

The Taste Of Mango

A FILM BY CHLOE ABRAHAMS



POV

DISCUSSION GUIDE



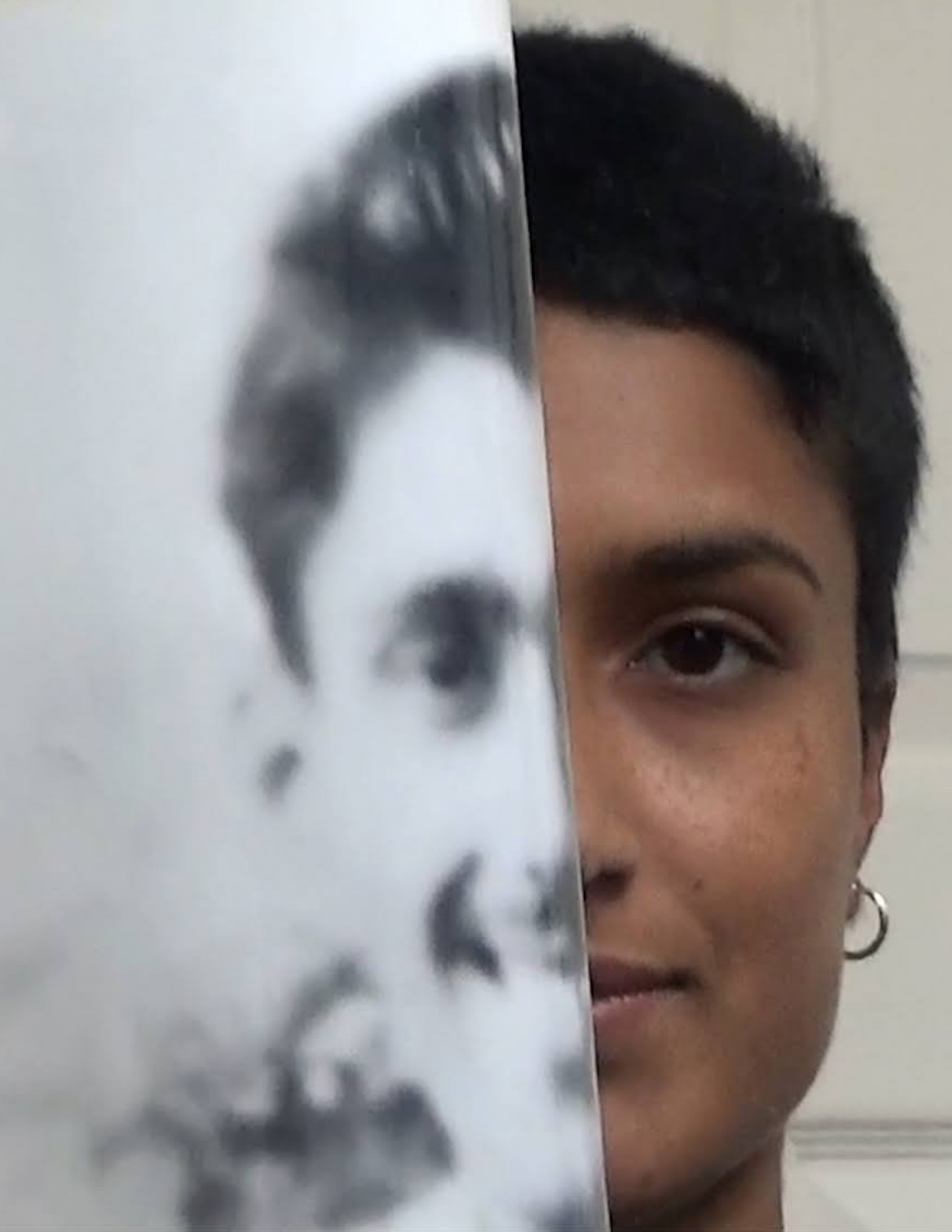


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Film Summary



The Taste of Mango unfolds as a hypnotic, urgently personal meditation on family, memory, identity, violence, and love. At its center are three women: the director's mother, Rozana; her grandmother, Jean; and the director herself. Their stories, by turns difficult and jubilant, bear witness to the complex, evolving nature of inheritance and the hurt and protection entangled within familial bonds.

