

An artistic, painterly portrait of a woman with long, dark hair, wearing a crown of large, vibrant pink and red flowers. Her eyes are closed, and she has a serene expression. The background is a soft, textured wash of pink and white, with numerous small, dark speckles scattered throughout, giving it a dreamy, ethereal quality. The overall style is reminiscent of watercolor or soft oil painting.

Women of Excellence

A SAIPAN TRIBUNE ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT
6 MARCH 2020

March is International Women's Month. Here, we give a roundup of some of the women featured in our Women of Excellence series where we were able to spend time and talk to women in the CNMI who are role models and have made an impact just by being themselves and pursuing their passion.

It is to the CNMI's credit that there are many such empowered women in the Commonwealth, that we

Breaking barriers, shattering ceilings

By BEA CABRERA
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CORRESPONDENT

don't have enough space to feature all of them, so this series is intended to be just a brief sampling of the women in the CNMI who are making a difference in the community, who believe in positive experiences, have shown inspirational achievements, and motivate by example.

Janice Marie Ada Tenorio holds two important positions in the IT industry and education. As Customer Service and Government Rela-

tions manager of IT&E CNMI, she helps build the strong and wide-ranging network of contacts and vast customer base of IT&E CNMI. As chairperson of the CNMI Board of Education, she has been governing the board and policy-making body of the CNMI Public School System for two

consecutive terms.

"I am a strong believer of and advocate for teamwork. Regardless of what organization one belong to or the amount of task one is expected of and or presented with, I am motivated by the people that I work and serve with," she said



Tenorio

"While I served in two entirely different organizations, it is worth to note that they both embrace the importance of teamwork through open communication. ...Both IT&E CNMI and the CNMI Board of Education value the importance of communication as an essential part of being a successful service provider and organization," she added.

While the bar of expecta-

tions for what she does for both the organizations is high, Tenorio says she makes sure that she commit time for her family and herself. "It is essential that we are able to balance work and personal life. We achieve this by giving time for yourself and to the people that inspire and motivate you to strive and work harder," she said.

"What is important also is how I am enormously proud

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Michelle Atalig

People Operations, Business Partner building a team of strong women at DOCOMO PACIFIC

May we know them, we may be them,
may we raise them.

docomo pacific
Better Together



Clayton

BREAKING

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to belong to these organizations that value the importance of community engagement and partnership, of reaching out and supporting worthy causes that help improve the way of life of the people from this beautiful community of ours," she added.

Diana Clayton is an advocate of using one's beauty to champion a cause. When we say beauty pageants, the default image is that of beautiful women, gowns, swimwear and the question-and-answer portion. Clayton wants to add another facet to this image.

As president of the Miss Earth Northern Mariana franchise, Clayton helps steer the pageant to achieve what it was created for—to promote

this experience, albeit new, has been life-changing. "I look forward to make a career of this. ...The work and commitment I put helps me share learning experiences with others...and more active within our community," she said.

Toward this end, Clayton has set five important goals for herself for the first six months of the year. That includes putting in the time to promote environmental issues that the CNMI faces, educating children in school, socializing within the community through volunteer and public events, and being more engaged in spreading awareness.

Shortly after moving to Saipan in 2012, **Beth Pliscou** founded the Saipan Cares for Animals group, of which she is currently the director. She describes Saipan Cares for Animals as a dedicated group



environmental awareness using beauty pageants as a medium.

According to Clayton, the organization was established two years two years ago and the first Miss Earth pageant was held just last year. "As president, I focus on promoting and coordinating the Miss Earth organization, along with my team, which is composed of different committees and awesome volunteers. I've always been driven to put myself out there to help our community to be aware of what is going on with our environment," she said.

"I have been intentional in learning the islands' environmental issues and whatever result I gather pushes me to commit to educating people to be aware," she said.

The work may sound simple but Clayton admits that

of volunteers whose mission is to improve the life of every animal on Saipan through sterilization, medication and socialization. "We do this by helping the animals directly and offering the community low-cost pet care services," Pliscou said. That explains the overflowing number of people who visit Saipan Cares for Animals everyday to have their pets vaccinated or dewormed, among other pet services.

