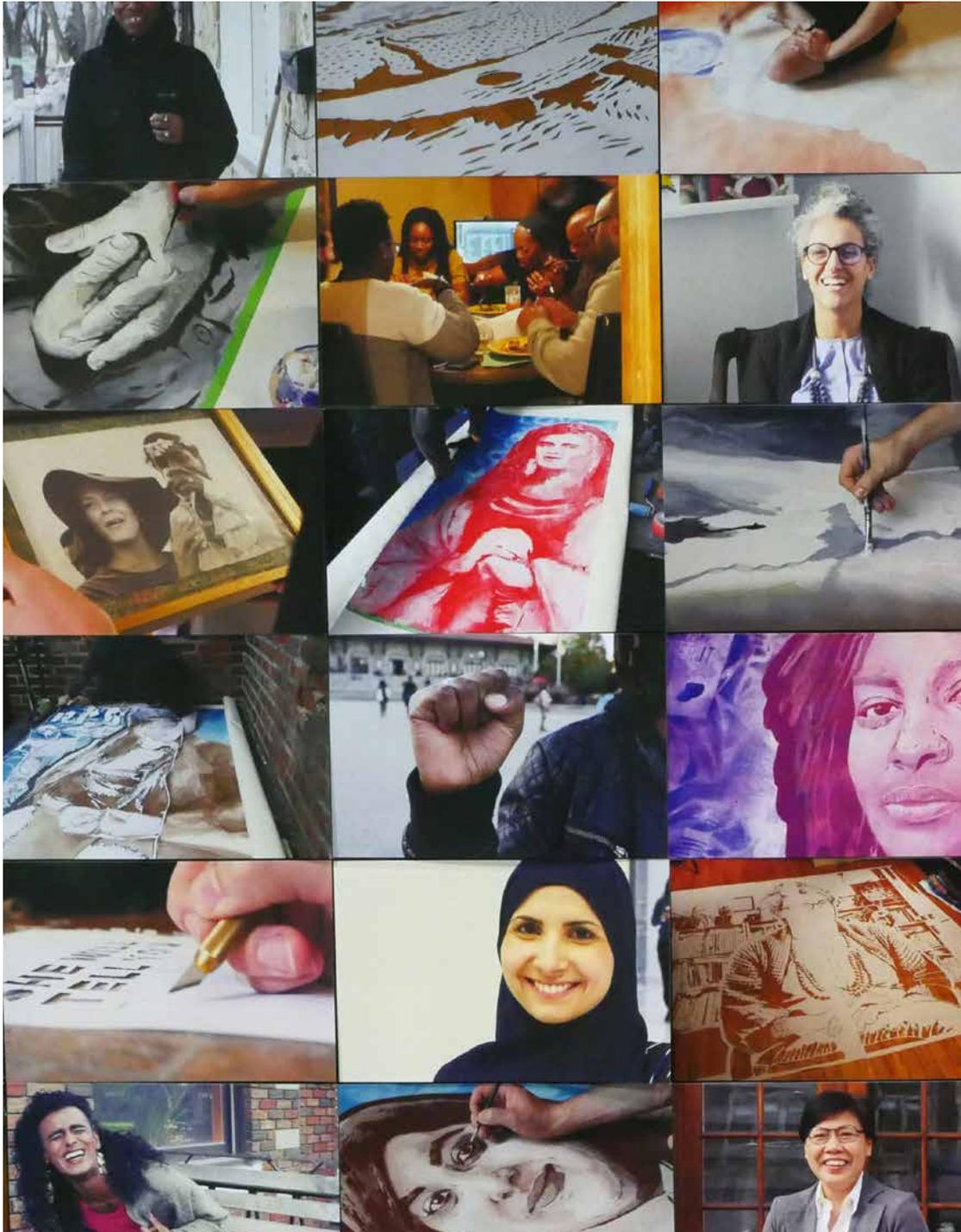




**12 inspiring, everyday women are recognized in an ambitious feminist art collaboration, combining portrait paintings and micro-documentaries from artist Aquil Virani with a verbatim sound play crafted by writer Erin Lindsay and directed by Imago Theatre's Micheline Chevrier.**

# **CelebrateHer: 12 inspiring, everyday women**

**Online catalogue • 2020 • 42 pages**



# Table of Contents

## Intro

- 03** Acknowledgements
- 04** Nomination process
- 06** List of 12 women

## Portraits

- 07** Bochra Manai
- 09** Shweta Khare
- 11** Dorothy Dixon Williams
- 13** Zébida Bendjeddou
- 15** Naomi Tatty
- 17** Kama La Mackerel
- 19** Joannie Verreault
- 21** Natalie Ramsay
- 23** Clare Byarugaba
- 25** Rachel Zellars
- 27** Kathy Malas
- 29** Romita Sur

## Extras

- 31** Artist Aquil Virani
- 32** Writer Erin Lindsay
- 33** Director Micheline Chevrier
- 34** Project press & publications
- 35** Exhibitions & installations
- 36** Transcription of sound play

# Acknowledgements, thank-you's and shoutouts

## **Cover photograph**

Alex Tran Photography

## **Morrice Hall – Venue**

Trevor Ponech, Chair of the Department of English, McGill University, Corinne Roche, Keith Roche

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Amber Hood (amberhoodld.com)

## **Morrice Hall – Venue supervisor**

Julien Brousseau

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Habib El-hage

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## **Sound play**

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## **Artistic direction**

Micheline Chevrier

## **Collaborator**

Imago Theatre (imagotheatre.ca)

## **Visual art**

Aquil Virani

We acknowledge the support of the  
**Canada Council for the Arts.**

And, of course, thank you to each of the  
12 women featured in the project and  
all those helped make it happen.



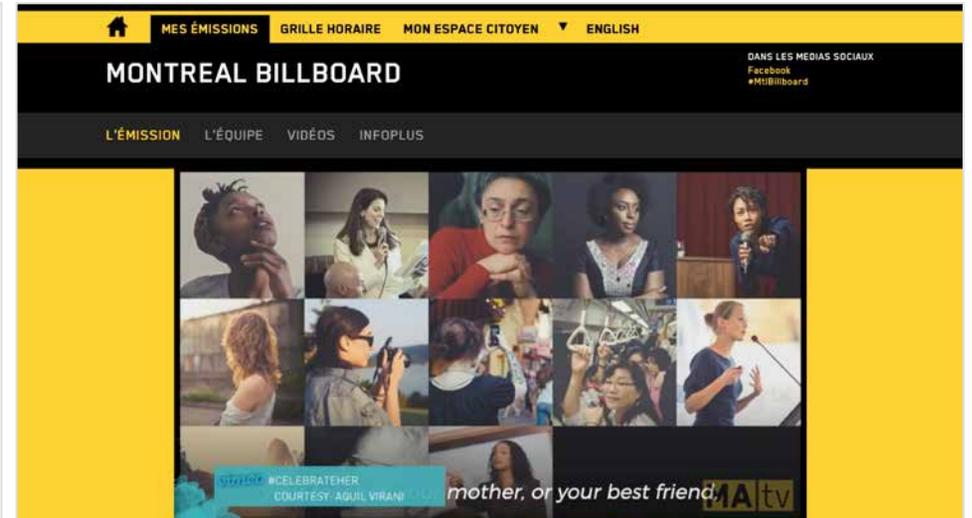
Hint: Age, Location, Occupation, Background, Hobbies

**3. Explain how you know her and why you nominated her.** \*  
  
Hint: How you met, Relationship, Her Character, Best qualities

**4. Write about why it's important to celebrate women.** \*  
  
Hint: Because it's 2015. Because duh. Because feminism.