Using This Guide

This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection and designed for people who want to use *The Taste of Mango* to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues, and communities. In contrast to initiatives that foster debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this document envisions conversations undertaken in a spirit of openness in which people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively.

The discussion prompts are intentionally crafted to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the issues in the film. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet your needs and interests. And be sure to leave time to consider taking action. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even in instances when conversations have been difficult.

For more detailed event planning and facilitation tips, visit <https://communitynetwork.amdoc.org/>.

A NOTE TO FACILITATORS

Dear POV Community,

We are grateful you have chosen to facilitate a discussion engaging the documentary, *The Taste of Mango*. This film is a vulnerable and emotional portrait of three generations of Sri Lankan and Sri-Lankan-British women who are intertwined in legacies of trauma and personal journeys of healing. This film invites its audience to hold the layers of love, curiosity, fierceness, resilience, joy seeking and hope alongside the experiences of intergenerational trauma, gender-based oppression and sexual violence that exists within our most intimate relationships and communities through space, time and family.

Before beginning this process of engaging the film it is suggested that you prepare yourself to support the audience you are working with to take care of themselves in any way they might need for the viewing.

Tips and Tools for Facilitators

Here are some supports to help you prepare for facilitating a conversation that inspires curiosity, connection, critical questions, recognition of difference, power, and possibility.

Share Community Agreements

Community Agreements: What Are They? Why Are They Useful?

Community agreements help provide a framework for engaging in dialogue that establishes a shared sense of intention ahead of participating in discussion. Community agreements can be co-constructed and created as an opening activity that your group completes collectively and collaboratively. [Here is a model](#) of community agreements you can review. As the facilitator, you can gauge how long your group should take to form these agreements or whether participants would be amenable to using pre-established community agreements.

Opening Activity (Optional): Establishing Community Agreements for Discussion

Whether you are a group of people coming together once for this screening and discussion or a group whose members know each other well, creating a set of community agreements helps foster clear discussion in a manner that draws in and respects all participants, especially when tackling intimate or complex conversations around identity. These steps will help provide guidelines for the process:

- **Pass around** sample community agreements and take time to read aloud as a group to make sure all participants can both hear and read the text.
- **Allow time** for clarifying questions, make sure all participants understand the necessity for the agreements, and allow time to make sure everyone understands the agreements themselves.
- **Go around in a circle** and have every participant name an agreement they would like to include. Chart this in front of the room where all can see.
- **Go around two to three times** to give participants multiple chances to contribute and also to give a conclusive end to the process.
- **Read the list aloud.**
- **Invite** questions or revisions.
- **Ask** if all are satisfied with the list.

Participants

Chloe

Filmmaker, grandchild

Rozana

Mother

Jean

Grandmother

COMMON CONCEPTS & LANGUAGE

Mother wound

The concept of Mother wound has surfaced into the zeitgeist of the mainstream therapeutic vernacular. The mother wound is often a person's first and most enduring heartbreak and also a seemingly inevitable one. Some say the first time we feel this wound is when we are separated from the warm home of our mother/parent's womb, their embodied protection. The place where we are supposed to receive the most intuitive, protective, abundant and nourishing love, we learn will somehow abandon or fail at providing for our essential needs and safety.

In *The Taste of Mango*, Rozana contends with the fact that her mother has continued to stay married to her stepfa-

ther, who is an abuser. This choice seems to Rozana that her mother is choosing their abuser over her. Rozana's mother Jean loves her and also is living her own limited choices, trauma and shame. Through the granddaughter's filmmaking we understand that life has devastated Jean in ways that have wounded her ability to show up as a mother and in that way, the mother wound exists in the mother as well as the child.

