

# NEW YEAR, NEW NAMSTA?

**(Heads up.... Sensitive subject: Intergenerational trauma and abuse cycles)**

Hey-hey!

I hope the second half of 2022 is treating you well!

Following up on last year's 'Finding my Voice' post (to which the feedback has been amazing – *cheers so much peeps* 😊), I believe now is a good a time as any to update you on why my mental health had deteriorated in the first place, to the point of feeling suicidal.

According to neuroscience research, our brains aren't programmed to do anything that will work against the interest of us which is why it will always try to work out the best course of action. No matter our personal opinions on the concept of someone feeling suicidal and in cases committing suicide, it said by that point the person's brain has concluded that the pain of living far outweighs the assumed pain of death. *Super deep stuff indeed.*

Although a private person by nature, the two main reasons I'm choosing to share my lived experience include:

- 1- My circumstances being a conversation starter for those in similar situations, given it's considered a taboo within the Caribbean diaspora.
- 2- If I had followed through and been successful in my attempt to permanently escape the 'madness', and rid myself of feeling trapped, I wouldn't be here now to raise awareness about the harmful and potentially fatal impact of toxic generational patterns.

With all in this mind, how has this '*connecting the dots*' revelation changed me as a person, if at all???

Hmmm let's find out.....

*Buckle up ladies and gentlemen, this ride is about to be a bumpy one!*

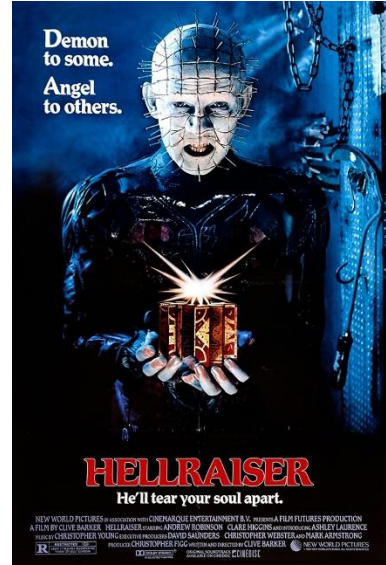


## Hellraiser - the millennial East End edition

*Lawd have mercy, where do I start? ...*

For anyone who isn't well versed in what's considered emotional and psychologically abusive behaviours, might assume that being on the receiving end of ReOf's (\*cough\* short for *Repeat Offender*) verbally rancid mouth and Tasmanian Devil like rages, was nothing more than this particular individual having a 'bit of a temper'.

As the frequent recipient of ReOf's 'temper tantrums' (*that's putting it mildly*) over a period of around five years in conjunction with being repeatedly exposed to the highly stressful situations (aka 'dramas') they were creating, I was losing the will to live.... *Literally!* Given it had become the norm for me to have to '*forgive and move on*' from ReOf's explosive tendencies, it eventually got to the point of feeling super resentful about having to interact with this individual more than I needed to, because of our biological ties.



Speaking of ReOf and their perpetual dramas, it's no wonder my nervous system had dysregulated itself and was on the verge of a breakdown. *I kid you not.* I would gulp down that deep, sinking feeling of dread upon hearing yet another installment of ReOf's latest stroke inducing lunacy.

It began to feel like I was the main protagonist in one of those retro slasher-horror movies, you know like *Chuckie* or *Candyman*. After noticing a self-destructive pattern in ReOf's reoccurring situations, I may as well have been that ill-fated character trapped in a large glass box watching the same gruesome car crash taking place *over and over again*. For all the screaming and thumping against that glass box, no one can hear me and by this point I was powerless to do anything to stop the latest crash. *Talk about stress dot com!*



Now I won't pretend to have always been *holier than thou* when it came to engaging with ReOf. A lot of my frustration or attempts to address either their vile mouth, fiery temper, gaslighting tactics, and/or their latest mega drama was initially done in a reactive manner. As you can imagine, home girl was knackered of being drawn out and disrespected by this individual. For the sake of my sanity, I started to keep a wide berth from them.



