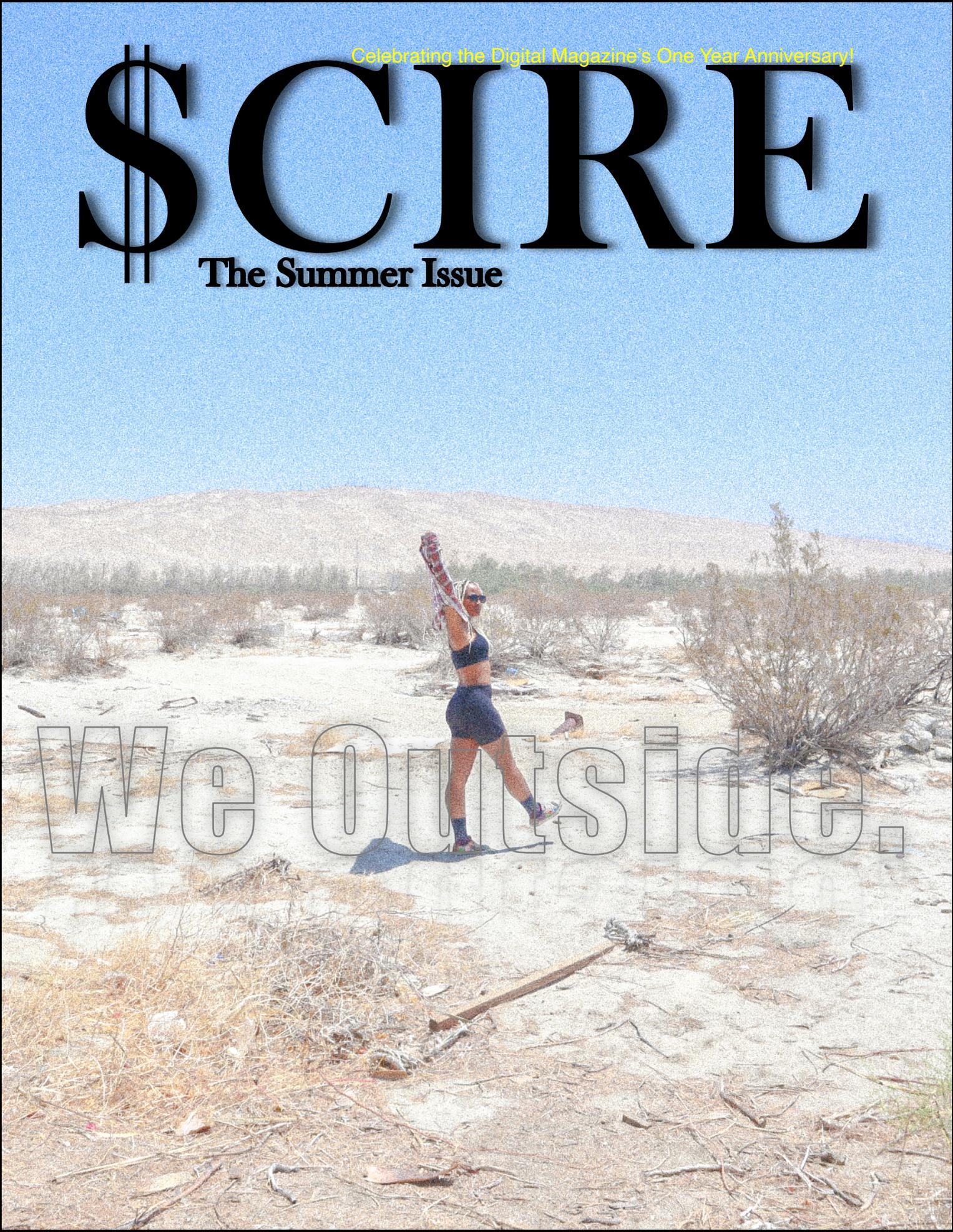


Celebrating the Digital Magazine's One Year Anniversary!