The concept of mother wound is deepened when we look at the intersectionality of parenting under colonial oppression and the suffocating tyranny of globalized misogyny. The mother wound of course would be felt deeply by the children who live in the wake and

shadow of a mother's attempts at navigating odds stacked against her. In a world that puts the highest responsibility for care and love on the most oppressed and abused population, the capacity for disappointment and failure is high. In a world that speaks on the virtue and joys of motherhood meanwhile, refusing to support the material, mental or spiritual realities of that role is expecting for many to emotionally drown.

Intergenerational trauma

Intergenerational trauma is an emotional inheritance of those that came before us, their adaptations and survival mechanisms for living in the social realities they were situated in. The history of a family lives in our individual and collective psyches through space, time, body and emotion. Intergenerational trauma as a concept acknowledges that our trauma doesn't happen in a vacuum or over a singular lifetime. That a grandchild could be living out the trauma of their grandparent's war experience or bad marriage. The trauma of those that raised us and the people that raised them and so on and so forth shapes our existence and ways of being in the world, whether we know them or the story of their lives or not.

Intergenerational healing

Intergenerational healing is what happens when there is inten-

tion and collaboration around healing collectively in a family line. Healing is often said to not be linear or a journey that can be done without support. What does it mean to heal on behalf of one's ancestors who were colonized and/or enslaved? Or to put an end to a family pattern of abuse? Or even to support members of a family in self-care, therapy and transformation?

Chloe:

Before I read it, it could be anything that I wanted. I imagined a world where I discovered the secret to fixing your relationship, a world where we were actually happy

It is often believed that one generation's sacrifice yields to the following generation's access to better conditions. The akan term Sankofa means "go back and fetch it" and is symbolized by a bird that moves forward while looking back. When we are able to do our healing work alongside our elders

and our younger generations, we provide a line of healing that ripples around and through us for futures that can only be dreamed of.

Family Archives

Archives are records and ephemera of life that are collected to reference existence and personalize and contextualize our histories. The family archival practice is a gathering, collecting and the passing down of family stories and ephemera that allows future generations to see where and whom they come from. In many families there is one or a couple of relatives who take on the task of doing this work and sharing it with the rest of the family. In communities and demographics that are subjugated to silence, oppression, displacement, violence and any other extremes of erasure, this protection and contextualization of familial memory is essential for future generations' access to the legacies they descend from.

The engagement of archival research lives strongest in academia and the arts, with professionals using the public archive. Many artists are exploring their own familial archives to deepen and inspire their research much like the filmmaker did as a part of her process for this project. In addition to her own footage was that of film and pictures captured by relatives in her family's informal archive.

Ancestors

In this documentary the presence of Rozana's father, who died when she was just a child, to her is a presence that protects, guides and has a spiritual presence even in his corporal absence. In a scene where Chloe puts a picture of him next to her face you see that his features, kindness and care live on in his grandchild who has never met him yet expands and deepens his legacy.

Many cultures in the world believe that ancestors are family mem-

bers that are no longer living their earthly lives but they still live on among us just the same. Cultures and societies throughout the world have distinct ways of understanding and honoring their ancestors. Celebrations, altars, prayers, offerings, art and conversations are ways that people throughout the world maintain their connections with their ancestral family. Colonialism, imperialism and religious crusades forced through violence and death many indigenous cultures globally to end such practices. These practices continued nonetheless, and when needed they moved underground and integrated clandestinely through the religions and social orders forced on colonized people.

Femininity and Femme identity

In this documentary we witness three generations of women of the Sri Lankan diaspora, their individual and intersecting stories of their personalities, life experiences and contextual

realities. In this film we see the way that being a woman or femme identified person has social consequences, vulnerabilities and obligations that bear different impacts on each member, their respective generations and the way they live in the world. How free do they feel? How much do they belong to their own selves? What obligations does their femininity beholden them to in their communities? "Traditional femininity" is constructed and defined by social and behavioral qualities that are attributed to cis-girls and women, created by cultural expectations and is determined in reference to cis-hetero-masculinity. On the other hand, to be femme is a queer reclamation and alchemy of what it is to be feminine for the self and queer community, that centers sovereignty, fierceness and pleasure. In this particular family line we see over time and spiraling back the various ways the three women explore the spectrums of feminine and femme identity.