**5. Express why the world is better with art in it.** \*  
  
Hint: Consider the opposite, what art brings you personally

Anything else?



# Call for Nominations

**CelebrateHer started with an open call to nominate “an inspiring woman in your life.”**

Nominators – whether daughters, mothers, friends, or spouses – answered 5 questions with the option of uploading a few photos. The call was shared online, on television and on the radio as far as we could spread it.



# Nomination Example

**Below is an example of a nomination submitted by Kai Cheng Thom for Kama La Mackerel.**

**Describe yourself** - I'm a novelist, poet, social worker, and performance artist! I'm also a trans woman and the kid of Chinese immigrants who came to North America to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway.

**Tell us about her** - Kama La Mackerel is a glorious goddess and unstoppable force of nature - she burns up pages and stages with her writing and incredible mixed-media performance art. She is also a pillar of the queer community in Montreal, being an activist and youth arts facilitator. Every month, Kama hosts the Gender B(l)ender open mic cabaret - on a volunteer basis - thus creating a safe space for queers of all identities and ages to express themselves creatively and form friendships. Kama's artistic and community work are an inspiration to many and a challenge to the capitalist, colonial, gender-oppressive world we live in.

**Explain why you nominated her** - I met Kama at a community show in a now-defunct queer person of colour-run art space. We were both much younger and very different, then! But even then, her kindness and her creative spirit stood out. Even more essential and gorgeous than Kama's work is the genuine beauty of her heart. Kama is a kind neighbour, a generous sister, and a loyal friend who fights fiercely for her family and chosen community. If you're sick, Kama will bring you soup and curried goat. If you're sad and lonely, Kama will take your calls late at night. It is this great integrity and kindness that make her a truly rare soul.

# The 12 Women

These women were selected among dozens of stories to represent a diverse array of perspectives regarding womanhood, gender expectations, activism and allyship.

- **Zévida Bendjeddou**
- **Clare Byarugaba**
- **Dorothy Dixon Williams**
- **Shweta Khare**
- **Kama La Mackerel**
- **Kathy Malas**
- **Bochra Manai**
- **Natalie Ramsay**
- **Romita Sur**
- **Naomi Tatty**
- **Joannie Verreault**
- **Rachel Zellars**



# Bochra Manai

CelebrateHer



CelebrateHer: Bochra Manai.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.



# Bochra Manai

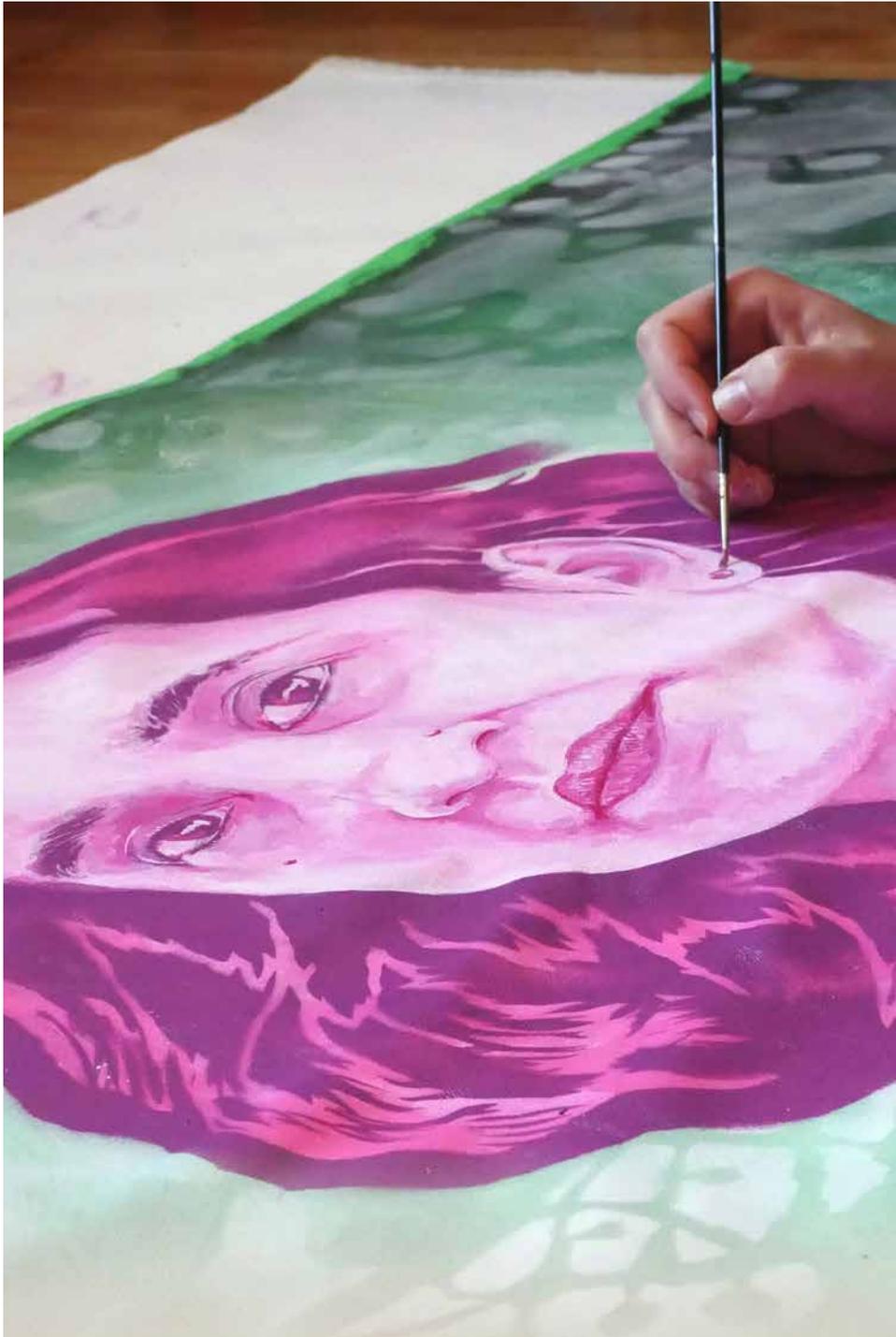
**Bochra** is a super smart lady with an incredible story. Alia's nomination describes her, among other things, as an "one of the brightest spirits she's ever met." She gives you her full attention. She is a researcher, a professor and an engaged citizen with a PhD in Urban Studies from the INRS-UCS. She's a Muslim woman who chooses not to wear the hijab. She fled from political turmoil in Tunisia and eventually ended up in Montreal via France about ten years ago. The backdrop of her home office – with all of its book-filled shelves and messy, planted greenery – visually represents her academic passion fused with her domestic commitments as a young mother. The only book in the background that is legible among the spray-painted texture is "Aime comme Montréal."

# Shweta Khare

CelebrateHer



CelebrateHer: Shweta Khare.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.



# Shweta Khare

**Shweta** started to cry when we surprised her back in February. I interviewed her for about ten minutes under the pretence that I was an employee from McGill asking questions to mature students and their families. Shweta strikes me as someone incredibly grateful for the life she has, even if it's not perfect. Family is so important to different Indian cultures, and her family loves her so much. My own mother moved to Canada and worked while raising a family in Vancouver. To do it all away from the familiarity of your home base is extraordinary. The spray-painted rendition of the henna designs in the background (that she originally created) is meant to elicit questions about what traditions we keep and what traditions we're allowed to do away with.

# Dorothy Dixon Williams

CelebrateHer



CelebrateHer: Dorothy Dixon Williams.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.