"The overpopulation of dogs and cats on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota is a huge but fixable problem. This can only be accomplished by spay/neuter. Killing them one by one...clearly doesn't work. I'm motivated to do the work that I do and lower this overpopulation problem every time I see an animal suffering, which is every day,"

See **BREAKING** on Page 14



**“all
May women
be free to dream,
express, create
and live their
deepest heart's
desires...”**
- Amethyst Wyldfire

Happy International Women's Day!

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Her soul is **fierce**,
her heart is **brave**,
her mind is **strong**.
She is a **woman**.

Happy International
WOMEN'S DAY

Hafa Adai! from the staff and management of
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

'A once-in-a-lifetime experience'

By LEISHA DELEON GUERRERO
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Becoming the first-ever Miss Northern Marianas Earth is a once-in-a-lifetime experience I am forever grateful for. Miss Earth is the biggest environmentally-themed pageant worldwide. It is a pageant that serves a purpose, and is becoming ever so relevant due to the state of our earth. Being a beauty queen has allowed me to serve our community, protect our islands,

and represent our people.

This platform has allowed me to work with numerous private businesses, schools, and organizations, which allowed me to launch community projects independently and for our community, such as my successful 5Rs Campaign. I was able to travel island to island and internationally, such as Japan and the Philippines, while representing our home. Also, being a title holder enabled me to inspire young *magahagas*

and push them toward a path of leadership and success.

Aside from creating an impact here on our islands, I was blessed with amazing experiences while competing in the international pageant. Since competing on a global platform, I was able to advocate for environmental concerns on a much bigger platform, along with the 86 other countries who competed alongside me. While competing, I created a monthlong worth of memo-

ries, met strong women from all over the world, and created memories while traveling all over the Philippines. While in the Philippines, I was able to work with international designers who created beautiful pieces such as my evening gown and national costume, which represented our islands in all ways possible. Furthermore, I was able to train in the Philippines, working on my on-stage performance professionally. I will always be grateful for the

amazing team behind my success, and the Miss Northern Marianas Earth committee for helping me achieve a successful reign.

Being a part of Miss Earth has opened up many opportunities for me locally and internationally. It has helped

me grow independently and taught me essential life skills. Being a part of this journey celebrates beauty and empowers women of all ages. You serve as a representative and an ambassador for the Northern Mariana Islands as a whole.



"The opportunity to protect our islands, serve our community, and represent our people."

- Leisha Deleon Guerrero
Miss Northern Marianas Earth 2019



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

2019 Miss Northern Marianas Earth Leisha Deleon Guerrero.

BREAKING

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Pliscou added.

Catherine M. Attao, who is vice president of Corporate

employees and the community. That focus on organizational development and company culture has enabled her office, together with the Tan Siu Lin Foundation, to support the community in the areas



Attao

Human Resources and Corporate Affairs of Tan Holdings, says she is glad to belong to a company that values em-

of health, education, and environment

It helps that Attao loves
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what she does. "In order to be successful in anything, it has to come from the heart. When you act from the heart, one will find a way to make things happen."

She also gives credit to her faith ("...my life and day-to-day schedule is very much based on faith. What our Lord brings me to, He will get me through") and to her very supportive husband.

"Being blessed with each new day, I hope to add value and make a difference in our community and for our youth," she added.

Attao believes that her role involves not just providing a strong support system to TanHoldings, but also includes nurturing women and the youth and building a more resilient community ("supporting TanHoldings through the challenges that all business are facing, increase women and girls' camaraderie in soccer by promoting participation, health, and exercise, learn and engage with all Northern Marianas Technical Institute stakeholders, and expand my knowledge on career paths for my children and their peers," she said.

Named as one of the Obama Foundation Future Leaders last year, **Sami Birmingham-Babauta** is passionate about

work in different [capacities] to accomplish this, my niche is teaching and promoting active living and using physi-

**Birmingham-Babauta**

improving the overall health of the CNMI community. She knows that this work is not easy, but she also knows that it can be done.

"Improving the overall health of the community is multi-faceted, with things like improving access to health care and advocating for policies that create environments that support physical activity (sidewalks, bike lanes, fitness parks). While I

cal activity to prolong life and prevent diseases," she said.

