

# Her Edit

QUARTERLY



Issue Twenty-one  
Spring 2017

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Front cover picture  
Courtesy Baroness Grey-Thompson

# Her Edit



## Welcome to Her Edit

I think we all have them. Those friends who we may not see that often, but when we do it's like it's been no time at all and we pick up exactly where we left off.

I hope you'll welcome this latest issue in that spirit and certainly the whole of the Her Edit team are very excited about this quarterly edition. We're delighted to have the inspirational and incomparable Tanni Grey-Thompson on our front cover and every page shines a spotlight on a very remarkable woman.

We have no theme for this issue, but nonetheless there is a clear thread which runs through it. Every woman featured is in some way challenging the preconceptions, orthodoxies or inequities in our society. Our ambition is to give a voice and support to women and the work they do.

The pending General Election inevitably focuses our attention on the palpable inequality evident in the gender imbalance in our Parliament. While our battle for parity of representation continues, it's reassuring that despite that, women everywhere are at the forefront of issues we face today, whether that's equality for people with disabilities, supporting women refugees, working for ethical farming, confronting the distress of hair loss, giving opportunity to women in male dominated professions or, like Julie Hambleton, fighting the establishment for truth and justice.

All these issues are worthy of our attention and support. Please pass Her Edit on to your circle of friends, family and colleagues. The wider we can share these stories, the further we move towards a better place. Don't forget to join the conversation on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#) and if you have something to say, we'd love to hear from you.

Happy reading.

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Clockwise from left: Tanni Grey-Thompson, Phoebe Weston, Lizzy Stewart, Zrinka Bralo, Julie Hambleton and Carly Barratt.



# All in the Games

Tanni Grey-Thompson is one of Britain's most successful Paralympians. At the age of 17, she joined the British Wheelchair Racing Squad and went on to win 16 Paralympic medals, including 11 golds; hold over 30 world records, and win the London Marathon six times between 1992 and 2002.

Born with spina bifida, she is an advocate on disability issues and became a Life Peer in 2010. She spoke to Jayne Phenton about drug use in sport, the joys and challenges of the House of Lords and why there is still no level playing field for wheelchair users.

Those of us who remember the rickety sets, even more rickety scripts, yet solid wooden acting which distinguished the long-running soap, [Crossroads](#), in the 1970s, probably wouldn't hail it as leading the vanguard of realism in drama, but it could be that the ubiquitous Midlands motel may have been one of the first hotels to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act - at least in telly land.

One of the main characters was a wheelchair user, one of the first to feature on British television, alongside US detective Ironside.

I'm reminded of this by legendary Paralympian, cross-bench Peer and broadcaster, Tanni Grey-Thompson - now Baroness Grey-Thompson - who cites these two characters as the most visible representation of disabled people while she was growing

up, despite the fact that neither of the actors had a disability.

Today Izzy in [Coronation Street](#) or Donna in [East Enders](#) may suggest greater visibility of disabled people in popular media, but it is probably sport which has challenged common preconceptions most.

Tanni is unequivocal about her own role model; she remembers watching Welsh athlete Chris Hallam win the London marathon in the early 1980s.

'He was the first athlete that got any coverage on television. He had dyed blonde hair and outrageous taste in leopard print lycra body suits. He could be quite rude, but he was a massive supporter of me and the one who put Paralympic sport on the map.

'Chris challenged authority. He was fighting prejudice in real life, and in sport, so he was quite demanding because he

wanted to be treated equally. It's a shame a lot of young athletes coming through now don't know who he is because without him, we wouldn't have a Paralympic movement.'

Since its inception at the Stoke Mandeville Games in 1948, the [Paralympics](#) movement has gathered momentum and now secures considerable media coverage. Does that greater visibility have a positive impact for disabled people? Tanni is adamant that although the Paralympics have a higher profile, it's not reflected in the day to day reality of most people.

'It's a ten day sporting event, so while there's been an evolution, it can't change the world. Although Paralympic sport gets amazing coverage, the reality is that disabled people still experience a lot of discrimination. A lot of media coverage is about them being benefit scroungers.'



IMAGES  
Previous page: At the Welsh Senior Championship and Cardiff Century Games, Lethwick Stadium Cardiff ©Alamy

Above: Painting a post box gold at Stoke Mandeville ©Alamy

'Disability hate crime is the worst it's been since reporting started and the Crown Prosecution Service says the full tariff is rarely applied, so we're still a long way from where we need to be.'

Born in 1969 in Cardiff, Carys Davina earned the nickname 'tiny' from her two-year-old sister and became known as Tanni. Her parents battled for her to attend a mainstream school. You might expect that almost half a century later, things would be different, but Tanni suggests otherwise.

'I was talking to a family whose daughter is a wheelchair user and not allowed to go on school trips for health and safety reasons. It's not beyond the wit of man to make that happen. I think there's more red tape than there used to be and it makes things harder. If you're a parent of a disabled child you have to have so much resilience.'

Retiring from sport in 2007, Tanni forged a successful career as a television presenter before entering politics. Inevitably it poses the question whether sport can transcend barriers more than politics.

'There's probably more politics in sport than politics. Sport can be an amazing tool for people's

confidence and inclusion and people can achieve so many things, but it can't achieve everything. I'd like to see more disability sport on television. The BBC do locally and online, but I don't want Paralympic sport to be forgotten for another four years; what about in between?'

As we covered in our sport edition of Her Edit, exposure

**'I couldn't take the next three trains because 'one of you is on board already''**

in the mainstream media relies on the money a sport attracts - an issue for women's sport.

'Disability sport is similar. Gordon Reeves is never mentioned in talk about Wimbledon champions. We don't see a lot of swimming on the television. Away from the major games, it's pretty hard.'

