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Creative Activist . Designer. Writer. Researcher. Campaigner. Producer. Entrepreneur. Speaker. Host. Ethical Fashion Ambassador. Educator. Creator. Collaborator. Model. Artist. Consultant. Photographer.

There are many words that describe the things I do. But life is rarely simple enough that a word covers it. My passion in life is to help find sustainable ways of living, ways for us all to express ourselves as individuals, to find a type of politics that we can engage with, and for us to love the natural world, not simply take from it.

*"I choose a future that is driven by love and respect not fear and greed. We'll all be on the same side and working together in support of each other. We'll be using our creative energy to solve the world's problems and we'll be having fun whilst we're doing it. The*

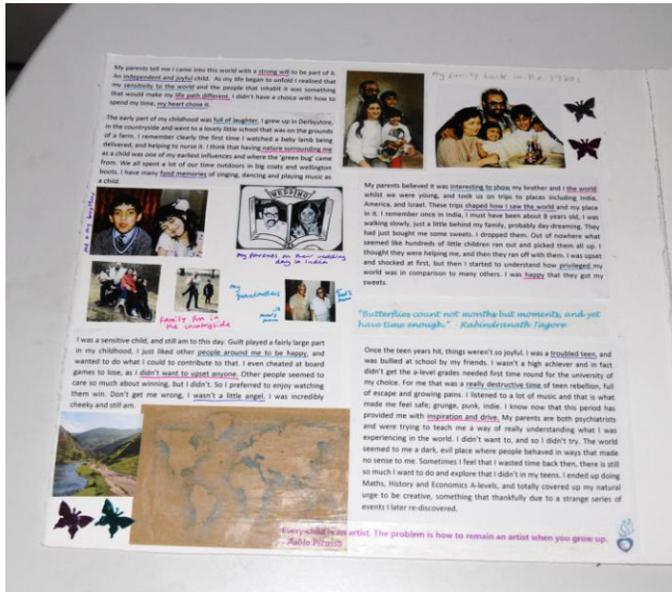
*future I choose is one where it is sexy and cool to care about the planet and its people."*

My story is one of turning painful traumas into courage to create the change I see needed in the world. I lean on the side of romance as I tell my tale, but please understand this attitude hasn't come easily. I see what the world can be and how people can behave both positively and negatively. I have been scared and I have been angry, but my strength to deal with all life throws at me, is from trying to accept that people aren't perfect and choosing to see the good in them. I use bad experiences as a way to learn and grow. That said there are days when I would like to stay under the duvet and watch my favourite films. There are moments when I feel that I am responsible for some of the awful things that have happened around me. But that is just life, there are always great days and difficult days, but it is how you choose to deal with them that matters.

*"You Must be the change you wish to see in the world."*  
~ Mahatma Gandhi

My inspiration comes from everything I have absorbed; places i have been, people I love, people I have read about, books, films, songs, the internet. As I tell you part of my story (there is always so much more that could be shared), I hope you connect with some of the things, people and experiences that have inspired me along the way.

*"Let the beauty of what you love be what you do."* ~ Rumi



My parents tell me I came into this world with a strong will to be part of it. An independent and joyful child. As my life began to unfold I realised that my sensitivity to the world and the people that inhabit it was something that would make my life path different. I didn't have a choice with how to spend my time, my heart chose it.

The early part of my childhood was full of laughter. I grew up in Derbyshire, in the countryside and went to a lovely little school that was on the grounds of a farm. I remember clearly the first time I watched a baby lamb being delivered, and helping to nurse it. I think that having nature surrounding me as a child was one of my earliest influences and where the 'green bug' came from. We all spent a lot of our time outdoors in big coats and wellington boots. I have many fond memories of singing, dancing and playing music as a child.

My parents believed it was interesting to show my brother and I the world whilst we were young, and took us on trips to places including India, America, and Israel. These trips shaped how I saw the world and my place in

it. I remember once in India, I must have been about 8 years old, I was walking slowly, just a little behind my family, probably day-dreaming. They had just bought me some sweets. I dropped them. Out of nowhere what seemed like hundreds of little children ran out and picked them all up. I thought they were helping me, and then they ran off with them. I was upset and shocked at first, but then I started to understand how privileged my world was in comparison to many others. I was happy that they got my sweets.