Rape Culture, Tradition, obligation and self-betrayal

"Society so often makes excuses for perpetrators – or finds a reason why victims and survivors 'asked' for what happened to them or somehow deserved it. People so often don't believe victims and survivors – whether that's family and friends, the police, jurors or people reading about cases in the news." (Rape Crisis England & Wales)

Embedded in the the intergenerational trauma of this family is the way that cis-hetero-marital obligation, patriarchy and its intersections with rape culture* have created a crushing rupture with the mother and daughter bond.

This documentary circles, cycles and eventually centers in the devastating and silencing experiences of physical abuse and sexual violence that Rozana endured from her own stepfather. We learn of the death of Rozana's

biological father and her own mother Jean's subsequent remarriage. For the first half of the film the stepfather is only seen in the ripped absence of him in family pictures. Rozana's way of using the family pictures themselves to remove his violence from her own memory is an example of her creative resistance and reclamation of her life and memory. It is one of the ways Rozana navigates the emotional violence of denial, erasure and complicity that deepened the harm of the abuse from her stepfather and her mother's passive complicity.

Jean:

There was no love coming out of me. Just at home, waiting to go to bed, not with love, but duty. Once again my life was hell. I hope my daughter will understand. I never wanted anyone to hurt her. I didn't want her to suffer like me. I wanted her to have a good life. I did what I could in that situation. Maybe I have

made mistakes along the way. I wrote this letter explaining why I took these decisions at the time...Please ask me, because my story is an open book. Some hide their stories. Please trust me, and believe everything I have written...It's okay, you can disown me. Sometimes I think it's better to be... in home and not seen by anyone.

Jean deeply loves her daughter and yet has been programmed by her provincial and global society and culture to protect the dignity and powers of her husband and abuser more than the safety and needs of her own child. Despite the overwhelmingly high expectations that society places on mothers to protect and love their child as an existential priority, the documentary shows that this requirement is subverted by the expectation of women to protect the male figures in their lives and by doing so upholding the patriarchy.

**Self-love, Self-care,
Self-regard and
choosing yourself,
again and again**

As the audience we witness the rituals of self-love and self-care that Rozana grounds herself in, soaking in a bubble bath, singing and dancing with friends. These rituals accompany her telling stories from her life that were sad and painfully shaped her world. The filmmaker's choice to contextualize her mother Rozana in the soft life that she has created for herself in London is to remind the audience that despite Rozana's trauma that her life is filled with beauty, comfort and love.

Chloe employed the documentarian curiosity, sense of justice and care as a tool of reflection and healing for her mother and grandmother's relationship. Chloe's use of filmmaking to ask intimate and penetrating questions to her mother, allowed her mother to re-situate herself with her own stories

and this ripple would extend out to Jean, who by generation and geography was the most embedded in the infrastructure of their culture and the expectations of women within it.

won't you celebrate with me

won't you celebrate with me

what i have shaped into a
kind of life? i had no model.

born in babylon

both nonwhite and woman

what did i see to be except
myself?

i made it up

here on this bridge between

starshine and clay,

my one hand holding tight

my other hand; come cele-
brate

with me that everyday

something has tried to kill
me

and has failed.

