

The Detail.

Papz
Guest Editor

ISSUE 005

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5. CONTENT CREATORS *shaping culture*

COMMON SENSE

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GUEST EDITOR'S NOTE



No matter what you think content creation is, it's definitely a job. I know because for years it wasn't one. I was posting for free, for the love of the game, making parody songs at school and arguing with my mum about whether "skits" counted as a career. They do, Mum. I've got the invoices now. Back then nobody was paying me, nobody was booking me, and I was still making something every single day, because making people laugh was the only thing I ever wanted to do properly.

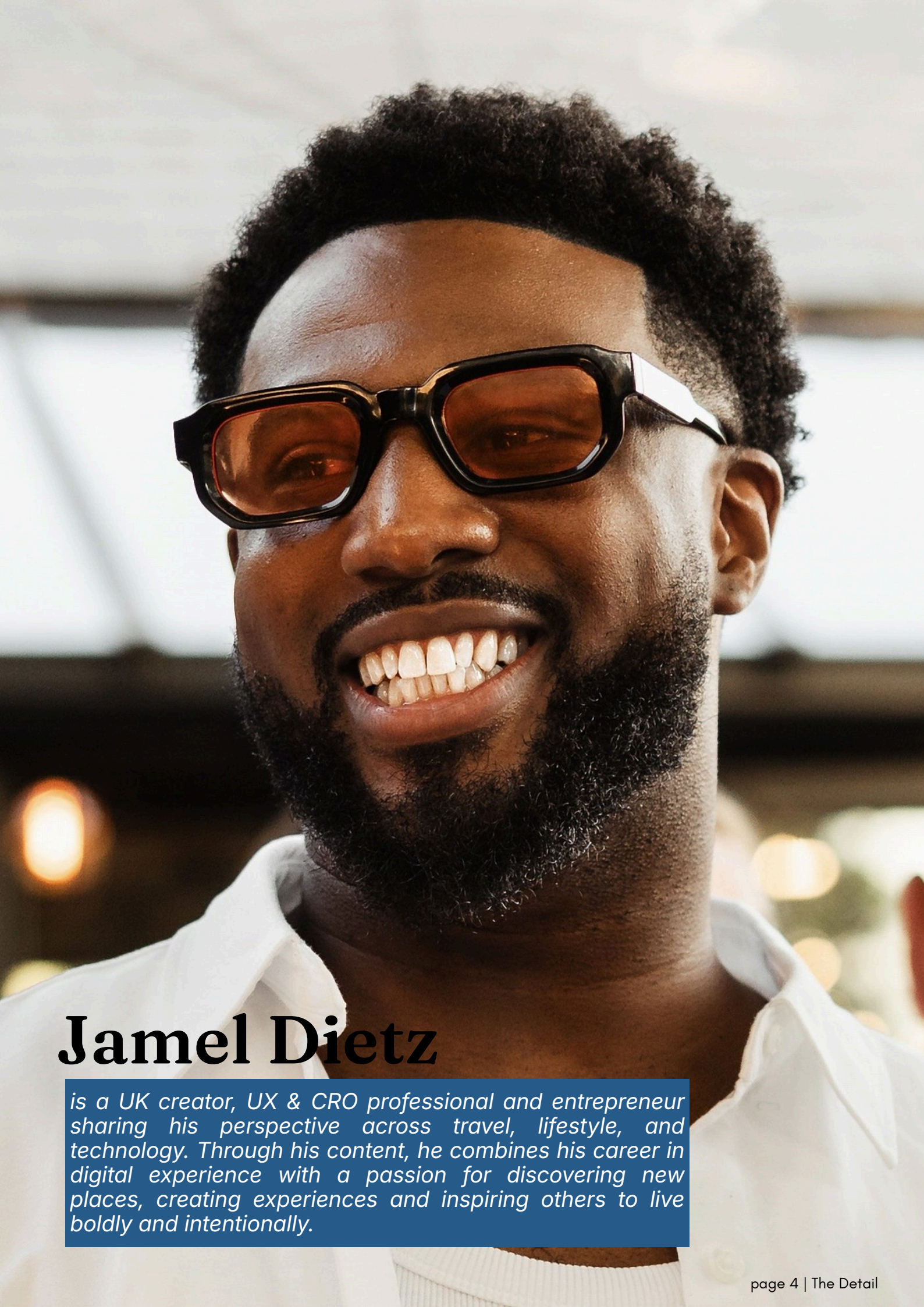
The writing came later. In 2021 someone sat me down and said, look at what Michael Dapaah's doing, he writes now, you should too. So I studied screenwriting and learned how scripts actually work, and I'm still learning. Now I can be in a normal conversation with you and clock that it's a skit before you've finished your sentence. Twitter helps. Twitter is free comedy. People are out here handing you material and all you've got to do is make it better and give it back.

What I've realised is that you don't just entertain people, you end up holding a piece of the culture. When something happens online, people come looking for the Papz skit, and that's a responsibility as much as a compliment. I learned that the hard way. Someone I look up to told me to delete a video that went too far, and I did. Now I still push it, but I know where the line is, mostly. If a Christian skit gets a bit close to the edge, my church friends get it first. I'm not trying to go to hell for a punchline.

That's why I picked the creators in this issue. They're people I watch, work with or am just a fan of, and the thing that links them is that they're themselves. They don't care how they look or what people think, and hardly anybody is like that anymore. They have no ceiling.

So this one is for anyone still posting for free, still being told it's not a real job. Keep going. Stay prayed up.

Here's The Detail.



Jamel Dietz

is a UK creator, UX & CRO professional and entrepreneur sharing his perspective across travel, lifestyle, and technology. Through his content, he combines his career in digital experience with a passion for discovering new places, creating experiences and inspiring others to live boldly and intentionally.

TONI MORRISON

IF THERE'S A BOOK THAT YOU WANT TO READ, BUT IT HASN'T BEEN WRITTEN YET, THEN YOU MUST WRITE IT.

American novelist, Nobel Prize winner



He started out making parody songs at school. Now, whenever something happens online, Twitter waits for the Papz skit. Our cover star and guest editor talks satire, Nigerian stand-up and knowing where the line is, and explains why he'd happily play Spider-Man's web-shooter cleaner.

Papz: The Super Entertainer

BY MICHAEL ADEGOKE

There's a certain kind of British internet moment that only feels finished once Papz has made a skit about it. A politician says something daft, or a stranger tweets about a baby shower that turns out to be his own, and the replies fill up with the same request: where's the Papz video? He trained his audience into that habit the old-fashioned way, writing every sketch himself and posting for years before any of it paid. For our fifth issue, Content Creators Shaping Culture, he's on the cover and in the editor's chair, picking the names he thinks deserve your attention next.

He's also, by his own cheerful admission, the best in the country at what he does. We sat down with him at the studio to find out where that confidence comes from.

You make content, you act and now you write. What came first?

Content creation and music, both at the same time. At school I used to make parody music, YNW Melly parodies, that kind of thing. The writing is newer.

When did the writing start?

