

# PRIDE JA

MAGAZINE

ISSUE 9





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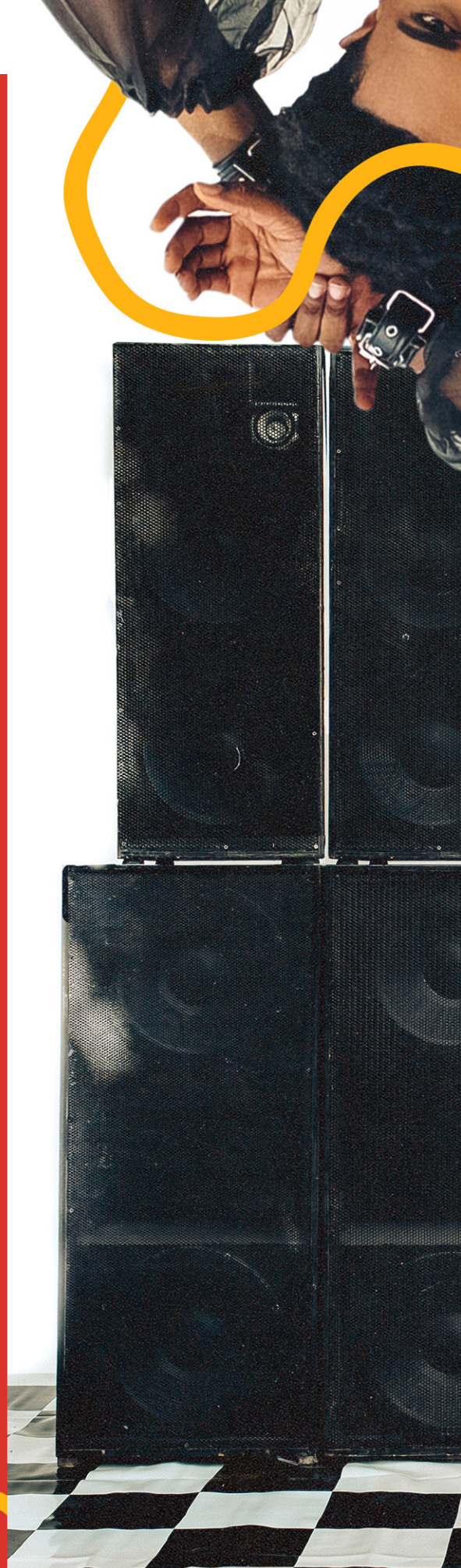
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## EDITOR'S NOTE

This was an important year for **Equality For All Foundation (EFAF)** and for Jamaica's LGBT community at large. One year short of a quarter century as the leaders of LGBT advocacy in Jamaica, and we are showing no signs of slowing down. In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and two-years of significantly reduced community activity, EFAF has risen to the challenge of reconnecting community minds, reigniting community spirit, and re-energising the community's vision. This, our 9th issue of **PRiDEJa Magazine**, celebrates our 24th anniversary by documenting the reconnection, reignition and re-energizing that took place over 2022 for posterity and prepares readers for an even greater celebration for our silver anniversary in 2023.

As we sat and brainstormed what stories and visuals best represented the energies of 2022, only one potential collaborator came to mind—the indomitable Bootleg Rocstar, Neko Kelly. Our trust in Neko's talent is strong. For the first time ever, we have given complete creative control of both the magazine cover and the cover story to someone outside of #TeamEquality. The images from Neko are not only beautiful, but they are also deliberate in their advocacy. Using himself as the mannequin, Neko shares with us three separate looks which all tell a story; the story that has always been told by PRiDEJa Magazine - that our queerness is not foreign. Our expressions of queerness are as Jamaican as rice and peas. He shows us the compatibility of our queerness and Jamaican culture using various looks from dancehall culture. The accompanying cover article, written by his friend, Davina Bennett, is a heartfelt story about the rise of a young man from Clarendon, Jamaica to Jamaica's renowned fashion icon who never shied away from acknowledging his queerness. He showcases that his talent and his queerness are both indigenous products of Jamaica.

We hope you enjoy this issue of PRiDEJa Magazine as much as we enjoyed creating it for you, and that this visual memento will allow 2022 to live on in our hearts and minds as the year Jamaica's LGBT community began to reunite.

**Elton Johnson**  
Editor





A MESSAGE FROM

# EQUALITY YOUTH JAMAICA

Equality Youth Jamaica (EYJ) exists as a beacon of hope and safe space for Jamaica's LGBT youth, and that in itself is a huge accomplishment. The relationship between EYJ and parent organisation, the Equality For All Foundation (EFAF), is a strong one. EYJ's involvement with EFAF gives LGBT youth in Jamaica the chance to freely experience their sexual and gender identities, to be exposed to the different facets of the Jamaican LGBT community, to advocate for a better Jamaica for all. Importantly, it gives them the chance for personal development through socialising, connecting, learning, growing, discovering and creating.