Don't get me wrong. We've all got our crosses to bear and our fair share of skeletons in the closet. No one's perfect. The impact of ReOf's more poignant life 'choices' let's say, had a suffocating habit of grossly impacting those closest to them though. What was even more ludicrous is that it was just obviously expected of *moi* to form part of the clean-up team.... All while unknowingly traumatizing myself in the process. *Oh, what joy.*

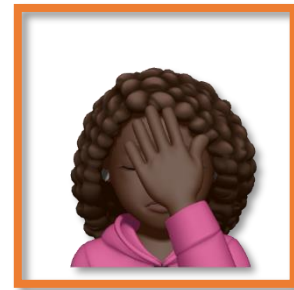
The final straw for me was made on the brink of my blood pressure skyrocketing into the galactic. All that was left to do now was to escape *'Nightmare on Barking street'* as this hellraiser who true to their chaos magnet self, had managed to even wreak havoc from half-way across the globe.

“Dem need help man!” My Jamaican relative sighed, kissing their teeth after spilling the beans on ReOf’s high voltage shenanigans *Jamrock styleeee*. While my relative was on to something, I was silently praying my invisible garlic bulb necklace would protect me from anymore of ReOf’s soul sucking palavers!!



You’d be forgiven for thinking that I was ReOf’s caregiver or something. *Not even*. However, in order to escape the walking on eggshells, high tension headaches, tight chest pains, and living in constant fight or flight mode, I had to stop being one of their enablers though. Having been irresponsibly dragged into ReOf’s latest pandemonium and then consequently treated as their emotional punching bag afterwards, had certainly worn thin on my mental wellbeing.

Stuck in the fear of retribution if I did speak up to the wider family about what I was being subjected to while trying to seek help for ReOf in the process, kept me in a tense loop of hypervigilance. It’s no wonder ending my own life felt like the best option. This was until outside persons chose to ‘intervene’ for which I was desperately grateful for at the time. However, if you read my ‘Homies & Haters’ post mentioning *Mix-Up Mandy*, you’ll know all too well that this deceitful character’s idea of *help* was anything but! To say the least, it’s a cautionary tale to check out another time if you haven’t already.



## **The Collective: We don’t talk about (insert here) NO, NO, NOOOOO!**



Ok folks so for the purpose of this section, I’ll refer to the group of elders mentioned as the ‘Collective’.

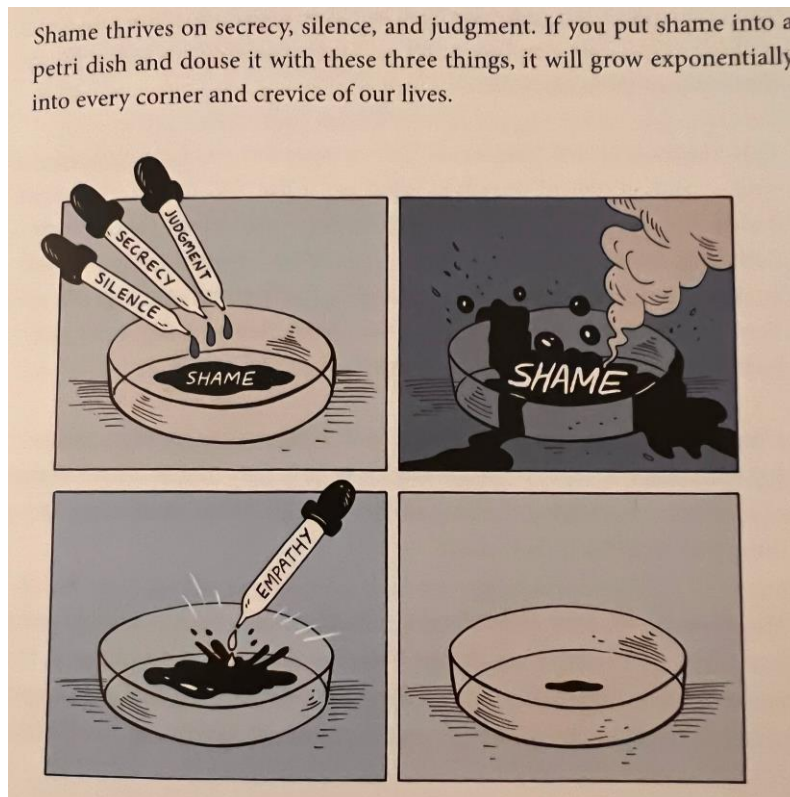
When it comes to trauma, I’ve learned we humans can experience it at varying degrees. Naïve as it sounds, I genuinely used to think trauma was just reserved for military personnel and the victims of war. *How wrong was I?*