In 2021. I was in a meeting with my old management, and Michael Dapaah's management came in and gave me some advice. He said, look at what Michael's doing, he writes now, and you should too. So I went to uni and studied screenwriting, and I put the work in at home too, learning how scripts work. I'm still learning as I go.

People describe your work as satire: it makes you laugh, but there's truth in it. Was that always the aim?

I've always wanted my content to mean something. It can still be funny, but I want people to think. I've done Sadiq Khan, I've done the housing crisis. I use it to shine a light on things society doesn't talk about, either because people are scared to or because it never comes up in conversation. In that space I look up to Munya. Nobody does social commentary on politicians like him, so in that lane I give it to Munya.

How does being Nigerian feed into your comedy?

Growing up I watched Nigerian stand-ups like Basketmouth and AY, and I still watch their sets. I think Nigerian comedians are the funniest in the world. The delivery, the way they land a joke, it's proper funny, and nobody gives them the accolades. That's the comedy I leaned towards because it's what I grew up on. So big up AY, big up Basketmouth, and the Nigerian skit makers too.

Where's your biggest audience outside the UK?

America and Australia, mostly New York, LA and Sydney. I'm still shocked by it. When I was younger I used to make videos on Omegle, and I'd meet loads of Australians who'd say, "Oh my God, it's that British guy from TikTok." For my videos to reach the other side of the world, and for people there to know who I am, is a mad feeling. I went to America for the first time last year and got clocked twice. Two times is like a million times to me.







Do you think about fame?

The work comes first. Fame and money are a bonus. I only started making real money a couple of years ago. Before that it was free work, posting for the love of the game. I do it to make people happy.

This issue is called Content Creators Shaping Culture. Is that you?

That's a real question. I see myself as a content creator shaping British culture, especially Black British culture. I've stapled myself into it. Every time something happens, people on Twitter are asking, "Where's the Papz skit? Papz is definitely making a skit about this." They come straight to me, like I'm the super entertainer.

Rappers get ranked in tiers. Where do you sit?

S-tier. In my age group, I'm the best in the UK. I haven't met anyone who thinks like me yet. There's a clip of Michael Jackson in front of the mirror before a performance, telling himself, "I'm the greatest, I'm the greatest." I watched it every day for a while and did the same thing. That mindset hasn't left me.

Who writes the skits?

All me. I can be talking to you right now and think, that could be a skit. Twitter is my best source because Twitter is free comedy. Someone in America tweets that the guy she's talking to said he was going to a baby shower, and it turns out it's his baby shower. That's a skit. People hand you comedy for free now. All you've got to do is write it, make it better and give it back to the audience.



As guest editor, you picked the creators to watch. How did you choose?

They're people I've watched, worked with or am a big fan of. One guy came up on my For You page recently, Muni Mercs, who does poetry about footballers. He's new, he's funny, and I see a bright future for him. Then there's Gold, who I've known and watched for years, and Miss Sandy Baby. These are my most talented friends, and they have no ceiling. What links them is hard work and resilience, and they don't care how they look or what people think. They're authentically themselves, and hardly anyone is anymore.

What's next?

Getting my show commissioned, writing more projects and telling stories that haven't been told yet. Music too. I'm taking it seriously this year, and I'm in the studio every other day. In five years I want to be closer to God, writing on TV shows, commissioning my own and working with the people I grew up watching. Most importantly, I want to be happy.

Films?

When I say TV I mean everything, so films too. Marvel would be a dream. I'm not even asking to be Spider-Man. Make me Spider-Man's personal web-shooter cleaner, I don't mind. Make me the light bulb. Just give me a role.

A message for readers?

Chase your dreams, and don't let your African parents stop you. It's your life, so do what makes you happy. If you're not where you want to be yet, there's light at the end of the tunnel. Keep pushing, stay prayed up, stay blessed.



Tolulope Adefeso

is a London-based trainee lawyer and co-host of Under the Bed Podcast, a platform creating space for open and honest conversations about the topics people often shy away from discussing within Christian communities. Through her work, she is passionate about faith, storytelling and creating spaces that encourage people to get to know Jesus personally, discover the truth of who He is, and understand Christianity beyond the narratives and misconceptions shaped by culture.

NINA SIMONE

AN ARTIST'S DUTY, AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, IS TO REFLECT THE TIMES.

American singer, pianist, civil rights activist

Letter to my younger self

Words by Mike Omoniyi



You are about to spend money you don't really have on a camera, and you will call it an investment so the purchase feels respectable. You have watched a handful of YouTube tutorials on aperture and shutter speed, and you are fairly sure that makes you a filmmaker. It doesn't yet, but the instinct is right, so buy it anyway. Nearly ten years from now you will still have the habit that camera starts, which is pressing record before you feel ready.



Over the next few years you will teach yourself to edit, then to colour grade, then to build websites. You won't do it out of a love of software. You'll do it because paying someone else is out of the question. Lots of nights will end at two in the morning with you staring at a timeline and wondering whether anyone will watch what you're making. A few people will, then a few more, and that slow growth will teach you more than any viral moment could.

The idea behind Common Sense is simple enough to fit on a napkin. You think people who disagree should be able to sit in the same room and talk without the conversation turning into a bonfire. In the early days that will sound naive to some people, and they will say so with a confidence you should learn to find funny. Hold on to the idea anyway. The country is about to get louder and angrier, and the need for that room will grow with it.

The rooms you will end up in

I'd love to tell you how it all happens, though the honest answer is that most of it happens because you keep turning up. One day you'll be in a conversation with Harry and Meghan, and you'll catch yourself halfway through wondering how a lad with a second-hand camera got here. Try to stay in the moment instead of narrating it to yourself. The people in those rooms care much less about your credentials than you'd expect, and much more about whether you have anything worth saying.

You'll also speak at the Huxley Summit, among people whose decisions shape business and public life. You'll feel underqualified walking in. By the time you leave you'll have realised that a lot of people in rooms like that feel exactly the same and have simply got better at hiding it. That realisation is worth more than the lanyard.

The one that will really get you is the textbooks. Common Sense's work will be published in Key Stage 3 textbooks, which means students across the country will open a book in class and find something you helped make. Somewhere a fourteen-year-old will be asked to analyse it in full sentences, and you should feel slightly guilty about that. Mostly, though, you'll feel the weight of it. The thing you started so people could talk to each other better ends up shaping how young people learn to think.

What nobody tells you

None of this will be a solo effort, so please stop picturing it that way. Talented, generous people will join you, and some of them will believe in the vision on the days you've lost sight of it yourself. The best thing Common Sense ever produces won't be a video or a panel. It will be the team and the community that gather around the work, and it is now forty thousand people strong. Treat them well, pay them as soon as you can, and say thank you more often than feels necessary.

There will also be stretches where nothing seems to move. Funding will fall through, a project you love will stall, and you will quietly wonder whether you should get a proper job like a sensible person. In those seasons, remember that Zechariah says not to despise the day of small beginnings. God has a long track record with small beginnings, and yours are in good company.

