

CANDID

THE WELL-PAID PROFESSIONAL MAGAZINE

JUNE 2021 | ISSUE 03

STORIES OF
PROFESSIONALS
CREATING
SUCCESS ON
THEIR TERMS

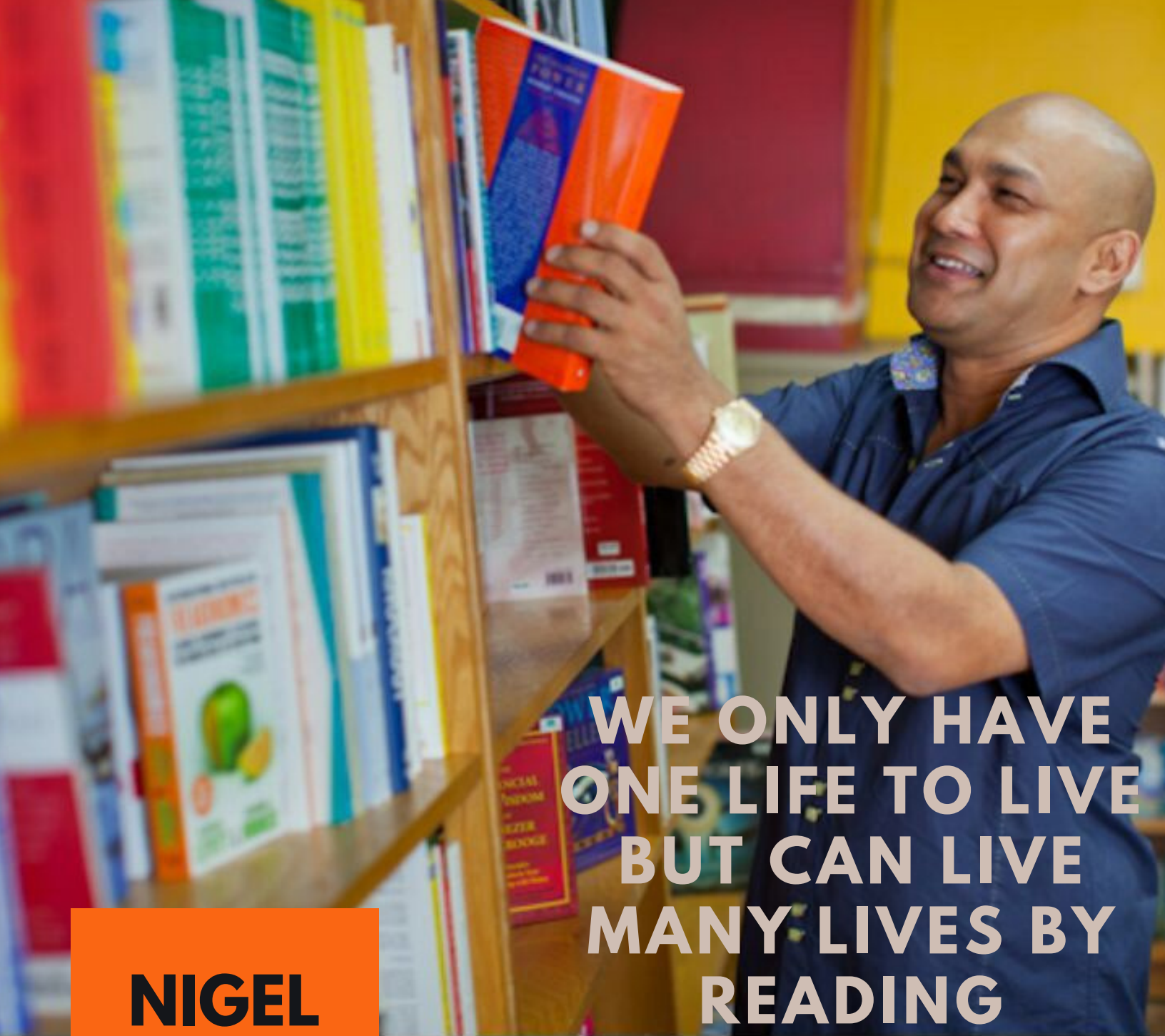
▶
Nigel Khan





FINDING THE RIGHT

**INGREDIENTS TO SUCCESS
IS AN INSIDE OUT JOB**



WE ONLY HAVE ONE LIFE TO LIVE BUT CAN LIVE MANY LIVES BY READING

NIGEL KHAN

Nigel Khan gives an overview of his world and the way books have shaped his life and how he sees books in the context of Trinidad and Tobago.