Access to employment, to the media or to power seem to mirror the physical barriers. I've heard Tanni talk before about the challenges of making a train journey as a wheelchair user. If someone with Tanni's profile has difficulties travelling on public transport, what hope is there for anyone else?

'Physical access is an issue. I try to book my train ahead, but I don't always know what time I want to travel. Sometimes the attitude is 'you haven't booked'. So sometimes I turn up and I think, 'You know what? I'd love to be able to tell you 24 hours in advance'.

'Sometimes the attitude from staff is not great. Once the train I was on was diverted and we had to change. I couldn't take the next three trains because 'one of you is on board already. If you're not resilient and thick skinned and able to deal with it, it becomes a barrier and people don't feel able to travel. How you're treated is a massive part of that. London is good for accessible transport, but other parts of the country aren't.'

Tanni is uncompromising in her view of ethics in sport. In 2012 she was appointed to the commission to investigate the Lance Armstrong doping affair.

'I want to feel I'm watching clean sport. Some people say, 'Let athletes take whatever they want to', but I don't agree, partly because it's massively detrimental to an athlete's health.

'There's the rule book of the sport and then there's 'within the spirit of the games' and I

think we should adhere to the latter.

'Cycling has to decide whether it's going to operate within the rules, or in the spirit of the games. Where do you draw the line? Doping in cycling has been around for a while and there are issues in athletics. I'm fairly optimistic and you hope most of the drug cheats will be caught and there will be a move from random testing to targeted testing.'

On Radio 4's [Desert Island Discs](#), Tanni told presenter Kirsty Young that she was very competitive, but she seems to have an almost weary cynicism about winning.

'It matters to individuals and it matters to countries where they finish in the medal table. In the USA they have a different medal table; they pick up a lot of silver and bronze so they count total medals. Everyone else does it on golds. It matters to nations. It's money, it's fame, it's glory - lots of things which people crave. In terms of what that medal gives you, it's very seductive.'

'When the Olympics were in London, I was all in favour of life banning athletes who had been convicted of failing a test, but that was changed because of the attitude that once you've

served your time you have the opportunity to rehabilitate yourself, like in real life. I think the penalty should be harsh and take people out of sport for a long period of time, but athletes don't do it on their own.

'I think anyone who's associated with an athlete taking drugs should be taken out of sport as well. You have to train smart when you're on drugs, so the coaches and the

**'I think the penalty should be harsh and take people out of sport for a long period of time...'**

doctor are very often involved. For Olympic and Paralympic sport there should be a criminal penalty. A two year ban doesn't change people. I'm in favour of anything which stops people feeling they can get away with it.'

I'm shocked when Tanni tells me that an Olympic Committee survey which asked, 'If you could win a gold medal by taking drugs and get away with it, would you?' received a huge number of affirmative answers. Does Tanni miss competing?

'No not really. I miss having my highly defined triceps. I could get those back if I did lots of

training in the gym, but I don't want to any more. Travelling with your mates can be a really good laugh, but most of it is really boring. You're training 15 times a week on the same bit of trunk road; it's repetitive, six days a week, two or three times a day.

'I don't really have any regrets over my sporting career. I chose when to step out and I think that changes how you feel about it. I'd had enough, mentally and physically, but if you're deselected it's a different place to be.'

Tanni now has a different, but no less relentless schedule with her work in the [House of Lords](#) and with charities.

'I was keen to have something to step into when I finished competing that would give me a similar quality of life, a similar kind of feeling. The stuff we do here, winning or losing a vote, is very similar to winning or losing a race. The difference is that what we do here affects thousands of lives. I'm not saying sport is frivolous because it's important to a lot of people, but nobody ever lived or died because I lost or won a race.

'It's similar in that you can spend a lot of time going round in circles, writing speeches, going



IMAGES  
Left: With her husband and daughter at the Athens Paralympic Games, 2004,  
©Luch Calder, Alamy



Right: Winning gold at the Manchester Paralympics, 2005 ©Alamy

to meetings, real slogging your guts out stuff then you've got three minutes in the chamber. So coming from sport, knowing you're doing all that training for a couple of minutes in the sport, has helped me. The Lords is a weird and amazing place to be. They may not agree with you, but they listen to you and that's an amazing privilege because just being listened to has a huge sense of freedom.'

As you might expect from someone so independently spirited, Tanni values the freedom of being a crossbencher.

'I always say the best and the worst thing is that no-one tells me how to vote. Sometimes you wish someone would tell you what to do. My view is that unless I can explain why I've voted that way in five sentences, then I shouldn't vote.'

Despite a successful and prestigious career, the achievement Tanni is most intensely proud of is her daughter.

'She's an amazing young woman. I'm away often and she puts up with a lot because of my decision to go into politics - my husband does too. She'll say to me something like, 'well

done, I know you try hard', so she brings a sense of reality. I feel guilty when I'm away. Women feel it differently. When I first came here, she was eight and I was one of the few peers who had young family. There were times when I had to take her into Welfare Reform for five hours and say 'just sit there and I'll buy you a cake afterwards'.

'As a result she's incredibly adaptable, quite serious, quite grown up for her age and she knows far more about politics than most 14 year olds should ever know.'

The qualities admired in sports people - drive, ambition, a determination to win - seem to be the same qualities which are reviled in politics. How do you secure the trust of the people you serve?

'When I first came here I believed in a directly elected chamber. I still think we need reform, but it's not our job to say to the government, 'Are you really sure that's what you want to do? Have another think about it'. People are much more forgiving of sport than of politics, because people want to believe in sport.'

'I worry most about young people not voting. There needs to be more understanding

that what we do here affects everything from before you were born to when you are dead. I worry people are disengaged.'

Tanni clearly values the experience and expertise in the second chamber.