# SCIRE

The Summer Issue



we outside.

# What's Inside



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TALL



# What is happening in Ethiopia?



“War sounds like there’s two almost equal enemies fighting, and this doesn’t sound like that. This doesn’t sound like two armies fighting”

“It’s not. They’re intentionally targeting civilians, and that’s what makes this a **genocide**. A crisis.”



Press [play](#) to watch/listen as Social Justice Activist, **Agazi Agbay** and I discuss the current state of Tigray, and ways we can all get involved.



THE **TREVOR** PROJECT  
Saving Young LGBTQ Lives

## June

Dance, Celebrate, and Educate

**Pride Month**  
**African-American Music**  
**Appreciation Month**  
**Juneteenth**

**The Trevor Project** is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning youth.



## July

Stay cool with some deserts

**National Ice Cream Month**  
**7/11 Free Slurpee Day**



## August

Support, Volunteer, and Donate

**Black Business Month**  
**Back to School Month**

**Kids In Need Foundation** believes every child in America should have equal opportunity and access to a quality education.

Home Buying & Selling

**How I bought my home in  
Los Angeles, California**

**How I sold my home in  
Colorado Springs, Colorado**



Press [play](#) to watch/listen as I discuss my journey

## COVID, Career, and Life Hacks



Eight Questions

Three Professionals

Endless Gems

# Ashleigh Owens

Writer

Consultant

Mental Health Advocate



Ashleigh is an Ohio native, currently residing in the DMV.

*“I’ve always used writing as a form of release. Once I began sharing my words with the world, I realized that people cared about and learned from what I had to say.”*

## **How/Why did you get into your current line of work?**

My day job of technology consulting came about from my love of technology and computers. I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do so after graduation the next step was consulting to try out different roles within information technology.

I’ve always used writing as a form of release. Once I began sharing my words with the world, I realized that people cared about and learned from what I had to say.

As someone who has struggled with mental illness for much of my life, I know the importance of advocating for mental health treatments, resources, and experiences. There is still a great deal of stigma surrounding mental health not just in the world, but within the black community. This stigma prevents those who are struggling from talking about their experiences and/or seeking treatment.

## **What’s number one on your bucket list?**

Nothing came to mind. There is so much that I want to do but I don’t think I have a number one.

## **What’s something you’re interested in learning?**

More about visual design. I’m going in the User Experience Design field and after taking my Visual Design course this semester, would be interested in diving deeper.

## **What piece of advice would you give your teenage/college-age self?**

Live. Get help. Life is not meant to be spent constantly hating it and yourself.

**How has social media/internet/news played a role in your field/line of work specifically? Give us the tea! Good bad and ugly!**

Social media, news, and trends have definitely affected both my writing and mental health advocacy—consulting, not so much.

Because more people have struggled with their mental health due to the pandemic, the conversation is expanding and getting louder. More people are discussing mental health and mental illness. Resources are becoming available. Others are speaking out about their own experiences. This had made sharing my own stories a bit easier.

I must be cognizant of what I subject myself to. Social media is riddled with constant news, other people's thoughts, opinions, and trauma, and if I'm not careful it can weigh heavily on me. Therefore, I have curated my feeds the way that I have, am selective with my following, and will not hesitate to utilize the delete, unsubscribe, block, or unfollow options.

**Can you elaborate on how COVID has impacted your career?**

Whew. Much like most people, COVID put a damper on many of my 2020 plans. I had to cancel several trips, my role at work went completely virtual, my grad-school program went completely virtual, and I lost my damn mind mentally. It was then that I was properly diagnosed with bipolar disorder. I had an unhealthy mechanism of keeping my schedule booked and staying busy so that I wouldn't have to focus so much on how sucky I felt. Well, when everything shut down, it seems my mind did also.

**Has COVID impacted your personal life, if at all?**

I feel like a completely different person than who I was pre-covid. I'm now a mother, a grad student, I was promoted at work, my relationship changed. It's overwhelming when I think about all the life transitions that have occurred this past year.