WRITTEN BY GISELLE P. HUDSON

“This is my passion. If I die in the morning, I would’ve fulfilled my purpose.”

We are sitting on a couch in his Trincity Mall store. I’m in my element because I love books but I think I’ve met my rival!

There’s a lot to say about serendipity.

Although I have my own questions to ask, Nigel just starts talking. I let go in the moment and allow him to share. I watch and listen as he relates story by story; I watch as his face changes to match whatever he is emoting. I am drawn in.

"Growing up with my parents, the entire neighborhood would have toys; yes my mother might squeeze in a toy – she's Chinese" he chuckles "but the books always remained there, batteries not included." He concludes with a perfunctory smile.

Nigel continues, his eyes quickly shifting from right to left, "Books are accessed electronically" referring of course to digital books. "Worldwide they've lost about 20% of the market to e-reading but a lot of people have come back to the permanence of the printed word."

"You can't loan a download now can you?" We both laugh out loud.

Nigel's position, despite all the statistics supporting e-reading, is that books will never die.

"We are all touchy feely as humans." Indeed the feel of paper matters when reading a book. There is a real human experience to holding a book in hand, smelling the paper, hearing the crackle of the binding and flipping through the pages. Observing the number of pages you've read and the number you have left to read also plays a part in the psychological experience of reading.

**"YOU CAN'T LOAN A
DOWNLOAD NOW,
CAN YOU?"**

**HE HAS SEEN MANY PATTERNS
EMERGE FROM WHERE HE SITS AS
THE OWNER OF NIGEL R. KHAN
BOOKSELLERS.**

In his own circle, he sees readers encouraging their children to read. Girls have been influenced by fiction and are good at abstraction as a result of this. Boys appear to be more visual and don't score as well as girls in exams. A reader is always better at both conversation and comprehension. "Leaders are readers", he almost whispers. "It's cliché but a correct one."

He reflects on the brain drain in Trinidad and Tobago.

"Free education is beautiful but it's sad to see all these kids migrating with all this knowledge to 'make it big' somewhere else.

He is seeing a resurgence of Independent bookstores, which is how he describes his own chain.

**"WHAT WE NEED IS
MORE WELL CURATED
BOOKSTORES"**



"SEEING BEAUTY IN THE ORDINARY"

Oprah has started back her book club" he shares.

Her latest Book Club pick is not one, but four books, by Marilynne Robinson. Together, this quartet is known as the Gilead novels: 2004's Gilead, 2008's Home, 2014's Lila, and 2020's Jack. "

Marilynne Robinson is one of our greatest living authors," Oprah comments, "and in the Gilead novels she's written a quartet of masterpieces.

The more closely I read them, the more I find to appreciate, and the more they show the way in seeing the beauty in the ordinary. I'm thrilled to share them all with you."

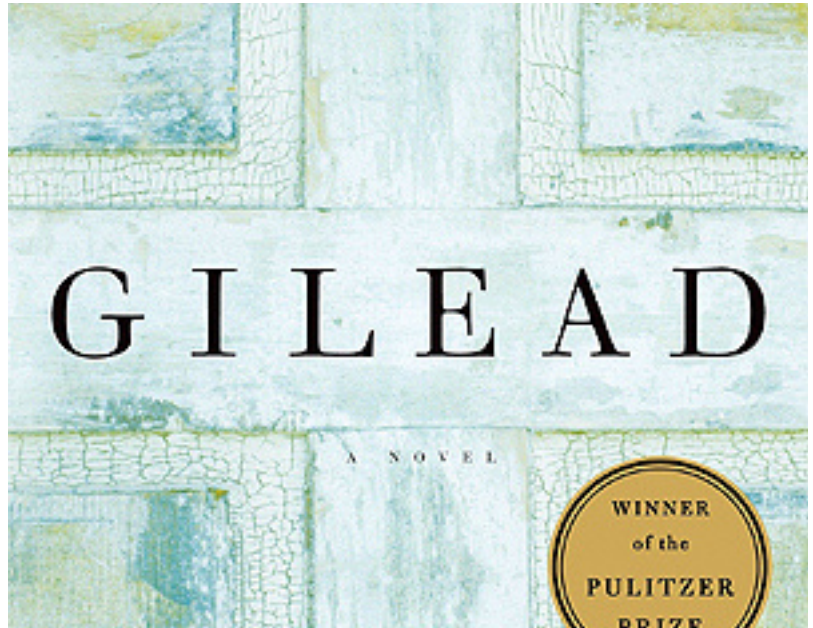
Amazon is opening physical bookstores after a long run of being exclusively online. After opening its first bookstore in 2015 in Seattle, Amazon now has 24 bookstores. These bookstores are located in major cities across the United States.