Birmingham-Babauta admits that keeping good health is a global challenge and working to tackle that can be related to being an Obama Leader. Last year, she was one of the 199 young Obama Foundation Leaders to be selected from all over the world. "The Obama Future Leaders Program is about bringing emerging

young leaders in the Asia and Pacific region together. ...Going through the workshops they had for us was empowering. ...At the convention in Kuala Lumpur, I realized that a lot of us are fighting the same battles in our homes, and connecting us reminded us that our work is important and we are not alone," she said.

Birmingham-Babauta has held several positions at the Commonwealth Health Care Corp., worked as program manager of 500 Sails, and is now with Northern Marianas College-CREES in the Nutrition and Health Program.

Justice and service are sources of missions for **Pamela Brown Blackburn**, more popularly known on the islands as Pam Brown. She loves public service work and always wakes up in the morning thrilled to make a difference in other people's lives.

As executive director of Pacific Ombudsman Humanitarian Law, majority of her work focuses on assisting victims of human trafficking, labor exploitation, and domestic and sexual violence. "POHL was formed to help victims of abuse, both domestic and foreign-born. ...The other major area of work deals with representing

Chinese Christian refugees fleeing persecution in China. These areas of legal services are complex, emotionally charged, and always gratifying," she said.

Blackburn is a chartering member of Soroptimist International of the Northern Mariana Islands and has had many positions with SINMI, including president and chair of its Ways and Means Committee and currently the secretary and chair of

the "Live Your Dream" Award Committee.

"The prime focus of all of our projects is serving women's needs, from Dress for Success, to mentoring programs for women entering the workforce for the first time or re-entering the workforce. Our No. 1 program and the reason for much of our fundraising activities is the 'Live Your Dream' annual award," she added.

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**Blackburn**

There is no limit to what we,
as **women**, can accomplish.

*Happy International
Women's Day*

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BREAKING

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Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Laboratory manager

Plan." Formerly a co-leader of The Compassionate Friends, a grief support group from 2013 to 2018, Krum is currently the president of So-optimist International of the

the "spa" portion of Paradise Dental Center, start an Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous family group ("the CNMI does not currently have this valuable resource

port our families but...it always bends toward helping [improve] the society that we live in, no matter how small or big our contributions may be. I hope I get to deliver that

'eyes of the ocean' and work in partnership with the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality to conduct surveillance for environmental infractions in the priority

profit, giving good service comes first. Our service comes from the heart and not from the pocket. Of course, we need to earn to survive but...we will [never]



Yelin

Heidi Yelin's work is about trying to protect the health and safety of all who live in the Marianas by making sure that we have clean drinking water.

"...I ensure that all the staff follow all the CUC Laboratory standard operating procedures for collecting, receiving, and testing samples. ...This helps maintain the CUC Laboratory and CNMI Bureau of Environment and Coastal Quality certification for analysis of drinking water samples for total coliform and E.coli," she said.

"CUC Saipan water system has made huge improvements in my 15 years. ...There was much to learn and I con-

Northern Mariana Islands, where she also used to be the Ways & Means chair, and club secretary.

Krum said that part of woman success is how much she values people and relationships. "I've always wanted to go out there and be involved in everything in the community because of the relationships that develop out of that. ...Show up, play nice, and just go everywhere that you can go to build friendships because it's all those relationships that will help you solve all issues and...I am thankful that I've been so fortunate in my business life," she said.

"I was just really willing to



Tolentino

for family members who have been affected by a loved one's alcohol and/or drug addiction") and "continue to learn something new every day."

As executive director of the Tan Siu Lin Foundation, which is the charitable arm of TanHoldings, **Merlie Torres Tolentino** has been at the forefront of many projects and events. That untiring effort was recognized in January this year at the annual gala of Saipan Chamber of Commerce, when the TSL Foundation was recognized as the 2019 Non-Profit of the Year for its many charitable acts, events, and projects that help uplift individuals and

message to others through my job," Tolentino added.

Roberta Guerrero has been the executive director of the Mariana Islands Nature Alliance since March 2017. MINA's mission is about empowering communities for conservation. As such, MINA creates and implements programs that focus on a number of environmental issues.

"These include marine debris prevention, watershed management, climate change, and island resiliency. The main programs that are currently in progress are the Schools for Environmental Conservation that engages students and their teachers



Shrestha

watershed area of Garapan, and clean up illegal dumping sites, and handle the revegetation projects in LaoLao," she added.