COVID-19 in Jamaica disrupted all our lives, and the lives of LGBT Jamaicans was no exception. Despite this, EYJ and EFAF continued to work on behalf of our communities. In honouring the relationship between both organisations, we at EYJ send a heartfelt happy 24th anniversary to the staff and board of EFAF on behalf of the LGBT youth of Jamaica. We look forward to celebrating 25 years with you next year as partners in the business of LGBT advocacy.

## **Sean Lord**

Programme Officer  
Equality Youth Jamaica





## A MESSAGE FROM **TRANSWAVE JAMAICA**

In 2022 we celebrated many victories, most importantly, the reuniting of the community after COVID-19. The proud, resilient LGBT community in Jamaica went back to work and continued to break societal stereotypes and strive for equality, equity and justice. The synergy and cohesiveness shared and seen between TransWave and the Equality For All Foundation (EFAF) has been a major part in empowering people to advocate for themselves and live authentically. This partnership has not slowed one bit. It continues to be our joint prerogative to empower and sensitise stakeholders and the public about the challenges faced by LGBT Jamaicans and charter a way for a more just and inclusive Jamaica.

As we congratulate EFAF in celebrating their 24th anniversary, the strength of our partnership and the benefit to Jamaica's LGBT community remains at the forefront of our minds as we're sure it remains at the forefront of theirs. Happy 24th Anniversary to the staff and board of EFAF on behalf of the TransWave team.

**Lamar Grant**  
Policy, Advocacy & Reserch Officer  
TransWave Jamaica



FASHION FEATURE

Q&A WITH

# AMANI

“

I'M INSPIRED BY  
MY STEPMOM  
WHO WAS  
ALWAYS  
POWDERED  
DOWN AND  
SNATCHED ASF

”



The sophisticated and chic fashionista, Amani, sat down with us for this very short interview and shared with us these amazing photos which capture the details of their look and style.

**PJM:** How would you describe your style?

**AMANI:** I would describe my style as very sophisticated chic. Simple yet flamboyant.





**PJM:** What is the process that you go through to assemble an outfit?

**AMANI:** Well, first, I think about where I'm going and how I'd like to feel in that space. Then I mentally pair pieces to create an outfit. As soon as I like what I see mentally, I try it on and make the necessary changes until I'm satisfied and happy with what I see in my mirror.



**PJM:** What inspires your personal style?

**AMANI:** Well I'm inspired by my step mom who was always powdered down and snatched asf. Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn who both exude so much class and grace; and the TV show Grown-ish, that showcases very edgy progressive looks.





FASHION FEATURE

# SIMPLY QUEER:

Artist Kadine Lindsay Speaks

“ I AM SURROUNDED BY QUEERNESS; ALL MY MUSES ARE QUEER. ”

She describes her work as simply queer and that it is. The expressions in Kadine Lindsay's art pieces are dark but in the exaggerated features of the figures are conversations about queerness.

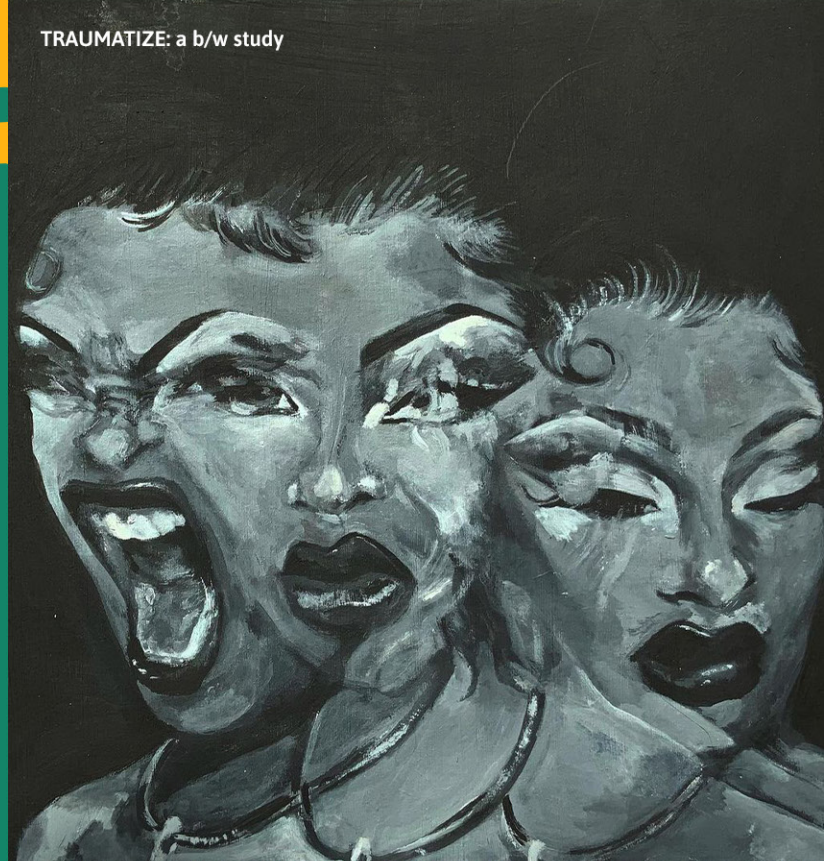
Her work ranges from queer fan art dedicated to Megan Thee Stallion to creative art stylings that showcase queer expressions. In this interview, Kadine discusses her art describing her inspirations and the importance of her work to the queer movement.