'What I like about the place is that people have done stuff before they get here. I'm not sure if you can call being an athlete a real job, but it's valuable, so when we have a debate on sport we've got Olympic cox, Colin Moynihan, Olympic athlete Ming Campbell, Olympic swimmer, Chris Holmes. We look at sport legislation, take it apart and send it back. You're here to learn, listen and make an informed judgement.'

So what for the future?

'There's nowhere really to go when you're in the House of Lords - as a crossbencher there is no career path because if I was a minister I'd have to give up my independence. There's lots I'd like to do on disability rights, like making it a criminal offence to park in a blue badge

space without one. It sounds a bit harsh, but it's not about sending people to jail, it's about respect.

'For a lot of disabled people life is really hard now. I don't need a (parking) space near the door, but I need one where no-one can park near to the driver's door, so I have enough space to get in.

'If you're a disabled person you have to have a sense of humour

**'There must be enough compassion to not want people to starve.'**

otherwise you'd be angry. If you give people a smart answer back,

they accuse you of having a chip on your shoulder. Lots of things have improved, but disabled children are still being excluded from PE at school on the back of the most amazing Paralympics ever. Having access to education and work is still a bit of a slog really.'

Tanni says living in the north east keeps her grounded and she appreciates the opportunity the House gives her to address inequities.

'People think that because the Paralympics is on telly, it's all ok, but the emails I get every week tell a different story. The

welfare system needed reform, but now, if you're a disabled person, you're constantly having to prove what you can't do. People have lots to offer society, but where I live, there aren't a lot of jobs available. I suggested that instead you should prove what you can do, but that doesn't fit into a neat assessment form.

'Some of the cases I encounter just make you cry. I was dealing with a guy last year who had many issues. He had a tin of soup to eat every two days. There must be enough compassion to not want people to starve.

'I get really upset that we don't spend our money in the right way. The Disability Living Allowance is changing to the Personal Independence Payment and the form assumes you're disabled and sick. I'm not sick. It's already starting from a negative connotation. That's why you have to be resilient, keep having a go and keep trying to change things.'

The same resilience and determination which characterised Tanni's sporting career informs her political career as well as being fuelled by a need to do good.

'I'm pretty thick skinned. People say transferring from sport to here is a massive

change, but it's not really. Sometimes it's boring; it's relentless. You go round in squares because everything is built in a quadrangle instead of circles like on the track. As a crossbencher I'm always in opposition. You just need to keep going. If you don't win and it doesn't work out, you just have another go again. I have a platform, I have a voice and I'm willing to try and do what I can.'

So how do you meet the challenges of being a woman in an overwhelmingly male work environment and a wheelchair user?

'I get treated in four ways; as a Paralympian, as a politician, as a woman; as a disabled woman, that's the worst treatment I get. People say, 'I saw you in the chamber and your jacket looked shit on you'. You have to laugh, sometimes it's the only thing that gets you through. And cake!

'I probably don't leave most nights till 10pm. It can be fantastic and bonkers. There is a kind of House of Lords humour. I'll phone my husband and say 'something really funny happened today', and he'll say, 'That's not very funny', but it's a good place. It's not the real world, but it's all good.'

# From subsidy to sustainability

Phoebe Weston was brought up on [Romshed Farm](#), a small organic farm in Kent, and despite now living in London, continues to play an active role. She says,

'I gravitate to the farm at the weekends - helping my parents with lambing and calving as well as more mundane tasks such as keeping the animals topped up with food and water during the winter months. I'm particularly interested in wildlife and farming issues. I'm currently growing a small garden on my balcony in an attempt to make my little spot in London a little more green than when I arrived.'

Here Phoebe shares her thoughts on educating youngsters about the reality of farming and its post-Brexit future.

**F**arming is arguably the sector the most affected by our departure from the EU. According to DEFRA, EU support from the Common Agricultural Policy made up 55 per cent of farmers' incomes in 2014.

The debates about farming and how we will continue to support this heavily subsidised industry have been thrown into the ring post-Brexit. It raises ideological questions about how we should govern our countryside; whether we should side with agribusinesses who tell us we need greater yield and more technology, or the agro-ecological movement who argue that farming must also nourish ecosystems and wildlife.

I live on a small family-run organic farm in Kent and for a few years we've been giving tours to inner city London kids. Last time I was showing them a chicken and one of them put up his hand and asked me, 'do you have to kill an animal to

get its meat?'. Another pointed to a horse and asked me if that was a cow.

It's possible I'm very gullible – or they were budding existentialists – but I suspect they were just extraordinarily unaware about farming and where their food comes from. And who can blame them? There is no connection at all with what is bought in the supermarkets and what goes on in the countryside on farms.

To think about farming in terms of volume of production is missing the point. Food isn't just made in the kitchen, it comes from the craggy rocks of Cumbria and salt-flecked fringes of Cornwall. Yet consumers' understanding of rural England is often limited to the pictures of rolling hills on packets of Anchor butter.

The language of the consumer has turned into an alphabet soup - organic, free-range, red tractor, soil association.... These labels bear little relation to how the food is really produced, how the land

was treated and what provisions were made for wildlife.

As the daughter of a farmer, animals and wildlife are a great source of excitement and visual interest to me. David Attenborough said, 'If people lose knowledge, sympathy and understanding of the natural world, they're going to mistreat it and will not ask their politicians to care for it.'

Agricultural issues seem dull and distant to many people not from rural backgrounds. How can we make sure people eat healthily from farms that are nurturing the soils and environment, if they have no experience of them?

The problem is we've lost our respect for food. More than 50 per cent of grain goes to feed animals, which is very wasteful and could be going to feed people. At home we throw away a third of what we buy. Too little attention is given to the quality of food and its impact of production on the wider environment.

There are a few big, powerful names in agribusiness who will always be pushing to make profit – many of whom have a firm grip on parliament. People must tell their politicians that these consumer gains are frequently to the great detriment of the wider environment and to our own human health.