Given the sensitive circumstances to how trauma can get stuck in our bodies in the first place and later, reveals itself via a suite of survival mode related behaviours, I have nothing but absolute gratitude for

the therapist I saw in 2021. *Talk about eye opening!* I can’t thank ‘Lady A’ enough for helping me to understand how the trauma cycles that were playing out in my life had actually stemmed from my childhood. Furthermore, these dangerous patterns hadn’t started with me. *Oh no*. They were in effect long before I even existed.

Trauma is often described as an experience that happens in an individual's life which creates serious harm, whether that's physical, mental, or emotional. It can be deeply disturbing to the individual and can cause them to feel out of control of the situation. After all, every thought we have creates a hormonal release within our bodies. This is particularly problematic if we should have negative thinking patterns exacerbated by the unhealed trauma trapped inside of us.

Bearing that in mind and what I have come to understand about the Collective, their early years were shaped by a devastating tragedy followed by episodes of what is deemed to be psychological abuse and emotional neglect towards some of the members while they were growing up. Between that and a coping mechanism, if not a culture of sweeping things under the carpet, it would seem the Collective's programming has been subconsciously built on survival. Therefore, with silence being the unspoken rule, certain toxic behaviours within this group have inherently become normalised (*even if some members are unaware of it*). Taking into consideration the Collective are the first British born generation of Caribbean immigrants during the Windrush era, may have also come with some external challenges of its own throughout their childhoods.



An excerpt taken from *'Atlas of the Heart: Mapping Meaningful Connection and the Language of Human Experience'* by Brene Brown. As I'm sure we can all relate, many families have secrets which are prohibited from being shared with the extended family members and outsiders. I think this is understandable if the secrets aren't harmful, given we're all entitled to our privacy. In emotionally immature family units like the Collective's, keeping secrets appears to be more about protecting their caregivers from their own shame, unhealed trauma, anxieties, fears etc. rather than because it's private *'family business'*. When I think about ReOf's behaviour and their main caregiver's attempt to try and conceal if not downplay the severity - this hits the nail on the head.



That isn't to say there aren't plenty of photo album perfect moments filled with the Collective's genuine love and banter from over the years or, helping each other out materialistically when needed. Going by what I've experienced to date though, it feels like these sparkly memoirs are never going to outshine the Collective's unaddressed shared experiences and quite possibly deep-rooted pain.

*So, here's where the plot thickens...* When we are in survival mode and conflict arises, we hang on to what we have, not open to engagement, emotionally withdraw and behave in a defensive, territorial manner.

With dysfunctional tactics such as:

- Avoidance/denial of the issue(s).
- Gossiping/bitching behind each other's backs rather than speaking directly to the person(s) concerned.
- Invalidation/dismissal of one's opposing feelings or viewpoints.
- The threat of abandonment/withdrawal of conditional love if you speak out on something that differs from the wider group consensus or opinion.
- Holding grudges/passive aggressiveness towards others when feeling hurt, frustrated and maybe even resentful.
- Giving a long-term cold shoulder/silent treatment rather than respectfully letting the person(s) know why you are upset etc.

Known to loom during times of strife among the Collective, it was no surprise to my therapist that ReOf was displaying unhealthy behavioural patterns of their own. With the behaviours modelled in self-betrayal, it will be hard to see normalcy in anything that is considered healthy conduct for those operating in this type of environment. What became apparent to (*and stunned the shizzle out of*) me is the psychological effects of the Collective's own unhealed trauma having transferred from their generation to ReOf's and I's. Couple that with ReOf's lack of emotional regulation and maturity, I quickly realised that intergenerational trauma really does come like a poison chalice and is quite the lethal *bish* indeed!

As previously mentioned in my 'Keeping up Appearances' post, even the healthiest of family dynamics aren't without some sort of dysfunction. *After all, we're only human.* However, in a system littered with codependency and enmeshment, I'd hardly be shocked if ReOf's main caregiver (*and key enabler*) is obviously living with high-functioning (*undiagnosed of course*) depression.

