

## Life, Love and Beauty

Nia helped **Kathy Wolstenholme** overcome the trials of acne, abortion and breast cancer. Here, she reveals how the technique helped her fall in love again – with herself.

**M**Y BODY HAS OFTEN brought joy to others. It has stunned them into silence, and made them smile and *whoop!* with excitement. My body has the power to stop people in their busy-ness, not to marvel at perfect skin or firm muscles – for I have none of these – but to witness a body that is expressing what they are feeling inside.

My body's movement is the testament to a life journey. It has known its share of trauma – from acne to abortion to childbirth to cancer. Acne convinced me I wasn't attractive, even when people told me otherwise. Nia focused the mirror away from my skin to my body in motion. I was proud of

what I could do. Abortion disconnected me from my sexuality. By focusing on my pelvis in Nia, moving it and loving it, I released deep-seated emotions, and cried for the joy of reconnecting. Through breast cancer, Nia held me. When all I wanted to do was lie down, Nia was the inspiration that kept me moving.

The Nia community gave me a sense of belonging, a space where shame was erased, where I could connect with other women. Through Nia, I fell in love with myself again. By learning my body's private song, I have risen through it all and now my body moves with a calm that says, "I survived." No matter what my age, I look good playing that song, *my* song.

At Nia demonstrations, people witness a body not performing, but rather responding to sound in a way that's natural. A body that places serenity in the same breath as strength, and combines beauty and power in one gesture. They know this kind of movement is inside them, too.

My body has pulsed and shimmied from Colorado to Cape Town, and has had the privilege of guiding many women to move and feel free without the stigma of seduction. Before I embraced Nia, I'd never attended a dance class. But I've always known that even without training – and sometimes *especially* without it – your body has an innate knowledge of the orbit of its own hips, shoulders, ankles and head. You *can* dance.

Every woman has the right to feel proud of her body. And mine illustrates that dance is not just for the athletic or lean. It proves that older, voluptuous women can access deep play through movement and music.

Through Nia, we learn to listen to our body's voice. When mine tells me to skip that destructive habit, just for one night, I pause, glimpse into tomorrow and see energy that's clear, thanks to the injustices I *didn't* put it through. I've learnt to marry the force of my mind's willpower to my heart's gratitude for a body that has rallied to serve others, and myself, for 50 years.

Nia is my way of thanking my body. I offer it lots of treats, too: Smells, tastes, sounds and touches that allow it to say "Abbb," and make it grateful to have chosen me as its partner.

I'm always going to treat this body to Nia, and the wonderful community of women who have started moving – for pleasure and the love of their bodies. **Q**

*Kathy Wolstenholme brought the Nia Technique to South Africa in 2002. Visit [niasouthafrica.co.za](http://niasouthafrica.co.za) or [niagp.co.za](http://niagp.co.za) to find a Nia class near you. For more information, call ☎ 021 674 3747.*



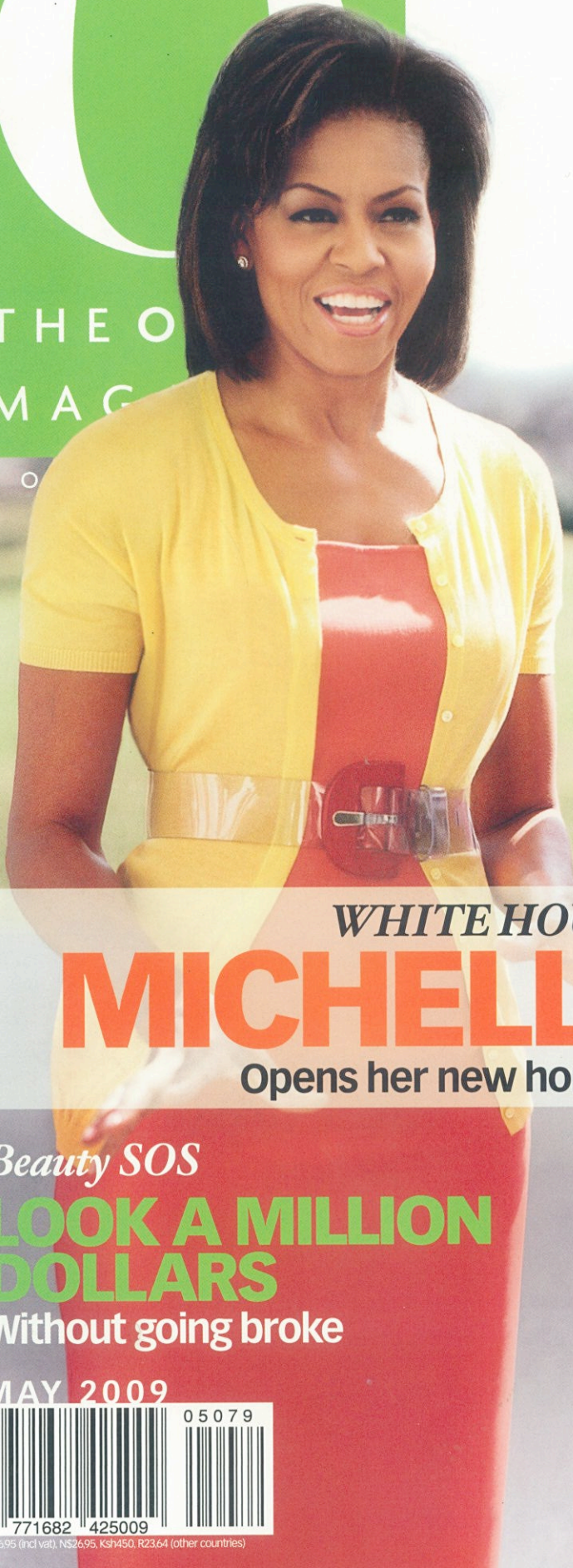
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