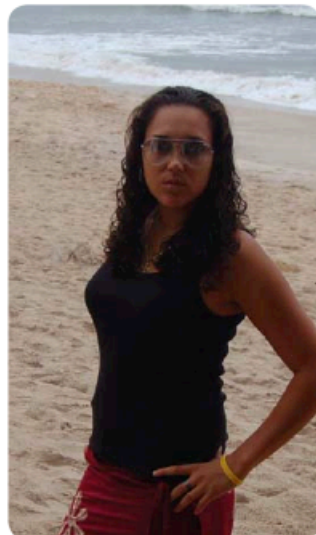




SOUL SISTERS

Two ambitious women spearhead Accra's DA MOVEMENT



In 2007, two women from seemingly opposite worlds collided in a small neighborhood in Accra, Ghana. Naa Sheka, born to a Canadian mother and Ghanaian father in Vancouver, British Columbia, and Sena, who spends her time between Ghana and Budapest, Hungary, met at a mutual friends house. "We were both 'halfcasts', but she grew up in Canada and was eager to learn about Ghana and her place in it, whereas I grew up in Ghana and had a completely different upbringing", Sena explains. "I am both African and European, black and white, I have lived in and experienced both worlds and am constantly drawing energy from both my homes." An MC/singer who is already making her mark in Europe and Africa, Sena's style can be somewhat defined as a mix between reggae, spoken word, dancehall and jazz.

Nash, as her friends call her, visited Ghana as a child and was baptized there, although she spent virtually her entire life in Canada. "Moving to Ghana was difficult, but since I was connected by blood and spirit, it made it easier for me to connect with the people and the culture. I love Ghana. It changed my life because it's so important to know your roots and yourself". Nash, a basketball player for most of her life, decided to take a break to pursue a degree which led her to the University of Ghana in 2007. Nash, whose full name means Lady Money in the Ga dialect, became very interested in local textile production and was inspired to start designing clothing that fused North American styles with Ghanaian patterns and symbols.

Both Naa Sheka and Sena are using their creative talents to spearhead a movement in Ghana called "Da Movement". I chatted with these two ambitious ladies to find out more about Da Movement as well as their personal projects.

TRACE: Tell me about Da Movement. How did it begin?

SENA: Da movement began in Accra with a group of young artists like myself who don't have the funds or the capacity to 'hit it big' without an audience to help us develop our craft. We were frustrated with how stagnant the music world is on the smaller scale. We started by organizing small shows and hosting open mike sessions with Accra's up and coming talent and it's been pretty successful.

NAASHEKA: My vision is to see the movement expand to an International level—doing collaborations with various artists. This movement can impact Ghana by helping local artists gain exposure—giving these artists a chance to excel in music and take it to another level, by embracing consciousness and Ghanaian pride through arts and entertainment. Since the world is so connected today with technology it is easier to envision the broader impact of this movement.

TRACE: Nash, what inspired you to start designing?

NAASHEKA: I've always had an artistic side and I've been a keen observer of style and fashion. I wanted to fuse my love of fashion with my instinctive business sense to do something unique and meaningful, drawing upon my experiences in North America and in Ghana.

TRACE: How does the production of your clothes impact the people of Ghana at a grassroots level?

NAASHEKA: My clothes celebrate the dynamic identity of Ghanaians. On a more specific level, my clothes are produced by Ghanaians who work under a Fair-Trade agreement with me, which not only benefits the workers involved but also the country's economy.

I hand select the materials from the markets in Accra, Ghana. Most of the designs are made with colorful textiles that are high quality wax print cotton or linen. I use "Adinkra Symbols", which are known throughout West Africa. Each symbol has a deep spiritual meaning or contains a life lesson.

TRACE: What is your vision for the future of Da Movement?

SENA: Da Movement has made a small mark in Accra, and I would be happy if Ghana had five or six cities with a similar programs to Da Movement, helping young artists to produce something with their own hands. If that happens, I will be happy.

NAASHEKA: I want to keep expanding and designing styles people appreciate globally. I also want my designs to empower Ghanaians and to reflect the richness of Ghanaian culture worldwide. I want 'Da Movement' to be a voice for social justice and consciousness for Ghana, Africa, and throughout the world.

SENA: is currently touring Europe and just recently launched two albums with the groups Irie Maffia & Barabas Lorinc Ekelectric. Check out her Myspace at www.myspace.com/dagadusena

NAASHEKA's clothing line is available in 7 regions worldwide: Vancouver, BC, Canada (Miranda's Hat, Small World & DeLino), Brooklyn, New York (Fresthetic), Bellingham, Washington (Fairhaven), Accra, Ghana, (Sun Trade - Kati Torda Beads), and Budapest, Hungary (Keuna). Check out www.westafricanfashion.com for more or to order online.