So, keep going

If I could give you one instruction, it would be the plainest one there is. Keep going when the views are low and the inbox is empty. Keep going when someone you admire doesn't reply, and when someone you've never met writes to say a conversation you hosted changed how they see their neighbour. The work adds up in ways you can't see from where you're standing.

Ten years on, the camera is out of date and you've finally learned what most of the buttons do. The conviction you had when you bought it is still the most valuable thing you own. Look after it, and keep pressing record.

With love and a little impatience,

Mike







JOIN THE COMMON SENSE NETWORK

THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY.



Gold

Gold lives in the fun part of the internet, and she's made it her job to keep it that way. Her content is a standing permission slip to be awkward, a little cringe, and completely yourself. She leans into the moments most people would edit out, and her audience shows up for exactly that.

JAMES BALDWIN

THE PURPOSE OF ART IS TO LAY BARE THE QUESTIONS THAT HAVE BEEN HIDDEN BY THE ANSWERS.

American novelist, essayist, civil rights voice

From the Estate to the Algorithm

An interview with Zayz



Nobody handed Zayz a microphone, so he built one out of a phone and a clothing brand

Zayz never set out to become an influencer. He had a clothing brand, no connections and a growing suspicion that waiting for someone else to give him a platform would get him nowhere, so he built one himself. What started as a way to shift product became a way to say something, whether that was a joke, a story about feeling lost or a video during Suicide Awareness Month that reached nearly 200,000 people. Here he talks about the highs, the lows and the strange experience of going from a big day out to his council estate in the same evening.

He started posting to sell clothes because nobody with influence would help him do it. Four years on, the guy from the estate who used to dance at every party has found a voice, a purpose and a career he never planned. Zayz on how social media changed his life.

Before you started posting, what did an ordinary week look like?

Like any typical 18-year-old's. I'd go to and from education, come home, play games and chill with my friends. I was ambitious, but I wasn't doing anything to work towards it. That's probably what pushed me to change and start trying to shape my future.

What made you post for the first time?

Having a business, and not getting support from people with influence. That didn't upset me, because I understood it, and I understand it even more now that I'm in a position of some influence myself. It just made me want to become my own outlet so I didn't have to rely on anybody. I realised I wouldn't get far relying on connections or on people's good faith when so many others were relying on the same thing. If I created the opportunity myself, it would be easier for the business to grow.

When did you first notice things changing?

February 2022, about nine months in. A few videos had done well before that, but none of them showed my character or set me apart. Funnily enough, the first one that did was me imitating somebody else. Instead of being "the guy who does TikTok", I became the guy who made that video, so people knew who I was. The second phase was when people started recognising me by name. I'd had enough moments that they knew me as a character, not just for one clip.

How has your life actually changed?

Purpose, first of all. I feel like I've found mine, though it isn't rooted only in posting or the business. It's who I am, and I feel it across the different things I do. The other big change is opportunity. Whatever career I'd gone into before, there was a ceiling. Now there isn't really one. I could wake up tomorrow to the biggest opportunity of my life.

Who noticed the change first?

My older brother. He saw the impact I was making online before I did, and before most people. Once I could see it too, he had the evidence to back up what he'd been telling me. He's proud but not surprised, and the same goes for my family and the people I grew up around. The character people see online has always been me. Entertainment was never my plan, but I was always an entertainer. I've always wanted to be the centre of attention, dancing at parties, showing out, being the joker.

What has social media given you?

A voice. Some of my videos have done 100,000 views and some have done 1,000, but I've been able to affect people the way I'd want to be affected. My clothing brand, Chapter X, is built around the feeling of being lost or not knowing your story, and I've been able to tell people they're not the only ones in that position. Last month was Suicide Awareness Month, and I made a video that got almost 200,000 views. People might have heard elsewhere that they weren't alone, but I could add my voice to that and get it to far more than one person.





What's been harder than people assume?

Motivating myself when nobody else is there to do it. There are highs, but there are lows too, and even in the high moments you can find yourself thinking about the next low. I've done something crazy in the day and come back to my council estate the same evening thinking, how did I go from that to this? When your views are low it feels like nothing you do is enough. When the opportunities don't come after you've worked so hard, you start asking what the point is. But it's my career, and it's something I'm passionate about, so I keep going.

Is there a version of yourself you lost along the way?

The version of me that was genuinely happy and content, though I've recently found him again. I was spending so much energy online that I had nothing left offline and needed to recharge. I got it back by doing the things I used to do and not making my whole life about work. I do miss the innocent version of me with less responsibility, but that's life and growing up.

What would your younger self make of all this?

He wouldn't believe it. If I'd told him I was a professional footballer or a famous actor, because I used to love acting, he'd have believed me. This was never the plan. I started posting as an outlet to promote my own products, and becoming a creator who promotes other people's things and has influence was something I could never have imagined. That's the lesson for me: anything really is possible. There's a lot I want now that I'm in this position, and that keeps me going, because once upon a time I didn't think I'd be here at all.



Sent Back Pod

Two boys Shaped and changed by One Flight, the Sent Back Podcast (#SBP) is a show that dives into the experiences of young boys who have lived in Nigeria and how that has made us who we are today. They cover all things pertaining to being Nigerian as well as British.

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MAYA ANGELOU

THERE IS NO GREATER AGONY THAN BEARING AN UNTOLD STORY INSIDE YOU.

American poet, memoirist, activist

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Why Do Black Creators Get Paid Less?

Words by Tomi Okeowo

In 2024, a UK talent agency found Black influencers are paid 34% less than white creators with matching follower counts and engagement. It isn't a new injustice. It's the same one the music industry ran for a century, just wearing a different outfit.



The numbers

The UK figures have been measured more than once, by more than one organisation, and they keep landing in roughly the same place.

Every few months, a number does the rounds that should stop the creator economy in its tracks, and every few months it doesn't. In 2024 the number was 34%. That was the gap SevenSix Agency found when it surveyed 300 UK influencers for its Influencer Pricing Report: Black creators were being paid a third less than white creators for the same deliverables, with the same size of audience and the same level of engagement.

It would be easier to dismiss if it were the only study, but it keeps being repeated. Two years earlier, MSL UK polled 600 influencers and found a 22% pay gap between Black and white creators, along with a detail that tells you a lot about how the money moves: white creators were nearly three times more likely to successfully negotiate a higher fee. Across the Atlantic it is worse. A 2021 study by MSL and the Influencer League put the US gap at 35%, and a 2023 MSL follow-up found that 73% of white creators had landed their first paid brand deal within a year of starting, compared with 46% of Black creators and other creators of colour.

Look closer and the picture becomes more uncomfortable still. SevenSix broke its findings down by skin tone and found creators with the deepest complexions earned 44.63% less than those with the lightest, averaging £928 per Instagram post against £1,675. Hair texture followed the same pattern. Creators with looser curls averaged £1,713 per Reel, while those with tighter coils averaged £800. At that point it becomes very hard to argue the market is simply pricing reach.

