



AFTER YEARS OF SWEAT AND TEARS UWG ALUM YONISHA ELMADANY FINDS SUCCESS

JANNETTE EMMERICK
Feature Editor

UWG alumni graduate of 2016, Yonisha Elmadany is the CEO of a video production company called “Yoshfilmss.” With over 30,000 followers on Instagram @yoshfilmss and a nationwide business, Elmadany helps film content for companies to improve their social media presence.

Elmadany has worked for several multimillion dollar companies, including marketing company Amway, specifically with Artistry, one of the top three makeup brands in the world. Elmadany has also worked with music festivals including Afropunk Festival, ONE Music Fest and Revolt World. She also worked with local companies and social media companies, including hair companies The Cut Life and True Glory.

Elmadany specializes in filming, editing and photography, but when it comes to her success, she boils it down to how she presents herself online.

“They say most people enjoy a story,” said Elmadany. “They said if you decided that you wanted to be the face of your brand, just create a story with your social media. Like, I’m not just an owner of a production company. Like I love fashion, I love music, I love going to festivals and concerts and all of those things. So I tend to create footage of my life doing those things.”

Companies notice Elmadany’s showcased talents on her social media alongside her views and follower count. Still, everyone starts somewhere, and for Elmadany, it began on MySpace in 7th grade.

“I was, like, photoshopping my photos and other people’s photos and I had gained 12,000 followers,” said Elmadany. “Just from creating photoshops and people’s web pages.”

Her mom then bought her a silver Kodak camera with a filming function.

“Me and my brother, we created a music video and I edited it in Windows Movie Maker,” said Elmadany. “I showed this to Mama and she was like, ‘yo, this is, this is wow.’ Like, I made myself, like,

‘pop,’ like appear on the sofa, like it was nobody there.”

Even though Elmadany’s mother acknowledged how talented Elmadany was with editing, she didn’t view video production as a career path, especially where they grew up in a small town of Barnesville.

“She was like, ‘you’re going to be a nurse,’” said Elmadany. “So she made me get into my nursing pathway in high school. During that time, I was still doing video photography stuff and I went off to college and I didn’t tell her my major until the end of the first semester. When I declared my major as film and media arts, and I told her she was like, ‘What? Are you serious? Like you’re not gonna make any money in that.’”

Still, Elmadany had passion, even though her film dreams were placed on the backburner after graduation. She moved to Savannah with her husband, and ended up as a teacher for a few years, teaching math and special education. However, during her teaching career, she ended up bringing film programs into the school district.

She started her company while teaching and ended up moving back to Atlanta, where at some point, her second gig in filming was for singer and rapper Anderson .Paak.

“It wasn’t even the album released, cause the album hadn’t released yet, as far as his album Oxnard which won a Grammy that following year,” said Elmadany. “It was a very intimate setting. I was able to meet so many people in the industry, which a lot of those connections still send me clients to this day.”

Elmadany landed this gig through reaching out to her husband’s best friend from the military, believing he would have some kind of direction for her. He suggested connecting with Charles, his cousin’s husband, who worked in the industry.

“I still consider [Charles] like my mentor to this day, even though he’s like, ‘I’m not your mentor. You did this on

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your own, you know?” said Elmadany.

It wasn’t long after that Elmadany found herself invited to high-end gigs and penthouse parties. Elmadany’s career has been nothing short of a journey seasoned with sweat, determination and no doubt some tears.

“It’s been ups and downs, you know, [there’s] times where you’re overwhelmed,” said Elmadany. “Because early on, I was still teaching and I was going to these Martell events and capturing at like 9-7 p.m., getting back home around like one or two, waking back up to go teach that next morning.”

Still, Elmadany’s hard work paid off to where she can now work full time with her company while also balancing her time with her family. And, eventually, Elmadany’s mother also came around.

“When I showed her my first, like, really big check, it was with True Glory,” said Elmadany. “She was like, ‘Whoa! You made this in like 5-6 hours?’ I was like, ‘yeah.’ She was like, ‘that’s crazy!’— ‘That’s insane!’— ‘Keep going, baby girl— keep going, you got this.’”

The advice Elmadany has to give for students is to work on their own projects while they can and to find mentorship. She also suggests networking “horizontally,” not just trying to network upward, but also connecting with your peers. Ultimately, and as cheesy as it sounds, friendships will take you far in any career.