Everest Kitchen president **Laxmi Shrestha**, who hails from Nepal, believes that if you work hard and hold tight to your vision, life will give you what your heart desires. For almost six years now since Everest Kitchen opened, that has been the guiding force for Shrestha, who lives everyday with intent and purpose, while sharing good things from where she came from.

"My husband, Chola, came to Saipan in 1997 and I followed in 2003 and worked

compromise what the customers want as they are family to us," she said.

Lyza Johnston is a coral reef ecologist and has been studying coral reefs from Rota to the Northern Islands. Recently, Johnston was awarded a contract to help the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration establish the first ocean-based coral nursery in the CNMI.

"This is a very exciting project that will eventually provide local managers with corals for restoring degraded reefs around the CNMI. The nursery was installed last year and is doing really well



Krum

tinue to learn every day, which keeps life and the job interesting. It's gratifying to share what I've learned about water and wastewater with others, customers, friends and especially students," she added.

Donna Krum runs both the Paradise Dental Spa and Friends First Marketing Inc., which is the plan administrator of the least expensive dental plan in the CNMI, "Island Smiles Discount Dental

show up, learn new things, and people always wanted to take me with them. I wasn't a person that knew what I wanted to be when I grew up. I just grew wherever I was planted, did the best I could no matter where I was, and the rest just kind of took care of itself," she added.

According to Krum, her immediate plans include starting a Mom Group for women who have lost children, continue working on



Guerrero

families in the CNMI.

"...It is great to be recognized by business people. All of us are working hard, whether in business or charitable works, to help the CNMI. ...I hope that...I get to inspire others with what I do," Tolentino said. "I hope that my hard work somehow inspires others to give their all in any job that they do. ...At the TSL [Foundation], we do not only work for ourselves, for the company or to sup-

in workshops and field trips. Students learn about how they can help conserve the CNMI's fragile environment, after which they develop Conservation Action Plans for their school campuses.

"MINA also has a very successful 'Bring Back our Trees' campaign that is replacing trees lost along coastlines due to typhoons Soudelor and Yutu. In addition to these two programs, MINA's Tasi Watch Rangers are the



Johnston

in a household. A year later, I transferred to Nikko Hotel and worked as a cook and, even if we worked for somebody else every day, our dream of having our own business someday kept us going," she said.

She estimates that about 35% of the people who go to Everest Kitchen everyday are the same individuals and that speaks to her about their expectations.

"...More than earning a

so far and I am excited about maintaining and expanding the coral nursery as we will be doubling the capacity of the nursery the first half of the year," she said.

"I am also working on building partnerships with local, regional, and international organizations to provide more resources for local managers and conservationists. I want to expand my business, hire my first full-

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BREAKING

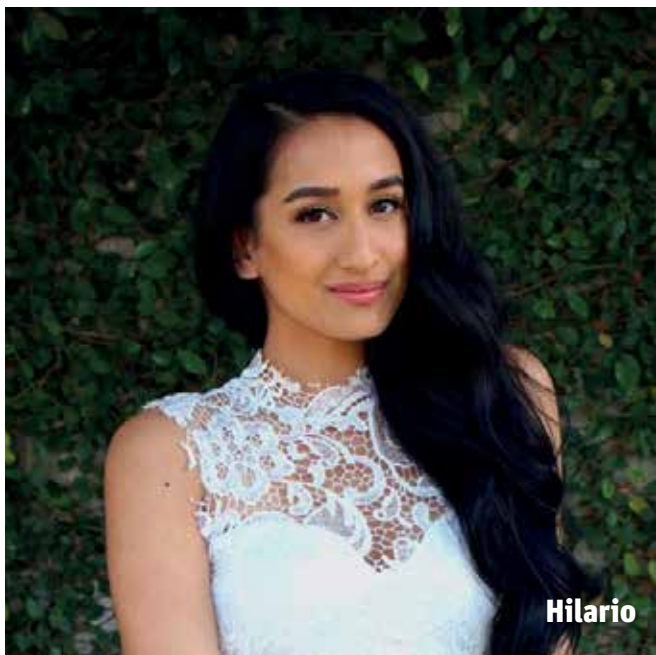
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time employee, and support at least one local student intern over the summer. Finally, I am hoping to establish a non-profit organization in the CNMI dedicated to coral reef research and conservation," she added.

