

I was born at the beginning of the '90s into middle-class Australia, where every child had access to education. It was the turn of a decade that had seen women don the power suit: the stereotype was *the larger the puff, the greater the power*.

My private grammar school education had been handed to me on a silver platter and provided a canvas for creativity and further intellectual dimension, but it lacked a fundamental element of humanity: self-value. Surely, I should have had the knowledge to avoid situations of conflict, oppression and harm.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 130 million girls are still denied an education. Many are regionally isolated, impoverished, culturally restricted and married off as a bargaining tool; sent away to honorably procreate without question. As we now watch WHO daily virus graphs consume thousands more, we understand, first-hand, how epidemics, be they educational or medical, can rapidly become pandemics.

Emerging from a childhood of abuse by my mother and without female counsel, I had, throughout my twenties, entered dangerous relationships only to become forcefully isolated and made redundantly friendless. Mental and physical attacks had continued, now through others, and yet, somehow, I believed that I could mend. My private, preserved self was diminished, although I knew I was strong enough to live beyond abuse to help others.

Years later, having lived in Bangkok, Tokyo and briefly in Gothenburg; Los Angeles, at last, became my home. And it was upon arriving *home* that I fully learned the necessity of female connection and blanketed myself with articles about self-worth, women's rights and how and where to connect with other gifted and independent women.

Over my thirty years I had been informed by Oprah, Michelle Obama and young activists like Malala and Greta Thunberg and, inspired by their strength, I shifted the focus of my fashion-tech startup to advocate feminism and equality. I began an interview series titled *Finding Frida* and met with female activists, politicians and thought leaders to observe and document their own childhood experiences of female support systems and, most importantly, to learn how those relationships have added value to their courageous careers.

While producing this series in Mexico City, I again found myself in a situation of undesired sexual attention. During the eve of a production cycle, amid the Harvey Weinstein lawsuit and #metoo movement, I met an English-speaking, Mass-going young man for dinner, where I opened up about work, faith, equality, celibacy and the soul mate that I'd left behind in Los Angeles — only to have this childlike, dimple baring, adult male proceed beyond my many *No's*, *Stops*, *I think you should leave*, *I don't want this*, *NO*.

Seventeen weeks later and at home in L.A., I discovered that the severe PCOS symptoms I was experiencing were not symptoms at all, but pregnancy. I was carrying twins and I knew instinctually that they were girls.

Nearly two years have passed since reading the results of my first pregnancy test and I have since let go of ambitions to reconnect with a soul mate and of pioneering a technology-driven fashion and entertainment network. I have learned even in darkness, wherever goes devil, God will there too, be.

Having simplified our business plan and corporate mission, **one30m** features artisanal designers from around the world who employ Fair Trade and sustainable practices. We have leveraged the trillion-dollar fashion industry to quash the 130 million statistic. By donating 28 percent of profits to the International Rescue Committee, every purchase provides one girl with several months of education - while an innovative visualization of how each purchase grows our Family Tree of impact. Influence plays an integral role in welcoming consumers to join our cause and continue the mission, and a present collaboration with renowned Chinese feminist artist, Li Xinmo, whose art installation will stand testament that no matter what cultural, political or societal dismissals women face, hope exists.

It is our growing community of female innovators and socially conscious subscribers that comforts me and brings peace, especially in times of adversity. As a woman that has endured humiliation and the wrath of humanity, I still believe in the goodness of what lies ahead — in the social movements that are rebuilding communities and rehabilitating lives; and in platforms like ours, that are intent on preserving traditional techniques, conserving the environment, using technology for good and redesigning the patriarchal blueprint — where Woman and Man are equal.

I have found my higher purpose: not only to educate my twin daughters with fundamental female values and basic human rights, but also to serve the **#one30million**; so that women, universally, can connect and support one another without prejudice and at last, truly know liberation.

#### **Bibliography**

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#### **Public Contact**

Bethanie Ashton

[orders@one30m.com](mailto:orders@one30m.com)

#### **Unpublished Contact**

[missbethanieashton@gmail.com](mailto:missbethanieashton@gmail.com)

+39 366 456 0969