The excuses

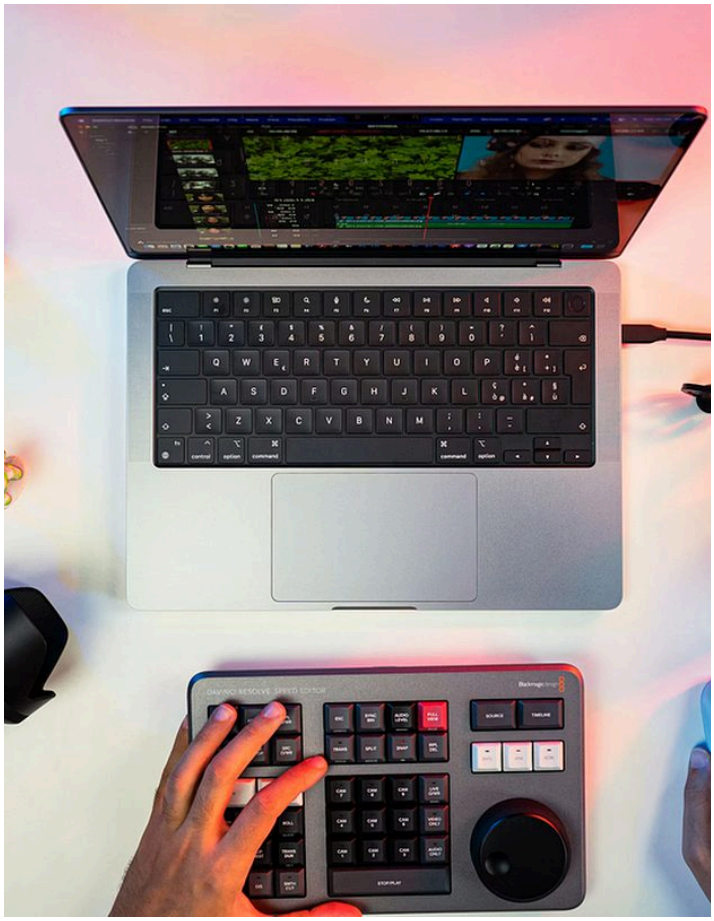
Brands tend to offer one of three explanations, and none of them holds up for long. The first is that it's about reach rather than race, but every study above compared creators with matching audiences and matching engagement. The gap survived anyway, and at the macro-influencer level, where the biggest fees sit, it sometimes widened.

The second is that the algorithm decides, which has more truth in it than brands would like. Creators and researchers have argued for years that recommendation systems under-amplify Black creators compared with white creators posting similar work. That suppresses the very growth figures brands then point to when they make a lower offer, so a platform's bias quietly becomes a brand's justification.

The third is that brands simply pay what the market says. The trouble is that brands are the market. They set the rates and negotiate the deals, and according to MSL UK they accept white creators' counter-offers roughly three times as often as Black creators'. Calling that the market doesn't explain the gap. It describes it.

There is a fourth factor people rarely say out loud, which is that talking about any of this costs money. In one US survey, 59% of Black creators said speaking publicly about race had hurt their income, compared with 14% of white creators. The industry is happy to profit from Black creators' cultural influence, and noticeably less generous when that influence is turned on the industry itself.





A much older story

None of this is new. It's the latest chapter in a long history of industries built on Black creativity that handed Black creators the smallest share of the reward.

For most of the 19th century, the biggest entertainment business in America, and a major one in Britain, was minstrelsy: white performers in blackface caricaturing Black music, dance and speech for paying white audiences. The culture being sold was Black, while the stages, the songwriting credits and the money largely belonged to someone else. By the 1920s the business had moved into recorded music, and labels were selling Black musicians through separate "race record" catalogues on worse terms than the white artists on their own rosters. Many of the people who built the foundations of blues, jazz and early rock and roll never saw meaningful royalties from records that sold in their hundreds of thousands.

Then there is Big Mama Thornton, who recorded “Hound Dog” in 1952. It became an R&B hit and earned her a few hundred dollars. Four years later, Elvis Presley released a faster, cleaner version marketed to a mainstream America that Thornton was never allowed to reach, and it became one of the best-selling singles of the decade. Thornton never shared in that success. Little Richard told a similar story about watching Pat Boone turn his songs into hits for radio stations that wouldn’t play the originals.

The Renegade

TikTok, for all its talk of democratising fame, ran the same play almost immediately. In 2019, a 14-year-old from Atlanta named Jalaiah Harmon choreographed a dance to K Camp’s “Lottery” and posted it online. It became the Renegade, one of the biggest trends the platform has ever produced, performed by millions of users and eventually by celebrities on live television.

