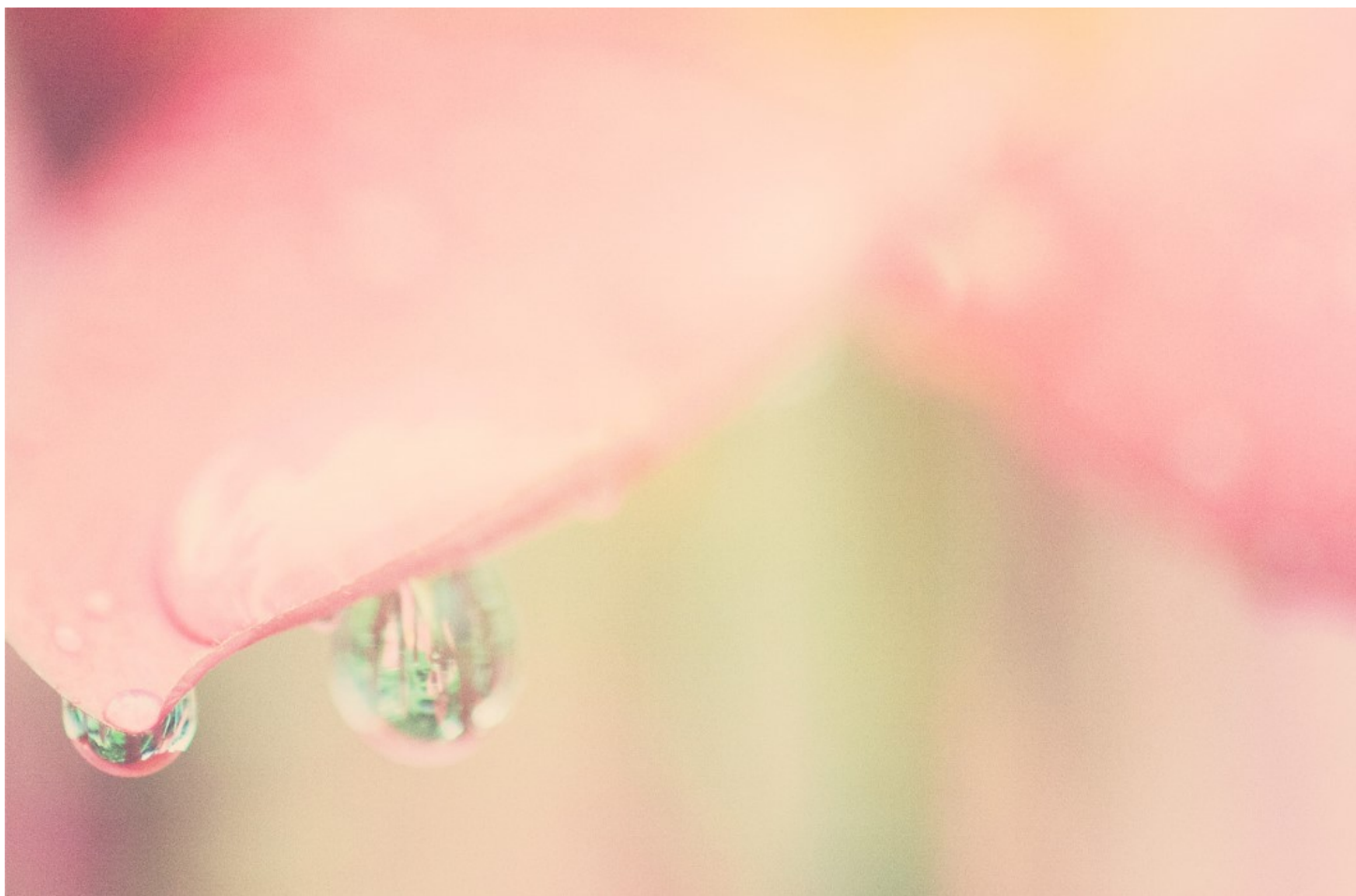


VOLUME I, ISSUE 2
1 FEBRUARY 2019

GraceFUL



manna

to add life
nourish
in small measure
al-maidah
radiance
suffuses
my blossoms
translucence
being

Naked Chastity Affirming Virtue (2014)

Inside this issue:

Manna: Life in Love 1*Healing from An Abusive Relationship* 2*Meditation: The Virtue of Patience* 2*Gaining Clarity and Moving Forward* 3*Photo Essay: A Heart of Compassion* 4-5*She Didn't Know How To Say No* 6*The Psychology of Surviving Abuse* 6*Remembering Crystal Hamilton* 6*Human Trafficking: Stealing Freedom* 7*Covenant & Light* 8*Wisdom Note: Harmony* 8**A HEALING PLACE** *women in transition*

A fantasy family life. Children used as pawns. Living in a fake world where others controlled their movements. "Breastfeeding on one side while my husband is having sex on the other."