By Lucille Clifton

Key Issues

- Mother wound
- Intergenerational trauma
- Intergenerational healing
- The body as a site of trauma, healing, pleasure and beauty
- Diaspora and ambiguous loss (and gain)
- Mangoes as a symbol of pleasure and presence
- Family Archival research and practice
- Ancestors that love and guide us
- Country music for tending to sadness
- Memory as individual and collective experience
- Rape Culture and familial betrayal
- Femme Rituals of self-love, self-care and love of beauty

Background Information

Sri Lanka History, Culture and Diaspora

Sri Lanka boasts an immense history of continuous human habitation that spans more than 2,000 years. Early civilization was shaped by cultural and religious influences from India, the island gradually developed its own distinct identity. The Sinhalese and Tamil populations, along with Buddhism and Hinduism, all have roots in the Indian subcontinent. Over time, Sri Lanka's relative isolation led to the independent evolution of these traditions. For example, Buddhism, which largely faded from its birthplace in India, is a deeply embedded spiritual system in Sri Lanka. Similarly, the Sinhala language, derived from early Indo-Aryan dialects, grew into a uniquely Sri Lankan tongue with its own rich literary tradition.

Cultural diversity is central to Sri Lankan life. Religion is an essential part of the social fabric, apparent in the numerous Buddhist and Hindu temples, mosques, and churches that define the landscape. Centuries of British colonial rule, the transformative impact of modernization, and economic spectrums across regions have all contributed to a complex and colorful cultural scene.

Sri Lanka's population is made up primarily of three main ethnic groups. The Sinhalese, who form around 75% of the population, are mostly Buddhists. The Tamil community makes up about 15% and is mainly Hindu; this group includes both Sri Lankan Tamils with long-established roots on the island, and Indian Tamils who arrived more recently, many as laborers during British colonial times. Muslims, who trace their ancestry to Arab traders from the 8th century, account for roughly 7.5% of the population. Smaller minorities—such as the Burghers (of mixed European heritage), Parsis (Zoroastrian immigrants from western India), and the Veddas (the island's indigenous people)—constitute less than one percent of the total population.

Beyond its borders, Sri Lanka has a widespread and active diaspora. According to a 2013 United Nations estimate, around three million Sri Lankans live abroad. These expatriate communities are primarily found in Europe, the Middle East, East Asia, North America, and Australia. Although many members of the diaspora may have been born outside Sri Lanka or lack Sri Lankan citizenship, they maintain cultural and familial ties to the island, particularly among Tamil and Sinhalese populations living overseas.

The body as a site of trauma, healing, pleasure and beauty

Somatics, embodiment, disassociation and other newly popularized terms amongst therapists, activists and the general population are guiding collective awareness to the body as a participant and not a bystander to our experiences. That we are not just minds and thoughts, but that we embody our feelings and trauma and live our memories often unconsciously within our bodies. Resmaa Menakem in his book, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Mending of Our Bodies and Hearts*, speaks to this more newly accepted phenomenon amongst the western psychological landscape.

“Years as a healer and trauma therapist have taught me that trauma isn’t destiny. The body, not the thinking brain, is where we experience most of our pain, pleasure, and joy, and where we process most of what happens to us. It is also where we do most of our healing, including our emotional and psychological healing. And it is where we experience resilience and a sense of flow.”

Somatic informed therapy insists that the body is where we can orient ourselves to deeply and meaningfully heal through the layers of ourselves as well as acknowledge the pleasure and comfort our body has experienced and needs. *“I touch my own skin, and it tells me that before there was any harm, there was miracle,”* Adrienne Maree Brown reminds us in her book, *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*.

In *The Taste of Mango*, Chloe, the filmmaker witnessed her mother on camera in her rituals of beauty and self-care, whether it was watching Rozana spiral in wedded radiance from a family VHS, or capturing her mother dying her gray hair’s black in her sunny backyard or her taking a bath and singing nostalgic country songs. The filmmaker is capturing the intuitive femme technology of beauty and pleasure as an essential ingredient and antidote to the misogyny and patriarchal oppression that her mother has endured and is now recounting for her daughter.