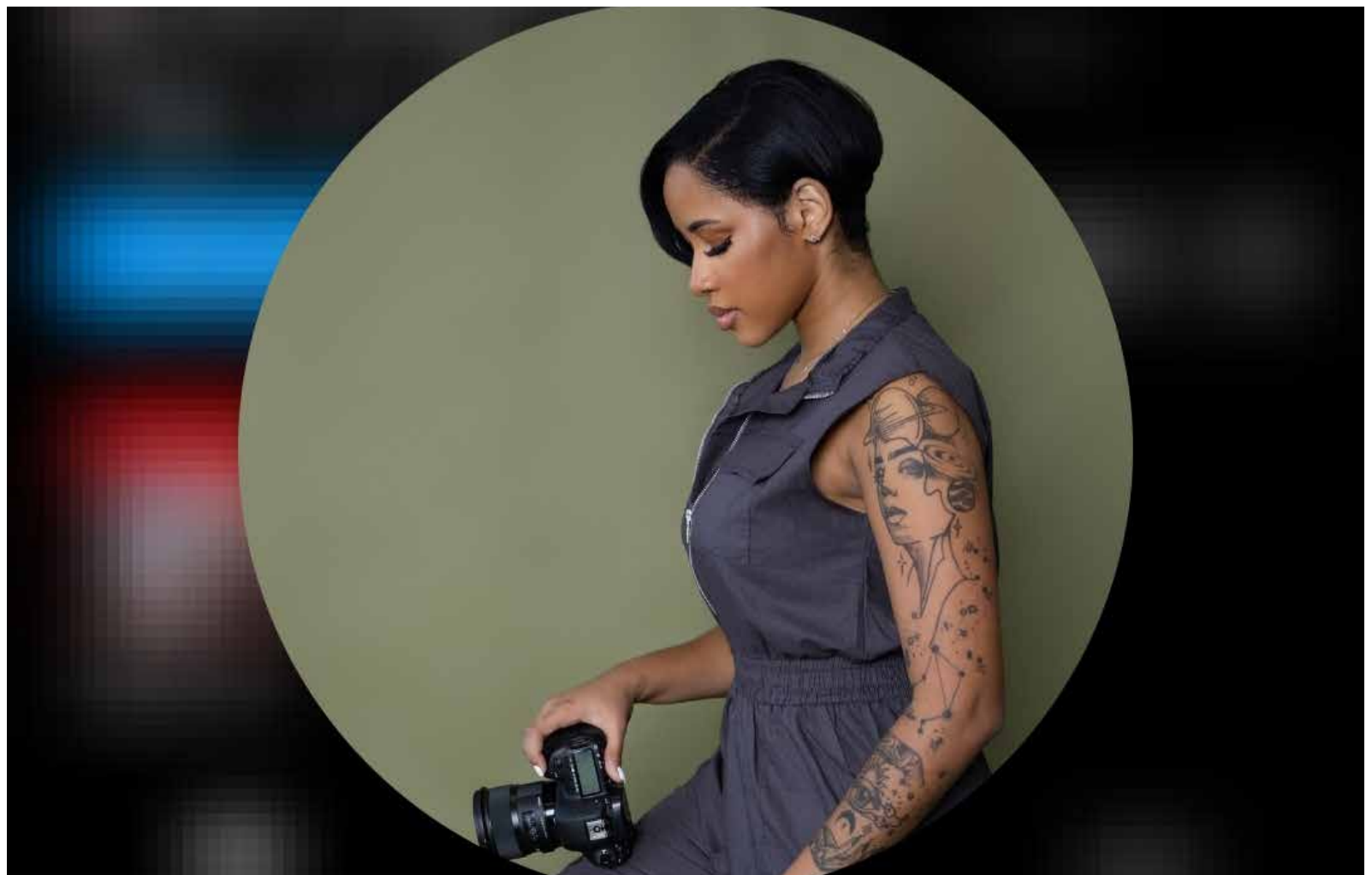


Photo courtesy of yoshfilmss

UWG'S DDEI PROMOTES INCLUSION FOR ALL STUDENTS

KESHAWN ALLEN
Contributing Writer

Since The University of West Georgia features many students with different and unique cultural backgrounds, they ensure that every student gets the representation they deserve. They go out of their way to make sure that the students feel represented and get to learn about different cultures by leaving the responsibility to the Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

This department is under the Center for Student Involvement and Inclusion, which organizes events that cater to student's entertainment and help them become more educated about their world. CSII works over the DDEI to advocate that representation matters in West Georgia, regardless of race, gender or religion.

Graduate Assistant Lilly Mallette has worked in this department for over a year and has had a great experience showing inclusivity on campus. She stated that she enjoys working for the Department of Diversity, Equity, and inclusion and how she gains knowledgeable experience.

"Getting to know different cultures and getting to relate to them and learn from them and how to understand their

traditions," said Mallette. "The primary goal is to create a diverse and creative environment for students.

"Basically just highlighting different cultures as well as advocating for those populations who are underserved that don't have enough representation on campus," continued Mallette. "Really just to create an environment on campus where students of different cultures and different populations can feel included."

Not many students are familiar with this department and the amount of work they do, putting on multiple events and tabling sessions throughout the school year to educate students and faculty about the beauty each population brings to the campus. Each event that they host focuses primarily on being educational while also having an entertainment factor that will be fun for anyone who attends and participates.

In the past few years, there has been a significant increase in events made to educate the cultural significance of certain music, food and holidays with the help of this department and CSII. The department also

plans to collaborate with many other clubs and student organizations to help spread the message of significance regarding specific backgrounds and upbringings.