Isolation. Hospitalizations. "If you call 9-1-1, I will kill you by the time the police show up."

From the onset of the session as the women introduced themselves and began to talk about their experiences, the session transformed into a space where the women felt safe to be transparent and vulnerable, some sharing for the first time their experiences of violence and abuse in the home; some realizing for the first time that what they endured constituted abuse.

As the women described themselves and the circumstances that led them to commit to their decision to leave, a vibrant tapestry of their hearts unfolded.

From their feisty perseverance to a beautiful brokenness, the women all shared how they found an inner strength they never knew existed. Instead of trying to make everyone else happy, they prioritized themselves.

More than anything, the mothers wanted their children rescued from the verbal and mental abuse they endured to live a better life. The confusion of not knowing how to get out of their abusive situations has slowly been replaced by a clear pathway toward self-sufficiency they are building at BARN, and finding healing for their hearts, minds and spirits along the way.

During my last safe house site visit, an immigrant from Eritrea grabbed me by the hand and pulled me into her room to share her space with me. Her two-month-old son lay asleep on her bed as a native song played softly from her music player. Her gracious and grateful heart transcended the language barrier between us. As I turned to leave, she embraced me with a fierce tight hug, resting her head on my shoulder in one of the most emotional moments of this project.

This work honors each tear, bruise, broken bone, shattered dream and hidden sorrow that has been overcome by the indomitable spirit and astounding courage of every survivor, reminiscent of the mantra of the women in the early seventies who grew the emerging grassroots battered women's movement: "WE WILL NOT BE BEATEN!"

Safe House (2013)

Dora Muhammad, The AWARE Project Founder, facilitating a special group session with the women at BARN, a transitional home for women and children in Bristow, Virginia.

Playroom at BARN



truth will transcend time and make it stand still
revealing the nature of things as they are
better still, love will prove time to be an elusive
ineffective measurement of truth

CREATIVE GRACE CONVERSATIONS



humiliate me
in front of
others

decide what
I wear or eat

destroy my
property or
things that
I care about

force
me to
have
sex
against
my will

CELEBRATE SAFETY

threaten suicide
should I leave

prevent me from
seeing my friends
and family

blame me
for their
anger or
violent
outbursts

hurt me by slapping, pushing,
hitting, kicking, biting

unfairly
accuse me
of being
unfaithful

monitor what
I'm doing all
the time



SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES OFFICE OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

VIRGINIA FAMILY
VIOLENCE AND
SEXUAL ASSAULT
HOTLINE
(800) 838-8238
FREE, 24 HOURS



Creating A Safety Plan

Think about all possible escape routes. Doors, windows, stairs. Choose a place to go. Friend/family, shelter, hotel. Set a code word so loved ones know when to call for help. Open a savings account. Send statements to a trusted relative or friend. Avoid arguments in areas with potential weapons or without access to an exit. Know the number to the free 24-hour Virginia hotline: **(800) 838-8238**

Gaining Clarity, Moving Forward

On average, it can take a person seven times to leave an abusive relationship and not return. Often, a person does not equate their partner's actions with abuse, but instead conflates it with love. Pain, suppression and fearful tolerance became the norm in their relationship, and it may take time to help

them recognize their abuse and commit to their safety. The period after they leave can be the most dangerous. Unable to accept their loss of control and manipulation, their ex may stalk, attack and seek revenge. Building a network of support that empowers survivors is key to forging a path to a new life.

Celebrate Safety posters can be downloaded for free under The AWARE Project tab at:

elevatedplaces.wordpress.com



1. Watch for signs of abuse: Bruises and cuts, name-calling and put-downs, isolation and demands for all of their time.
2. Find out about local resources. Offer to call or visit together.
3. Set up a time to talk. Be sure it is a safe, private place.
4. Be specific about concerns. Share recognized signs of abuse.
5. Plan for safety. Help leaving the relationship as safe as possible.
6. Be patient and keep the door open. It can take time to decide.

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE 1.800.799.SAFE (7233) FREE, 24 HOURS



GRACEFULL

The Trail of Alms (Devon, England) Historically lepers walked this trail and people stood on the edge to throw down food and money. Growing from the stony pathway, today we find a beautiful array of colorful flowers.



Meditation Walk (London, England) Long walks to reflect and center, catching a glimpse of a bypass above reinforces the moment's tone.

PAGE 4



A Heart of Compassion

Swan Meadow

(Devon, England)

A vast meadow stretched from student residences to the dining restaurant, making the long walk pleasant, particularly with its delicate monument to the life that springs from tender connection.

Dartington School of the Arts

(Devon, England) In the busy courtyard of the school's graveled entrance, under haste and foot, lived a tiny flower in full bloom.



THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SURVIVING ABUSE

The Caged Birds in R. Kelly's Grip

SHE DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO SAY NO

She came to him with dreams perched along her fingertips. Outstretched with yearning, fragile and unsure of her future. But she could sing. And dance. Gladly showing him. This was her miracle chance to make it in this world. She must be worth something now, more valuable than others before, as his desire grew larger than her sense of self. She sought to keep him happy with each thrust of his power over her, creeping control over every area of her life.

Then all that mattered was not making him angry so the eggshells would not scar her feet, only cut them as he delighted. What could she do, what would she say, how should she look? As the brilliance of her gifts slowly dimmed within the caged life of her stagnant dreams and elusive happiness, her eyes revealed what her words failed to cover.

Years were counted in shame and bruises were all hers to blame. And she could not catch the no's that escaped her for so long. So she convinced herself love was in her yes.

Moments of Virtue (2019)

For most of January, social media and the blogosphere have been saturated with responses about the six-episode docuseries, *Surviving R. Kelly*, that aired for three nights on Lifetime featuring women who accuse him of physical, mental, financial and sexual abuse and parents accuse him of kidnapping their daughters. The #MuteRKelly grassroots campaign is swelling and subsequently dominoes in his public appearances are falling with an increased tempo as cities renege their welcome and venues cancel shows. As pressure continues to mount against the musical genius, what has regrettably also magnified is victim-blaming and victim-shaming of the women.

The mind manipulation that reinforces abuse by an intimate partner can happen at any age, but it is certainly easier to wield against teenagers and young women — the age group that R. Kelly publicly has demonstrated is his sexual preference. Most of



the women share that they first connected to him to audition their teenage musical talent with the hopes that he would manage, coach or mentor them into mature singing sensations. This isn't a groupie tale gone wrong.

As these young wishful proteges walked into their first professional meetings with the hopes that they were stepping into their destinies, power sat at the other end of the table or reclined in the sofa across from them. And as has been consistent in these women's stories is that in one of their first few interactions with him as a teenager, he shifted their focus to sexual performance to please him. Asked to take off their clothes and promptly accept his lustful advance because they have uncontrollably aroused him. They just lost the twisted game of his love, all the while thinking they were winning their best shot for a bright and insured future in his hands.

This inability to say "no" at the inception of their relationship gradually becomes an albatross around their necks as the weeks and months pass by, choking out all objections because they are waiting for their big break to finally make something out of their lives. Their inexperience makes it easy to convince them that love makes compromises. "This won't last forever. If I can just hold on until change comes..." Time warps into years lost without any major recordings or releases. And they find themselves trapped in the

delusion of a carefully controlled life that obscures their choice to either please or anger R. Kelly as an autonomy they hold. Within this skewed reality, it becomes even more easier to reshape this false concept of responsibility into a paradigm where they hold all the fault for all things gone wrong. Saying "yes" in their distress becomes the pathway to survival, a fragile peace that exists only because they willfully suppress their true emotions to get by to make it to the next day that might just be different.

We must not cast shadows upon the position of the prey for the time it lay in the clutches of the predator. We must instead hold their broken hearts and spirits to the light so they can heal and help others still caught in the grip of abuse. They need and deserve an emotional standing ovation of support for their courage in releasing the shame heaped upon their heads to survive their abusive relationship, to now lift their heads high with the dignity of a songbird no longer caged. To truly understand the mental bars that surround the abused, we must carefully listen to the stories of these women and their parents. Each, a verse in the melody of the freedom in being.

*a caged bird stands on the grave of
dreams / his shadow shouts on a
nightmare scream / his wings are
clipped and his feet are tied / so he
opens his throat to sing / the caged
bird sings with a fearful trill / of
things unknown but longed for still /
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill / for the caged
bird sings of freedom*

~Maya Angelou
"Caged Bird"

Remembering Crystal Hamilton

She called 911 on a Saturday afternoon for help during a domestic dispute with her husband of 10 years. He shot her and wounded three officers who responded to the police dispatch.



National media picked up this Northern Virginia suburban story because one of the officers, Ashley Guindon, died from her wounds, a rookie on her first day in the field. We remember.

Human Trafficking: Stealing Freedom for Profit

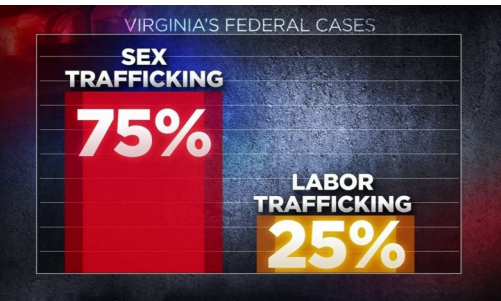
According to the Polaris Project, a D.C.-based nonprofit that runs the national human trafficking hotline, cases referred through the hotline increased by 25 percent in 2018. Advocates and attorneys attribute this surge not to an actual uptick in the occurrence, but the fact that more people aware of the nature of trafficking and willingly come forward to help investigators and prosecutors. On the federal level where these cases are handled because it often involves crossing state lines, taskforces have become more targeted and better informed.