At times, I do miss parts of my old life pre-motherhood and grad school. Being able to leave work, head to a happy hour, decide I want to travel the next week—whatever I saw fit to do. Now, I must be cognizant of travel and covid restrictions, I have to ensure my daughter is cared for or prepare for her to be with me, I have to consider my school schedule and so on and so forth. If I'm being honest, COVID was necessary for me to slow down, reevaluate my life, start a different treatment, and enter into motherhood gracefully.

**Switching gears... what's number one on your travel list?**

Jamaica. That was one of my trips that I had to cancel last year so I'll be going in August.

*“I had an unhealthy mechanism of keeping my schedule booked and staying busy so that I wouldn't have to focus so much on how sucky I felt. Well, when everything shut down, it seems my mind did also.”*

# Kathleen O'Donnell, MPH



*“It’s also hard to separate yourself from your job when people’s lives are at risk, so there were many months on end where my focus was singular.”*

**Clinical Research Program Manager  
Aortic Surgery Center  
University of Southern California – Keck Medical Center**

Kathleen is an Ohio native,  
currently residing in Los Angeles, California

## **Can you elaborate on how COVID has impacted your career?**

When COVID hit I worked with a Southern California health department on a team consisting of one physician, one epidemiologist (myself), and multiple nurses trying to combat the spread of COVID inside long-term care facilities for the elderly. The misinformation surrounding COVID from the start made our jobs very difficult. Something I don't think many people realized was the enormous shifting of resources many health departments had to undergo just to stay afloat during the peak of the outbreak, especially in areas that were most hard hit by the virus. The impact to me career-wise was massive. All my non-COVID related projects were placed on an indefinite pause and all our focus turned to tracking and attempting to contain the transmission of this virus. It was very difficult to work with the population I was tasked with helping because the mortality rate for this group was depressingly high. As a public health researcher death was not something I was used to dealing with, so dealing with death on this scale, every single day, was personally very difficult.

COVID also made the inequities of the healthcare system so much more visible. Many of the nurses and other healthcare professionals who worked inside of skilled nursing facilities lived in multifamily houses and were unable to properly quarantine, which exacerbated the spread of COVID both inside and outside the healthcare system. The problem was so layered that at time it seemed like containing this virus was an impossible task. It's also hard to separate yourself from your job when people's lives are at risk, so there were many months on end where my focus was singular, and outside of work I was often very distracted. My contract with the public health department ended in August of 2020 and I switched careers at that time. It is a blessing that I had a plan and another job lined up prior to the outbreak because I know how hard it has been for so many people to find work during this time. I had a really hard time leaving public health in the middle of a pandemic- part of me felt like I was jumping ship, but ultimately it was the right move for my career and my mental health!

## **How/Why did you get into your current line of work?**

My path here was long and winding! I always knew I wanted to be in the healthcare industry in some capacity, but it took me a long time to find my niche. In college I changed my focus multiple times, from pre-med to pre-PT, eventually landing on Kinesiology (the study of the mechanics of body movement). After college I took a few years off and worked some odd jobs, while trying to figure out what direction to take next. I quickly realized that all the magazine articles I was interested in and all the books that caught my eye had a common theme- they focused on infectious disease outbreaks or cutting-edge healthcare research. I've always wanted to help in a meaningful way, and it seemed like pursuing this interest was the most obvious choice! From there I obtained a master's degree in Public Health from Claremont Graduate University, with a focus on Epidemiology and Applied Biostatistics. I worked in public health for 5 years studying infectious diseases- specifically healthcare associated infections and antimicrobial resistant organisms. I learned how different types of organisms spread, tracked patient outcomes, and made recommendations to healthcare providers on best practices. After a few years of public health research, I was interested in pivoting to clinic research, which brought me to my current position here at USC!