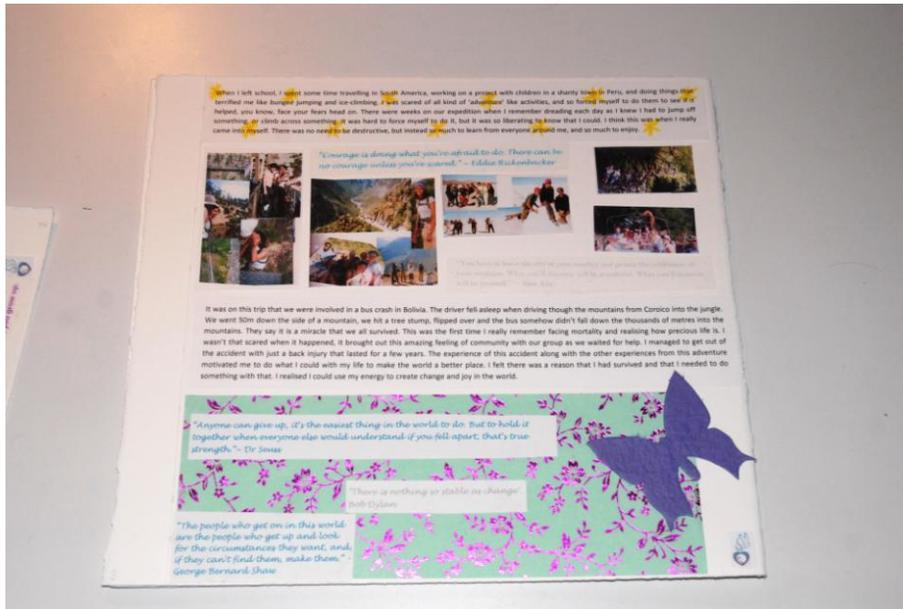
*"Butterflies count not months but moments, and yet have time enough." - Rabindranath Tagore*

I was a sensitive child, and still am to this day. Guilt played a fairly large part in my childhood, I just liked other people around me to be happy, and wanted to do what I could to contribute to that. I even cheated at board games to lose, as I didn't want to upset anyone. Other people seemed to care so much about winning, but I didn't. So I preferred to enjoy watching them win. Don't get me wrong, I wasn't a little angel. I was incredibly cheeky and still am.

Once the teen years hit, things weren't so joyful. I was a troubled teen, and was bullied at school by my friends. I wasn't a high achiever and in fact didn't get the A-level grades needed first time round for the university of my choice. For me that was a really destructive time of teen rebellion, full of escape and growing pains. I listened to a lot of music and that is what made me feel safe; grunge, punk, indie. I know now that this period has provided me with inspiration and drive. My parents are both psychiatrists and were trying to teach me a way of really understanding what I was experiencing in the world. I didn't want to, and so I didn't try. The world seemed to me a dark, evil place where people behaved in ways that made no sense to me. Sometimes I feel that I wasted time back then, there is still so much I want to do and explore that I didn't in my teens. I ended up doing Maths, History and Economics A-levels, and totally covered up my natural urge to be creative, something that thankfully due to a strange series of events I later re-discovered.

*“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist when you grow up.” - Pablo Picasso*

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When I left school, I spent some time travelling in South America, working on a project with children in a shanty town in Peru, and doing things that terrified me like bungee jumping and ice-climbing. I was scared of all kind of ‘adventure’ like activities, and so forced myself to do them to see if it helped, you know, face your fears head on. There were weeks on our expedition when I remember dreading each day as I knew I had to jump off something, or climb across something. It was hard to force myself to do it, but it was so liberating to know that I could. I think this was when I really came into myself. There was no need to be destructive, but instead so much to learn from everyone around me, and so much to enjoy.

*“Courage is doing what you’re afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you’re scared.” ~ Eddie Rickenbacker*

*“You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. What you’ll discover will be wonderful. What you’ll discover will be yourself.” ~ Alan Ada*

It was on this trip that we were involved in a bus crash in Bolivia. The driver fell asleep when driving through the mountains from Coroico into the jungle. We went 50m down the side of a mountain, we hit a tree stump, flipped over and the bus somehow didn’t fall down the thousands of metres into the mountains. They say it is a miracle that we all survived. This was the first time I really remember facing mortality and realising how precious life is. I wasn’t that scared when it happened, it brought out this amazing feeling of community with our group as we waited for help. I managed to get out of the accident with just a back injury that lasted for a few years. The experience of this accident along with the other experiences from this adventure motivated me to do what I could with my life to make the world a better place. I felt there was a reason that I had survived and that I needed to do something with that. I realised I could use my energy to create change and joy in the world.