Virginia is particularly aggressive in its efforts to end human trafficking. The Commonwealth ranks 6th in the nation for prosecuting federal human trafficking cases while ranked 15th in the number of reported cases, according to a recent report published by the Human Trafficking Institute (available at TraffickingMatters.com).

Largely centering operations around major highways and intersections because of the ease in transporting their forced workers, East Coast trafficking rings run exchanges primarily through Richmond, D.C., and Baltimore, according to the

Eastern District of Virginia which prosecutes cases in the DMV region. While the bust of one prostitution ring operating a few blocks from the White House received media attention, in the past two years reports of hubs of human trafficking exist in Northern Virginia suburbs as well as the Hampton Roads area in the southeastern region of Virginia.

So what should you be aware of? The national average age of a trafficked child is 12-15 years old. Traffickers prey in schools and malls, at bus stops, on social media, and through friends. One in five teens will be approached by a trafficker. They will start off by becoming “friends” to their prospects who listens and cares, buys them



presents and shows them affection. Most human traffickers use psychological means such as, tricking, defrauding, manipulating or threatening victims into providing commercial sex or exploitative labor. Human trafficking cases have been reported and prosecuted in industries including restaurants, cleaning services, construction, factories and more. Most localities have

some form of a coalition or taskforce available to provide local resources and immediate help. Find or create one in your community.



National Human Trafficking Hotline 1 (888) 373-7888

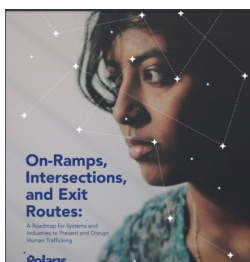


BeFree Textline Text "BeFree" (233733)

Human trafficking is the use of force, fraud or coercion to get another person to provide labor or commercial sex. In some cases, traffickers trick, defraud or physically force victims into providing commercial sex. In others, victims are lied to, assaulted, threatened or manipulated into working under inhumane, illegal or otherwise unacceptable conditions.

The crime of human trafficking does not require any movement. Survivors can be recruited and trafficked in their hometowns, even their own homes. Many survivors have been trafficked by romantic partners, spouses and family members, including parents. Initial consent to commercial sex or a labor setting prior to acts of force,

fraud or coercion (or if the victim is a minor in sex trafficking) is not relevant to the crime, nor is payment. Victims can stay due to a lack of the basic necessities to physically get out, like transportation or a safe place to live. Some are afraid for their safety. Others have been so effectively manipulated that they do not identify as being under the control of another person.



SPECIAL REPORT by POLARIS PROJECT

Click to Read: [“Roadmap for Systems and Industries to Prevent and Disrupt Human Trafficking”](#)



This sacred endeavor
we enter in
and cling to one another
belonging without possession
duty without compulsion
joined together to be free

This harmony of our lives
our love is music
you sing the melody I write
I dance the melody you play

This harmony in our lives
the salve of our love
healing sorrows
I taste the salt of your tears
you ache the pains I bear

This harmony for our lives
our love's repository
preserved waters
for refreshing and growing
in truth and spirit

This harmony from our lives
we love as fruit ripening
on the vine
deepening joys
around us

covenant

Naked Chastity Affirming Virtue (2014)

Sacred Synergy (2018).

Allah is the light of the
heavens and the earth.
A likeness of His light
is as a pillar on which
is a lamp - the lamp is
in a glass, the glass is
as it were a brightly
shining star - lit from a
blessed olive tree,
neither eastern nor
western, the oil
whereof gives light,
though fire touch it
not - light upon light.

Surah 24 (The Light): 35

WISDOM NOTE | FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2019



harmony

n. pleasing arrangement of parts;
congruence

origin. Greek
armos meaning *joint*, *arariskein* meaning *to fit*

CREATIVE GRACE CONVERSATIONS

The AWARE Project is a non-profit organization that leverages a multi-media art platform to raise awareness, increase civic engagement, and further the advancement of policies impacting women's rights, child welfare and human rights.

By intersecting community and municipality, faith and advocacy, and the arts with policy awareness, it creates a dynamic synergy offered to inspire the humanity in others with an unmatched passion to improve the quality and dignity of life of the vulnerable and marginalized.

Advocacy for Women's
Activism, Rights & Empowerment

THE AWARE PROJECT

doraym.wix.com/aware

ART AS A CATALYST
FOR ADVOCACY