## PJM: What form of art do you work with?

KL: I mainly do Acrylic on Canvas but I like to try out a lot of other mediums. I have A LOT of projects in the works that aren't just flat paintings and I'm so excited for people to see them!

## PJM: How would you describe your art style?

KL: If 90s/2000s Dancehall, Tim Burton claymations, RuPaul drag race and 2000s Cartoon Network had a big sexy baby.







**PJM:** People often wonder how artists' brains work. If we were to take a stroll through your mind, what would we see?

**KL:** They would see a lot of past trauma that I'm working through, big sexy blunts, really good animation from all over the world, complex recipes, *Rupaul's Drag Race* (and all the content that comes out of it), spirituality and my cute girlfriend.





Sisters in Conversaion

**PJM: How does your Jamaicanness impact your work, even with living in another country?**

**KL:** When I miss home, my art is the way I connect with it. Through my work I express my past, the things I've been through, and the things I gave up. I try to show people what Jamaican culture means to me, a person who got to see so much of the bad and so much of the good. I find that the clearest expression of Jamaica in my work though, is the colours. I choose vibrant colours, but there's always something dark

**PJM: Describe how your queerness influences your work.**

**KL:** I am surrounded by queerness; all my muses are queer. My queerness doesn't influence my work; my work simply is just queer.

Queerness is not something I can quantify in my work, it is simply just a part of the experience. To fully understand my work you must exist in queerness. Outside of that scope, my work is just pretty colours and