As a species we have an innate interest in other beings – as shown by our fascination with cats, dogs and other domestic animals. We talk to

them, cuddle them and increasingly put clothes on them too.

We also love Planet Earth; 10 million of us tune into each episode. Planet Earth counteracts our disenchantment with our own species, provides us with an escape from the shiny-floor reality TV shows and the drudgery of civilised life. The natural world is wonderful and amazing and it's real. We have equally fantastic animals closer to home - in our woods, fields and rivers. The way we eat impacts on these ecosystems, whether we're aware of it or not.

We need to restore balance into farming and the countryside. This means giving subsidies to support ecologically-friendly, small-scale producers who are producing high quality food for the public and for the public good. We

need to reconnect people with where their food comes from, get children onto farms and farms into schools. The texture of our green quilted landscape is changing and mixed farming practices can thrive with sufficient backing and consumer understanding.

Brexit gives us an opportunity to shape UK farming with a policy that ensures we reconnect people with where their food comes from and improve the quality of food we eat. You get three votes a day - breakfast, lunch and supper. We must be mindful of what we eat, appreciate the natural world and now more than ever, demand our politicians help farmers look after it.

**'..one of them put up his hand and asked me, 'do you have to kill an animal to get its meat?'**



# Drawing room

## Her Edit



TEXT  
Lizzy Stewart

IMAGE  
Above: Lizzy Stewart ©LizzyStewart

Lizzy Stewart is an Illustrator based in London; she also publishes children's books and graphic novels. She studied at Edinburgh College of Art and Central St Martins in London. She is one half of independent publishers [Sing Statistics](#) and an associate Lecturer at Goldsmith College. Here she shares her passion for illustration and why we need more diversity in the art of making images and telling stories.

I am terribly precious about illustration, almost certainly to the detriment of my own work. I always want my illustration to be, in the traditional sense, illustrative. It should be explanatory, descriptive, illuminating even.

Good illustration is such an effective and accessible form of communication. A picture might be attractive and decorative, but that doesn't mean it can't also be articulate.

The best editorial illustrations in newspapers and magazines are witty and succinct. They communicate something the article can't. They're immediate and evocative and they require a great deal of skill to create.

I am, emphatically, not a good editorial illustrator (illustrators who create images for newspapers and magazines). Sadly it is just not how my brain is wired. My stories always end up longer and more chaotic. So instead I work, primarily, on books and comics.

With pictures you can deliver so much information. A single panel of a comic strip can

tell you everything you need to know about the world a character lives in, something that might take pages in a novel.

In picture books the image must be clear and concise, it must tell the story to the child reading, but it should also be immersive; it should demand time and repeat visits; it should be a world to escape into.

Pictures are how we first experience stories as a child, we recognise facial expressions and learn empathy, we understand the existence of faraway places by seeing them in books. Pictures are how we learn about the world.

There is much discussion of the notion of 'women in comics'. I think there is some great work currently being done by women in visual-storytelling. In the last few years I would argue that the majority of the most exciting graphic novels have been authored by women such as Jillian Tamaki, Isabel Greenberg and Eleanor Davis.

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While there are challenges for female artists and writers, there is a broader diversity issue that plagues comics, illustration and picture-books in general. The indie comics scene, which I guess I am a part of, is surprisingly bad for this. For an industry that prides itself on its DIY ethos and openness, there are alarmingly few people of colour participating in events such as comic fairs, panels and conferences on a regular basis.

We need to rally publishers to share the fascinating, hilarious and wise voices of women in comic books but it is vital that we also fight to hear stories that do not directly mirror our own.

Pictures create empathy and foster understanding. If we, as artists, present only the face we have and not the faces we see on the street, on the tube and in other countries, then we contribute to the idea that the world is best experienced by, and thus belongs to, white people.

Luckily there are people who are working tirelessly to address the balance. I am utterly enthralled by the writing of Zainab Akhtar, a comics critic and appreciator who has done so much in recent

years to draw attention to writers and artists from a diverse range of backgrounds. Illustrator Manjit Thapp makes beautiful, luxurious images featuring gloriously thick-browed Asian women, appealing to those who crave a different version of beauty.

Comic book artist and illustrator Jillian Tamaki uses her project 'super mutant magic academy' to talk about adolescent experience, but she uses characters with a range of ethnicities and abilities, neatly demonstrating that teen-angst belongs, unfortunately, to everyone.