*“Anyone can give up, it’s the easiest thing in the world to do. But to hold it together when everyone else would understand if you fell apart, that’s true strength.”  
Dr Seuss*

*“There is nothing so stable as change”.  
Bob Dylan*

*The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and, if they can’t find them, make them. - George Bernard Shaw*

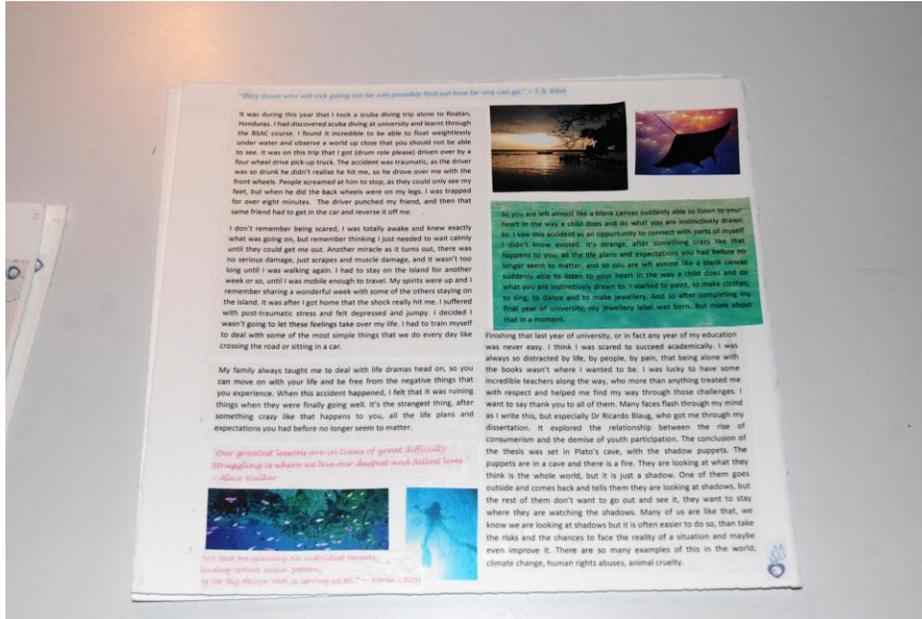


I went on to study Politics at Leeds University. It was really interesting to learn how the world worked on that global level, and why things were the way they were. I used my time at university to learn all I could, and to work with different kinds of people, like teaching English to Asylum seekers, many of whom were from Iraq. I spent my summer holidays working on interesting projects like with the Citizenship Foundation, Peaceworkers UK, and running different volunteer projects like playschemes for kids in disadvantaged areas of Rural Wales. The thing that really stood out for me though was my time in Bulgaria. I spent a summer working in an orphanage for teenagers in Bulgaria. They were the children that had been abandoned when the Soviet Union collapsed. It was one of the hardest things I had ever done. They weren't much younger than me, just four or five years. They had been left because of politics. Some of them were mentally unwell, sometimes all would be fine and we would be laughing and then the next moment, I would be held up against the wall by my neck. I always felt safe there though, and inspired by the strength of the kids. One of the strongest memories I have is of Stefka and her story. I think she was 12, she was an

identical twin, and an amazing artist. She didn't really speak much English, and my Bulgarian was improving every day but still left a lot of gaps. She would draw pictures and I would sit with her and we would share the warmest smiles. Whilst I was there, her twin sister who was adopted by a French family came to visit. It was heart breaking. The two girls were the same flesh and blood, but they could not speak to each other. I still have the picture in my head of the two of them standing next to each other, one healthy and glamorous, the other so skinny and drawn. I went back to the orphanage that year for Christmas. It was a surprise, and I turned up on the steps on Christmas Eve. It was one of the best Christmas' ever (the food was awful and served cold) but the snow was so deep and we shared so much laughter. I am still in touch with many of the kids that were in the orphanage, especially now we have facebook, and always meet up with them if we are in the same place. I wanted to go back constantly, but I made a sensible decision that if I wanted to do humanitarian work that I needed to learn to not get too attached but to do my best in the moment and then try to move on.

*"The day came when the risk it took to remain tightly closed in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to bloom."*  
Anais Nin

I was lucky to have a third year out of university where I got to work for a Congressman in DC (now Senator Cardin of Maryland) and an MP in Westminster (John Battle MP, Leeds West) The experience of working in these places at 21 was mixed for me. I loved it in many ways, but at the same time, I felt there was so much that wasn't right about the system, the way decisions were made, the priorities. I was planning on a career in International Development when I left university, so I was just trying to learn all I could. In my spare time I volunteered for the Society for International Development and the Make Poverty History campaign.



