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With Themes of Finding Light in the Darkness, "Cancer Is My Engine" Music Video Releases During Hanukkah 2020

Backed by Leading Doctors, and with a Fresh Take on How to Face a Health Crisis, Seattle Area Band Releases Innovative Music Video about Healing from Cancer through Song

Kitsap, WA – Amidst the global pandemic, volunteer cast and crew drove in from across Washington state, donning masks and practicing social distancing, to film against the backdrop of the stunning Olympic Peninsula forest - for Iraqis in Pajamas' music video, "Cancer Is My Engine." The video tells the story of front woman Loolwa Khazzoom's choice to reject the conventional thyroidectomy treatment for thyroid cancer, despite medical and financial pressure. Khazzoom instead chose to approach the diagnosis as an opportunity for radically transforming her life - such as by going vegan and practicing numerous forms of mind-body medicine.

After cold-stopping the growth of the nodules for years, through these measures, Khazzoom moved to Washington state from California, returned to her lost love of music, and launched her band - which combines ancient Iraqi Jewish prayers with original alternative rock. Immediately following, the thyroid nodules began shrinking. Through magical realism and metaphor, the music video reveals how, by listening to her inner voice, Khazzoom self-healed through her actual voice, by singing - the ability of which ironically may have been destroyed by a thyroidectomy, given the proximity of the thyroid gland and vocal chords.

Video Storyboard

The video begins with Khazzoom standing at the edge of a cliff, singing the opening line of the song, "Cancer is my engine." As she sings it, a candle is lit by her voice. Suddenly she is transported to a forest, where she is searching in the dark with the light of that candle. She comes across a bear - representing Khazzoom's mother - and picks it up, then continues on her quest. An insurance agent and doctor appear and begin chasing Khazzoom through the forest. As she runs away from them, carrying the bear, she comes to a fork in the road - with the doctor on one side and the insurance agent on the other, coming toward her. She stops, looks in each direction, then runs forward, through the part of the forest that has no path, heading toward the light. She keeps running until she comes to a cliff and jumps off it.

She lands in the middle of a drumming circle and starts dancing wildly. A few scenes later, she is drumming in the middle of the circle, and everyone else is dancing around her. Both circles represent the pivotal importance of music and dance in Khazzoom's healing. The video then starts to shift from magical realism and metaphor to real life shots, with the band playing music in a vegetable patch in Khazzoom's garden, representing Khazzoom's regimen of juicing daily and eating a whole-foods, plant-based diet. The video ends with Khazzoom standing on the edge of the cliff and singing the last words of the song, in the original a cappella Iraqi Jewish prayer that exalts the power of the Divine.

Endorsement Excerpts

Loolwa Khazzoom is one of the most uniquely powerful and creative people I have ever met...I recall her experience with thyroid cancer and the remarkable intelligence, research, and deep thoughtfulness she put into making her decisions about treatment. In her case, she decided to go with an intensive immersion in natural healing, involving dietary changes, deep mind/body/spirit work, dance, and natural remedies. She's obviously been successful...and all credit goes to her and her fierce belief in following the life that her deep soul guides her in. This song and video, "Cancer is my Engine," is just a taste of the passion and commitment that Loolwa brings not only to her healing, but to everything she does. - **Martin L. Rossman, MD**, Author, *Fighting Cancer from Within: How to Use the Power of Your Mind for Healing*

Pay attention to Loolwa Khazzoom, especially if you ever had cancer. Music and dance became her path to healing, along with a robust program of organic foods, botanicals, and nutrients. I am a medical oncologist and hematologist who worked with Ms. Khazzoom as a patient from 2012 to 2014, and watched her large malignant thyroid nodules (Hurthle cell tumor) stabilize as she found her voice, and made cancer her engine, as the song goes. To me, cancer represents not an enemy, but a call for transformation. Loolwa transformed her life profoundly, followed her intuition wherever it took her, and healing was the result. The joy that this transformation brought into her life is in every breath of her music, in every tone of her chants, in the fluid movements of her dancing...We can all learn from Loolwa Khazzoom. And enjoy her music. - **Dwight L. McKee MD, CNS, ABIHM**, Author, *After Cancer Care: The Definitive Self-Care Guide to Getting and Staying Well for Patients with Cancer*