## The re-education of Namsta

Trauma survivors' frequent habit of overexplaining and apologizing-- or, conversely, shutting down and refusing to elaborate-- doesn't come out of nowhere.

It's often the result of having their truth questioned & attacked whenever they tried to express it.

*This was the story of my life until I skeddaddled!*

Between going therapy and being fortunate enough to have a support network who not only understand my circumstances without judging but also actively listen without feeling the need to give their unsolicited advice, has been a welcome game changer for me. The simple fundamentals of feeling seen, heard, understood and valued, especially when it involves building trust and genuine connections with others, is contributing to the rewiring of my nervous system.

After years of having to intermittently put up with ReOf's deflections, gaslighting and projections, I finally clocked the deeply damaging pattern I had been caught up in. I'd be lying if I said it was easy taking that giant step in distancing myself from ReOf and their main caregiver. After all, it's all I ever really knew, even if the environment was tumultuous. That said, when it's literally a tossup between the desperate pursuit of living a happy, peaceful life or wanting to die so you can escape the prolonged and chaotic misery, the choice is pretty much made for you.

***What has my journey of self-discovery taught me so far?***

**You can't heal in the same environment or around the person(s) who harmed you.**

As abuse (*whether it's physical, emotional or psychological*) can have a residual effect on the survivor, it's not necessarily something you "just get over". For me, one of the effects used to be waking up most mornings wishing I hadn't. It wasn't until I limited my contact with ReOf back in 2018, did I really feel like I could start my healing process. Truth be told, my mental wellbeing has improved two-fold since having the bare minimum to do with ReOf these days.

**Do I feel let down by the Collective for not doing more about addressing ReOf's behaviour even though some members were aware of it?**

In short, not anymore. While safeguarding services might scratch their heads in disbelief as to why this group of fully grown adults didn't unite to nip this situation in the bud, the answer is simple. *They weren't equipped.* The impact of the Collective's own shared and adverse childhood trauma may have affected the structure and chemistry of their brains, stunting natural growth and maturation in the process. In other words, age doesn't always reflect emotional development.

**Hurt people hurt people**

This popular saying certainly rings true. Does it make the mistreatment of another person acceptable? *OOOh hell to the nah!* Nor should this saying this ever be used as a reason to justify or excuse the individual’s harmful behaviour.

**Boundaries...WHAT ARE THOSE????**

As a recovering ‘*people pleaser*’, my self-worth often hinged on what others thought of me. Between seeking out validation and not actually knowing what a boundary was, resulted in me creating a pattern of self-neglect, and fearing that I would look mean or selfish if I turned people down.

Learning to be crystal clear on my own boundaries and communicating them means I am no longer taking on more than I can handle. How others have reacted to my new boundaries hasn’t always been positive, but it doesn’t mean I am going to remove them either.

**When you finally learn that a person’s behaviour has more to do with their own internal struggle than it ever did you... you learn grace.**

When I started to become less accessible for ReOf to deflect their self-hate onto, I was mocked and jeered for writing things down (*i.e., communicating via messaging or email*) rather than just talking. The problem is when you are dealing with ignorance of this nature, writing down what you have to say means you are less likely to be verbally dismissed if not, gaslit into submission.

**#ProtectYourPeaceAtAllCosts #SelfCareIsAMust #Period!**



**Unlearning my own toxic behaviours**

*Frustration. Passive aggressiveness. Resentment. Hypervigilance. Anger. Withdrawal from others. Irritability. Difficulty concentrating. Anxiety. Disconnection. Stonewalling. Flashbacks. Avoidance. Fear. Confusion.* The list for unlearning my own toxic behaviours and just sitting with the emotions that cause them isn’t a short one. Dismantling this list is an ongoing work in progress with the understanding that healing is not straightforward.

As you can see, I’m not without fault, even if the circumstances are ones I was born into (*if that makes sense?*). I know a huge part of the healing process requires me to be honest about the role I play in my own suffering. This involves being accountable for deprogramming the learned and unsafe behaviours I used to think were protecting me. I also get why it’s often said that emotional maturity is nothing to do with our age and everything to do with our level of self-awareness.