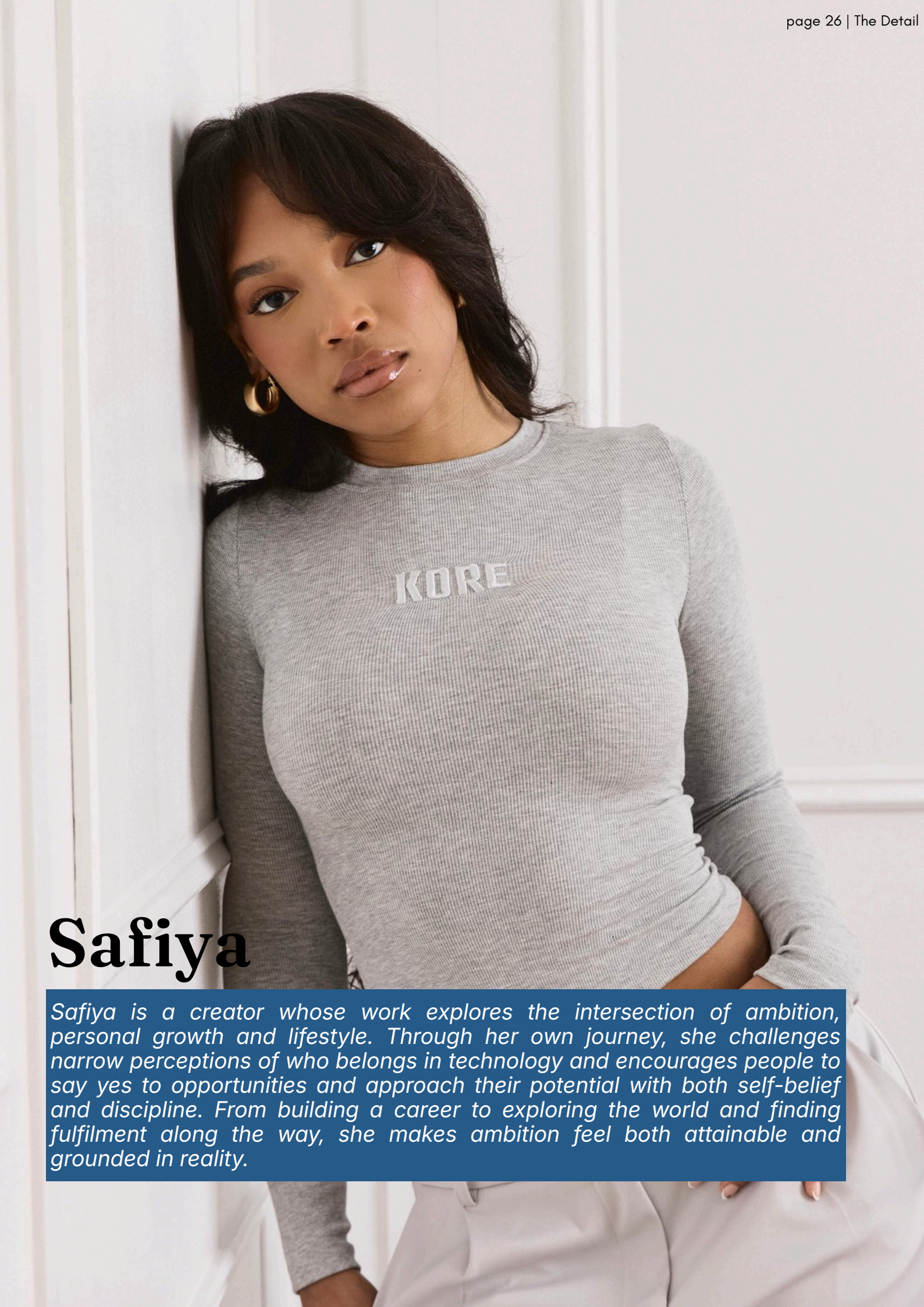


For months, hardly anyone knew her name. The dance spread fastest through white creators with large followings, who performed it without credit and turned it into brand deals, press and new followers. Harmon, the person who actually made it, stayed uncredited and unpaid until a New York Times piece identified her, and only then did some of the recognition and opportunity begin to find its way back. Swap the record label for a platform, the song for a dance and the years for weeks, and it is the “Hound Dog” story all over again.

What’s changing

What is different this time is that the gap is being recorded as it happens. The Instagram account @influencerpaygap, run by talent lead Adesuwa Ajayi, has spent years publishing anonymised screenshots of what different creators were offered for comparable work, dragging the industry into a conversation about pay transparency it had avoided for decades. In 2020, Nicole Ocran and Kat Molesworth founded The Creator Union, the UK’s first union for digital content creators, so that creators could negotiate with the kind of collective weight brands can’t simply route around.

Neither will close the gap on its own. Still, minstrelsy’s audiences, the race record labels and the radio stations playing Elvis never had to face what today’s brands do: a dated, public, citable record of who the money goes to while the culture is still being made. That record is the reason this version of the pattern is being named while it is happening, and the reason it may be the first one that doesn’t take half a century to put right.



Safiya

Safiya is a creator whose work explores the intersection of ambition, personal growth and lifestyle. Through her own journey, she challenges narrow perceptions of who belongs in technology and encourages people to say yes to opportunities and approach their potential with both self-belief and discipline. From building a career to exploring the world and finding fulfilment along the way, she makes ambition feel both attainable and grounded in reality.

“

CHINUA ACHEBE

UNTIL THE LIONS HAVE THEIR OWN HISTORIANS, THE HISTORY OF THE HUNT WILL ALWAYS GLORIFY THE HUNTER.

Nigerian novelist, author of Things Fall Apart

”

WHO'S TAKING WHOSE HAIR?

A sit-down with Aziza Zawadi



She has had locs since she was three, grew up wrapping them every school day, and once tried to comb them out just to fit in. Now Aziza is building a platform for the women who keep getting left off the panel. She talks about Rasta roots, the word "dread" and why locs are anything but the easy option.

Walk through any London borough today and someone in the room will have locs. For Aziza, that's a strange thing to witness. She grew up in a Rastafarian household where locs weren't a look but a statement of faith and identity, and where wrapping your hair was simply what you did. Strangers on the street would greet her and her mother with a respectful tilt of the head, a hand to the chest, recognising an empress before they'd said a word.

These days she wraps her hair for work and lets it down for content, and she's honest about the tension in that. She's also on a mission to give women with locs what the beauty industry hasn't: someone who looks like them, talking about what actually works. We spoke to her about where she comes from and what she wants the next generation to feel.



What's your earliest memory of your hair meaning something beyond how it looked?

I was probably eight or nine. My parents are Rastafarians, and that carries a lot of weight when it comes to locs. I remember walking down the road with my mum and people giving us the hail, the head tilt to show respect, or the hand on the chest. It wasn't just because our locs were wrapped. It was more, wow, this is an empress, she deserves respect. So from a very young age I knew that having locs meant something. It wasn't just a hairstyle.

You've had them almost your whole life.

Since I was about three, so I'm not new to this. Locs are part of my personality. Growing up there were definitely moments when I was surrounded by people with all these different hairstyles, thinking, why am I not part of that?

How did school respond?

From Year 1 right through to Year 11, I wrapped my hair. My mum made sure of it, because in that culture wrapping your hair is essential. Today, for a lot of kids, locs are just a hairstyle. But because I came to school with my hair wrapped, everyone assumed I was Muslim. A young Black girl who covers her hair has to be Muslim, because there's no other category. Then, once they realised I wasn't, it became, "So why is she covering her hair? She doesn't need to."

My mum had to fight that with schools. Just because something isn't your norm, or isn't talked about much, doesn't mean she has to be Muslim. Rasta culture isn't dying, but so few young people are raised in it now that nobody makes room for it.

And at work?

Maybe it's my personality, but I'm very confident in how I look, and nobody has ever told me to change it. When you own something completely, there's no room for anyone to open their mouth. I still cover my hair for work, and no one has ever tried it with me.

What made you start creating content about your hair?

I enjoy people seeing the styles and learning what locs represent, and that's the direction I'm heading in. What pushed me was an event celebrating Black beauty. They had makeup artists, and women with long natural hair talking about their journeys, their treatments and their products. Not one person on that panel had locs.

So I'm sitting there thinking, hi, I'm a girl with locs, what do you suggest for me? Nobody. That happens on panel after panel, so we end up working it all out ourselves. I want to build a platform that shows what locs mean, which products we should be using and how to look after them properly. Not just, "your styles are nice." People ask me all the time how I maintain mine, and I can honestly say I have good locs because I look after them. If that's what people want to know, I should share it. We're not gatekeeping round here.

Who in your audience has surprised you?

Men, sometimes, asking about products and maintenance. Women without locs too. You see locs everywhere now, but I get a lot of women in my comments who clearly like the idea of them.

How do you feel about locs going mainstream?