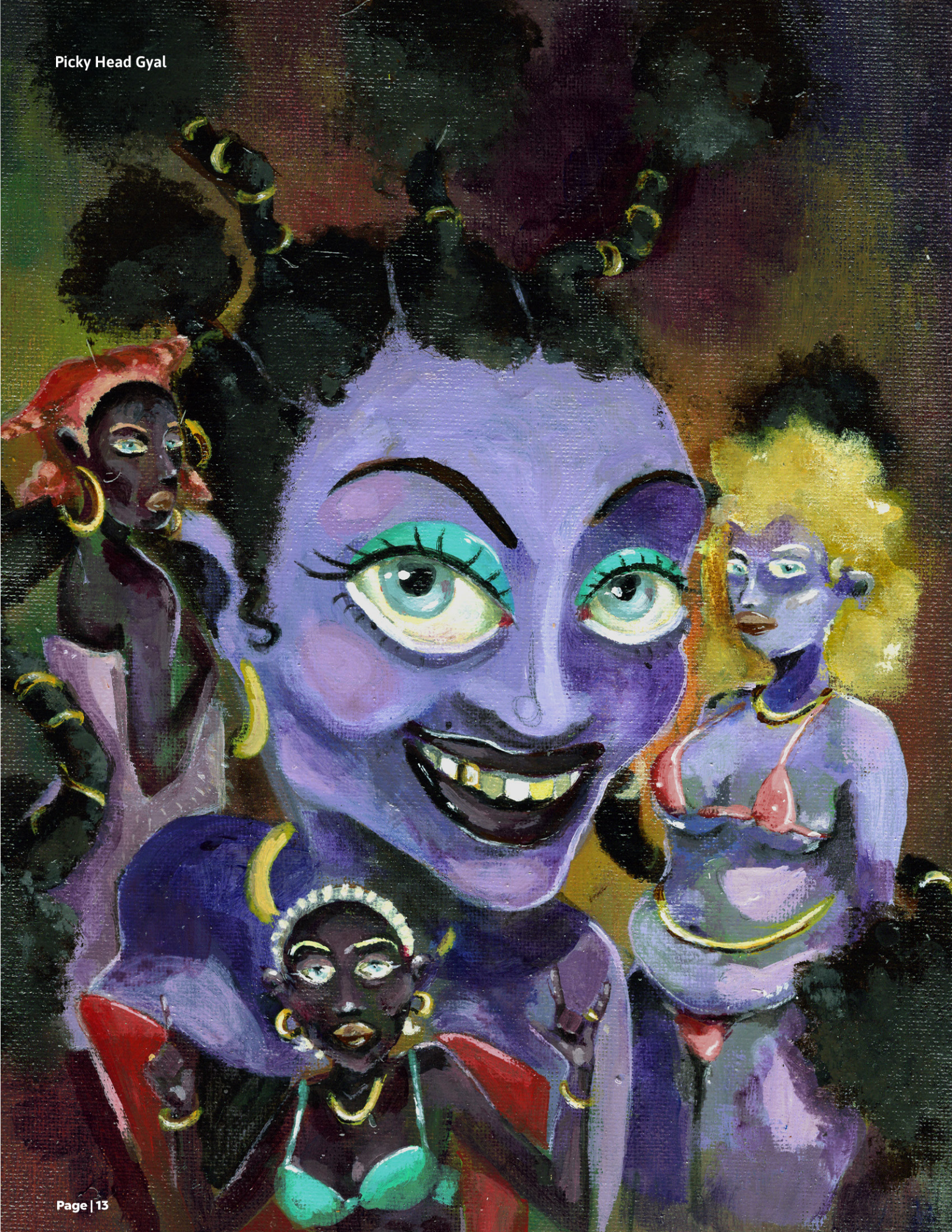


Riding in Cars with Boys



Something for Meg







*My* **QUEER**  
**FRIEND**





# MY QUEER FRIEND:

## THE JAMAICAN FASHION ICON

by Davina Bennett

Fashion is a universal language that, sadly, not everyone is fluent in, but it is the language that Neko Kelly was born speaking. At fifteen, I was a student at Clarendon College. At school I would see this slender, sassy, and unapologetic boy command the attention of all around him as he made the school corridors his runways and the classrooms his showrooms. People paid to see what he had on display. It was the beginning of greatness. He was confident, mesmerising, and bold. Years later, he's exactly who he has always been, with a bigger personality, a bigger crowd and one of the most memorable monikers in the business—Bootleg Rocstar. Now, he is one of my closest friends and a true inspiration. His journey is worth celebrating.



*Davina Bennett*

I stand so often and imagine the roots of a young boy from a fishing village called Old Harbour Bay, who has become the respected, well-recognized creative icon we love so much. Being openly queer in Jamaica, in a culture that is not always accepting, made it harder for the teenager to transition to his true potential. But this is what makes Neko not only exceptional at what he does, but an inspiration to others. Nothing could stop him from his destiny, and most definitely not discrimination and homophobia. Hard work, dedication and fulfilled potential is what makes him a true master of his craft and a game changer of the culture.

Working in this industry myself as an international model allows me to appreciate and value his work on another level. He is a creative genius beyond his years. Neeks has a special talent of creating a juxtaposition between time periods of fashion and styles which gave birth to the uniqueness of his amazing creations that wear the renowned tagline, “Styled to Roc”! With his work

becoming so nationally (and internationally) recognized, even his followers can say when someone is “styled to roc” before even he confirms it. He draws inspiration from our Jamaican people, from our streets, our art, our cultural references, our traditions, and our shared life experiences to create and style unique fashion that is light years ahead of his Jamaican contemporaries. Quite often Neko will style his clients for photoshoots today and tomorrow his brilliant ideas are on runways and being worn by influential figures around the world.

Each time he opens a door, he does so with the intention of letting it be known that he is unapologetically queer and a tremendously talented creative who deserves to be in the room. His approach means he's not just opening doors for himself but for other unapologetically queer Jamaicans who refuse to choose between their identities and their careers. An LGBT Person of the Year Award and a Prime Minister's Youth Award later—in the same year too—Neko is letting us know that LGBT Jamaicans deserve to be



appreciated for their talents and contributions to Jamaica, without their identities being weaponized against them. With every look, he serves us a reminder that even the once outcasted queer Jamaican from the ghetto has the power to be influential. It is up to us Jamaicans to make the Nekos of this nation the rule and not the exceptions.

He is my friend so pardon the obvious bias—lol—but no one is more deserving of being on the cover of this year's Pride Magazine than Neko Kelly. Visibility matters. Representation matters. I hope there's a young queer Jamaican out there reading this or watching the rise of Neko's career and feeling motivated to follow their dreams, despite what the dominant narrative is about their queerness. I hope they turn their own corridors into runways, their own spaces into showrooms, and, despite the odds, be present and true to themselves in every room that they enter.

I couldn't be any prouder of the slender, sassy, and unapologetic boy from Clarendon College with big dreams and even bigger talent that created his own lane for others to follow in Jamaica today.









# BAD LIKE THE BADDIE TWINS



From C-Squared to the baddest bitches on YouTube, the Baddie Twins are making waves and taking names. We interviewed them for Pride Magazine to quickly discuss their inspirations and aspirations, and here are their responses.