*"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go." ~ T.S. Eliot*

It was during this year that I took a scuba diving trip alone to Roatan, Honduras. I had discovered scuba diving at university and learnt through the BSAC course. I found it incredible to be able to float weightlessly under water and observe a world up close that you should not be able to see. It was on this trip that I got (drum role please) driven over by a four wheel drive pick-up truck. The accident was traumatic, as the driver was so drunk he didn't realise he hit me, so he drove over me with the front wheels. People screamed at him to stop, as they could only see my feet, but when he did the back wheels were on my legs. I was trapped for over eight minutes. The driver punched my friend, and then that same friend had to get in the car and reverse it off me. I don't remember being scared, I was totally awake and knew exactly what was going on, but remember thinking I just needed to wait calmly until they could get me out. Another miracle as it turns out, there was no serious damage, just scrapes and muscle damage,

and it wasn't too long until I was walking again. I had to stay on the island for another week or so, until I was mobile enough to travel. My spirits were up and I remember sharing a wonderful week with some of the others staying on the island. It was after I got home that the shock really hit me. I suffered with post-traumatic stress and felt depressed and jumpy. I decided I wasn't going to let these feelings take over my life. I had to train myself to deal with some of the most simple things that we do every day like crossing the road or sitting in a car.

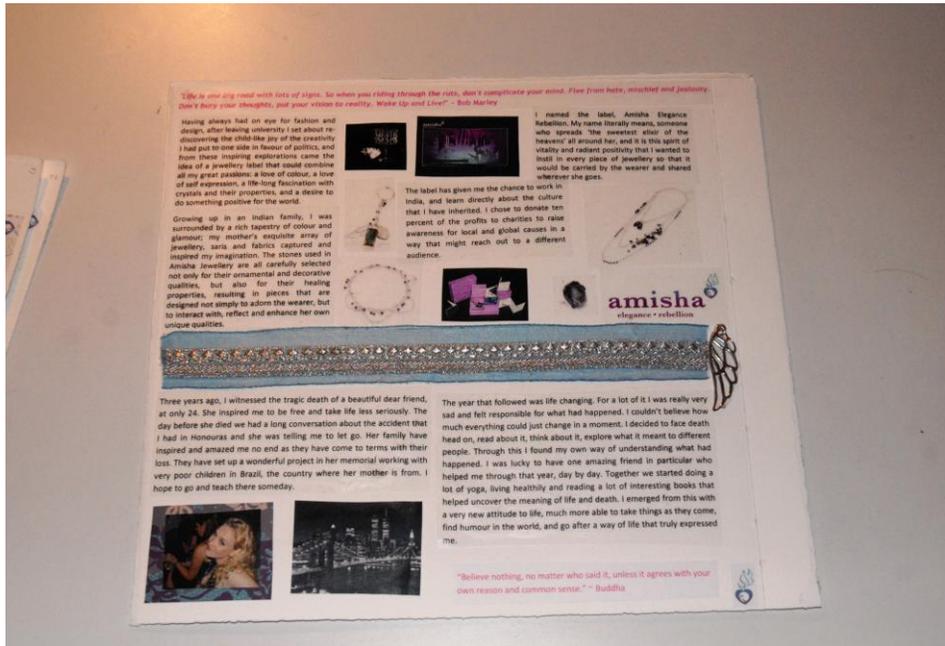
My family always taught me to deal with life dramas head on, so you can move on with your life and be free from the negative things that you experience. When this accident happened, I felt that it was ruining things when they were finally going well. It's the strangest thing, after something crazy like that happens to you, all the life plans and expectations you had before no longer seem to matter.

*"Our greatest lessons are in times of great difficulty ... Struggling is where we live our deepest and fullest lives."*  
Alice Walker

*"We each are spinning our individual threads, lending texture, colour, pattern, to the 'big design' that is serving us all."* Karen Casey

So you are left almost like a blank canvas suddenly able to listen to your heart in the way a child does and do what you are instinctively drawn to. I saw this accident as an opportunity to connect with parts of myself I didn't know existed. It's strange, after something crazy like that happens to you, all the life plans and expectations you had before no longer seem to matter, and so you are left almost like a blank canvas suddenly able to listen to your heart in the way a child does and do what you are instinctively drawn to. I started to paint, to make clothes, to sing, to dance and to make jewellery. And so after completing my final year of university, my jewellery label was born. But more about that in a moment.