HOW DO YOU PERPETUATE THE LOVE OF READING?

Khan feels that 'more bookstores' is not the answer. "What we need are more well-curated bookstores."

He, his CEO Kerry Ann Bishop and a team comprising of people who love books and of course the number crunchers, stay on top of every list including bestsellers and the Booker Prize formerly known as the Man Booker Prize - awarded annually to the best novel of the year written in English and published in the UK or Ireland.

They review all advance copies and try to predict based on historical information, trends and gut-feel, which books will sell in Trinidad and Tobago.



“I AM YET TO READ EVERYTHING IN THE STORE BUT I’M TRYING!”

They have to also ensure that they are catering to all reading styles and must consider:

- What is going to appeal to the ‘now’ generation
- What’s just a fad
- What’s going to be a permanent part of the collection for example the Dale Carnegie and Napoleon Hill foundational bestsellers
- And which books are going to be game changers, like the 48 Laws of Power by Robert Greene and Becoming by Michelle Obama.

Sometimes they make a miss, especially in the local market but most of the times their choices are spot on!

Nigel R. Khan is doing what needs to be done in ensuring that books remain and reading is encouraged especially for the new generation.

He told me about a young employee who complained to him that the speed of change in the industry was unsettling for her.

“Everything is always changing”, she said. “The bestseller lists, the West Indian books”...she simply could not cope. Those individuals who embrace change and thrive in the dynamism and growth of this sector are the ones who stay on at the book stores. Nigel is convinced that “Once you get people between those pages” – then you have planted the seed, and started the growth of a new reader.

JUST LIKE HE CAN PICK A GOOD BOOK, NIGEL CAN ALWAYS TELL A READER

“Their conversations are different – filled with colour and a depth of understanding. “Words are integrated into your soul. It becomes so much a part of you, your conversation...your reality. Readers embrace language in a way that it isn’t theoretical; it isn’t logical; it just emanates from the soul and you speak the words, using them in context yet if you’re asked to explain the meaning of a particular word, you may have a little difficulty in terms of the definition. But bet your bottom dollar, you certainly know how to use the word correctly.”



THE IMPACT OF NELSON'S WEST INDIAN READER BOOK V

"What a wonderful introduction to students in Standard Five where you had different genres of literature, like Merchant of Venice.

Everything was in there to spark that curiosity..."

This drops out of nowhere but it lands without a thud as Nigel quotes Longfellow's poem - **'The Day is Done'**.

The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight...

ALL BOOKS PLAYED A PART IN DEVELOPING WHO WE ARE TODAY

The ebb and flow of life demands that you keep in pace with the changes and the consciousness of the world. Tastes change. "I used to love Sci-Fi - Dune, Isaac Asimov; then I loved Stephen King and then John Grisham. Each book represents a life and gives you windows into the lives of others like the Diary of Anne Frank. **We only have one life to live but can live many lives by reading.**

"When you read you can really live a full and happy life without saying that you missed out on something."

As a reader you are highly socially and emotionally intelligent. Nigel compares that to connections on social media - a shallow façade juxtaposed to living an in-depth life fueled by knowledge gleaned from books.