Speaking my truth (*warts and all*) has been a proper emotional rollercoaster. It was a tough decision to make especially as I've been threatened with police action, liable and slander for *singing like a canary*. As if that wasn't delightful enough, I was also called spiteful and selfish. *Joke of the century*. As hideously warped as this may sound, the hurtful threats and comments (as mentioned), somewhat make me feel like if I had taken my own life - this ordeal would have been *conveniently* buried with me.... *if you catch my drift*.

Putting all that aside, releasing the shame which was never mine to carry in the first place where the Collective are concerned, has also been life changing. To be fair, the shame isn't theirs to carry either. While I have no idea what's around the corner for me (*or the amount of pending backlash I will receive from the Collective*), knowing I am now living life on my own terms is a feeling like no other. My endless love for the Collective and deep empathy for what they have experienced as a unit will never change. I have countless fond memories that exist thanks to this group, and I will be forever grateful to them. However, the rigid dynamics (*for which I appreciate have existed long before I was born*) aren't ones I can thrive in as it requires me to shrink who I really am, just to fit in. These days I prefer to go where I am celebrated for being my authentic self, not tolerated.

I will never forget the alarmed tone in my therapist's voice when I initially explained my circumstances to her.

"That's way too much stress for one person to manage." She gasped.

Armed with self-compassion nowadays, I completely understand why being kind to myself as I would be to others, must be my number one priority. Even if it should make me the villain in other people's stories. *You can't please everyone!*



## In conclusion: Passing generational trauma patterns off as culture.....



<p><b>Top left photo – Slaves in the West Indies</b></p>	<p>(1800s) It's common knowledge that slaves faced horrific levels of physical and psychological abuse at the hands of their slave owners. With male slaves often emasculated and tortured, their female counterparts were also tortured and raped.</p>
<p><b>Top right photo – The Empire Windrush ship</b></p>	<p>(1948-1971) There was a mass migration from the Caribbean islands and other Commonwealth countries to help rebuild Britain's infrastructure after the second world war.</p> <p>Many of the Caribbean migrants were direct descendants of the African slaves who used to work on the plantations. The behaviour of 'beating'/whipping' and 'cussing' (<i>an offshoot from the slave owners' cruel treatment of the slaves</i>) was now an integral part of the discipline culture, and widely adopted throughout the Caribbean.</p>
<p><b>Bottom left photo – British racism against the Windrush generation</b></p>	<p>(1948-1971) It is said that many of the people who arrived from the Caribbean to the Britain during the Windrush era, faced an abhorrent amount of racism while trying to settle in. <a href="#">Click here</a> to watch a short video featuring a few of the first Windrush generation's personal stories.</p>
<p><b>Bottom right photo- The Windrush scandal protest</b></p>	<p>(2017 to present) The Windrush scandal has not only exposed the failings of the British government, but it also suggests that institutional racism may still exist today.</p>

As you can see from the above timeline, the legacy of colonialism still has a resounding impact within the Caribbean diaspora. With trauma and abuse a pivotal part of our lineage, the ugly truth shows that the pain is still passing through the generations.

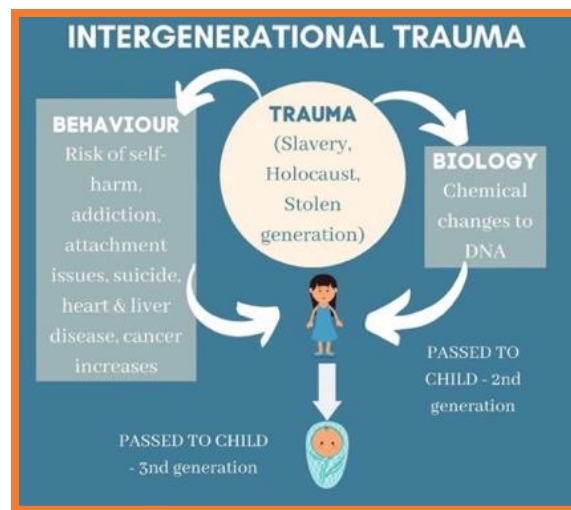
When I think about what the Collective's caregivers must have endured while migrating to Britain during the Windrush era, I imagine their back story probably isn't too dissimilar to the ones shared in the short video. If it wasn't for them and those from the Collective's generation paving the way, my generation probably wouldn't have the opportunities we do today.