**PJM: Over 200,000 subscribers is a big deal! How did you build this platform?**

**BT:** We've been on YouTube since 2013, so it's been a long time—lol—but it definitely took a lot of time, consistency and dedication to get to 200K subscribers. And, of course, we got here by being our authentic selves and our supporters love and appreciate us for that.

**PJM: Using five words, how would you describe the "Baddie Twinz" brand?**

**BT:** We would definitely say Proud, Colourful, Authentic, Fashionable and Fearless.



**PJM: What were the early days of building your brand like?**

**BT:** Not gonna lie, it wasn't easy at all. We received so much hate from our own Jamaican people. As a result, we have to grow very thick skin. Once we got over caring what people thought and, also, being fearful, we blossomed into being the BaddieTwinz.



**PJM: What are your favourite and least favourite parts of being influencers?**

**BT:** Our favourite part of the influencer life is being able to inspire and help somebody who may be in a similar situation that we went through. We also really love creating content. There's no better feeling like uploading a new video or new content that you worked hard on and having people love and appreciate it. On the other hand, as an influencer/content creator, you sometimes

get discouraged or even run out of ways to be creative. There's also the fact that no matter what you do, you can never please everybody and somebody is always gonna find something to complain about.

**PJM: Despite all that you went through with homophobia in Jamaica, you still infuse so much Jamaicanness into what you do. Why is it important to you to ensure your content is still authentically Jamaican?**

**BT:** It's very important because we love our country and culture no matter what. Yes, we've been through horrible life threatening situations living in Jamaica but that's our country and we will always represent no matter what.



**PJM: How do you as YouTubers use your platform to advocate for the LGBT community?**

**BT:** We advocate by telling our story and making everybody know that we are proud of who we are in hopes of inspiring other people from our LGBT community especially those still living in Jamaica. We also definitely plan on doing some more motivational speeches in the near future.





**PJM:** Many persons don't know you guys were also musicians. Tell us a little bit about that part of your journey.

**BT:** LMFAO! That journey was very short lived. We grew up around music, so it's in our blood. Ions ago we created a duo called C-Squared and we wrote and recorded like 2 or 3 songs but then we didn't really do anything after that—lol—but maybe one day we'll record an EP and GAG the GWORLLS!

**PJM:** What's the next step in your career?

**BT:** Everything, and when we say that, that's what we mean—a little of everything. Our Baddie Sawwce is already on sale on our website; we got our "Talk Up Di Tingz" Podcast streaming on all platforms; we are working on a book; we wanna start a bag line soon; more acting, hosting more events, more fashion projects, fragrance line, music; our own reality show, etc.; lol—so yea we got a lot of work to do.

**PJM:** We have a lot of creatives and content creators in the Jamaican LGBT community, what advice would you give to new YouTubers/podcasters coming up?

**BT:** Our advice would be to definitely be yourself and never compromise no matter what because that's what your audience will appreciate most. Also, you have to be consistent and make sure that your content is QUALITY even if it may take you a bit longer to complete because that content represents you and once you put that content out it will be out there forever.





# PRIDEJA REWIND



We promised you *"The Pride of Your Life!"* and we delivered in fine style. Our theme for Pride Week this year is not an attempt to be braggadocious. It signifies the importance of celebration and enjoyment in Jamaica's LGBT community that became even more pivotal after two years of significantly reduced community activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

For those who could not celebrate with us or want to relive the moments, here are some images from Pride Fun Day and Pride Breakfast Party so that PRIDEJa 2022 may live on in our hearts and minds forever.



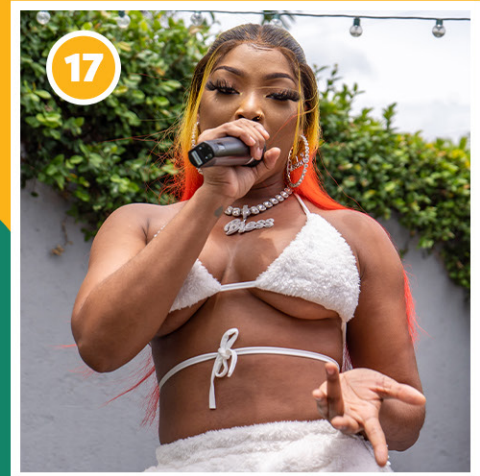
**Photos 1-9:** Patrons at Pride Fun Day at Hope Gardens on Emancipation Day (August 1) celebrating the opening of Pride Week 2022.

**Photos 10-21:** Not even rain could slow down the excitement at Pride Breakfast Party in New Kingston on Independence Day (August 6).













# *The* JAMAICAN FASHION *7* *con*





“

Fashion is a  
Language that  
Neko Kelly was  
born speaking.