Mangoes of Sri Lanka and the symbols of Mangoes

***Chloe:** What joy I would feel when you handed me the seed, with juice dripping down my arm and flesh stuck in my teeth.*

Karutha Colomban, Willard, Vellai Colomban, Ambalavi, Chembatan, Malwana, Bettiamba, Giraamba, Peterpras, and Dampara. These are just some of the varieties of mangoes of Sri Lanka. Mangoes in this film are

not only a fruit but a metaphor for how to experience life and be in ritual with sweetness. Each of the different terrains of Sri Lanka, yield a certain kind of mango. Mango season of Sri Lanka from May to August, parallels the wet season of the country. The warmth and hydration yields a bounty of fruit in abundance for the enjoyment in a variety of culinary experiences from savory to sweet to utilitarian, being used for juice, ice cream, chutney and even leather.

Chloe: Whenever I think of you, the taste of mango appears in my mouth. I'm transported back to all the times we ate them together, when you taught me to know if it was just ripe enough, to cut carefully around the centre, making criss-cross shapes on either side....You told me you devoured crates of mangoes when you were pregnant with me, and that Nana did the same for you.

The opening monologue Chloe invokes her mothers ability to invoke wisdom, pleasure, family history in the sensuously mundane act of cutting and eating a mango. In this ritual her mother, Rozana, is able to convey that the succulent and miraculous is accessible in the golden and honeyed sacred fruit, if not in any other place in their lives. Chloes words speak to a potential symbolic offering of this mango seed: to take the concentrated and dense wisdom of a mother and plant it in soils that are rich with minerals and nourishment that will activate that magic into a new possibility. "What joy I would feel when she handed me the seed," Chloe says.

The Taste of Mango is the title of this film and also a metaphor for what we seek to know of life. A sweetness, a ripeness, a sovereignty, a wildness, a freedom to be juicy and succulent for one's self and the beloved relations we choose. Chloe learned the love and pleasure of mango from her mother, and her mother learned it from her mother. The saying of when life gives

you lemons, make lemonade speaks to an opportunity to create an alchemy of sweetness from a sour bounty. If we were to repurpose lemon with a mango in this analogy we could explore a dimension to this optimism. If life only gives you sweetness in the form of a mango, eat that mango with attention and intention. Have the mango remind you of the stories of sweetness and wildness that runs in your blood, the hushed and banished stories of femme ancestors who lived their full magnificence and beckon for you to find yours.

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DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Starting The Conversation

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen. You could pose a general question (examples below) and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion. Alternatively, you could ask participants to share their thoughts with a partner before starting a group discussion.

- What were the themes or elements of the film that emerged and were important for you?
- What ways do you think making a film about her family allowed them to open up?

Chloe, Rozana and Jean: Three generations of love

Chloe: *Why do you think I'm like this?*

Rozana: *Well, I think you're trying to. I think it's... It's difficult when you come from generations of... people who are different. And it's good that you question things. It's good. I'm proud of you for that. it's not easy. And because you have questioned, I have broadened my mind as well.*

The filmmaker, Chloe, introduces her mother and grandmother and the relationship between the three of them. They are close and connected. They are different and also have similarities, and things that connect them. Beloved grandma visiting and the heaviness and sadness she represents. There are things that haunt them, mainly the death of her father when she was young, and an abusive childhood suffered by Rozana at the hands of her stepfather, her mother Jean's husband. The acquiescence of country music.

- Take a moment and be present with your body. What resonates most with you after watching this film? What are the sensations, emotions and feelings that are present for you at the completion of this film? List some of what is coming up and ground in the presence of them.
- Have you ever interviewed members of your family or does doing something like that interest you? What would you ask them?
- What ways has this film surfaced for you any conversations or questions you would like to have with people in your family or chosen family?
- How do you think the fact they were being filmed may have impacted the vulnerability of their sharing?

Mother Wound and Rituals of Care

They are enveloped in a conflict that is omnipresent and painful. The tension between the feelings of betrayal and mother wound expose the cracks in the relationship. The tragic loss of Jean's first husband, Rozana's father and subsequent marriage to an abusive man. The longing of Rozana to have her mother leave her husband and join her in Londo. We see the impact and shaping of their different life experiences have had on each of them. We also get to witness the ways they celebrate and care for themselves and each other. Rozana gets engaged while Jean is struggling with the notion of whether or not she can actually leave a marriage she is tethered to by loyalty and social pressure.