# Dorothy Dixon Williams

**Dorothy** grew up in the “cradle of the church” as she describes it. She doesn’t like small talk, likely because she values her time and the time of others enough to “go deep or go home.” She has a welcoming warmth about her that puts you at ease and makes you feel seen. She’s a pillar in her community. Dorothy was the only portrait that featured an open mouth – I wanted to capture her beautiful teeth while keeping in line with the strong, unapologetic tone of the portrait poses. Her portrait background highlights the role that faith plays in her life and how music often serves as the medium to express that devotion; the musical concert – with the lyrics as the centrepiece – represent the blurring of the religious and the everyday, of the personal and the political.

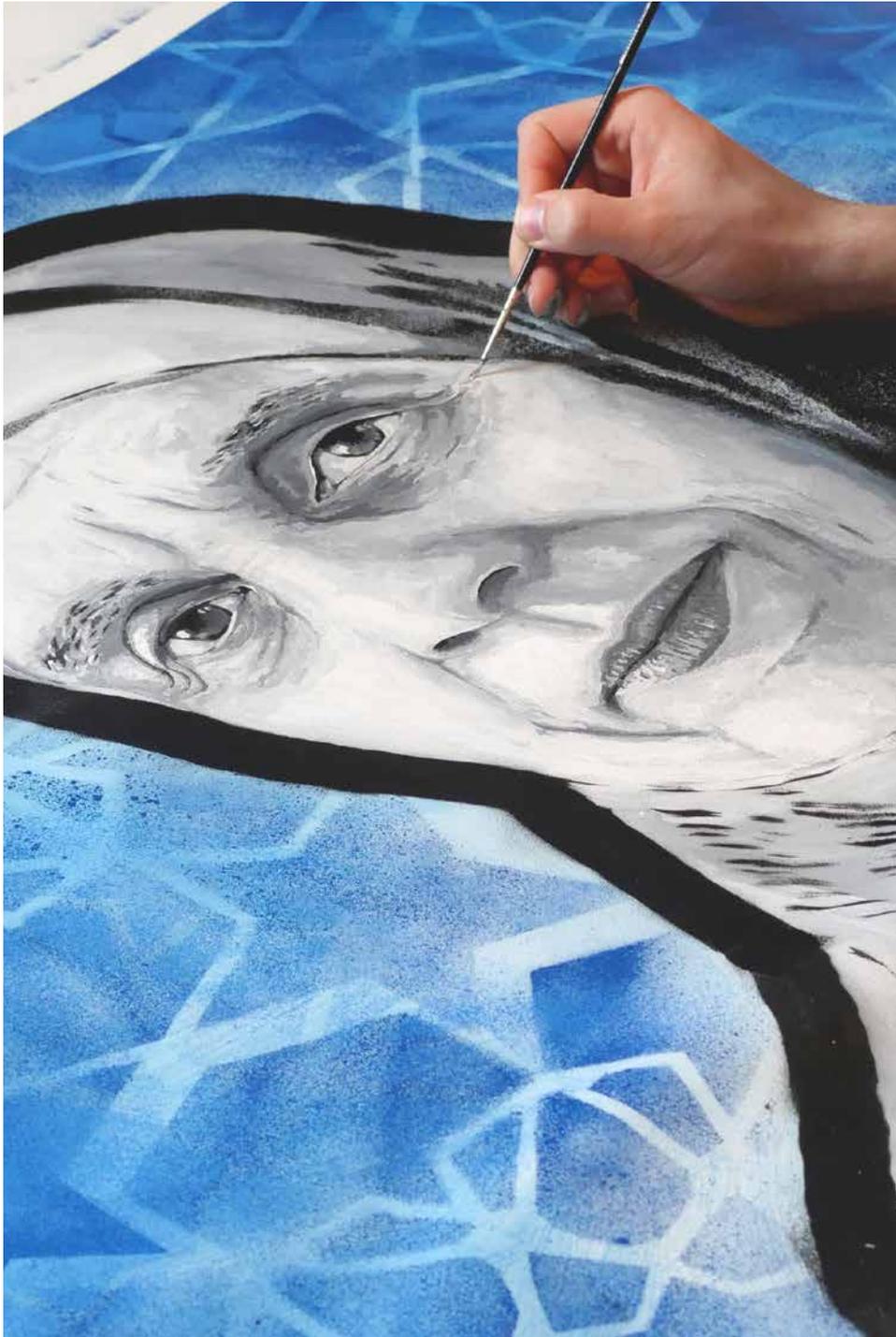
# Zébida Bendjeddou

CelebrateHer

CelebrateHer: Zébida Bendjeddou.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.

*Winner of "Certificate of Achievement  
(Top 10)" at Portrait Society of Canada  
"2018 Miracle of the Portrait" online  
exhibition.*