”



**I would see this slender, sassy,  
and unapologetic boy command  
the attention of all around him  
as he made the school corridors  
his runways and the classrooms**











# HUMANS OF PRiDE

by Dahlia Thomas

Humans of Pride features LGBT Jamaicans telling real stories about themselves and other LGBT people in Jamaica. It is meant to be raw and honest, while showcasing the collateral beauty that often shines through even the most painful of stories. Stories of struggle and stories of hope, stories of triumph and stories of ongoing journeys. Say hello to these *Humans of Pride*.



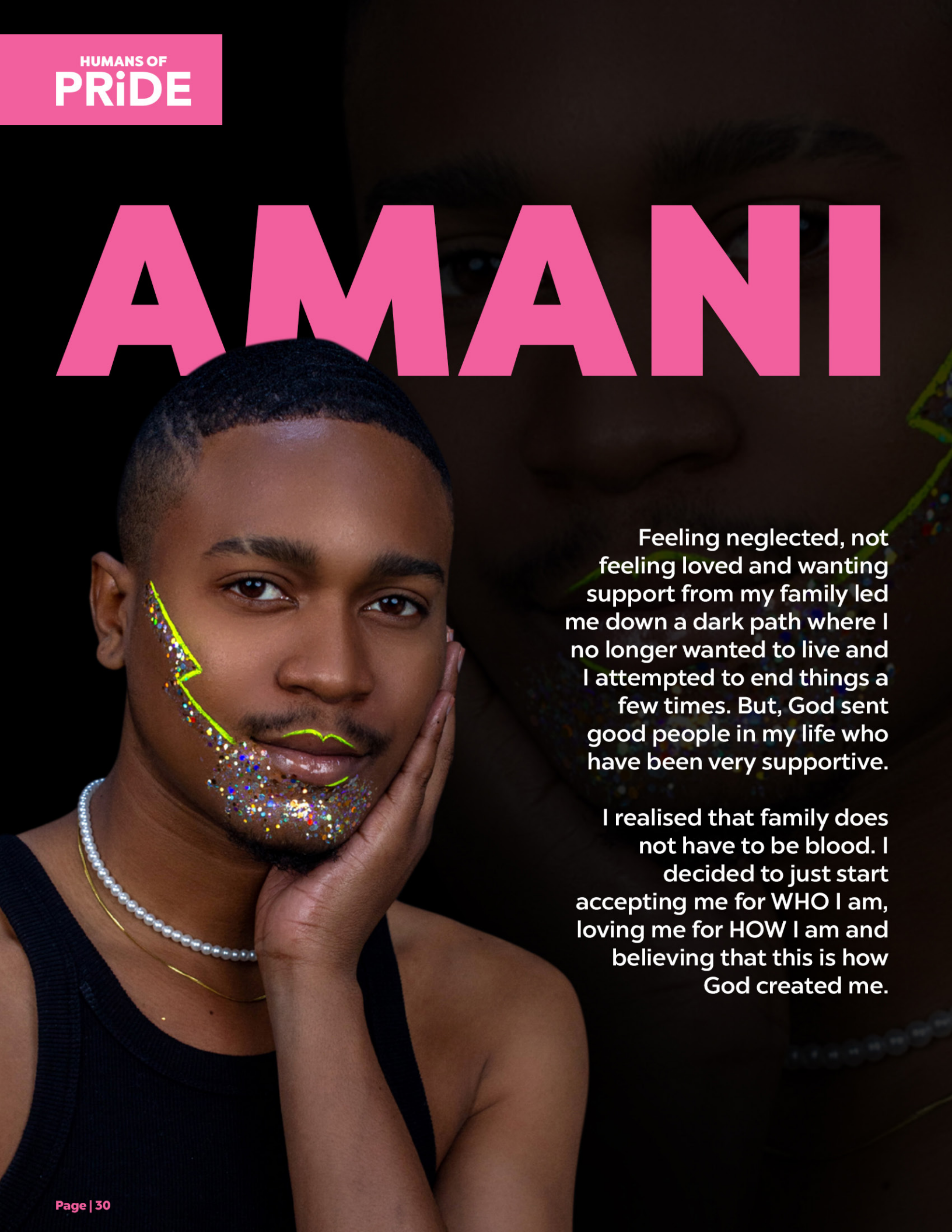
# DONIQUE

My inspiration comes from my journey. My wrongs, my rights, and my internal processing helped me to learn and grow tremendously.

My unapologetic style, determination, and expression made me who I am today, a strong person.



# AMANI



Feeling neglected, not feeling loved and wanting support from my family led me down a dark path where I no longer wanted to live and I attempted to end things a few times. But, God sent good people in my life who have been very supportive.

I realised that family does not have to be blood. I decided to just start accepting me for WHO I am, loving me for HOW I am and believing that this is how God created me.