## **Can you elaborate on how COVID has impacted your personal life, if at all?**

For me personally, COVID and the related lock-downs have been a time for personal reflection and growth. My personal experience with this time through work really made me appreciate my health and the health and safety of my loved ones. I am profoundly grateful that no one in my personal life got extremely sick or died from COVID.

While the lockdowns were not fun or ideal, it was a great time to strengthen existing bonds between friends. I feel like I've gotten a lot closer to so many of my friends and made friends with many of my neighbors as well! I've lived in the LA area for about 6 years and the one thing I always felt was missing was a sense of community. With no one was allowed to congregate with people outside their household or outside of their apartments, I got to know people that lived in my building and on my block. In a weird way I think COVID helped to strengthen that feeling of community.

I was also one of the hundreds (thousands?) of couples whose wedding plans were affected by COVID. I am lucky to have such a supportive family that has been helping us plan, cancel, move, and replan this wedding from across the country. I also couldn't have asked for a more loving and helpful partner during a time when I was very much not myself.

## **How has social media/internet/news played a role in your field/line of work specifically? Give us the tea! Good bad and ugly!**

Social media was both a blessing and a curse over the past year! Pre-COVID social media and the internet were lifelines for new and exciting healthcare research. We would often use social media to help identify individuals who may have gotten sick in relation to local restaurant outbreaks and to announce new health initiatives. Post-COVID, however, social media and the 24-hour news cycle became flush with misinformation that made public health jobs extremely difficult. It was hard enough trying to contain an outbreak we didn't completely understand, add never-ending misinformation to the equation and you get an absolute nightmare.

Personally, however, social media was a gift! Apps like Zoom, HouseParty, & TikTok saved my sanity during lockdown and were a great way to stay in contact with family and friends when you couldn't visit in person.

## **Switching gears... what's number one on your travel list?**

Right now, I'm very interested in visiting National Parks all over the world! This August we have a trip planned to Manuel Antonio National Park in Costa Rica, so I'll get to knock that one off the list. Exciting! Others on my list include Torres del Paine National Park in Chile, Kakadu National Park in Australia, and Fiordland National Park in New Zealand (among many many more!) I couldn't pick just one!

## **What's number one on your bucket list?**

To visit every state in the USA. So far, I've been to roughly half so I've got a ways to go!

## **What's something you're interested in learning?**

I'm trying to learn Spanish right now. Language has never been my strong suite, but I've been using this app called LingoDeer and it's going pretty well!

## **What piece of advice would you give your teenage/college-age self?**

I'm lucky that I had a calm and steady father and a Oprahesque mother who were pretty great at keeping me grounded and in check but if I had to give my younger self some advice it would probably be to stop seeking external validation. You're perfectly fine just the way you are! I know this now, but it was absolutely my biggest struggle during my teenage/ college years.

# Troy Gary

Director of Originals Marketing at STARZ  
(a Lionsgate Company)



Troy is a Virginia native,  
currently residing in Los Angeles, California

*“Shits going to all work out, but you don’t know that for sure so sit your smart-mouth-ass down and shut up.”*

## **How/Why did you get into your current line of work?**

I wanted to work in a field that has real impact on how we live our lives and I think entertainment is one of the strongest forms of persuasion ever.

Sure, there are more “honorable” roles that have an impact on culture, but not only does entertainment speak to you in a non-invasive preachy way, it’s super cool that people can actually see the fruits of my labor - I’m a good person, but I like credit just like the rest of them

## **How has social media/internet/news played a role in your field/line of work specifically? Give us the tea! Good bad and ugly!**

How we reach people and what we do to engage them. The cool thing about social media is that it gave culture control of itself.

Before, we relied on the TV and others depiction of society. What social media has done is given culture the driving wheel and made marketers and content creators create on its terms: when, where, and how.

## **What’s something you’re interested in learning?**

Honestly, a new language. A lot of my friends are Iranian and Korean, so those 2 languages would be where I start so we can talk shit about people in front of them without being offensive.