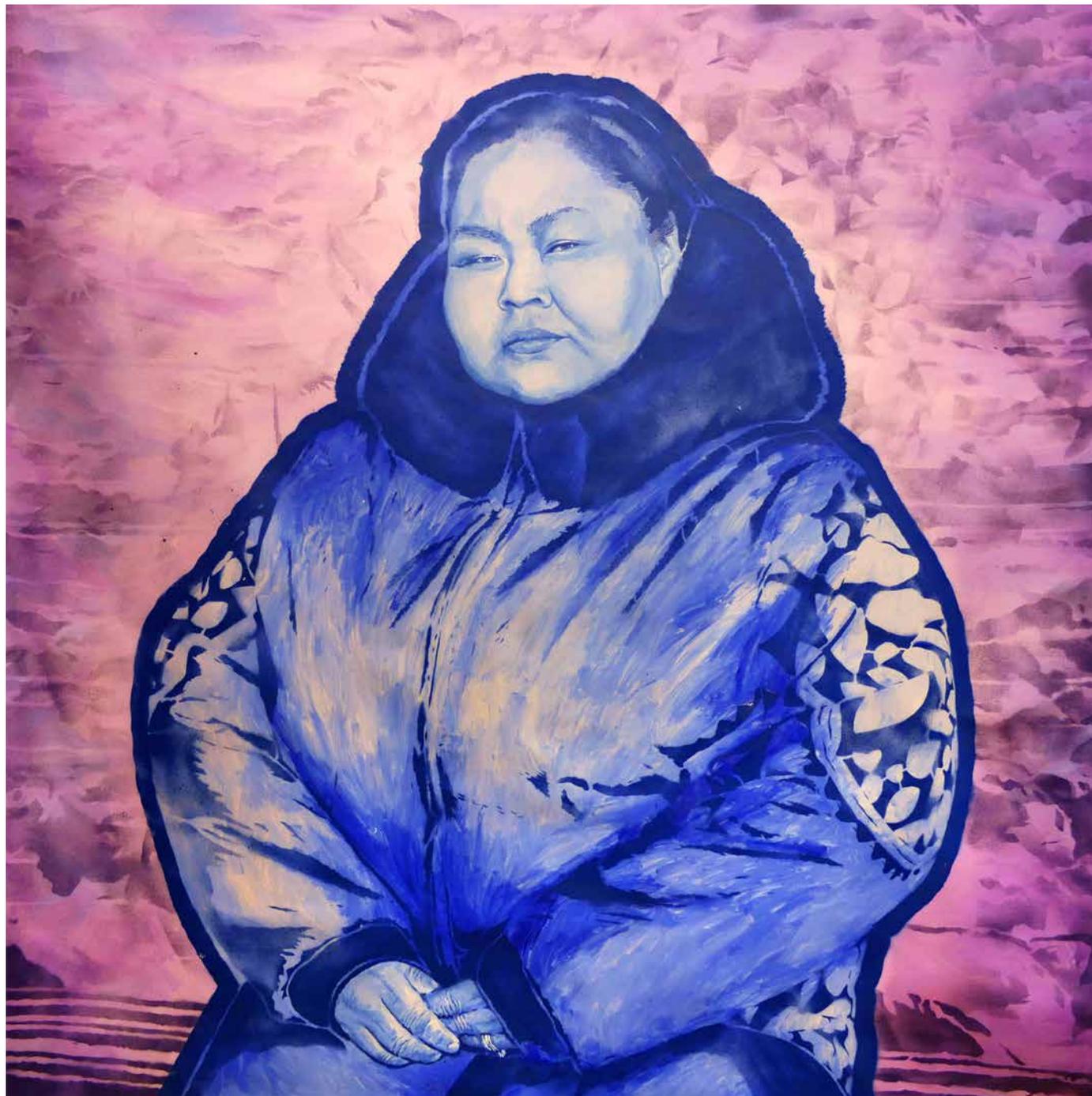


# Zébida Bendjeddou

**Zébida** is a woman who commands respect. Her daily work seems grounded in her relationship with others, with herself, and ultimately, with God. Zébida sees herself as apolitical, a simple volunteer for the good of the community. As I was leaving the mosque where we held the interview, I asked her what kind of art she likes; she said she used to draw stars and flowers as a child. A simple Islamic-style pattern felt fitting to contribute to the richness of the portrait while keeping true to the modest nature of her demeanour.

# Naomi Tatty

**CelebrateHer**



CelebrateHer: Naomi Tatty.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.



# Naomi Tatty

**Naomi** tells it how it is. She's an Inuit woman, a mother, a daughter, a seamstress, and, as her nominator Anna Bunce puts it, "a spoke in the wheel, connecting people and communities together." She works in community health outreach for the Department of Public Health in Nunavut. I had hoped I would be lucky enough to meet Naomi in person while she was visiting Ottawa to accompany her father on a health-related trip, but fortunately, they found what they needed locally. Chatting over the phone with a 3-second time delay proved to be a wonderful exercise in patience and trust. In our conversation, Naomi was very giving of her time and her experiences. On social media, one of Naomi's latest posts reads, "Takualugilli niruaqtaulautunga, one of the 12 nominated and selected [for the CelebrateHer project.] It's finally sinking in."

# Kama La Mackerel

**CelebrateHer**



CelebrateHer: Kama La Mackerel.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.



# Kama La Mackerel

**Kama** has this boisterous and contagious laugh; she lets the world know. She often has a lot to say; her sentences flow into one another. Sometimes, I'm not sure where the personal ends and the persona begins. She is fabulous, and when it comes to style, she can definitely pull it off. Kama is an artistic ocean of art-making and storytelling; I really wanted to incorporate the positive, political assertions in her portrait by illustrating one of her banner art objects in the background. She explains beautifully that her experience of gender is fluid, like waves of water – it comes and it goes, and it comes, and it goes.

# Joannie Verreault

## CelebrateHer



CelebrateHer: Joannie Verreault.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.



# Joannie Verreault

**Joannie** spends more time behind the camera than in front of it. Her knowledge of photography made me a bit nervous to interview her and take reference photos. I knew that she would notice the compositional choices of her portrait in a way that others might not. The home she has made with her partner Rumi felt like a treasure hunt of art projects. Joannie knows the opportunity she has as a teacher to shape the lives of her students. She is centred, both literally and figuratively, among the painted background that combines two of her passions in a symmetric way. The colour palette positions her against the stereotypical expectation of “girls wear pink.” I meant to include a subtle reference to an angel’s halo that emerges from the circular rings of the camera lens.

# Natalie Ramsay

CelebrateHer



CelebrateHer: Natalie Ramsay.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.



# Natalie Ramsay

**Natalie** made a bold decision as a young woman. Growing up in Rach Gia during the Vietnam War, she left her home country at 18, fleeing a communist government and the shadows of sexist marital expectations imposed by her traditional father. She was nominated by one of her daughters, LeeAnn, who told me, "My mom (Natalie) used to tell me to 'find a man who will help with the laundry.' I didn't get it when I was younger, but I get it now." When she finally arrived in the United States, she built a life for herself as an electrical engineer, eventually switching to software engineering in Northern Virginia. Some of Natalie's sisters still live the reality she left behind. She's filled with pride wearing her blazer and going to work, far from the rice paddies of Vietnam that she never chose.

# Clare Byarugaba

CelebrateHer



CelebrateHer: Clare Byarugaba.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.



# Clare Byarugaba

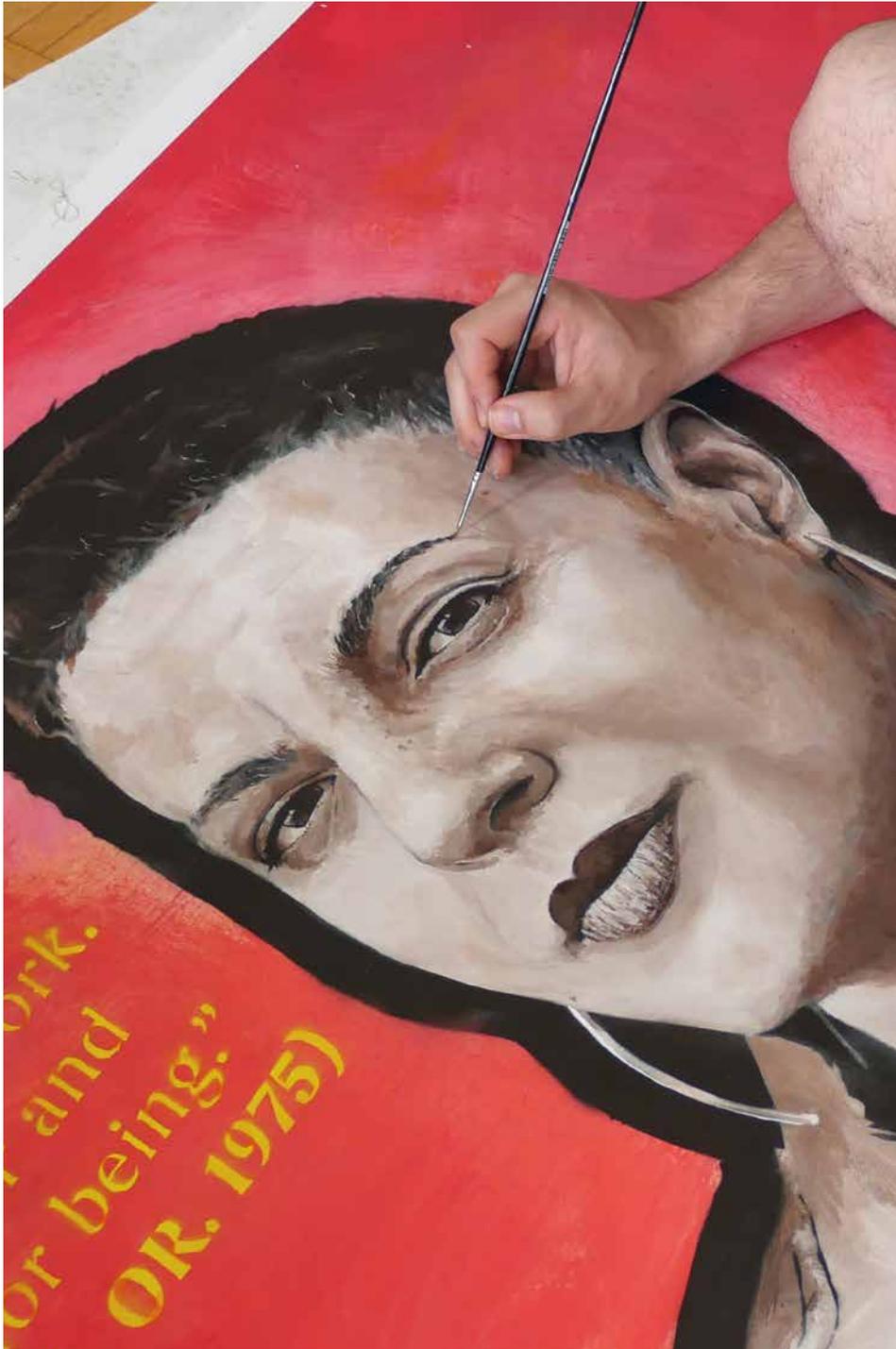
**Clare** is an amazing listener. She asks good questions. She seems willing to see the good in people. (On our day together, she chatted with this loud barista who I thought was being obnoxious and crass – the kind of guy that yells across the room and calls women he doesn't know "sweetheart." She was really pleasant with him.) Her demeanour might be related to the fact that she's the only daughter in the family with 7 brothers! Living in Montreal, walking in the Village, I think it's easy to forget the struggles of queer peoples around the world. Clare is a great example of someone who does activist work not necessarily because she's interested in abstract human rights and "politics," but because she's interested in her own survival.