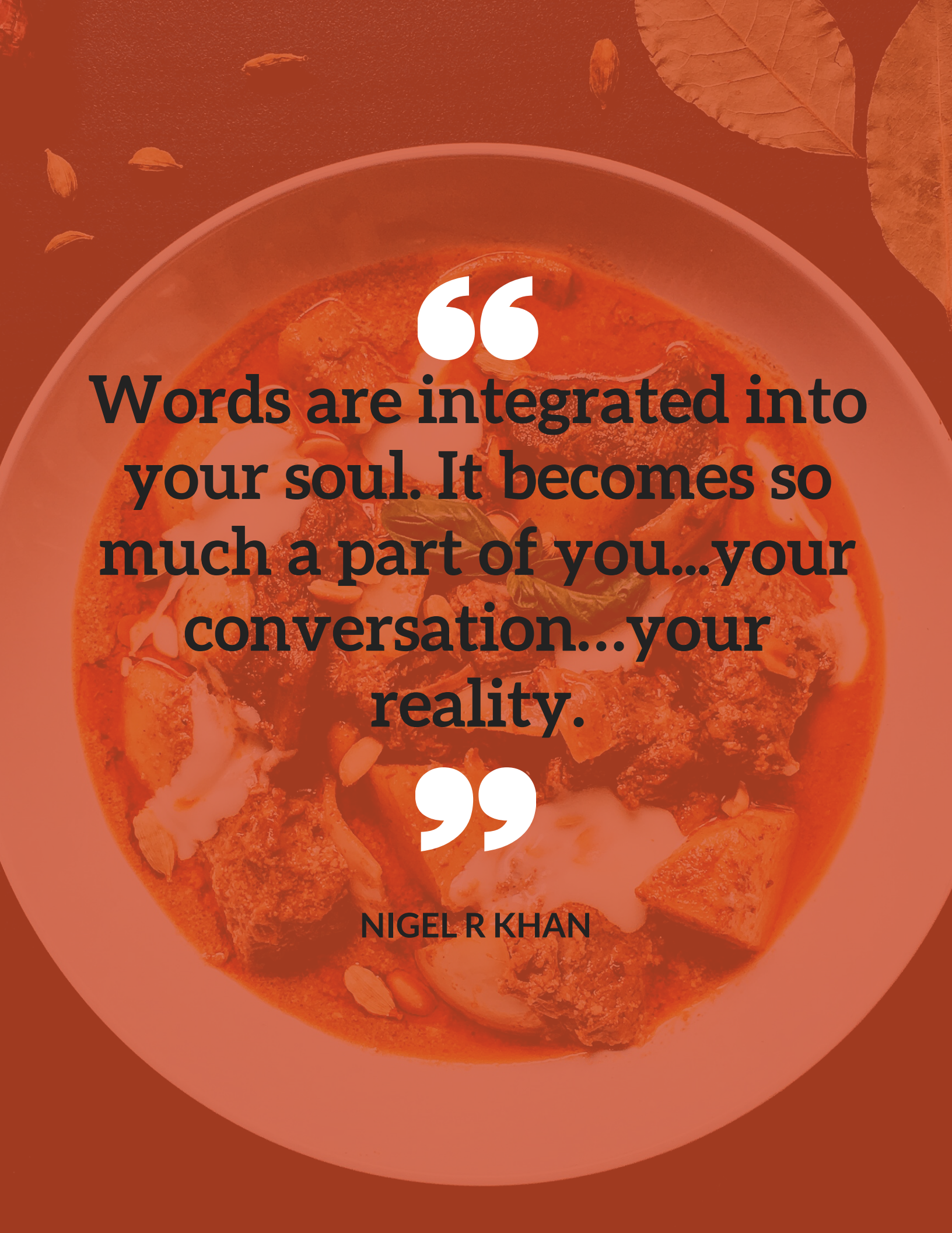
If Khan could have a billboard it would say - **TRANSFORM YOURSELF**

He feels that only through individual transformation can we transform at a national level and a lot of that transformation is facilitated through reading.

He is saddened that more Trinidadians are not reading but remains hopeful.

He is an avid reader and jokes that the worse thing is to let him loose in the container when they are receiving book orders.