Finishing that last year of university, or in fact any year of my education was never easy. I think I was scared to succeed academically. I was always so distracted by life, by people, by pain, that being alone with the books wasn't where I wanted to be. I was lucky to have some incredible teachers along the way, who more than anything treated me with respect and helped me find my way through those challenges. I want to say thank you to all of them. Many faces flash through my mind as I write this, but especially Dr Ricardo Blaug, who got me through my dissertation. It explored the relationship between the rise of consumerism and the demise of youth participation. The conclusion of the thesis was set in Plato's cave, with the shadow puppets. The puppets are in a cave and there is a fire. They are looking at what they think is the whole world, but it is just a shadow. One of them goes outside and comes back and tells them they are looking at shadows, but the rest of them don't want to go out and see it, they want to stay where they are watching the shadows. Many of us are like that, we know we are looking at shadows but it is often easier to do so, than take the risks and the chances to face the reality of a situation and maybe even improve it. There are so many examples of this in the world; climate change, human rights abuses, animal cruelty.



*"Life is one big road with lots of signs. So when you riding through the ruts, don't complicate your mind. Flee from hate, mischief and jealousy. Don't bury your thoughts, put your vision to reality. Wake Up and Live!" - Bob Marley*

Having always had an eye for fashion and design, after leaving university I set about re-discovering the child-like joy of the creativity I had put to one side in favour of politics, and from these inspiring explorations came the idea of a jewellery label that could combine all my great passions: a love of colour, a love of self expression, a life-long fascination with crystals and their properties, and a desire to do something positive for the world.

Growing up in an Indian family, I was surrounded by a rich tapestry of colour and glamour; my mother's exquisite array of jewellery, saris and fabrics captured and inspired my imagination. The stones used in Amisha Jewellery are all carefully selected not only for their ornamental and decorative qualities, but also for their healing properties, resulting in pieces that are

designed not simply to adorn the wearer, but to interact with, reflect and enhance her own unique qualities.

I named the label, Amisha Elegance Rebellion. My name literally means, someone who spreads 'the sweetest elixir of the heavens' all around her, and it is this spirit of vitality and radiant positivity that I wanted to instil in every piece of jewellery so that it would be carried by the wearer and shared wherever she goes.

The label has given me the chance to work in India, and learn directly about the culture that I have inherited. I chose to donate ten percent of the profits to charities to raise awareness for local and global causes in a way that might reach out to a different audience.

Three years ago, I witnessed the tragic death of a beautiful dear friend, at only 24. She inspired me to be free and take life less seriously. The day before she died we had a long conversation about the accident that I had in Honouras and she was telling me to let go. Her family have inspired and amazed me no end as they have come to terms with their loss. They have set up a wonderful project in her memorial working with very poor children in Brazil, the country where her mother is from. I hope to go and teach there someday.

The year that followed was life changing. For a lot of it I was really very sad and felt responsible for what had happened. I couldn't believe how much everything could just change in a moment. I was lucky to have one amazing friend in particular who helped me through that year, day by day. Together we started doing a lot of yoga, living healthily and reading a lot of interesting books that helped uncover the meaning of life and death. I emerged from this with a very new attitude to life, much more able to take things as they come, find humour in the world, and go after a way of life that truly expressed me.

*"Believe nothing, no matter who said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and common sense." ~ Buddha*



*'It is not enough to follow world politics, see films and read the prize-winning best seller. This is superficial, you need to go deep in order to understand who you are, what the world is and how things could be better. This involves culture which can only be acquired by self-education: human beings should mirror the world.'* Vivienne Westwood

I had withdrawn from most people when dealing with my grief, just working in my studio alone on my jewellery label, and only regularly seeing a few friends and family members. I was ready to get back out there. My journey led me to ethical fashion. I was interested in the bigger picture, and sustainable fashion covers so many industries, and affects so many people all over the world. We all wear clothes, and so it is a powerful way of understanding how our lives directly impact on others, and how we can change this in a positive way.

This decision has led me to work with some amazing people and organisations including the Ethical Fashion Forum, and The Hub. Through this I have met many of the dearest friends in my life, the people who remind me every day the importance of being brave, and spending time

working on ideas that are creating a radically better world. For the last two years everyday has been filled with conversation on sustainability, innovation and collaboration. Questions like how can we work together to create real change in this world. I know there are many more adventures ahead of me with these people.

