

**No** I've been heavily influenced by multiple genres. This song incorporates so many. The overall song I wrote while witnessing (living in) the constant injustice to African Americans in the United States specifically when dealing with police and the criminal justice system. I wanted to use this song to tie in the African American experience to African drums and rhythms just to connect the black experience and to start the album off with a statement of what's to come and that this album won't be what you've heard from me before. The percussion and melody and especially the horns in the chorus are meant to show the angst and convey the feeling of how it feels to be black in America.

**Body Heat** I started as a dancer and it's so important to me to have songs to move to. This is definitely influenced by afrobeat and finally getting to go to Dakar where I was able to collaborate with an amazing singer named Rhapsod from Senegal. It's a celebration song. A lot of time I use writing to connect with others and also my future self as a reminder of myself and our collective worth. Lines like "God willing never stop building, too sensitive but I'll never stop feeling, I'm meant to live big sky, no ceilings, get by still dealing with my own healing"...from where I come from it's powerful to say these things out loud and in addition I had an amazing time with the arrangements and vocals!

**I Got Life** This is an ode to Nina Simone and her song "I Ain't Got No". Nina is a hero of mine and I always loved that song so I flipped it into this. It made me stretch more vocally as I'm not "rapping" in the first verse. I changed some of the words to make it personal to me and was inspired to make the drum pattern non-traditional as far as hip hop goes (which is kind of a theme in the whole album). What I really wanted to do here mostly is to show contrast. Even though so much may not go right just being alive can be a huge blessing in itself and even when it feels like the world is falling we still have life.

**The Day The Sun Came** This is a song Keren Ann and I wrote. I've known Keren for some years now after meeting backstage at a show in Paris and our friendship formed. This song has me in a more spoken word poetry style which is influenced by many but

mostly by one of my all-time favorite poets/singers Gil Scott Heron. I've always wanted to make a song where I was able to express this way and this felt perfect. Keren Ann's words and vocals painted such a picture for me, her voice says so much while her words can be minimal. I quickly tapped into 2 personal moments in my life. My mothers passing (1st verse) and my sons birth (2nd verse). The instruments in this song all come to support this feeling, the guitar, cello, and even flamenco palmas all come to accent the picture.

**Wonderful Fantastic** I can be a little schizophrenic. I can feel all the woes in the world and the next moment I can't stop smiling at the love and wonder and goodness on this planet! This is that expression... and also this song comes from me having a residency where I was the DJ at a roller rink in the town that I live. Heavily influenced by disco and funk. I wanted to make sure a dance party record was included on this project. Big horns, DJ on the bridge, and heavy drums, Wonderful!

**Pain Away** This is probably my most personal song on this album. Written during one of my many bouts of depression it's me talking to my higher power and asking to take my pain away. I feel this song so much. I wanted to deliver this over a more somber melody but not necessarily a "sad" sounding track. The contrast to give hope with the instrumental while writing from a place of no hope.

**Breathe** I wrote this song while watching people from a subway platform and feeling the energy of the city. I wrote this chorus and handed it over for my friends to sing and the place they took it just grabbed me by the throat. The instrumental parts of this song were written by a band called Object Heavy from Northern California. The way the organ and guitar etc are "crying" sounds like a modern-day blues/hip hop song. I love it.

**Sea** This song is a continuation of me as an artist. my first song singing totally with the amazing artist T.I.E. it is a song in Wolof and she is playing guitar. It is such a vulnerable moment and as the laast song on the album perhaps a glimpse into what's next...

RAASHAN AHMAD