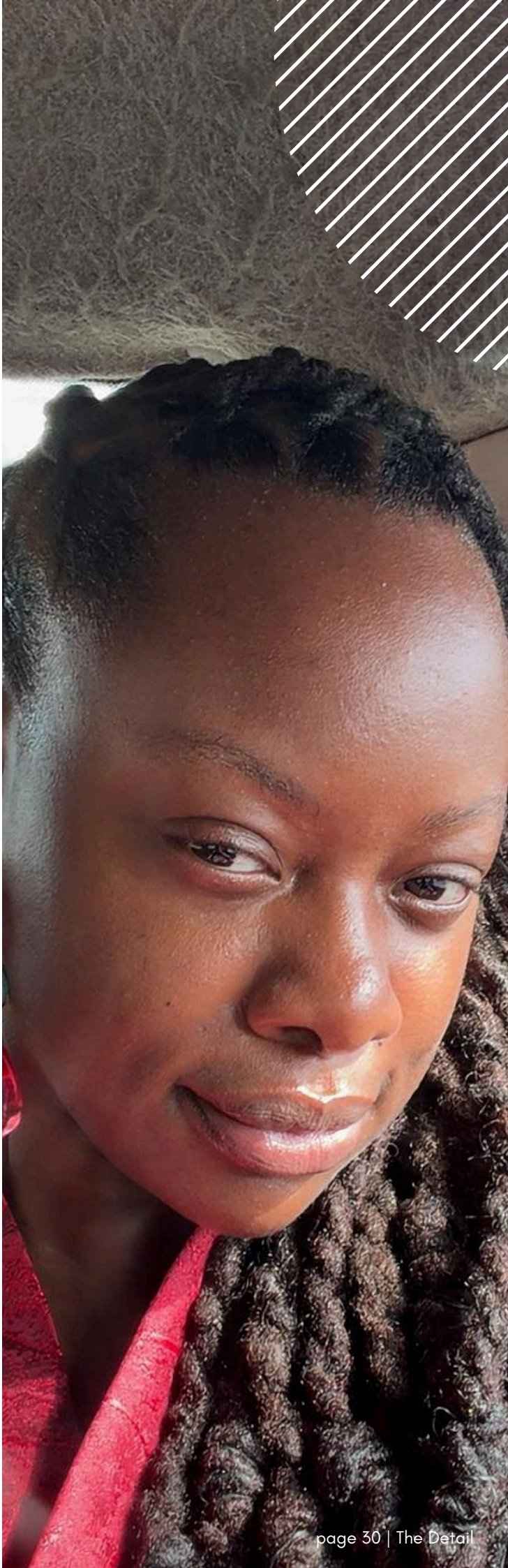
The way they're portrayed now is crazy to me, because where I grew up they actually represented something. My mum hates that I show my hair. She doesn't agree with it, but I do as I do.

I've spent years covering my hair, but I don't fully practise the Rastafarian faith, and I don't want to half-commit to something I'm not doing properly. So I pick and choose. Some days I'm wrapped and natural, and some days I'm showing my locs with a full face of makeup, because I want to. Your environment shapes all of that. If everyone around me wrapped their hair and didn't wear makeup, I'd probably be doing the same.

I'd love it if people getting locs knew the history first. Rasta women wear that crown high and proud, hair wrapped, not one loc showing. Now we've got fashion locs, and some of the meaning has gone. I play a part in that too, I'm not going to pretend otherwise.

You've been careful to say "locs" rather than "dreadlocks".

Deliberately. Many people believe "dreadlocks" goes back to colonial times, when natural Black hair was described as "dreadful" to make it something to fear. So we're moving towards "locs", which strips that stigma away. A lot of people don't know any of that history. They just follow the trend.





So where's the line between appreciation and taking?

Honestly, I think we fight for the wrong things as Black people. If Kylie Jenner posts with braids tomorrow, the comments will be full of people shouting that she's taking our hairstyles. Meanwhile, plenty of Black women are wearing straight blonde wigs. So who's taking whose hair? I don't wear wigs or extensions myself, so I'm outside that conversation in a way, but I notice it. Appreciation doesn't have to come through hair. It can be clothes, food, music, movement. There are other ways.

The UK has seen campaigns against hair discrimination in schools and workplaces. Has anything really shifted?

I'm not sure it has. We forget how recent all of this is. Discrimination was very much in our parents' lifetimes, our grandparents' lifetimes. That's why children are still having their hair cut at school because they have locs. If it wasn't so close to home, would anyone think they could take scissors to a child's hair? That's what we should be fighting about, much more than celebrities in braids.

What do you want a young person to feel when they see your content?

Seen. A couple of days ago I was walking through Tottenham, headphones in, and a man got out of a parked van holding flowers. He handed them to me and said, "These are for you. I go round London giving flowers to women who wear their natural hair." The same thing had happened to my cousin a few months earlier.

It was lovely, and it also made me sad. Why am I being celebrated for wearing my own hair? Nobody hands a white woman flowers for wearing hers. He told me Black people spend billions every year buying other people's hair. I have friends with long, healthy natural hair who still straighten or relax it. That's trauma. We've been taught that Black hair isn't nice unless it's straight, or curly in a particular way, and never kinky or tight.

So I want people to watch my content and think, she actually owns it. Because when you don't own who you are, you just become like everybody else.

Did you always own it?

No. I grew up in a diverse area where I was the only young person with locs. "Aziza with the locs," that was me. At one point I started coming home from school and combing them out. My mum found out and asked me why, and I just didn't want them, because nobody like me had them. When you're the outcast, you want to fit in. That's around when I started going to the salon, maybe Year 8 or Year 9, and learning what it meant to really look after locs. That's when I began to appreciate them.

AUDRE LORDE

IF I DIDN'T DEFINE MYSELF FOR MYSELF, I WOULD BE CRUNCHED INTO OTHER PEOPLE'S FANTASIES FOR ME AND EATEN ALIVE.

American poet, writer, activist



Jordan Kuponiyi: Let It Grow

At 22, with no job, a business barely off the ground and his mum begging him not to, Jordan Kuponiyi started growing his locs. Now African aunties are among his most loyal followers, and some of them are letting their sons grow their hair too.

Jordan grew up hearing that long hair was untidy and locs were unprofessional, from aunties, elders and church. He was even suspended from school for letting his hair grow too long. Today he makes content about the history and meaning of Black hair, and the people who once told him to cut it are watching. We asked him how that happened.

What's your earliest memory of your hair meaning something beyond how it looked?

Lauryn Hill, in the Fugees era. Seeing her freeform locs, the way she expressed her faith in Christ and carried herself, really meant something to me. She challenged the beauty standards I was used to. Then my interest in ancient Egypt made me ask how we'd arrived at this Western idea that short hair signals success and long hair suggests the opposite. Where did that come from, and why had so many of us accepted it?



Were you told your hair was "unprofessional"?

Constantly, especially by family and friends. From a young age I heard it from aunties, relatives and people at church. Locs were untidy, unkempt, and if I wanted to succeed I needed to grow up and cut my hair. When you hear that repeatedly from people you respect, it shapes what you believe you need to look like to be taken seriously.

At school, even a fade could be a problem. I was suspended because my hair had grown too long, while white pupils seemed to have much more freedom. It felt like I was crossing a line just by wanting the same thing.

So what made you grow locs at 22?

Honestly, life wasn't going well. I was struggling to find a job, my business was in its infancy, and my mum was strongly advising me against it. It was an uncertain time, and that's when my loc journey began.

What did you want people to get from your content?

I wanted to show how much meaning our hair carries: its links to identity, wisdom, wealth and status in different traditions. Learning about that made me question so much of what I'd been taught. So many of us inherit negative ideas about our hair before we've had the chance to explore it for ourselves. I wanted people to feel confident enough to embrace themselves unapologetically.

Is there a message from your audience that's stayed with you?