Being in this field for 18 years, **Lauri B. Ogumoro** knows this work all too well. She has been the executive director of Karidat Social Services since 2015 and sits as chairperson of the Commonwealth Health Care Corp.'s board of trustees.

**Ogumoro**

Social work is a courageous and, most of the time, an emotional fight. "One has to learn as a social worker to leave work at work. ... We see and hear some of the worst things that can happen in a person's

**Hilario**

life and this is the kind of job that can be 24 hours a day. ... I have witnessed victims become survivors and have walked with them through some of the darkest days of their lives..." she said of her job at Karidat.

As for her other job as a CHCC trustee, Ogumoro said she has a fiduciary duty to understand the needs of the Commonwealth Health Center and the larger CNMI community. "We provide check and

balance to the chief executive officer of CHCC, who oversees the daily operations. ... It is a big challenge especially without the financial resources we truly need," she added.

Saipan-born **Asia Hilario**, who was recently honored as its Woman of the Year by a women empowerment organization in South San Francisco in California, continues to make waves after being chosen as one of guest speakers at Imagine Talks. Hilario was one of the 20 speakers that talked about leadership and life lessons at the 6th Annual Conference of Imagine Talks this year that was held at the Oakland Asian Cultural Center last Jan. 18, 2020.

Hilario, who was named Woman of the Year last year by Women on the Rise, is currently based in San Jose, California. She is a lifestyle blogger advocating women empowerment, mental health, and wellness. She is a crisis counselor for CrisisTextLine, and a brand ambassador for Kuros, an organization whose mission is to enhance the safety and mobility of women around the world.

In an earlier interview, Hilario said that by lifting other women, an entire community and society can elevate. "Women are powerful beings, who can do incredible things, and by empowering them (giving them resources, offering support, encouraging them, educating them, giving them a voice) we can change the world."

Part of her advocacy is trying to break the nega-

tive stigma around mental health. "I'm trying to de-stigmatize seeking mental help for those who need it. The more we talk about mental health, the braver people will be to not only seek help, but to speak about it as well. The biggest struggle I've had in the past was feeling like I was alone in my struggles. I want to use my voice to make sure that no one else feels that they're alone in their struggles," she added.

**Ayuyu**

Marcia "Ruri" Ayuyu, who manages two McDonald's restaurants on Saipan, oversees all aspects of the business for the two McDonald's restaurants on Saipan, representing the McDonald's brand and building a strong team of 120 employees at the same time. She is also president of the Rotary Club Saipan—roles that she said requires good stewardship and a finely-tuned sense of balance.

"In my business, I want my employees to know that... they are just not my employees... I treat them as part of my family and they motivate me. Same goes for our customers every single day. ... Just seeing their smiles and happy faces makes me want to do more, makes me committed to be better every day," she said.

As president of the Rotary Club Saipan, Ayuyu takes on this position with heart and grit. "I take the Rotary's mission 'Rotary connects the world' to heart." That means encouraging Rotarians to ring in more members to become a part of the organization. "I believe the more members we have, the more tasks we can achieve," Ayuyu said.

Ayuyu says she has a knack for organizing herself—a talent that always serves her in good stead. "I have my way of prioritizing and I make time for myself and my loved ones," she added.

Kanae S. Quinn has been involved in various fields and skills that includes consulting, fitness, education and training, community outreach, and marriage counseling.

She manages her time at Quinn Consulting, LLC doing hospitality and events consulting service; at Marianas Fitness Ltd. as part-owner of a gym where she teaches spin class; as a hospitality and career training instructor at Latte Training Academy; board member of the Make-A-Wish Guam and CNMI, where she has been for six years now; and Worldwide Marriage Encounter, helping CNMI couples and families enhance their relationships. That breadth of experience has given Quinn a clear-eyed

view of what being a "woman of excellence" is.

"My view of 'women of excellence' may not necessarily conform to the norm. A person who has achieved a certain level of financial success or a prestigious position, title or award, is not always an excellent woman," she said. "An excellent woman values relationships and time with family and friends. She's not 'too busy' for you. She's kind, willing to help others, is a good listener and one you want to invite for parties as she's fun as well."