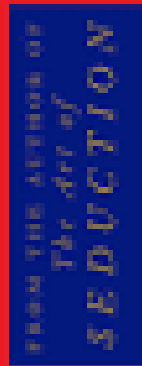
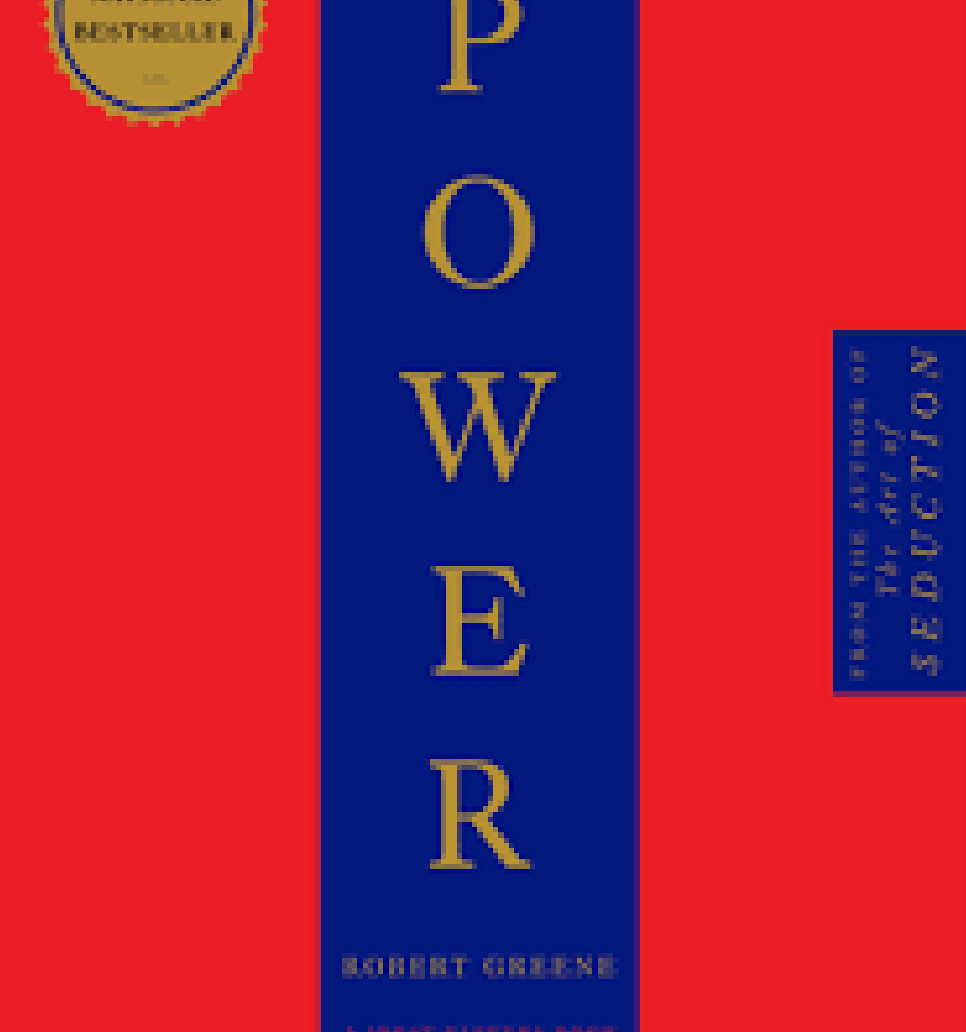
"I am yet to read everything in the store but I'm trying!"



“
**Words are integrated into
your soul. It becomes so
much a part of you...your
conversation...your
reality.**

”

NIGEL R KHAN



THE ART OF DISCONNECTING

If you want to develop reading as a habit, you have to learn to focus. Nigel suggests building unplugged moments into your schedule. Start small: half hour, then one hour, then four hours to spending an entire evening disconnected.

"We've become way too reactionary" he says. "If a fly passes by Marios and you saw it, it's an issue. You feel compelled to jump on Facebook or Instagram to share."

Being able to cancel the noise and give yourself time to let your stillness speak is imperative.