Loolwa is a force of nature. It's no surprise to us that the cancer wilted beneath her phenomenal presence and no wonder also, that her courageous heart expresses itself so eloquently in the hurricane of her gritty music. - **Deva Premal & Miten**, *Billboard* chart-topping musicians

Loolwa Khazzoom's journey from cancer to healing demonstrates how attention to emotions, attitudes, and lifestyle can serve as powerful factors promoting recovery. Her experience should give hope and guidance to anyone facing serious health challenges. She reminds us that healing forces originate from within, not only from without. In a world enchanted with high-tech approaches to health and wellness, this is a message we desperately need to remember. - **Larry Dossey, MD**, *NY Times* Bestselling Author, *The Extraordinary Healing Power of Ordinary Things*, Executive Editor, *Explore: The Journal of Science and Healing*

Iraqis in Pajamas song, "Cancer Is My Engine," is the soundtrack for the epigenetics revolution. This soulful music, inspirational lyrics, and captivating music video awaken us to the fact that with a positive mindset and healthy lifestyle choices, we can heal ourselves from chronic illness, no matter what our genetic predisposition. Through her bold decision to follow her heart through a cancer diagnosis, songwriter Loolwa Khazzoom is now living proof that music is truly medicine and that with the right mindset, a cancer diagnosis can serve as the portal to an extraordinary life. - **Kenneth R. Pelletier, PhD, MD**, Author, *Change Your Genes, Change Your Life*

"Cancer Is My Engine" is a wonderful story about our body's tremendous ability to heal—if we give it a chance. - **Joseph Pizzorno, ND**, Author, *The Toxin Solution*, Editor, *Integrative Medicine, A Clinician's Journal*

Sponsorship:

The music video was fiscally sponsored by nonprofit Healing Journeys and was funded by the Lloyd Symington Foundation, both of which offer innovative programs for people living with and healing from cancer.

About Iraqis in Pajamas

In turn vulnerable and angry, haunting and inspiring, Seattle-area band Iraqis in Pajamas (IraqisInPajamas.com) disarms audiences, opening them to deep contemplation about trauma, healing, and transformation. Featuring front woman and bass player Loolwa Khazzoom, guitarist Sean Sebastian, and drummer Robbie Morsehead, with songs in English, Judeo-Arabic, and Hebrew, the band has a unique sound - an innovative blend of ancient Iraqi Jewish prayers, alternative rock, and personal storytelling about topics as varied as cancer, domestic violence, racism, mental illness, street harassment, family caregiving, and national exile.

Khazzoom has had a meandering career as an educator, writer, health coach, and more, all with the central organizing principle of individual and collective healing. Her work has been featured in top media including *The New York Times* and *Rolling Stone*; she has presented at leading venues including Harvard University and the Simon Wiesenthal Center; and she has published two books, taught throughout the Ivy League and at universities nationwide - *The Flying Camel: Essays on Identity by Women of North African and Middle Eastern Jewish Heritage* and *Consequence: Beyond Resisting Rape*. Ultimately ditching her power suit and power point in favor of combat boots and cat glasses, Khazzoom now offers bold songwriting as the catalyst for deep and heart-centered conversation.

Guitarist Sean Sebastian is a professional musician, as well as an audio engineer, film maker, founder of Off the Wall Artists Collective, and owner of Bard Rock Studios - through which both the audio track and music video were recorded and produced. Drummer Robbie Morsehead has been a professional musician for decades – touring nationally, recording numerous albums, and performing for notables including Seattle Supersonics and Microsoft.

See full endorsements: <https://khazzoomusic.com/2020/11/13/cancer-is-my-engine-full-endorsements/>.

The Science behind Music as Medicine

Can music really heal the physical body? Leading scientific research says yes. Studies on the healing powers of music are documented in books like *The Power of Music* (by NY Times best-selling author Elena Mannes) and *The Healing Power of Sound* (by oncologist Mitchell Gaynor MD), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) has launched a series of studies on the healing powers of music. Quite simply, whether singing lullabies or sacred chants, mothers and religious leaders have known for millennia what scientists are only beginning to understand: Singing has the extraordinary power to uplift, transport, and heal us, as well as to connect us to the Divine. This shift in consciousness is why, after hearing a particular song, our mood may change abruptly, or we suddenly may feel transported back in time. Singing bypasses our mental process, both awakening and soothing us at the core, without effort. Among other benefits, we are able to access, release, and heal from the experience of trauma, without having to recount and risk getting triggered by painful memories.