***I'll give you something to cry about!***

Given that many of the first Windrush generation may have had no idea about the racism and abuse that awaited them when they arrived in the UK, makes me wonder how much of that contributed to the 'survival mode' type upbringings they orchestrated within their own homes. Between this and possibly replicating the upbringing they had back in the West Indies would also make sense. While it's not an excuse by any means, it stands to reason as to how the abused in these types of circumstances, can inadvertently become the abusers.

Therefore, some Caribbean families from the Windrush era (*especially the first British born generation*) might seem emotionally numb or have strong tendencies about discussing feelings because it's seen as a weakness. Putting myself in their shoes, I am guessing it's the logic over emotion which has kept them safe in times of uncertainty throughout their lives, starting from childhood. Traditionally in West Indian culture, we don't talk about our problems regardless of how bad they get. This often results in transferring poor coping skills and the effects of not dealing with trauma to the next generation. It also solidifies the venomous persistence of victim shaming, silenced trauma and abuse. *A hell'a' sad but true.*

At its most basic, for these types of horrendous cycles to end, it starts with an open-minded and honest conversation. The participating individuals actively listen to understand each other, and not just to respond defensively. From what I've personally experienced though, this is something my generation (*millennials*) and younger are far more willing to do than our parents' generation (*baby boomers*) but again, I can see why this is.



On that note, check out my recommended reading list below:

			
<p><i>No word of a lie.</i> Some of the chapters in this enlightening book was like replaying scenes from my own life. Reading this book has put a lot of things in perspective for me.</p> <p>In a culture where it's commonplace to get a 'lick' if "yuh doan stop yuh noise", or you're dismissed if not belittled for being "too rasss sensitive" – this book is a game changer in helping you to understand the logistics behind emotionally immature parenting styles.</p>	<p>Although British born and raised, I am (<i>proudly</i>) of Guyanese and Jamaican heritage.... <i>Yeh Mon!</i></p> <p>Both sets of my grandparents are deceased (<i>God rest their souls</i>) and have been for around twenty years now.</p> <p>Listening to this incredible book on the Audible app gave me a touching insight into what my grandparents may have experienced when they first arrived in Britain.</p>	<p>Between the Covid-19 pandemic, the heinous death of George Floyd and more recently, the Russia vs Ukraine war – it's no surprise that globally, there is a laser focus on the human condition, more importantly, our wellbeing.</p> <p>Not only is this book informative and full of wisdom, it's also the perfect guide to so many emotions we don't always manage to identify in our daily lives.</p> <p>In addition to being my favourite read of 2022 so far, I've found this book incredibly useful in my personal life as much as it is in my career, which specialises in people engagement and behaviours.</p>	<p>I've only just started reading this book and talk about brilliant! As someone who didn't really understand the purpose or importance of boundaries, this book is certainly teaching me!</p>
<p><a href="#">CLICK HERE to buy</a></p>	<p><a href="#">CLICK HERE to buy</a></p>	<p><a href="#">CLICK HERE to buy</a></p>	<p><a href="#">CLICK HERE to buy</a></p>

As you can probably tell, it's been quite the journey for me, and no doubt it's far from over! I guess me changing was inevitable and the big man upstairs only knows how grateful I am *\*praying hands emoji\**.

My path isn't for the faint hearted by a long shot, but I'm super proud of the courage I've shown in my quest to be #TeamCycleBreaker.

One thing that will NEVER change about me though is my insane love of music.

*\*Cue the rasta one foot skank.... JAH RASTAFARI!!\**



[CLICK here to play the CHUNNNNNE!!](#)



[CLICK HERE to play the CHUNNNNNE](#)

This post is dedicated to anyone who has ever felt suicidal, committed suicide and those of us who have lost loved ones to suicide. If my experience is anything to go by folks, *the act is anything but selfish.*

I know this post is longer than my usual offerings but all being well, what I've shared has left you with some poignant food for thought. A massive cheers for indulging in my perspective on this sensitive topic.

*Enough of my exquisite yabbering for now!*

Until next time....

Take care and stay blessed X



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