# RENAË

I found my way into advocacy through coming out on national television in 2012 at a debate being held at UWI. Javed Jaghai was representing JFLAG and was brilliant and unapologetically queer.

Back then, not a lot of people were out and talking about the issues in public. I was so moved by the entire experience that I went up and spoke, not realising it was being filmed by JNN. In that moment I felt so empowered and proud of who I was and am, and it was in that moment that I knew I was meant to be an advocate; a human rights defender.





# ALEX

My focus is living a deeply fulfilling life. I don't believe that can be achieved by rigidly defining one's self as any one thing and as such I've found it challenging to describe myself. I'm transgender (FTM), I'm a businessman, a bartender, a freelance writer, among other things.

Right now I'm making my way through the cosmos and making the most of my life. I just want to say to all queer folk and all humans in general — I see you. Life is hard. Life is good. Life is confusing. But the most important thing is that you be your authentic self and live a fulfilling life.



# SAINT

Society will put a cap on your legacy because of their own insecurities and ignorance.

Do not allow persons who have never fought as hard as you did to limit your success because their intellect does not allow them to see that your sexuality is only a fraction of who you are.



# PARIS

I've never been one to let my identity as a trans woman slow me down. Life was given for enjoyment, so I live my life as freely and safely as I can.

However, I am also very involved in the community and try my best to give back. So any likkle thing happening in the community I'm there giving my support."





# TG IDOL

My life as a trans woman in Jamaica has been very difficult. From foster care, to homelessness, to moving parish to parish due to threats, to being abandoned by my family because of my identity, to being a victim of human trafficking.

Back then, there weren't all the identities they have today but I had a sense of who I was from a young age. Learning I was a trans woman was traumatic for me because of the stigma and discrimination. However, I am still here and grateful for the opportunity to share my story.



# GLYNN

When I was 16, my whole family turned their backs on me for choosing this life. A few years ago I thought I wasn't going to make it but the universe had other plans for me. I'm standing here today as living proof that only you have power over what becomes of your life. Keep your head up, be PROUD of who you are and remember a clean heart and mind go a long way.



# SHAUNA

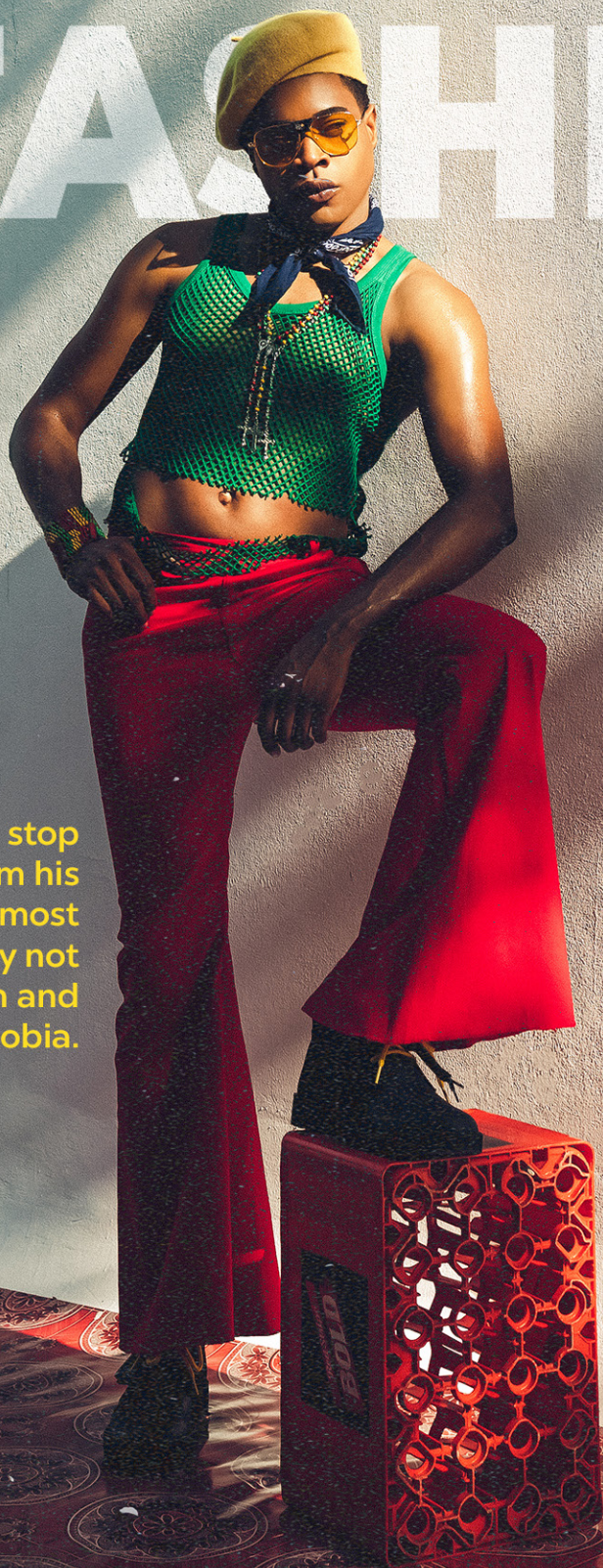


I struggled with deciding even what my pronouns were. I researched and actually heard someone introduce themselves as “they/them” and was like “Oh shit, I like that more than him or her,” so I go with they/them and being non-binary for now.