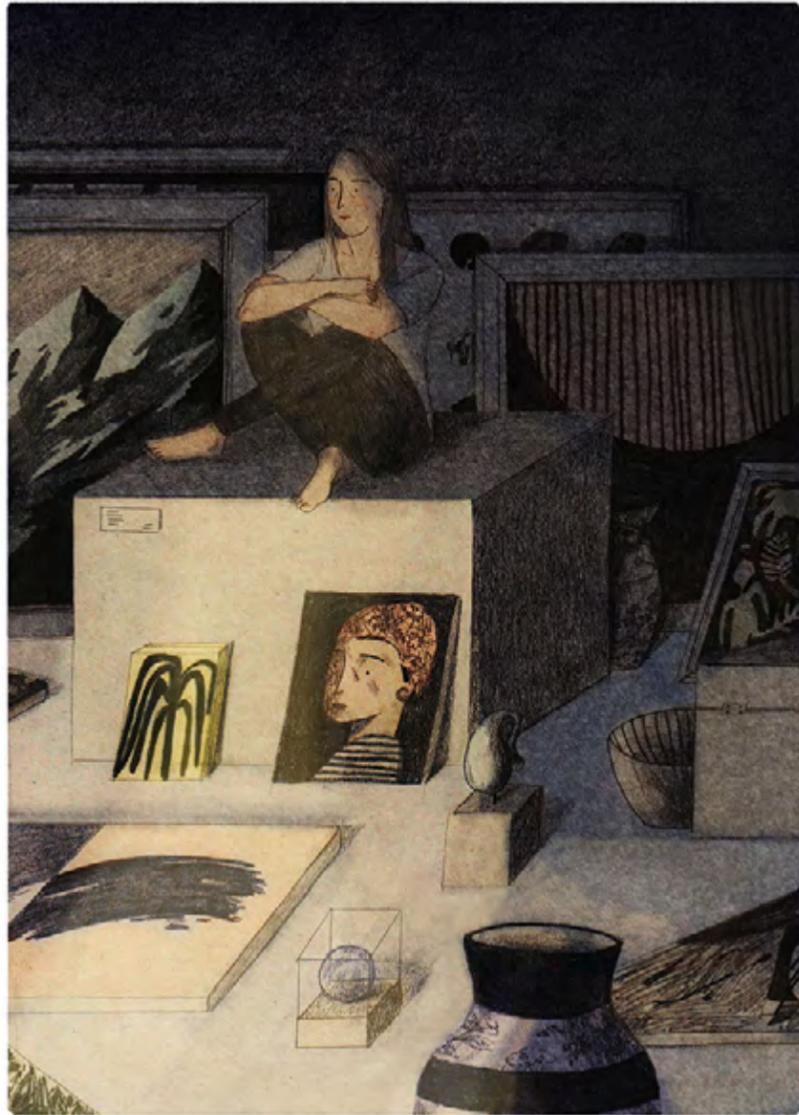
So, as we slowly edge towards a comics industry that includes women more fairly, let's use our visibility to ensure that equal representation is awarded to all our peers, not merely the ones who look just like us.

I can vividly remember the books I read as a child. The really important ones, by Shirley Hughes, Judith Kerr and Tony Robinson, have stayed with me well into adulthood. I would love my books to persist, like that, even for just one person!

IMAGES

Above: Penelope ©LizzyStewart

See more of Lizzy's work at  
[www.abouttoday.co.uk](http://www.abouttoday.co.uk)



## IMAGES

Left to right: And so on, Tiger cover, Jungle ©Lizzy Stewart



# Her Edit

## Profit and loss

Carly Barratt first lost her hair through Alopecia when she was 11 years old and struggled with the psychological impact for many years.

In February 2016 she took part in a BBC4 documentary called '[No Body's Perfect](#)' with Rankin and Alison Lapper which changed her perception of herself and the condition. After volunteering for [Alopecia UK](#) she realised there was a lack of services for hair loss sufferers and she set up Alikins, offering a personal wig service.

Here Carly shares her story and the journey that's given her her confidence back and opened up opportunities.

TEXT  
Carly Barratt

IMAGES  
All courtesy and copyright of Carly Barratt

I'm a 36-year-old single mum of two amazing children; a son of 14 and a daughter of 10. I may be biased, but they are incredible for many reasons, but especially for their unconditional love and support over the past two years.

In February 2015 I was washing my hair. I looked at my hands; they were covered in hair, as was the shower and the carpets. In fact everywhere I went I left a trail. I had noticed it was getting thinner and one or two patches had appeared.

I tried to remain optimistic, but this wasn't new to me. When I was 11, I developed Alopecia Areata, an autoimmune condition which causes patchy hairloss. It hit me hard back then. I tried wigs, but they were awful so I just wore hats. I missed almost two years of secondary school because of bullying.

It kept happening every year or so. Patches would develop and I'd lose hair in varying degrees until I had my son in 2002. Things settled down in my body and I had a full head of hair for 13 years. I loved it. It was my pride and joy after all of those years without it!

So when it started falling out again I reverted back to that 11-year-old girl. My hair loss

increased and in May 2015 I had to go and buy my first wig. I was scared, but it was a necessity as I'd barely got anything left and what I did have was all straggly. I had to drive 53 miles to a shop in a big shopping centre. Everyone knew why I was going in there and it was awful.

The NHS experience wasn't much better. It was hurried and they really didn't understand what it was like for someone losing their hair. I was just a number, a customer through the door. But I loved my wigs and in an attempt to make losing my hair a positive, I decided to have fun with it and change my style to suit my mood.

Blonde one day, redhead the next. Inside I was still in turmoil, pretending to be OK for my children's sakes. I had to be OK and show them I was strong, and be that positive role model. I couldn't afford to fall apart around them.

My son didn't like seeing me without my wig on as I didn't look like his mum. I explained to them what it was and that I was alright, but my daughter was so scared something bad was going to happen that she wouldn't leave my side despite my new bald look not phasing her at all.

'...they really didn't understand what it was like for someone losing their hair. I was just a number, a customer through the door.'

In December 2015 there was a post on the Alopeciauk Facebook group asking for people to be in a documentary challenging the idea of beauty with the artist [Alison Lapper](#) and world renowned photographer Rankin. Could I do it?

No, not me. It sounded like a great opportunity, but I couldn't go on television and talk about my lack of hair. Then one night just before New Year's Eve (and after a glass or two of festive wine!) I had a moment of madness and sent an email to the production company with my story.

A few days later I heard back and a few days after that they were on my doorstep doing test shots. Just a few weeks after that I had the call to say I had been selected to take part!

I nearly pulled out a few times, but my children and family were so proud of me and I wanted to show them it's to take these opportunities when they arise and to not let fear stop them.

Filming 'No Bodys Perfect' was the best time of my life and totally life changing. The photoshoot with Rankin was incredible. I was terrified walking into his studio even though he had

phoned me a couple of days before just to touch base and answer any questions. He sounded so lovely on the phone that I knew he would put me at ease, and I was right.

