

REAL LIFE

homeTown
FLINT, MI



CHIC CRUSADER

Kala Wilburn teaches fashion skills to kids who have lost or know someone who's lost loved ones.



EVERYDAY HERO

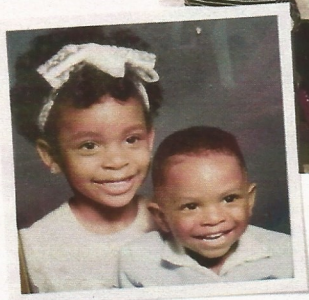
Sewing to Stop Violence

A fashion designer inspires at-risk kids to create brighter futures

AS FOUR TWEEN GIRLS HUNCH OVER THEIR NEEDLES AND FABRIC, diligently attempting a blind stitch, their instructor, Kala Wilburn, 32, sees more than kids who want to learn to sew: She sees hope for breaking the endless cycle of crime that plagues Flint, MI, one of the most dangerous cities in America. In 2011, she founded Fashion Against Violence, a program that's mentored more than 100 kids (mostly girls, but also a few boys) who have been affected by or know someone affected by bloodshed, teaching them basic sewing and modeling skills and giving them the chance to work with designers behind the scenes at runway shows. The program is free (sewing machines and supplies are donated; funding comes from sponsorships and Kala herself), and area schools provide space. To join, kids write an essay describing their personal experience with violent crime. →

Kala sees her life in those essays and herself in the kids. In 2011, her younger brother, Antonio, was shot in an unsolved murder on Halloween night when he was only 22. "We had just spent the weekend celebrating my birthday, eating cupcakes and talking about ideas for a business he wanted to start," says Kala. Stunned by grief, she vowed to honor his life by doing something good for the community.

She already had a small clothing line of her own, Fannie Lucille (named for her great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother), a background interning for fashion houses in New York City (even helping design shoes for Jay-Z's Rocawear line) and a degree in apparel merchandising and design from Central Michigan University. She established Fashion Against Violence to bring a sense of opportunity to kids who otherwise might spiral into hopelessness. "I want them to see that it's possible to come from Flint and go after your dreams," she says.



COMMON THREADS
Left, Kala with her brother; above, a sewing lesson.

Many of the children's essays are heartbreakingly raw. "I will never forget him," one girl wrote, describing how her uncle had been beaten to death and wondering why he'd been killed. Kala knows the answer. "Hurt people hurt other people," she says. "Things have happened to them, so they want to strike out first next time."

Fashion Against Violence spawned another initiative of Kala's, Vehicle City Fashion Week (in a nod to the area's history of car manufacturing), which spotlights local designers. She's spearheaded six shows so far in which the kids she mentors work with the runway designers. Next, she's looking to fund a pitch event in which would-be designers vie for seed money to begin their own apparel lines.

A number of her "graduates" now work in fashion or study it in college. "If I can show these kids that their dreams are possible, that's a win," Kala says. "I have a heart for my city. This is a lot of work, but at the same time it's an effortless thing to do." —*Cynthia Drake*

HEALING HURT

Word of mouth and social media spread the news of her mentorship program. Kala, a married mother of two, quickly realized she was more than just a sewing instructor to the kids—she was a safe person with whom they could start to process what they'd been through and learn to trust. "They have a hard shell so they don't get hurt again," she says. "When you're sewing, it's kind of quiet, so it provides an opportunity for them to talk about what's going on in their lives. It's like therapy, only you don't realize it."

Coffee Perk for Pups

DRINK GROUNDS, SAVE HOUNDS!

When Jordan Karcher learned that 2.1 million shelter dogs were euthanized each year, he began Grounds & Hounds Coffee, which donates 20% of proceeds from sales of its organic grinds to pet-rescue partners nationwide (over \$100,000 so far). "My dog could have been a statistic, robbing me of 40 pounds of pure happiness," he says. "We want to change the world one cup and one pup at a time." groundsandhoundscoffee.com; \$14 per 12-oz bag



YOUR BOOKSHELF

Good Reads

Cue up your book group!

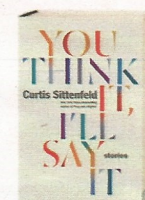


DATING DETOX

LOVE RULES

by Joanna Coles

This smart guide from the former editor of *Cosmopolitan* offers any-age tips on navigating digital relationships, with an emphasis on banishing junk love from your life. You'll quickly see why Coles is the inspiration for *The Bold Type* TV show.

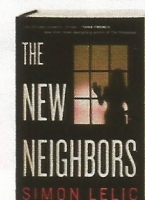


EVERYDAY INSIGHT

YOU THINK IT, I'LL SAY IT

by Curtis Sittenfeld

The best-selling author of *Prep* and *Eligible* delivers 10 short stories that neatly skewer the insanities of modern life. With her trademark wit, she creates characters and situations you won't soon forget.



HORROR HOUSE

THE NEW NEIGHBORS

by Simon Lelic

Londoners Jack and Syd have lucked into their dream home—or have they? When a neighbor is killed, secrets surface. Told through alternating diary entries, this twisty tale steadily builds suspense.

