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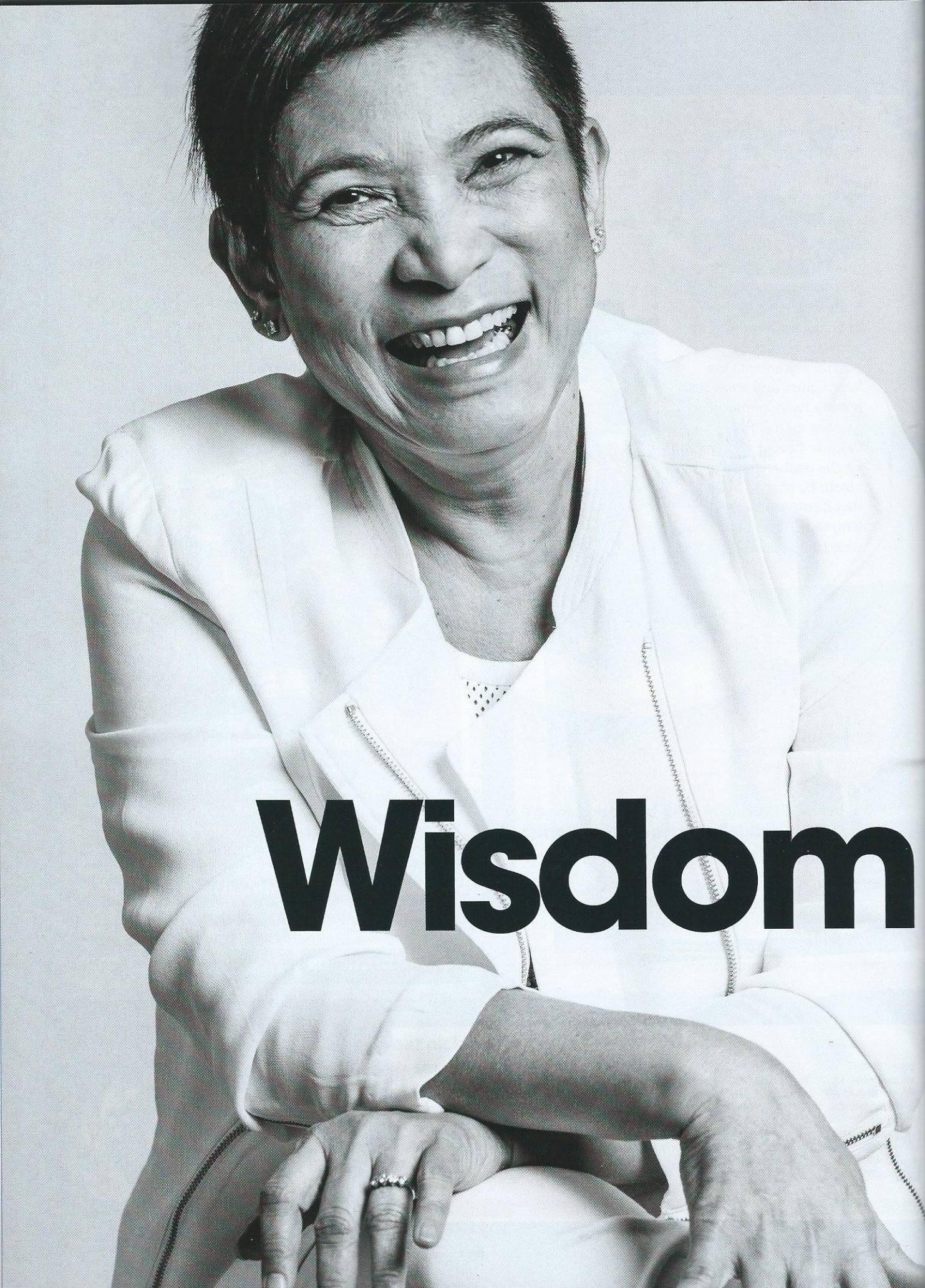
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Pacific magazines



Wisdom

Chutisa Bowman, 58, Thai

To be honest, I never feel that I'm getting any older. I don't have a definition of what 'old' feels like. Our bodies change and shift but I certainly don't think I should look like I did when I was 18! There are a lot of people my age or older who think, "Oh, I have to retire" and want to stop working. My husband Steve and I don't even know what that means, we wouldn't know how to retire—and we're not planning on retiring... ever.

Steve and I have a business consultancy, helping organisations and not-for-profits work with their boards of directors and CEOs on strategic planning and becoming more conscious, benevolent leaders. Our goal is to make a difference—and be able to travel while doing it. I also have a business, Fabulous Adornment, importing antique jewellery, and working as a curator for The Antique Guild in Brisbane. My other business, The Luxe Project (theluxeprojectdesign.com) is a funny thing—my daughter Sharidan is a marketing coordinator for an architectural firm and one day, I came back from Thailand with beautiful fabric from a hill tribe in Chiang Mai, which she thought would be wonderful to turn into accessories. We decided to do it together. We went to Thailand with our designs, sourced the fabric and looked for people to help us make them, so we could do good in the community as well. People often ask how a mother and daughter can spend so much time together without killing each other—but it works!

My grandmother was very much the wise elder of the family. Everyone looked up to her and listened to

everything she had to say. She died when she was nearly 90—until then she was still travelling the world. At that time, not too many people of her age did that sort of travelling. She was inspirational, she lived a very full life.

In the Thai culture, people tend to have a fixed point of view about how things are supposed to be. I was very lucky because my mother and grandmother were very different—they influenced me hugely to be who I truly chose to be. I was sent to be educated in Australia and it might have been expected that I return afterwards, be with the family and marry a nice Thai man. But I fell in love with an Australian and my family were supportive. They were willing to say, "Okay, we know you're going to be happy, so create your life the way you really want to." I pass that idea down to my own daughter, to live that way.

Now is a fabulous time. I used to read in magazines that life begins at 40 or 50 or whatever age, but for me, it truly begins every single day. I have so much more freedom now to be totally myself, without having to fit into the size, shape or look that we're told we should. Even when I'm looking at models in magazines, I never wish I looked like them. I'm happy looking the way I look—I don't feel I should be younger, or have no lines on my face.

The main thing I'm looking forward to as I get older is enjoying my life fully and having fun with my husband. I want to travel more—we both love it. I don't want to travel just for the sake of sightseeing, I want to make a contribution—to make the world a better place. ▶

reinvented

Seven women. Seven different cultures. What they all share? A universal zest for life and an outlook on ageing that redefines the word inspirational

By Cecily-Anna Bennett Photography Nick Scott