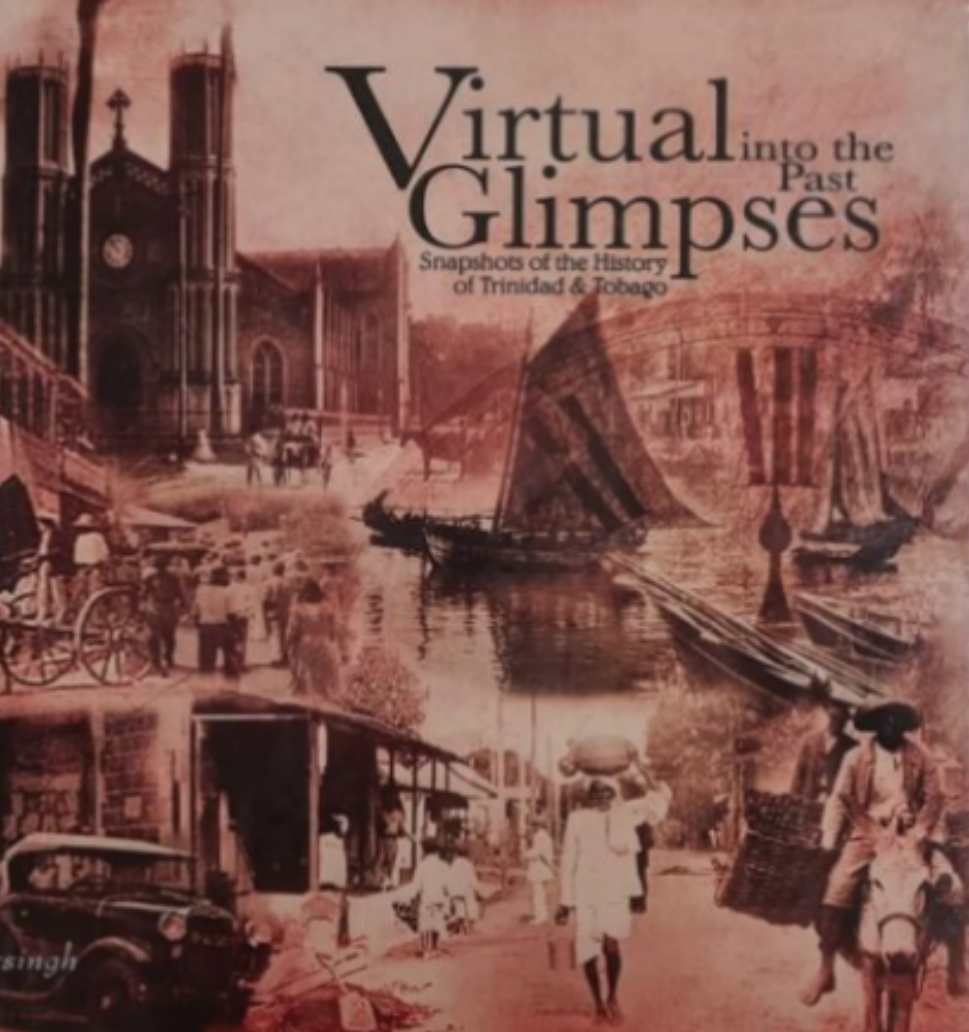
Giving yourself time to disconnect and think is important because no one seems to think anymore.

"People have outsourced your mind. Suddenly your every motor skill and reaction must be instant. As opposed to 'let me think about this first'; 'Let's see how can we use this for the greater good?' We have to relearn new ways to focus."

THE BEST GIFT IN THE WORLD

Are we surprised that Nigel Khan gives books as gifts? Not at all, but his choices are not detached and unconscious. **Remember – this man loves books and is very diligent in pairing books to the person he's giving the book to.**

"Some choices are fairly straight forward. For the wine connoisseur, I'll choose a book on wine; for the beer lover? A book on beer of course. For those seasoned and budding entrepreneurs alike, I love to gift **'The 48 Laws of Power'** by Robert Greene and for those involved in politics – **'The Art of Seduction'** also by Greene, which examines social power through the lens of seduction and was an international bestseller. I love giving **the Guinness Book of World Records** to kids especially boys and for girls, I would usually choose anything by **Jane Austen**."



It's so retro and the values and the way they did things, how they related to each other and the insight into the characters is perfect especially since our young people, so taken in with technology, usually lack social cues and aren't always comfortable when having to interact with real people in the real world. For older people I love gifting Angelo Bissessar Singh's '**Virtual Glimpses**'."

KHAN FEELS THAT WE DON'T HAVE A SENSE OF NATIONAL PRIDE.

"We know more about the Statue of Liberty than we do Lord Kitchener," he said. "We drive past our monuments without cherishing them and knowing the history behind them. We are rich in history. Here for example used to be farmland," he pointed out, referring to the land that now houses Trincity Mall.

DID YOU ALWAYS SEE YOURSELF HAVING A BOOKSTORE?