# Rachel Zellars

## CelebrateHer



CelebrateHer: Rachel Zellars.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.



# Rachel Zellars

**Rachel** talks and you listen. She's a single mother, a researcher and educator, and an anti-violence activist. I find her command of language mesmerizing. She holds a PhD in the Department of Integrated Studies within the Faculty of Education at McGill University. I first met Rachel in passing during organizational meetings of the first Manif des femmes (Women's March) back in January 2017 when she was serving as the Executive Director of Girls Action Foundation. In addition to her intellect, the humanity and warmth in her leadership style made you feel like, "I want to be on her team." And yet, perhaps unexpectedly, Rachel is a farm girl. Her favourite quote pays tribute to her scholarly pursuits, floating among the earthy backdrop of farmland in Moravia, New York.

# Kathy Malas

**CelebrateHer**



CelebrateHer: Kathy Malas.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.



# Kathy Malas

**Kathy** is a tireless leader. She was nominated by two sisters in her community, Mona and Manel, who are understandably astonished about how she does so much. She's one of those people that uses the same 24 hours that everyone else has in some magical way. And with all of her commitments and responsibilities – working as a speech language pathologist or the Vice President of the Canadian Muslim Forum, or a workshop facilitator in her faith community on spirituality – Manel says you can still phone her at 2am if you're in trouble, and she will answer the call. The fundraising slogan of the CHU Sainte-Justine hospital where she works, “plus mieux guérir” (meaning “heal better”), applied not only to her profession, but to her faith, and her life as a Muslim community member living in Montreal.

# Romita Sur

**CelebrateHer**



CelebrateHer: Romita Sur.  
Acrylic, spray paint on canvas.  
65 x 65 inches. 2018.



# Romita Sur

**Romita** is a badass woman of colour. She's almost done with her transsystemic law degree – in both civil and common law – at McGill University. When I visited Rom's apartment, I was reminded of my hospitable Indian "aunties" who would offer me everything they had without hesitation. "We have water, juice, milk, some leftover iced tea. I just made some food, do you want some?" Romita is especially proud of her work with the *Contours* journal that promotes the voices of women in law. She co-founded the Women of Colour Collective that built a community around racialized women in her faculty. A banner that the WOCC commissioned features the words, "Survival, Resilience, Solidarity," so I got in touch with the talented Oakville-based illustrator Izabela (Izzy) Stanic to see if I could remix her artwork into the painting. Izzy was delighted. (Check out [izzystanic.com](http://izzystanic.com).)

# Artist Aquil Virani

**Awarded as the “Artist For Peace 2018” by the Quebec-based artist collective “Les artistes pour la paix,” Aquil Virani is an Ismaili Muslim visual artist of Indian and French heritage who often integrates public participation into his socially-conscious art projects.**

As Éric Clément observed in his article for La Presse, “Aquil Virani could not be more Canadian;” he exhibited his award-winning Canada’s Self Portrait project at the Canadian Museum of Immigration in Halifax after integrating 800+ participant submissions into a single artwork. Virani premiered his Postering Peace documentary at Nuit Blanche Toronto after receiving a production grant from the Ottawa-based Michaele Jean Foundation. He is presently working on a commemorative portrait series honouring the 6 Muslim men killed at a terrorist attack in Quebec City on January 29, 2017, according to the wishes of the widows and their families; the community-driven arts initiative is supported by grants from the Silk Road Institute, TakingITGlobal and the Government of Canada. As curator Celine Le Merlus explains, “his approach, which aims not simply to assert a personal point of view on a pressing social issue, but also to facilitate opportunities for others to express themselves freely – to speak and be heard – is characteristic of all of Virani’s work.”

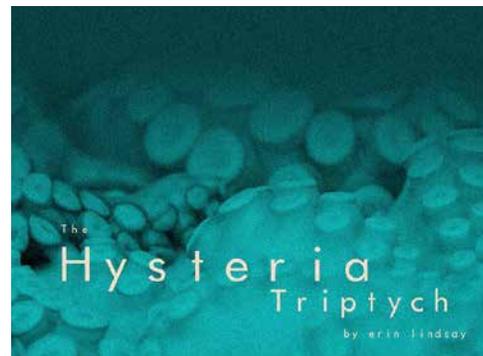
**Learn more by visiting [aquil.ca](http://aquil.ca).**



# Writer Erin Lindsay

**Erin Lindsay is a writer and creator currently enrolled in the MFA Creative Writing Program at the University of British Columbia.**

She is an alumni of Playwrights' Workshop's Creator's Unit, the recipient of a SSHRC grant for her current thesis work, a former Associate Artist at Imago Theatre and their current Artist in Residence where she is working on a contemporary adaptation of Lysistrata. Erin is interested in supporting and creating work that questions the status quo and encourages critical thinking and empathy. She is currently working on a novel addressing systemic issues in the Canadian healthcare system, while collaborating on a libretto, and a place-based poetry project. **Follow her on instagram @crowlake.**



Again, via: booming,  
hastily constructed,  
poised for warp-speed (tens  
of millions of)  
processing plants,  
and prisons.

Every  
move, word,  
relationship  
mineable.

And keys to  
gleaming  
showroom at  
dead  
precipice  
of public  
money and  
warmed-over  
appetites.

A rush-job,  
almost everything: edge,  
myriad, sheer volume.

soft and goodsolid pixels  
not points marched out to  
the pier no this is  
glazeless doorless  
and laughing unjudged  
unhid a raft





# Director Micheline Chevrier

**For over thirty years, Micheline has worked across Canada and abroad as a director, artistic director and dramaturg.**

As a director, she has worked at such theatres as The Shaw Festival, the National Arts Centre, Theatre Calgary, Alberta Theatre Projects, the Citadel, the Globe Theatre, Prairie Theatre Exchange, Manitoba Theatre Centre, Canadian Stage, Young People's Theatre, Théâtre français de Toronto, the Centaur Theatre, Segal Centre, Geordie Productions, Imago Theatre, Theatre New Brunswick and BeMe Productions (Barcelona and Munich). Micheline was the Artistic Director of the Great Canadian Theatre Company from 1995 to 2000, Associate Artistic Director at Theatre New Brunswick, Associate Artist at Toronto's Canadian Stage and is currently the Artistic and Executive Director at Imago Theatre. She has also taught at the National Theatre School and several universities across the country.