I was swept off to the dressing room. With the make-up artist working her magic, manicure being done and someone getting me drinks, I felt like a celebrity. I stepped in front of Rankin's camera, wig on, nervous at first, but soon getting into the swing of it.

I loved every minute and some of the pictures he was producing. Then it was time for the ultimate picture, wig free. I had never let anyone see me without my wig on other than immediate family and very close friends and even then I would ask permission to take it off in front of them.

I took a deep breath and stepped out. It felt like I couldn't breathe for what seemed like ages. Rankin snapped away. I looked at the pictures. I wasn't sure I liked seeing me like that, but more pictures were taken and they grew on me. It was me, captured beautifully by an incredible talent.

Alison Lapper was my rock through filming. She's an amazing lady and reduced me to tears on many occasion through her honest, heartfelt and lovely comments. I walked out of the studio



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on cloud nine. I was buzzing and I actually felt quite pretty!

I phoned my mum from the train station to tell her all about it. I remember saying to her, 'I wish I could bottle this feeling so I can give it to everyone going through this.'

If they could feel a little of what I was feeling at that moment, I knew it would make all the difference to them. Of course, bottling it wasn't possible, so it got me thinking as to what was possible.

How could I make a difference to people and change their lives? How could I use my experience with hairloss and my incredible experience with Rankin and Alison to help others?

In the weeks and months after filming my confidence soared; my self-esteem and self-worth was back. For the first time ever I actually loved the person I was. Even without a wig on, I loved what I saw looking back in the mirror.

I realised the true meaning of beauty and that everything on the outside from your hair to your make up are just accessories to who we are.

It may be a cliché, but true beauty really does come from within. Since I've accepted who I am, and learnt to love who I am, I've never felt more beautiful. I knew I had to use all of this to help empower ladies with hairloss to feel the same.

So [Aikins Hairloss Solutions](#) was born - a one stop shop for people with hairloss which sells wigs, eyebrow solutions, headwear and, above all, the much needed emotional support.

Word soon got out and I made my first sale. I offered home visits; or clients could come and see me at home. I also offered a mail order service for those that lived too far away. Soon I had clients up and down the country and I realised exactly where my passion was in life.

I have cried with clients, felt their pain and heartache; I don't think I've ever cried as much as I have since starting this. Clients write or

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text to thank me for everything I have done and say how I have changed their lives; I can't read it through the tears. It's very humbling and an honour to be able to help give someone their life back.

Losing your hair is such an emotional rollercoaster. You lose your identity and it's no easier for men then it is for women. They go through the same emotions; the only difference is that it's more socially acceptable to see a bald man then a bald woman, although I am doing my bit to change that.

The final part of the documentary was of me walking around a busy part of Colchester without my wig. It was the hardest thing I have ever had to do and took a few attempts for me to remove my wig, but I did it and I was so proud. Someone asked me recently what my vision is. It is this: to make bald beautiful, wigs fashionable and to change the world. Maybe one day, but for now I have taken Alikins to the next level and opened a private consultation

room within a well established hair salon and healing centre in Colchester.

It's a beautiful and tranquil place where those that need my services can come along and be my VIP. I have clients visiting from all over the UK from as far as Cornwall and Staffordshire. There are various services on offer including a pamper package aimed at those that are new to hairloss and wig wearing.

Buying a wig should be a positive experience even, dare I say it, fun! That first experience you have will determine the relationship you have with your new hair, so I make sure it's a positive one from the minute you make contact.

All in all, I am so glad my hair fell out. It has given me opportunities I never thought would happen and brought so many amazing people into my life. It has changed me so much as a person and I have never been happier, so thank you Alopecia. my friend!

Alikins Hairloss Solutions is on Facebook or visit the website at [www.alikinswigs.co.uk](http://www.alikinswigs.co.uk)

Consultation room is by appointment only. Email [info@alikinwigs.co.uk](mailto:info@alikinwigs.co.uk) or call 07938785444 to book. Weekday, evening and weekend appointments available. The address is 201 Shrub End Road Colchester CO3 4RH

# A champion for migrant and refugee women

Her Edit



Zrinka Braio is CEO of [Migrants Organise](#), a grass roots organising platform for migrants and refugees acting for justice. Zrinka is a refugee from Sarajevo, where she was a journalist and where she worked with leading war correspondents during the siege in the 90s.

She is a founder of [Women on the Move Awards](#) that celebrates achievement of migrant and refugee women and winner of the 2011 Voices of Courage Award by the Women's Refugee Commission in New York.

She served as a Commissioner on the Independent Asylum Commission, the most comprehensive review of the UK protection system, and still leads the process of implementation of its 180 recommendations. With Citizens UK, Zrinka successfully negotiated the end of immigration detention of children in 2010.

She currently chairs the National Refugee Welcome Board working to welcome Syrian refugees. Zrinka holds an MSc in Media and Communications from London School of Economics and is a 2014 Churchill Fellow.

TEXT  
Interview by Ann Clark

IMAGES  
All courtesy and copyright of Zrinka Braio

**W**ould you tell us about how you became a refugee and what was your experience?

Before the war, I was a journalist in Sarajevo. When the war started, I worked with international war correspondents. They helped me to escape the siege and, through a strange set of circumstances, I ended up in London. I did not realize at the time that I had become a refugee, but the way that the bureaucratic world of borders works meant that I had to apply for political asylum, which was a very stressful experience. Everyone could watch the news and see that genocide was taking place in my country, and that my city was being bombed, but I was treated with suspicion, as if seeking sanctuary was a criminal act.

*Did you experience difficulties & prejudice when you came to Britain?*

No, ordinary people were kind and welcoming. It was the government officials who were very unwelcoming. I did not understand why they treated me as if I had done something wrong. The tabloid press made me feel unwelcome, too. I was so intrigued by the negative representation of asylum seekers in the media that I did my MSc on this topic, to try to understand why the media hated immigrants so much. I realized that the media creates this sense of a “British” or “English” identity in relation to the imaginary “other”. The media does not want to hold neoliberal capitalism responsible for the inequality in our society, so they blame foreigners.