I am now referring to my questions and realizing that we've been talking now for more than an hour.

It doesn't feel like it and Nigel's response makes me wish that we had more time.

"It finds you. The universe conspires to give you what you want. I've always had a passion for reading and reading always opened the door for me. It's the one thing I can't quite figure out yet. Good authors...I've met so many in my life. Your passion finds you. That's a mystery. Like Paulo Coelho. Check his history."

THE P.C HISTORY

Indeed I did. Paulo Coelho shares on his blog: "It took me 40 years to write my first book.

When I was a child, I was not encouraged to follow the career of a writer because my parents thought that I was going to starve to death.

When I was young, my parents sent me to a mental institution three times (1966, 1967 and, 1968). The reasons in my medical files are banal. It was said that I was isolated, hostile and miserable at school. I was not crazy but I was rather just a 17-year-old who really wanted to become a writer."

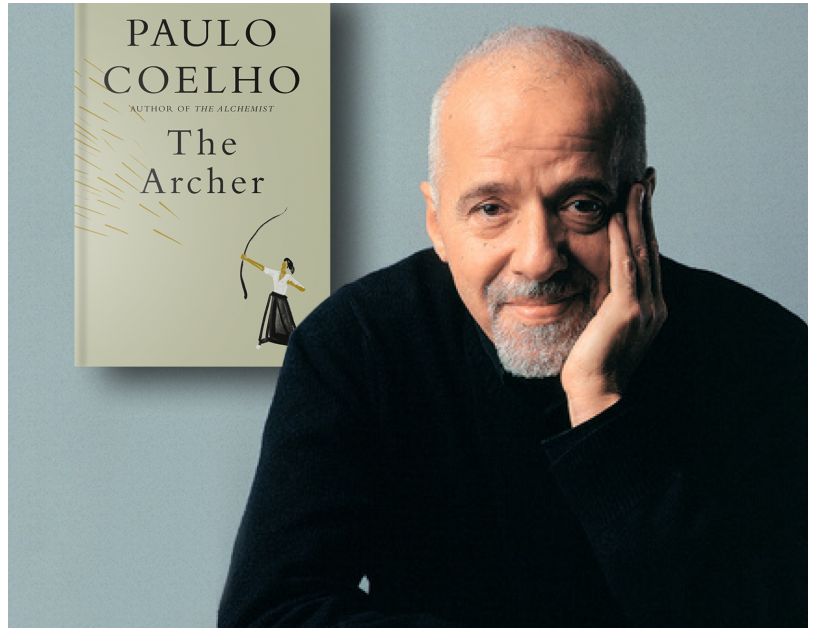
"IT FINDS YOU..."

"One night, I set the stage for reading. I lit candles, put on soft classical music and in that moment I wondered – how many people are at home reading as I am? Am I a relic?" Nigel asks, as if delivering an epilogue soliloquy.

Reading is here to stay and Nigel is doing his part in ensuring that more Trinis start reading. After all, there is scientific evidence that books can make us happier, inspire us to travel, and encourage us to make life-changing decisions.

What you are in fact, is a new kind of hero - who has risen - especially now - where the pandemic has forced people to stay home and many are using books as a means to escape.

You have become more important than ever with your local chain of booksellers carrying your name. So, no Mr. Khan, you aren't a relic.





Content marketing is a marketing strategy where you create indispensable information for a specific audience *on a consistent basis* with the goal of maintaining or changing a behavior. “Everything you do as a company of one or many can be copied by someone else... except for how you communicate.” This is why we cannot get hung up on how our amazing product or service is or will be. **It can be copied.**

So how do you compete? You don't! Focus instead on being unique and creating amazing experiences for your customers on a consistent basis.

I work with solo professionals who want help getting clear about who they are and the real value they bring to the table. When they come to me, they are struggling especially in the area of consistent revenue generation. They have plateaued and don't seem to be able to move from where they are. They are stuck. When they have that clarity, they can define, package, monetize their expertise and boost their income. [Click here for more information.](#)

When companies come to me, they are struggling with a recurring problem they are unable to solve. I take time to ask questions, delve deeper and unearth the real problem or issue. Once I see clearly where the problem lies, I provide the guidance, ideas, framework and tools to help my clients find solutions and get back on track. [Click here for more information.](#)