A Kenyan mother with three boys. She'd been following my journey, including how I am with my family, and told me it had changed her perspective. She was going to let her boys grow their hair, and she invited me to Kenya to mentor them. Seeing my content change how a parent understood her children meant a lot.

Who in your audience has surprised you?

African aunties and mums, definitely. Given the attitudes I grew up around, that's surprised me most. Some have completely changed their stance. Others still have their preferences, but they're letting their children grow their hair. I think they've seen that locs don't have to stand in the way of success.

Where's the line between appreciation and taking?

I'm happy to see Black hairstyles embraced more widely, but there's a double standard. A Kardashian wears cornrows and it's called bold and innovative. A Black woman wears the same style and gets called ghetto or unprofessional. Appreciation has to include respect for the people and the culture behind the style.

What do outsiders get wrong about locs?

That they're dirty, or that we don't wash them. Locs are hair, and we care for them. People also confuse a fresh retwist with cleanliness, when that's just what our hair looks like as it grows. Our hair doesn't need to be straight to be considered cared for or beautiful.

What do you want a young Black person watching you to feel?

That their hair is an extension of who they are, and that they're free to enjoy it and experiment with it without it becoming a political statement or a reason to be treated like a criminal. Our natural hair is part of how we're made. If you're saying the hair that grows out of our heads is inherently unprofessional, what are you really saying about us? This is how God designed us, and we should be allowed to embrace that.





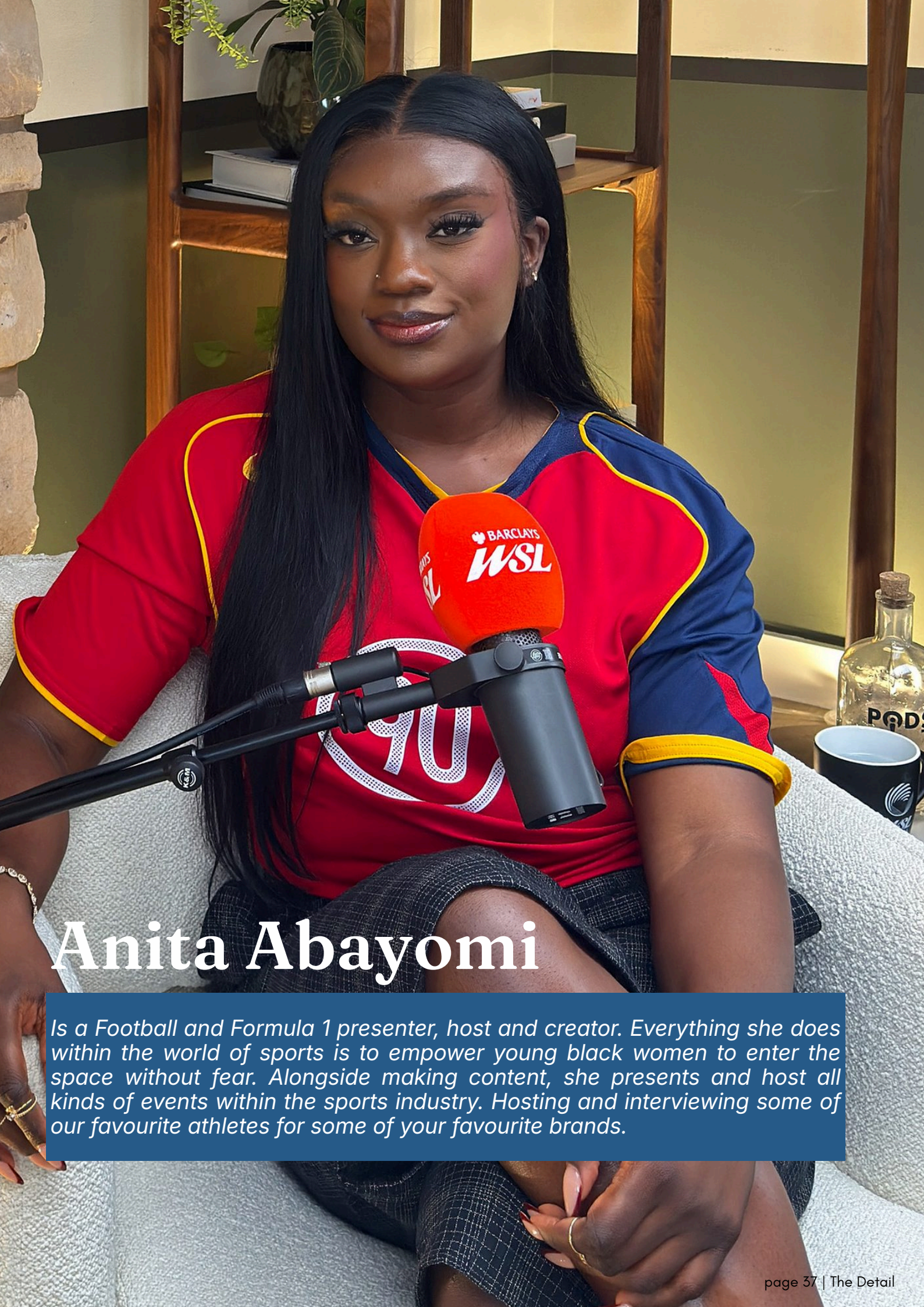
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STUART HALL

CULTURAL IDENTITY IS A MATTER OF ‘BECOMING’ AS WELL AS OF ‘BEING’

Jamaican-born British cultural theorist

”



Anita Abayomi

Is a Football and Formula 1 presenter, host and creator. Everything she does within the world of sports is to empower young black women to enter the space without fear. Alongside making content, she presents and host all kinds of events within the sports industry. Hosting and interviewing some of our favourite athletes for some of your favourite brands.


COMMON SENSE

30 MUST-WATCH CONTENT CREATORS

We sat down with our guest editor Papz to pick the 30 creators changing what British culture looks, sounds and feels like. Some are friends he's watched grind for years, and some are names that turned up on his For You page and wouldn't leave. What links them, he told us, is "hard work and resilience. They're authentically themselves, and hardly anyone is anymore."

Some have millions of followers and some have a few thousand, but every one of them makes something that's unmistakably theirs. In Papz's words, they have no ceiling. Here's the list.