There are several upcoming events planned to occur in March and early April. Many students and faculty members can look forward to participating in a self-defense course being hosted on March 12 in support of Women's History Month, allowing anyone of any gender identity to learn how to defend themselves. On March 25, there will be a celebration for the "Festival of Colors," also known as Holi, which will take place at Love Valley, allowing students to become more familiar with Hindu culture. Another upcoming festival that students and faculty can participate in is the Lantern Festival on April 3, which will pay homage to the Asian and Pacific Islander community.

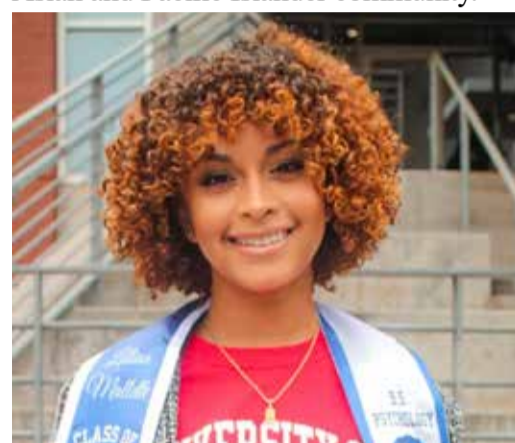


Photo: Keshawn Allen, *The West Georgian*

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

CANADIAN GRUNGE DUO SOFTCULT INVOKES CHANGE THROUGH MUSIC

EMMA SWALES
Editor-in-Chief

It is hard to make a change in the world when no one seems to listen, but Canadian twin sisters Phoenix and Mercedes Arn-Horn prove that all you need is a strong voice. These twins banded together to create music featuring powerful lyrics and heavy instrumentals to shine a light on uncomfortable topics such as gender violence, inclusivity and diversity.

They created Softcult, a grunge rock band that vocalizes and spreads their message on the hardships that come with being a woman within the alternative rock community, as well as society in general.

Softcult's edgy post-punk style is influenced by artists such as Deftones, Bikini Kill and other shoegaze alternative groups. The band was formed by the Arn-Horn sisters in 2021 shortly after their split from the dream pop band Courage My Love. The twins expressed their hopes for independence and wanted to go in a different direction with their own band and touch on the topics that were important to them.

"We were signed to a major label, toured around and had a lot of great experiences, but we became really frustrated," said Mercedes. "We had to ask permission to release anything or write the music that we wanted to write. We didn't have complete full creative control over the art, so by the end, we were just so done."

Once the duo branched off and created a name for themselves, crafting lyrics and

making music became second nature. Softcult was slowly becoming the perfect outlet for their creative energy and a solid platform for their strong voices and opinions. The twins stated that they take pride in their lyrics and hope to shed light on the countless hardships that women and non-binary people face every day.

"The inspiration is all around us and there is no shortage of inspiration for our songs," said Mercedes. "I don't know if that is a good thing or a bad thing because a lot of the stuff that we write about for example is social injustices and gender violence. We try to call it out.

"It's not so much hard to write about, it's more wanting to be sure that the way we word things and the way it's conveyed comes across the way we mean it to," continued Mercedes. "We try to do the topic justice. I find that the music comes easily but when it comes to the lyrics we have to take a second and think about how we want to say this."

Since its start, Softcult has released 22 singles and gained a large following in the alternative rock community. The band has reached many different audiences, allowing them to tour several countries worldwide. The band released its latest single "Shortest Fuse" in January. Softcult releases these songs to encourage its listeners to speak up and fight for what they want.

"Our band is all about empowerment, so even though we are calling out a lot of

negative stuff it's supposed to be a call to arms," said Mercedes. "We realized that you have the power to change things, you can stand up for yourself, you can change society and call things out. You can ultimately make the world a better and more inclusive place for everybody. We are just hoping to inspire and empower people to do that."

As the twins move forward with their musical journey, their voices grow stronger and their messages continue to reach audiences around the world. Softcult plans to release an EP later this year, and claims that its music will never stop pushing the bounds on important issues and empowering women and non-binary people.

"We just started touring in 2021 and the growth so far has been awesome to see," said Mercedes. "The main thing for me is that it's still fun and fulfilling and that we never lose sight of why we are doing it. If it becomes about success it means you're losing what made you who you are and the message of empowerment and gender inclusivity.

"When we start to lose that, that's when it will be time to call it," continued Arn-Horn. "As long as we stay true to our message, I don't care if we keep playing in small venues or big arenas. The big thing for me is to stay true to our art at the end of the day."

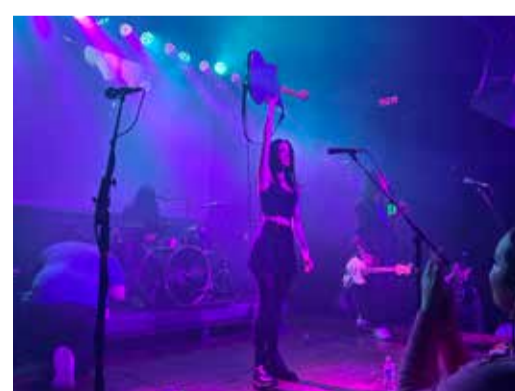


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