- What are some qualities you would use to describe the intergenerational dynamic of this family?
- This film uses family archival footage as well as new footage of Rozana and Jean as captured by Chloe. What is your relationship with your own family archives and histories?
- There are a lot of moments of self-care and beautifying during interviews in this project? How do you think that impacted the feeling of the piece? What is your relationship to these practices?
- What is something you wanna ask an ancestor? Or tell them?
- What are questions you wish people in your family would ask you about your life?

Choosing yourself, again and again

The relationship between Rozana and Jean, daughter and mother are at an impasse. Rozana after years of asking her mother to leave her abusive husband and come live with her in London, is surrendering all hope to this ever becoming a reality. She is also deciding to honor her own needs and boundaries for the first time with her mother and is no longer willing to suffer the pain of her mother's betrayal. Chloe fills in the gap of communication and emotional capacity to support her grandmother making a life-changing choice.

- In what ways do you think that Chloe as the grandchild, was able to be a catalyst for healing between the mother and grandmother that was difficult before her integration/intervention?
- What ways did the generational divide of the three relatives impact their experience of social pressures and familial obligation? What did they learn from each other?
- Are there any cultural or generational divides in your family that you have experienced? What were they and how did they impact familial connections?
- What lessons did each three women have to offer each other?

OPENING/CLOSING ACTIVITY

TAKING ACTION

- Think of someone who you love and are curious about and invite them to sit down and talk with you.
- Learn about organizations local to you that support people who are navigating family abuse and domestic violence and see if they need any resources or volunteers.
- Buy a mango and enjoy it thoughtfully and slowly with attention and intention. Learn about and enjoy fruit in your own community in a similar way.
- Learn about your city's and state's policies on domestic violence and reach out to local politicians who are doing work on the topic and figure out ways on how to get involved.

Resources

A list of relevant social movements, non-profits, and organizations.

Story Corps

StoryCorps is committed to the idea that everyone has an important story to tell and that everyone's story matters. Our mission: to help us believe in each other by illuminating the humanity and possibility in us all — one story at a time. Since our founding in 2003, we've helped nearly 700,000 people across the country have meaningful conversations about their lives. These recordings are collected in the U.S. Library of Congress and in our online archive which is now the largest single collection of human voices ever gathered.

<https://storycorps.org/about/>

The Moth

The Moth Community Program provides the space, tools and expertise for people to practice the art and craft of personal storytelling. We partner with community organizations, cultural institutions and non-profits to host workshops that inspire confidence and self-reflection and deepen connections within and between communities.

<https://themoth.org/>

Me Too

The 'me too.' Movement supports survivors of sexual violence and their allies by connecting survivors to resources, offering community organizing resources, pursuing a 'me too.' policy platform, and working with researchers to add to the field and chart our way forward. We believe that the movement begins with connecting survivors to resources for healing, justice, action and leadership.

<https://metoomvmt.org/>

Credits & Acknowledgments



About the Author

Junauda Petrus

Junauda Petrus is an abolitionist, writer, filmmaker, and performance artist of Black Trinidadian and Crucian descent, born on Dakota/Anishinaabe land (Minneapolis). Her work fuses ancestral dreaming, poetics, and radical imagination to envision Black liberation and sweetness. She is the 2025–2026 poet laureate of Minneapolis and author of *The Stars and The Blackness Between Them* (Coretta Scott King Honor), and *Can We Please Give The Police Department to the Grandmothers?* (Minnesota Book Award Finalist). Her interdisciplinary work includes plays, immersive performance, aerial dance, and film projects centering Black queer futures, abolition, and healing. She has created original work with the Kennedy Center, Heart of the Beast Theatre, Intermedia Arts, and Pillsbury House Theatre, and is a Jerome Fellow and two-time Jerome Travel and Study Grant recipient.

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