**Quinn**

You are
**powerful,
brilliant
and brave**

Happy International Women's Day!



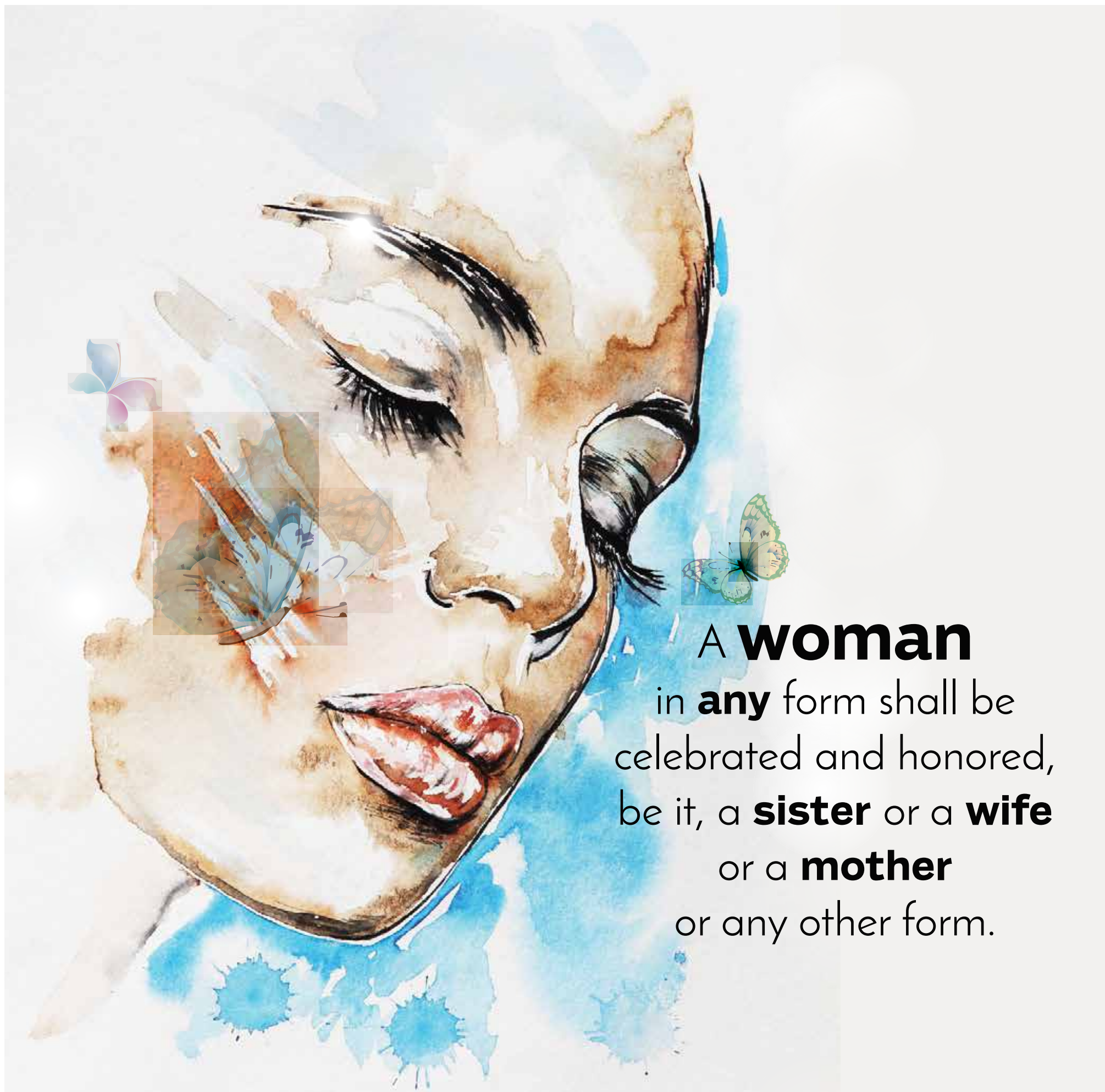
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in **any** form shall be
celebrated and honored,
be it, a **sister** or a **wife**
or a **mother**
or any other form.

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