Imago Theatre is a catalyst for conversation, an advocate for equal representation, and a hub for stories about unstoppable women. **Learn more at [imagotheatre.ca](http://imagotheatre.ca).**

# Project press & publications

*CelebrateHer was featured across television, radio and online platforms throughout the project.*

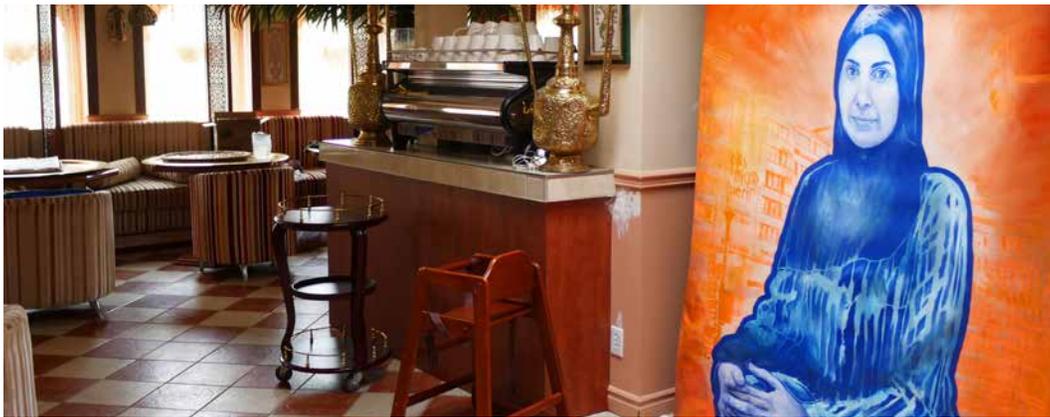
**La Presse.** « Aquil Virani célèbre la diversité des femmes » Éric Clément. Montreal. • **Global News.** “CelebrateHer: Twelve inspiring, everyday women.” Laura Casella. Montreal. • **Global News.** “Notable women for an extraordinary project.” Laura Casella. Montreal. • **Art/iculation** (Vol. 3, Art of Healing). Montreal. • **Art/iculation** (Vol. 3, Art of Healing). Montreal. • **MAtv.** “Perfect Metaphor.” Aquil Virani. Montreal. • **MAtv.** “#CelebrateHer on Montreal Billboard.” Kim Sullivan and Tina Tennerriello. Montreal. • **F-Word Zine.** “CelebrateHer.” Aquil Virani. Montreal. • **Le Devoir.** « De l’art comme outil pacifiste au MBAM. » Caroline Montpetit. Montréal. • **Portrait Society of Canada** – Winners (online exhibition). portraitsociety.ca. Toronto. • **CBC Radio’s Homerun.** “CelebrateHer with honouree Rachel Zellars.” Sue Smith. Montreal. • **CKUT Radio’s Upstage.** “Interview with visual artist Aquil Virani.” Sarah Deshaies. Montreal. • **CBC Radio 1.** “Rialto Theatre transformed into museum of live performances.” Nantali Indongo. • **CTV.** “What’s On: Archipelago.” Christine Long. Montreal.

The screenshot shows a news article from La Presse. The main headline is "Aquil Virani célèbre la diversité des femmes". Below the headline is a portrait of Aquil Virani. The article text mentions that on Friday and Saturday at the Morrice pavilion of McGill University, the artist Aquil Virani and Imago Theatre will organize five meetings with the public to celebrate 12 inspiring women from here and elsewhere. It also mentions a meeting with the painter and diversity of women. The article is by Éric Clément. There are social media sharing options for Facebook, Twitter, and Email. A sidebar on the right lists "LES PLUS POPULAIRES : ARTS" and "AUTRES CONTENUS POPULAIRES".



# Exhibitions & Installations

*CelebrateHer was exhibited in various contexts, in full and in part, at various venues throughout the project.*



**Morrice Hall**, McGill University, Montreal.

**Collège de Rosemont**, Montreal.

"Archipelago: Living Museum,"

**Rialto Theatre**, Montreal.

Iftar event during Ramadan,

**La Table Fleurie d'Algerie**, Montreal.

"Feminist Art Collective – Narrative Healing,"

**OCAD University**, Toronto.

# Transcription of CelebrateHer Sound Play

*Sound play created by Erin Lindsay*

**Natalie:** Oh, oh, okay, so we start now?

**Aquil:** Yeah, yeah, whenever you're ready.

**Natalie:** Oh, I thought ... (laughing)

**Aquil:** Oh, were you waiting for me to tell you to start? (laughing)

**LeeAnn and Vanessa:** (laughing)

**Aquil:** Good, I was waiting for you. Okay.

**Aquil:** That was my bad. So I'll give you a 3, 2 ...

**Natalie, LeeAnn and Vanessa:** (laughing)

**Aquil:** (pauses) Are we ready? Alright. 3, 2 ...

**Kama:** Okay, yes. So there is such a thing as womanhood in contemporary Western societies. And a lot of times, that idea of womanhood is defined in a singular way. It's the idea that there is only one kind of womanhood. Which typically means like white, middle class, skinny,

**Dorothy:** And even as a woman of colour, I think that's one of the things that I recognized at my job...When I looked at my schoolboard and I saw the colour and how white it was, I

thought, "Wow this is not good," but I have the opportunity to show them... This is how a black woman - who appears confident ('cause it's not always confident) - but who appears confident...This is how we do things. This is how we work.

**Romita:** Sometimes you don't have a choice. Sometimes you just have to go and do things because of the space you are in. So, I guess for me, in terms of defining womanhood... When things are tough, you just "get going" and women often do that. And so that's how I see it I guess.

**Clare:** So... to be a lesbian and a woman in a country like Uganda makes you kind of like the poster child of non-conformity.

**Shweta:** The girls need to realize that the capacity that they have is not less than men's. And also, after marriage, it's not only the burden that they take over of the family, they have more than that...that they can do.

**Rachel:** And I think about how tremendously the arc of queerness has shifted to make space... to just broaden the category of

"woman" in ways I certainly didn't see when I was a young woman. And so I want to just acknowledge how important that feels as a starting place for me, to acknowledge how much wider, if you will, how much more spacious the category of "woman" has become.

[ Music ]

**Aquil:** And what's the goal, and personally, what do you get out of it?

**Romita:** Work towards diversity in the legal profession. Work towards mentorship as well as just advocating for radicalized students in the legal community.

**Kama:** What I think remains with me and sustains me the most is that ... finding trans sisterhood actually. Finding other trans women - particularly, in my case, finding other trans women of colour.

**Rachel:** And I think that any work that fundamentally is interested in the survivals (one) and creating a brilliant future for black life...

**Bochra :** Je veux révéler ... tout ce qui est invisibilisé, tout ce qui est dans l'ombre, tout ce qui n'est pas vu, mais qui est pourtant vécu parfois avec difficulté...

**Natalie:** Making a difference, you know. Proving the point that girls can be as good as boys is pretty much the goal of my life.

**Kama:** Basically, all the doors just get closed in your face...All the doors just get... Bam, Bam, Bam.. they just get closed in your face... in many cases.

**Shweta:** I am just trying to fight out with a lot of things within me, I guess...Not outside...so yeah, I am resilient with that... maybe that's what it is.

**Romita:** Well, I remember just before I went through the interview process, somebody told me to remove "Women of Colour Collective" and "Law Needs Feminism" from my resume. And to me, that was alarming because ... especially "Women of Colour Collective" is a project that is very close to my heart. It really defines my law school experience and my leadership experience. And so, to remove that, didn't seem right to me. I felt that if I have to remove something that is so core to who I am, maybe that's not the right fit for me. Maybe I don't need to be interviewing at that place.