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." - Margaret Mead*

*"There are three words that convey the secret of the art of living; the secret of all success & happiness. ONE WITH LIFE. Being one with life is being one with now. You then realise that you don't live your life, but life lives you. Life is the dancer, and you are the dance." Eckhart Tolle*

This year I founded Think Act Vote, to inspire us to think positively about our future and how everything we do on a daily basis shapes our world. I have been asking everyone to share the future that they choose, with the hope that we can inspire ourselves and each other to live a life that goes towards creating it.

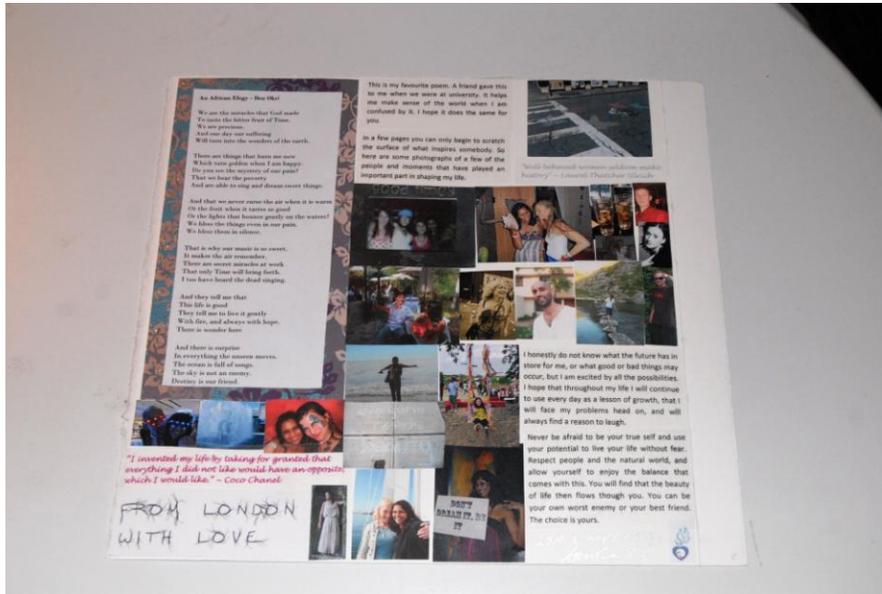
"What's The Future You Choose?"

*"Problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them." ~ Albert Einstein*

*"The Future I choose is fitter , healthier, happier , less greedy , more liveable , more equal and beautifully designed " ~ Wayne Hemmingsway*

*"The Future I choose is to fight to end poverty not keep people dependent but without gimmicks." ~ John Bird*

*"If you think you are too small to make a difference, you have never been in bed with a mosquito" Anita Roddick*



In a few pages you can only begin to scratch the surface of what inspires somebody. So here are some photographs of some of the people and moments that have played an important part in my life.

This is my favourite poem. It helps me make sense of the world when I am confused by it. I hope it does the same for you.

## An African Elegy - Ben Okri

We are the miracles that God made  
To taste the bitter fruit of Time.  
We are precious.  
And one day our suffering  
Will turn into the wonders of the earth.

There are things that burn me now  
Which turn golden when I am happy.

Do you see the mystery of our pain?  
That we bear the poverty  
And are able to sing and dream sweet things.

And that we never curse the air when it is warm  
Or the fruit when it tastes so good  
Or the lights that bounce gently on the waters?  
We bless the things even in our pain.  
We bless them in silence.

That is why our music is so sweet.  
It makes the air remember.  
There are secret miracles at work  
That only Time will bring forth.  
I too have heard the dead singing.

And they tell me that  
This life is good  
They tell me to live it gently  
With fire, and always with hope.  
There is wonder here

And there is surprise  
In everything the unseen moves.  
The ocean is full of songs.  
The sky is not an enemy.  
Destiny is our friend.

*"Well behaved women seldom make history" Laurel Thatcher Ulrich*

*"I invented my life by taking for granted that everything I did not like would have an opposite, which I would like."*  
*Coco Chanel*

I honestly do not know what the future has in store for me, or what good or bad things may occur, but I am excited by all the possibilities. I hope that throughout my life I will continue to use every day as a reason to grow, that I will face my problems head on, and will always find a reason to laugh.

Never be afraid to be your true self and use your potential to live your life without fear. Respect people and the natural world, and allow yourself to enjoy the balance that comes with this. You will find that the beauty of life then flows through you. You can be your own worst enemy or your best friend. The choice is yours.

Love & Happiness, Amisha x x