## **What piece of advice would you give your teenage/college-age self?**

Shits going to all work out, but you don’t know that for sure so sit your smart mouth ass down and shut up.

*“I think before being confined to my apartment for the better part of a year, much of my life, relationships, and social doings were on auto-pilot.”*

**Can you elaborate on how COVID has impacted your career?**

Since graduating in 2017, I've had pretty rapid career growth and I think that's largely due to my in-person interactions, so the only real hindrance I've had from Covid is everything being virtual. I am a charismatic person and I think you lose your ability to read people over camera. By read people I mean their body language. I use my charisma and my empathy to make everyone feel apart. So that all voices are heard big and small. In-person it's easier to empathize with people based on their tone and body language - with that I manipulate situations to include everyone. I do the same thing with my friends. I learned I had this "super power" after working in more professional settings with people (mentors) actually cared about me. So now that I'm aware of this trait, I can actively use it.

**Can you elaborate on how COVID has impacted your personal life, if at all?**

I don't think Covid has really impacted my personal life so much as it gave me time to evaluate my personal life. I think before being confined to my apartment for the better part of a year, much of my life, relationships, and social doings were on auto-pilot. I'd been hanging with and doing things for so long they felt natural because of the longevity. COVID gave me time to analyze what and who I really wanted to spend my time with / on.

**Switching gears... what's number one on your travel list?**

Japan! I want to go somewhere with a culture shock

**What's number one on your bucket list?**

Cool bucket list: Attend a Savage Fenty Fashion Show

Sappy bucket list: Be able to take care of all the friends and family I grew up with financially

*“I think before being confined to my apartment for the better part of a year, much of my life, relationships, and social doings were on auto-pilot.”*



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# ABOUT THIS ISSUE

(1) It's been one whole year since my first issue! Crazy how time is flying but feels like we're sitting still. Here's to 12 months of figuring out my shit!

(2) During our Presidential Election back in November – while the world was watching us, the Ethiopian government launched attacks on its citizens in the region of Tigray. I spoke with a close friend about it because not only is he and his family from Tigray, he's also been very vocal and active in sharing information and advocating for change. The more we shed light on shitty human nature, the more likely we are to fight it and discourage it from continuing and/or happening again. I'd say the same about the Palestine-Israel violence. We must educate ourselves and stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves.

(3) As always, y'all know I have to highlight organizations that we should all get behind. This summer and every summer (every day of our lives) we should rally behind the equal rights of our LGBTQ community. No if, ands, or buts about that. The nonprofit, The Trevor Project is great place to start. Also, this summer, especially with the kids going back to the classrooms, we should all be looking into ways to support, fund, or volunteer for children getting ready for school. Kids in Need Foundation is a great nonprofit to get behind. Check them, see how you can help!

(4) I bought a condo in March – and I wanted to share my journey to make it less illusive and more inclusive. I believe the ownership of property is very important for wealth building and wealth maintaining (all my opinion).

(5) Going to start a new tradition for the magazine – INTERVIEWS. Not a crazy edition, but I think each season I'd like to interview 3-5 people. This way we can learn from, feel connected to, and even be inspired by different people's stories! I am open to suggestions so please don't hesitate to reach out!

Finally - WHAT INSPIRED HER COVER PHOTO?!

It's summertime, and with more than half of the US being vaccinated, shit is opening back up! WE ARE OUTSIDE!!!!!!!!!! But the story behind the cover is more about my own personal journey. I've finally found my photography niche (landscape and architecture, hence **Tall World**) so I decided to take a trip to Palm Springs. I wanted something different, I wasn't exactly sure what that looked like, so I just said fuck it! I ended up with some dope shots of different parts of town - and I left feeling inspired and rejuvenated. Lately, it's become more and more important for me to let my creative juices flow when I feel it, instead of pushing them aside.

So here's to staying in-spired and staying in-love.

All Love,  
Assia

# THANK YOU