**Bochra :** Dans le fond, à dix ans, on a fui le pays en passant par l'Algérie. Donc on a traversé à pieds pour plusieurs jours. Puis, donc, on est partie en Algérie avant de

demander l'asile politique en France. Donc, en fait, à dix ans, j'ai commencé l'école en France en étant réfugiée. Donc, j'ai découvert ce que c'est qui est une frontiere, j'ai découvert ce qui est le racisme, j'ai découvert ce qui être étrangère en fait très jeune...

**Kama:** You know, when you've been displaced... when there's been a genocide enacted against your people, when you've been cut from your culture, your land, your history, your family... everything that makes you human, basically. But despite all of this, you still get out of bed every day. You put yourself out into the world. You decide not to disappear...When you live in a society that is structured...

**Zévida :** J'espère que nous avançons vers le meilleur et ... que le Quebec et le Canada, et tout ça, soient un pays. C'est multiculturel, mais qui soit formé une grande famille, qui est composé d'une mosaïque. Et cette mosaïque se donnera la main. Puis, vivre dans la paix et le bonheur et ... bâtir ce pays. C'est surtout ça. Toute cette violence – peut-importe ici ou d'ailleurs, la – ils apparaissent parce que... c'est devenu trop, c'est trop... mais qu'est-ce qu'on doit faire? On ne sait pas. Mais peut-etre, juste s'aimer les uns and les autre. C'est tout. Respecter les uns et les autres. Je pense que la

vie est très simple à vivre.

[ Music ]

**Aquil:** So what does responsible representation look like in the context of man painting a feminist portrait series? What are some things I should consider?

**Romita:** I think first is, of course, representation. Like make sure there a wide diversity of women who are there. People who are racialized, or indigenous or white or what have you. The other thing is also the way a woman looks because not every woman looks quote-unquote feminine.

**Dorothy:** And so, yeah, I'm self-conscious, I am a self-conscious woman. I know my flaws. I know MAC makeup can only do so much. But you know what? It's an interesting time because I actually told myself that I would not be crippled by fear or insecurity. I would just do it. And it's kind of my mantra: In spite of... Just do it.

**Kama:** The major thing around it has been navigating power dynamics around, like, who is holding the camera...because that's the other thing about photography, you know, you have somebody else who actually frames ... the picture that is being taken. So learning in that sense as well, because you aren't speaking, you are not talking. It's just you. It's just your body. It's just your face. It's just your eyes! (A lot of the time, it's just the eyes.)

**Rachel:** The first thing that came up for me was: when I did the CBC campaign, I ultimately hated the photo they used and, like, intentionally put it on the wall so I would have to look at it and grapple with what I didn't like about it... Maybe no pimples. I have a pimple. [Laughs]

**Aquil:** Good, yeah, I don't have to paint that. You know? It's all good. Great. And okay, I think my last question ... although I just want to make sure on that theme ... what does it mean for a white man (a cis-heterosexual white man) to paint ... however you identify? So what are some things for me to consider (if you want to maybe phrase it in that way)?

**Rachel:** Great! It means to ask questions like you just asked, and to trust the judgement of the person who has the most to lose in that representation. Right? For me that ties very much to my thoughts about cultural appropriation. So, you know, trust the judgement, the perception, the words, the discontents, the appreciations of the person that has the most to lose in that representation.

[ Music ]

**Kama:** I think about this. And I do think about my gender also as the figure of the ocean for me. To go back to the symbol of the ocean. I like the fluidity of the ocean because for me the ocean also captures how fluid I feel in my gender. It's like waves. It comes and it leaves. It comes and it leaves, and that's how I also think about my relationship to masculinity and femininity.

**Shweta:** But the thing is... when I see the rural area of India and the parents in rural areas, yes, I feel bad for those girls. There is definitely a restriction for those girls to pursue their studies, or to pursue their career, or even to come up with an open mindset or say that "I want to do this" or anything that they think is good for them. They are not allowed to do so. (So that's before marriage, as well as after marriage, it continues on after marriage.) And with two different ... lives the girls are living, it requires a lot of sacrifices from a girls. And that's how I see from Indian social perspective, they are asked to sacrifice more than men in general.

**Kama:** I think also that it's important to remember that gender is a social construct. It's a cultural construct. It differs from cultures to cultures. Like, the ways in which masculinity is understood in a North American Canadian

context is different to the ways in which masculinity is understood, and portrayed and lived, in (let's say) a South Indian context.

**Clare:** I feel like, as women in Uganda, you kind of have to adhere to pre-planned or pre-determined social norms that are not necessarily always to your best advantage.

**Natalie:** Especially with my father, he just ... his goal was to raise a girl and marry her off. That's his "duty." And he did that with two of my sisters. And I determined that ... I do not want to live that life. You know? Marry somebody you don't know? You don't love? And the life that you have no control over.

**Clare:** These social norms are usually meant to protect the patriarchy. These social norms are meant to protect some of our male privilege that we've grown up with. That ... we have been told not to question. Some of these social norms are really to keep women in check.

**Joannie :** Encore une fois, j'ai un peu de difficulté en positionner là dedans par rapport justement aux genres parce que ... ça était ... le genre ... je pense ... les rôles par rapport aux genres, ça était inventé par nous, donc on sait nous-même en cabaner en quelques choses, [pris] nous-même, dans cet espace de cache-la, par rapport à la société. Donc, c'est difficile de parler par rapport à ça parce que, justement, il y a tellement encore de choses à faire, même si qu'il y a beaucoup de choses qui ont été fait déjà. Donc, oui, si c'était basé un peu comme

réponse-là, mais j'ai la difficulté à mettre les mots...

**Bochra:** J'ai pu voir que les hommes peuvent être forts et vulnérables et que les femmes pouvaient être vulnérables mais très fortes aussi. Et donc, en fait, ... pendant très longtemps, ... pour moi, le féminisme, c'était juste une évidence...c'est comme: C'est une évidence que nous devons être égaux. C'est comme: It's obvious...

**Naomi:** About that...a lot of the Inuit up here (and the women specifically) ... are silent about their feelings and hiding and I just tell these ladies, like, "Break your silence, just open up, and [it will be the reason] you'll feel so much better."

[ Music ]

**Aquil:** Do you consider yourself an activist?

**Bochra:** Yup!

**Shweta:** For me, I feel I am [an] activist.

**Natalie:** I guess I [would] not consider myself an activist, but I have a lot of thought about it and I have a desire ...with what I want to do.

**Romita:** Now, the answer is still yes, but my activism has changed.

**Kama:** I'm not interested in activism with a big A ... and the "dismantling of the structures" and all of this. I'm more interested in everyday actions.

**Bochra :** Pour moi, toute est dans l'intention. Toute est dans la façon avec laquelle on participe à faire que les autres discutent, faire que [il y a] des espaces de discussion, non pas seulement pour soi, mais avec les autres and pour les autres.

**Zébida :** ... Bah, moi, je suis bénévole tout simplement. Militante ? Oui, pour le bien. Oui, je milite pour le bien.

**Bochra :** On est emporté par l'idée que ... si tu es visible, c'est parce que tu fais quelque chose de bien. (Et si tu n'es pas visible, tu n'existes pas.)