*You have successfully campaigned to end*

*immigration detention for children. How did you achieve this and what are the remaining problems with detention centres?*

The detention of children was a shameful secret which was done for the administrative convenience of officials who were not doing their job properly. I worked with Citizens UK raising awareness about this cruel practice. Once we told ordinary citizens that children were kept in prison-like conditions for months, without judicial oversight, they were outraged and they wanted to do something about it. Ordinary British people up and down the country took action, and raised it with their MPs. They demanded an explanation, and there was no explanation that would satisfy the voters.

Citizens UK organised people and managed to make the detention of children an election issue. As a result, all party leaders promised to end the practice if elected. It took more than a year for the Coalition government to actually end it, but it was worth the effort. I led the effort to see it through and was very happy to see it end. Sadly, indefinite immigration detention of adults continues, and it is still without judicial oversight. It is costly and ineffective, but the government wants to appear tough on immigration, so they keep locking people up, including women. The detention centres are privately run and there is very little accountability and abuse of the detainees’ human rights is widespread. The campaign to end this cruel practice continues.

*Tell us about your foundation “Bridge of Peace”*

Bridge of Peace is a charity that I set up with a group of friends to support the process of

reconciliation in Bosnia, in the area where the worst atrocities happened during the war in the 90’s. We work with young people and use arts as a way to foster dialogue in a very segregated area that is still scarred by the war.

We have been blessed with wonderful volunteers from all over the world, who come and work with those young people on a regular basis. We have made huge progress - children from ethnically segregated schools are now friends and every year they produce a play together. It is a slow process, but there is no other way to repair the damage caused by the war and to build trust.

*What inspired you to set up the Women on the Move awards and what have they achieved?*

In 2011, I was a recipient of the Voices of Courage Award which is given out by the Women’s Refugee Commission in New York. I wanted to share that wonderful experience with other amazing refugee and migrant women who do so much good community work that goes largely unrecognized, but that is of huge importance for community cohesion.

I was lucky that my colleagues at Migrants Organise were supportive of the idea, and that the Women of the World Festival and UN Refugee Agency joined in as partners.

Together, for six years now, we have recognized and celebrated some amazing women and managed to give them a platform to be heard and make a difference. I am immensely proud of all of them. I am also happy that we could celebrate something positive. We now also have

a Media Award and a Champion Award, so the family of inspiring change-makers is growing,

*How do you evaluate suffering at the strategic level to make the best judgements for accepting those seeking asylum?*

That is very simple. The need for protection is defined by the 1951 Geneva Convention, which was drafted and adopted in the aftermath of Holocaust, when the world came to terms with the enormity of the genocide committed, but also the failure to provide sanctuary, which was rooted in prejudice against Jews. It was a promise of ‘never again’.

That promise is still relevant and you do not need a law degree to understand that someone fleeing Syria, Iraq, Iran, Eritrea, Afghanistan needs protection. The problem is that western governments have adopted a rather negative, exclusive and adversarial approach to protection. They have failed to implement the Geneva Convention and they have failed refugees, and ultimately their own citizens. Germany is the only country in Europe that takes its responsibility under the Convention seriously. The rest of the EU and the US have failed refugees and fueled human trafficking, as well as right wing xenophobia.

It is all very ugly and unnecessary. Refugees are survivors, and if given a helping hand, refugees make a huge contribution to their countries of arrival. The EU governments must implement a fair asylum system, rather than the very politicized one we have at the moment. Refugees have become collateral damage in the domestic politics of fear.



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*What would your three wishes be for the UK's approach to migrants?*

First, I wish for sections of the media to stop fabricating lies and hate against immigrants. Second, I wish for politicians to take a moral stand, have courage and show leadership in welcoming refugees in the way that Justin Trudeau in Canada did and that Angela Merkel in Germany did. Finally, I wish for ordinary people to reach out and meet refugees and migrants, hear their stories, because they would realize that we are not the cause of their problems. In fact, we have so much in common and need to work together for better society that serves all of us.

*Are you concerned about the brain drain from countries from which people emigrate & can anything be done about it?*

The structural inequality is not helped by the brain drain, but many countries are dependent on remittances. Many Bosnians in Bosnia would not survive without remittances from their family in the diaspora.

*What has been the greatest success of Migrants Organise?*

We have done so many great things: helped end the detention of children, supported tens of thousands refugees and migrants to start a normal life with dignity and respect, amongst them more than 3,500 refugee and migrant doctors and dentists. I'd like to believe that our greatest success is ahead of us – developing and organising amazing refugee and migrant leaders across the UK to speak out and build a movement for justice and the common good.

*What do you feel ordinary people in the UK can do about the situation?*

Join us! All people of goodwill must speak out and join progressive forces at these testing times for democracy around the world. We must stop being bystanders and clicktivists and do real work in our communities, with real people, making real change.

## About Migrants Organise

**Migrants Organise is a platform where migrants and refugees organise for power, dignity and justice. We work across the UK to bring community organisations, individuals, and institutions together to build common ground, speak out, connect, grow power and act together for common good.**  
<http://www.migrantsorganise.org>

# Her Edit



## IMAGES

Previous page: Zrinka presenting the Women on the Move Awards

Left to right: At the WOW London event, at the Women on the Move Awards with winners, with the artist Ai Wei-wei

All courtesy and copyright Zrinka Braio



# The campaign for truth and justice

Julie Hambleton's sister, Maxine, was killed in the IRA pub bombings in Birmingham in 1974. The men wrongly convicted of carrying out the atrocity, known as the Birmingham Six, were released after serving 16 years in jail.

