable.

For your comments, contributions, connect with me here: @TonyeCole1 on Twitter.

THE WATCHER OF TIMES

Dear

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Womenwear brand, Funke Adepoju, has just launched a new capsule collection titled The Adunni Collection.

Adire pieces have strong traditional ties to the Yoruba culture - they are indigo-dyed cloth made in southwestern Nigeria by Yoruba women, using a variety of resist-dyeing techniques. The Funke Adepoju brand appreciates the uniqueness of the fabric and has designed the collection with an "Adire" title. "Adire" names are traditional names from the Yoruba culture often used during ceremonies to celebrate a deceased one. The collection is filled with celebratory pieces and has been fondly named Adunni.

In the words of The Creative Director:

"The Adunni Collection is named after my aunty who passed away. She was an inspiration to me. She was strong but very feminine, hard but still soft and caring. Her Adire was Adunni, which means, "a beautiful child has come to this land," she shared. Her many faces of a woman, her life was somewhat always a sacrifice for us all. She always put everyone else before herself and this embodies the essence of a woman. It was always so inspiring as she still put up a show: a glamorous, happy and effortless show."

"The Adunni Collection as she represents the Funke Adepoju woman in essence of a woman: her strength, femininity, and delicate nature. "A beautiful child has come to this land." She depicted feminine, hard but still soft and caring. Her Oriki was Adunni, which means "the only product that comes with "Oriki" title. "Oriki" names are traditional names from the Yoruba culture often used during ceremonies to celebrate a deceased one and this embodies the essence of a woman. It was always so inspiring as she still put up a show: a glamorous, happy and effortless show."

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