Reefa / @reefatv1
Comedy Content Creator & Presenter



Ayo / @aywuzgoodfam
Comedy Content Creator



Patz / @patzmb
Lifestyle & Comedy Content Creator



Sam Obaseki / @_samobaseki
Lifestyle & Sports Content Creator & Host



Daniella Carmen / @daniellacarmenn
Lifestyle, Fitness & Business Content Creator



Franco / @fb.nre
Sports & Comedy Content Creator



Rambo / @ramboistalking
Music, Culture & Sports Presenter



Myers / @myerslondon__
Social Media Manager & Content Producer



Denz / @_denzworks
Comedy Content Creator



Paul / @paulenterprise12
Lifestyle & Comedy Content Creator



Gold / @7.goldd
Comedy Content Creator



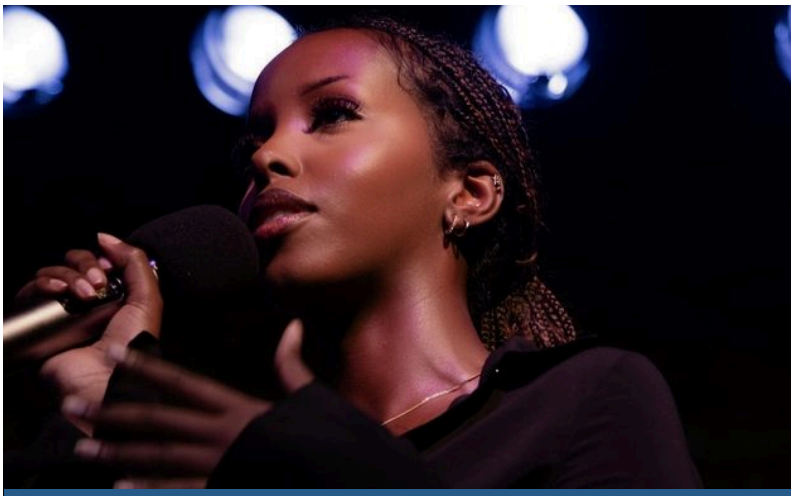
MMB / @6banks
Lifestyle & Comedy Content Creator



Safiya / @safiyarozi
Lifestyle, Career & Fitness Content Creator



Suby / @1suby
Fitness & Comedy Content Creator



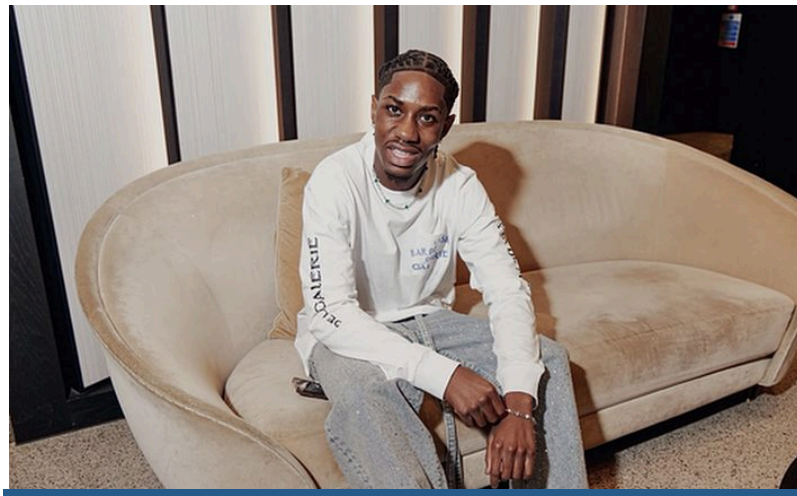
Fadz / @fadzagain
Music, Fashion & Culture Presenter



Iya Bouji / @iya_bouji
Comedy Content Creator



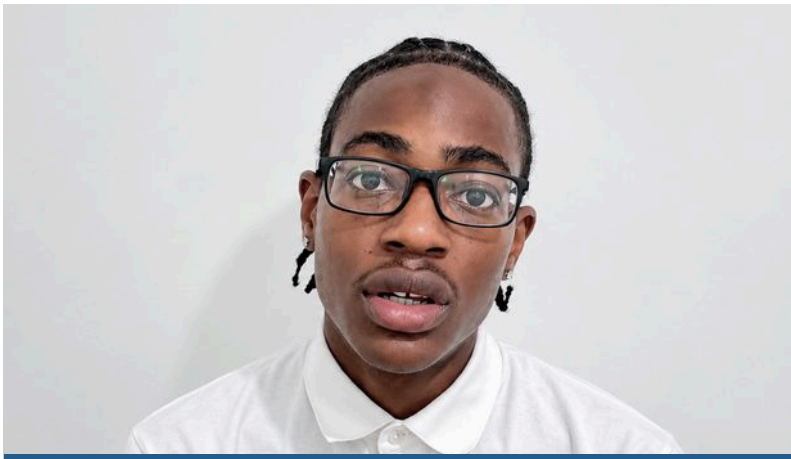
Marcus / @isdatmarcus
Comedy Content Creator



Sean / @seanjtv
Lifestyle & Fashion Content Creator



GB / @gbayike
Comedy Content Creator



*Poles / @polesss_*
Comedy Content Creator



Dr Funmi / @doctor.funmi
Sports & Health Content Creator



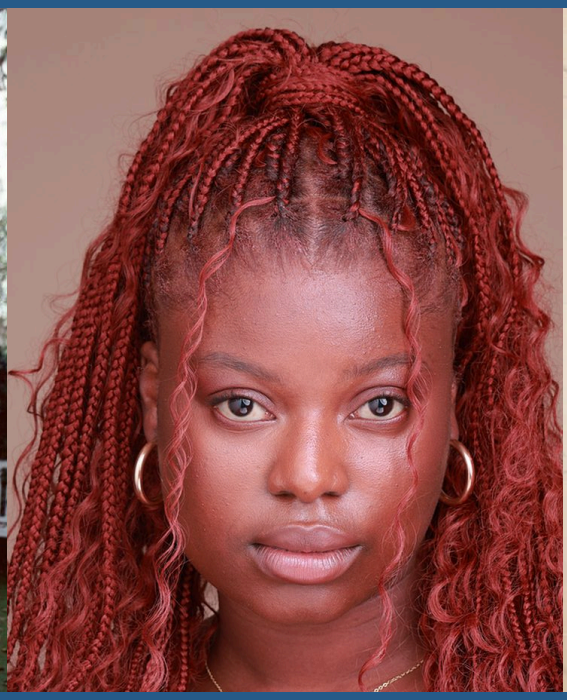
Tdott / @tdott.tv
Comedy Content Creator & Presenter



SentBackPod / @sentbackpodcast
Lifestyle & Comedy Podcasters



Motobora / @motobora
Comedy Content Creator



Audrey / @_audrea5
Comedy Content Creator & Filmmaker



Vet / @vetunfiltered
Lifestyle & Comedy Content Creator



Tolu / @tolsfeso
Lifestyle Content Creator & Podcaster



Jamel / @jameldietz
Lifestyle Content Creator



J Babe / @luvjbabee
Lifestyle & Comedy Content Creator



JOIN THE COMMON SENSE NETWORK

THERE ARE TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY.



Thank you

A note before you go

Thank you for reading this issue of The Detail. Thank you to Papz for lending us his eye and his editor's chair, and to every creator, writer and contributor who gave us their time, their stories and, in a few cases, their unfiltered opinions on wigs. None of this works without people willing to be honest on the record.

It's easy to treat content creation as a sideshow, something people do on their phones between real jobs. This issue argues the opposite. The people in these pages are shaping how a generation laughs, argues, worships, spends and sees itself. Many of them built that influence with no gatekeepers, no budgets and, as Tomi's piece shows, often for less than they deserve. That deserves to be documented properly, while it's happening.

So watch them, share them and pay them properly. If something in here made you think differently, tell someone about it.

Until the next one.

Mike Omoniyi

Founder, The Common Sense Network