No-one has ever been held accountable for the deaths of the 21 people murdered that night. Along with other families of the victims, Julie and her brother have continued to campaign for an inquest to uncover the truth of the corrupt investigation by the West Midlands Police and find justice for their loved ones.

Despite the inquest into the tragic events at Hillsborough setting a clear precedent, the families have been refused public money to take their case forward.

Julie wrote for Her Edit in our Faith issue in January 2015. Here she gives an update on the campaign and highlights the inequitable access to justice they face.

**J**ustice4the21 have been campaigning for truth, justice and accountability for many years on behalf of those loved ones we lost in the Birmingham Pub Bombings 1974. Truth, justice and accountability engage principles of law, morality and ethics.

By ethics I take a narrow interpretation in respect to our campaign as meaning a code or standard by which a duty owed to the public by a statutory authority is discharged – it is about a public obligation toward others. In this instance, the obligation owed to us on behalf of those we lost.

It has become clear that both West Midlands Police and the British government do not want the truth known as to why our loved ones died on the 21 November 1974. If they did, then why have they made us fight so hard to get to where we are today? It is not to protect us from the truth, but rather to protect them for their ethical failings both then, in the immediate aftermath, following and now.

If our loved ones had been stabbed on the streets, the police would investigate, there would be an inquest and (hopefully) justice would be served; but this has not happened for the families of the victims and those survivors of the Birmingham Pub Bombings of 1974.

Six men were imprisoned in 1975 and then their convictions quashed some 16 years later. Upon their release, no one came forward and said, "the families of the 21 who were brutally murdered need to have an inquest, because they never had one". The police did not bother to look for the actual murderers. In fact the then Chief Constable of the West Midlands Police made a public statement claiming the police had done all they could and "that we're not looking for anyone else". Case closed.

What ethical code, standard or professional engagement with the public - us - have the police and the government worked to these past 43 years? It appears there was none. If anything, there was an anti-ethical agenda in play to demonise our loved ones as terrorist fodder



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because collusion, by omission or commission, and because, maybe, there was professional negligence.

It is only in recent years that the police has established a Code of Ethics, which states:

“Ethical behaviour comes from the values, beliefs, attitudes and knowledge that guide the judgements of each individual” (Police Ethics Code). Within this Code of Ethics, the College of Policing have introduced nine principles: accountability, integrity, openness, fairness, leadership, respect, honesty, objectivity and selflessness. It states:

“The principles must be more than words on a page and must

become embedded in the way police professionals think and behave”.

If only the ex-Chief Constable Chris Sims of West Midlands Police had read these prior to our meeting in 2014, because it was clear he had no moral or ethical compass in relation to dealing with victims’ families of terrorism. He lacked every single principle listed above. He – on behalf of his force – was ethically barren toward us.

The government have acted no better than the ex-Chief Constable. The level of contempt shown us has been breathtaking – we are left speechless in the face of the force of the State.

The Home Secretary, Amber Rudd MP, invited us to London. We all had to take annual leave only again to be asked, “Who are you? Why do you want legal funding?”, implying we must justify what truth we seek for those who cannot speak.

This political servant of the state – elected by us - was so ill-prepared for the meeting that it did not go as she and her faceless and nameless lackeys anticipated. It was, as she was quoted later “a frank and candid exchange”.

We told her who we were, who we represented and why we needed funding for legal representation to effectively participate in a legal process that will be the opportunity to

independently investigate the deaths of our loved ones.

It was insulting and humiliating especially as the Home Secretary made promises that we now know she could not possibly keep. She exhibited her utter lack of respect for us and any moral or ethical compass. This government expects us to beg for parity of funding that is being afforded to the state agencies and agents whose collusion and negligence has concealed the truth. Where is the equality of arms for victims’ families?

It appeared for a long time that this government was deliberately creating delays to getting inquests expedited and to deny us our choice of legal representation, KRW LAW LLP, the lawyers who have worked for us *pro bono* to date.

This firm has a reputation for getting results and the confidence of the families involved. Are the government afraid the inquest could potentially open up that can of worms that the government simply do not wish the public to ever know about?

Why else would they make ordinary, working class families

fight for the right – as decided by the Senior Coroner - for an independent investigation into the deaths of our loved ones in accordance with human rights standards.

On 27 January 2017 the government amended the law to allow us to apply for legal aid and keep our loyal legal team. At the stroke of a minister’s pen, we were given the right to choose, but not guaranteed the legal funding the other Interested Parties will receive

**‘It has become clear that both the West Midlands Police and the Government do not want the truth known as to why our loved ones died on 21 November 1974.’**

via the public purse without question.

We ask: Is this the government’s end game, to deny us the opportunity to be legally represented on a par with the state agencies and agents so they have full control at the inquest to manipulate it to suit their aims - as opposed to giving the families what they desire most – access to truth, justice and accountability?

In total contrast to those we pay to “serve and protect us” and those who are elected to represent us, our legal team displays an ethical and moral duty towards their clients. Yet the government and police seek to deny, besmirch them and castigate them for the work they achieve – across difficult ethical divides.

KRW LAW LLP have always been open and honest with us, on who they are, who they have represented and what they can and cannot do for us, in fairness to us and in line with the legal professions strict code of conduct. Such transparency clearly indicates their level of respect for their clients, where they illustrate integrity and objectivity.

That the work they have done for us to date has been for free demonstrates not only excellent leadership and accountability, but also the level of selflessness that they, as a law firm, have bestowed on us, as their clients.

If only those we are in unnecessary contest with – with their professional ethics – could do likewise.

**Support the campaign at [justice4the21.co.uk](http://justice4the21.co.uk)**

# Her Edit

HER ISSUE, HER VOICE

Issue Twenty-two  
out Autumn 2017

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