**Rachel:** So I do think of myself as an activist. And, you know, I really do wish that ... all of us have an understanding of activism that isn't

loaded with ... either this negative or hyper-positive meaning. And I wish that our activism would focus on one fundamental question, and that question is: What does my relationship look like with someone in my community or neighbourhood or school or job ... place .... that doesn't have enough? What does my relationship look like with that person who doesn't have... enough, knowing that I barely have enough sometimes? What kind of things can I bring or support in that person's life (or build in that person's life) to lift that person up, and to affect the conditions that make impossible the really rudimentary things that we walk through each day for that human being? For me, that is the best kind of activism because that is where most of the world lives.

[ Music ]

**Aquil:** Do you have any advice for ... (let's say) men who are trying to make the world a better place and fight for equality of women? (Some call these people allies.) Do you have any thoughts? What would you say to a man who came up to you and said "I want to make things better for women." Do you have any advice... I guess, what would you say to them? And there's no right answer.

**Shweta:** So, if a man comes to me and says, "I want to make a better place for women." I would say just be careful. [Laughs.] You cannot trust ... you cannot trust everyone, and those who are coming to say this to you ... it's not like every man is going to be like that. Maybe

there are men. But ... do the best, and ... find out about the man himself first (that's very important) and then take the next step.

**Bochra :** La question féministe n'appartient pas seulement aux femmes. Elle appartient toute la société. Tout comme la question du racisme n'appartient pas seulement aux (personnes) racisés. Elle appartient à tout la société. Si on se réfléchit comme société, on doit (dans ces moments et ces espaces) inclure aussi celui à qui on veut parler.

**Clare:** I would say, "Educate yourself. Unlearn what you've been taught. Allow yourself to question the social norms that allow your kind of thinking. And more importantly, understand why someone else would say, 'Sexism is real.'"

**Natalie:** But I wish I could go back and do it differently. Like, actively get him involved and make him more aware about the fact that it's totally unfair. ... And [tell him] he did not do enough. Rather than just accepting it and going on with your life, trying to do everything.

**Aquil:** Parents, now, in this new generation are going to teach not their girls to dress differently, but their guys to behave differently. So I want you to [say], "In my role as a mother, I will teach my son to..."

**Bochra :** En tant que mère d'un garçon, je lui enseignerai que ... il faut qu'il soit sensible, justement, aux problématiques que peuvent vivre les femmes. Je lui enseignerai, je pense surtout, qu'il faut lui-même, qu'il sort de la masculinité tel que ... comme un sort d'injonction. Il y a une injonction pour que les hommes soient virile, qu'ils jouent un certain rôle...et je pense que je lui enseignerai qu'il ne faut ni enfermer les femmes dans cette injonction à la beauté, puis à la superficialité, ni qu'il entre dans l'injonction faites aux hommes à la masculinité, et la grande merveille des hommes et du patriarcat...et cetera...alors, je pense que je lui enseignerai la sensibilité, l'éthique, et le fait que ...il faut qu'il agisse avec toutes les citoyennes et toutes les citoyens autour de lui, comme il aimerait ... qu'on soit égalitaire, inclusif avec ... et qu' pour ça, il faut avoir un certain sensibilité sociale...

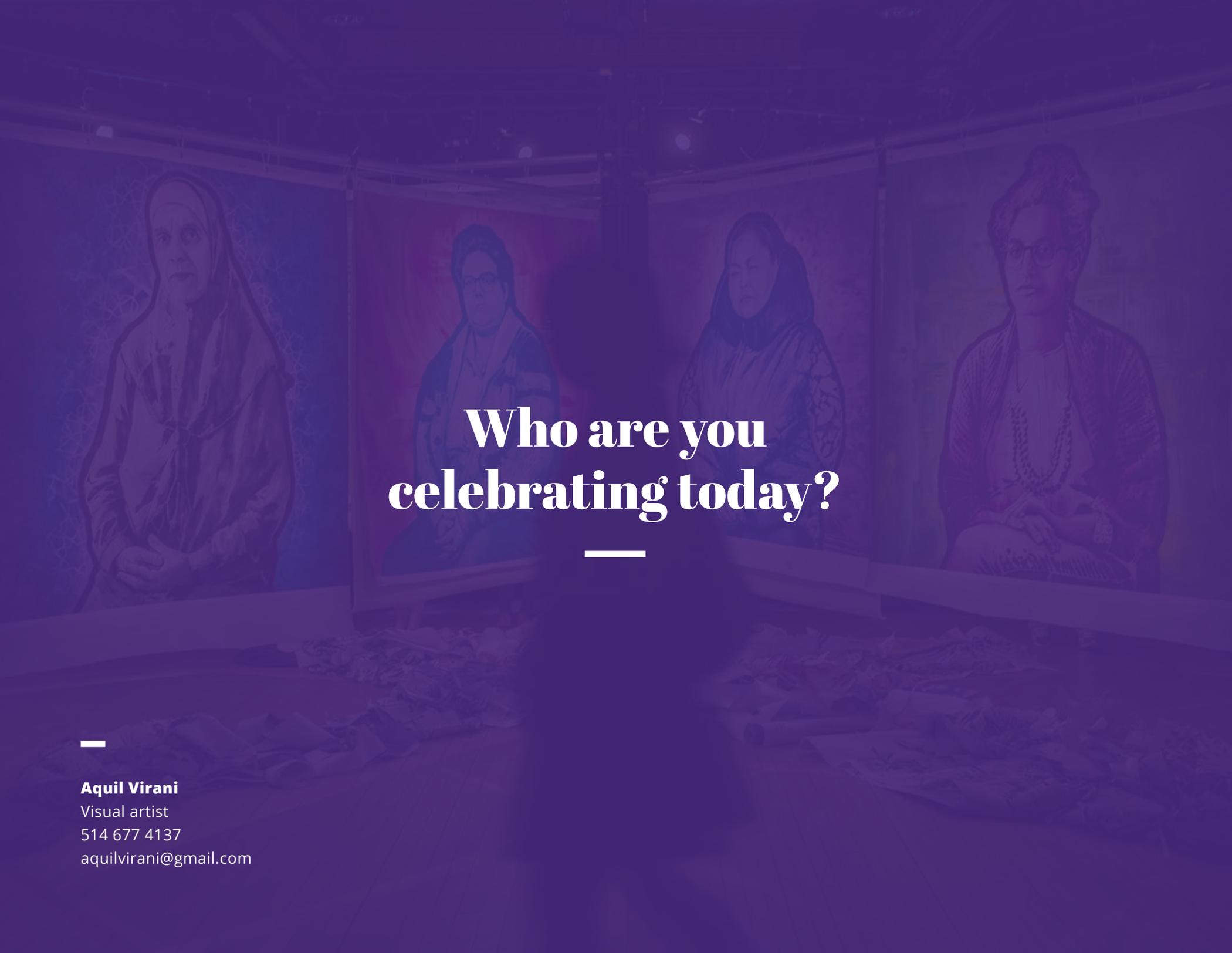
**Aquil:** I would say...Allyship is definitely complicated. One of the ways it's complicated is that: You have to constantly remind yourself that good intentions aren't enough... Right? And so, you know ... who you are and you trust that you have the right reasons in mind, but ... there's always work to be done. And there's work to be done both ... when I mention "work," I mean work to be done in the community and in society, but there's also work to be done, like, internally. So there are internal biases, and there are the things that we've grown up with that we constantly have to think about. And work to be done in terms of ... making sure that you're open to change and open to hearing people out.

**Rachel:** I mean last, it's possible and it's necessary...and again, that bridge is seldom forged because (well, for different reasons, but that bridge is seldom forged because) it's hard and it's painful to sit down and have real frank conversations about difference. And just letting those things be as they are. And then finding ways to work around that difference in ways that are mutually respectful... It's possible though.

[ The end ]



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