I’m living my truth and I recommend everyone else to do so and be happy.

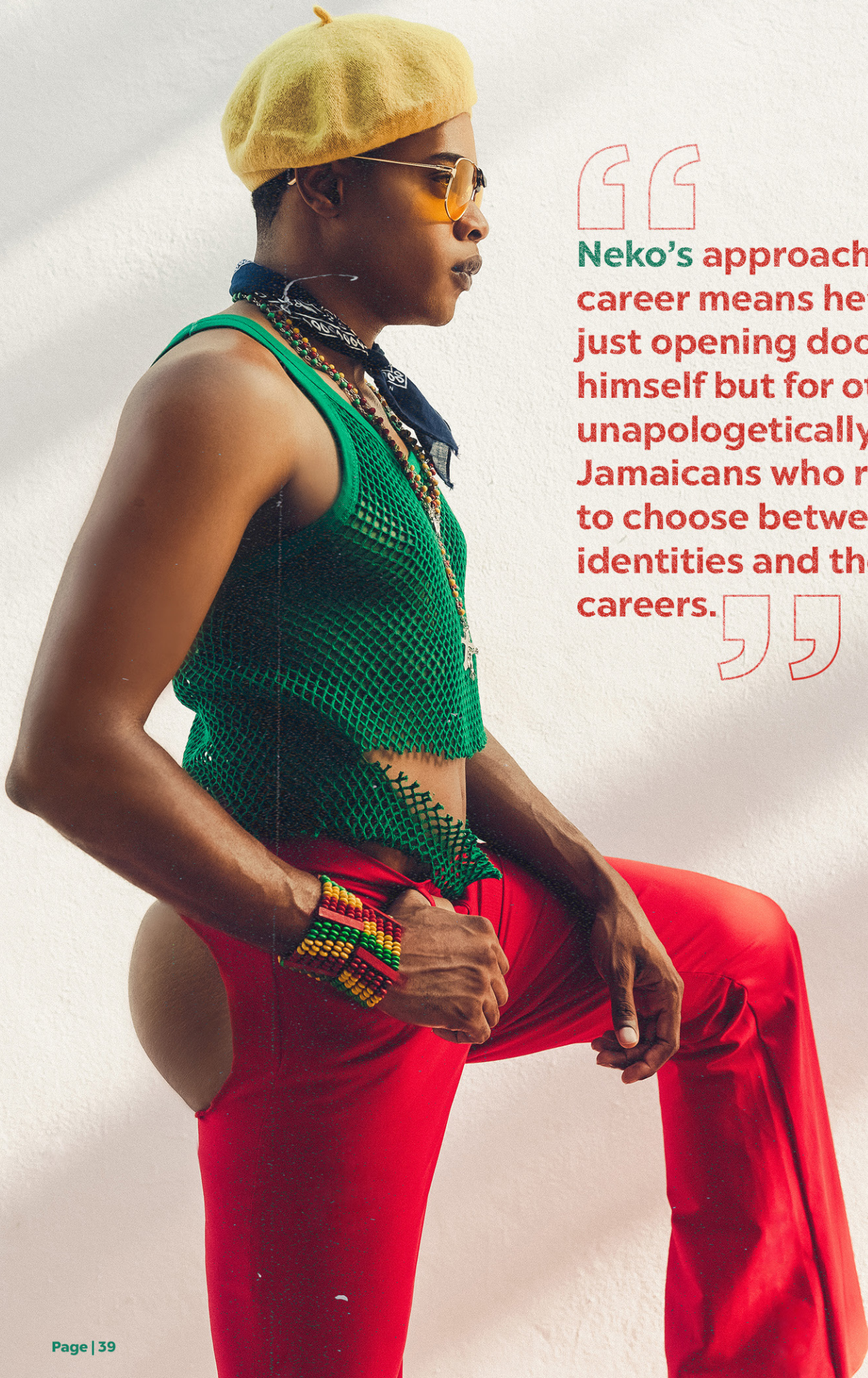


# The JAMAICAN FASHION *7*con



Nothing could stop Neko Kelly from his destiny and most definitely not discrimination and homophobia.





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