

Ali Holder

We each have unique fibers that weave, twist and turn to make up the person we are. Some, like privilege, are pieces we're born with. Others can be a little ragged, a little worn, a little less than what we expected they'd be -- the parts of our brains and bodies that require a little extra care. Singer-songwriter Ali Holder is facing these pieces of her own story head-on throughout *Uncomfortable Truths*.

"I have a lot of uncomfortable truths that feel very heavy," Ali says of the album. "I often asked myself, what's the point of this in my life? The way I have chosen to move through them is to share with others. My hope is that in sharing all of the uncomfortable things that make up my story, people will be able to relate and feel less alone in their own."

Throughout the 12-song collection, Ali discusses mental illness, chronic pain, healthy boundaries, relationship challenges and more. Intertwined is a theme of privilege, discussing physical and mental violence, poverty, and women's rights. Many songs are from Ali's perspective and confessional in nature, seeking to convey an ultimately positive outlook on surroundings, while still acknowledging difficult circumstances. Two, "Bruja" and "Singing Over Bones," take on the voice of La Loba, a Pueblo myth who is known for collecting bones, especially those in danger of being lost to the world, as well as her ability to resurrect the wild spirit of life from the underworld.

"I saw an art installation where plaster cast hearts were hanging from the ceiling to represent women who had gone missing via the Mexican Cartel. I always wanted to avenge them, so I had La Loba raise the bones of the 300 dead women to march as an army on the men who destroyed them."

"Singing Over Bones" recreates the La Loba myth, finding her using her powers to lend a powerful voice to women: "La Loba gathers the bones of wolves, and pieces them together to make a full wolf. She sings and chants to bring another wolf woman to life. As women, we shouldn't apologize for the wild within us."

Privilege is weaved throughout the album through four complementary vignettes scattered throughout the album, each titled a version of "Speak." With a run-time between two and three minutes, they discuss ways to use privilege to speak for those who are voiceless. "It's hard to talk about privilege when you have it, even when you want to use it for good," she says. "I am hoping that this will open up conversations around that. I hope it can teach me the right ways to talk about it."

The first vignette discusses violence: how a white person doesn't fear walking around in the way that a person of color does, but as a woman, there's a different fear ingrained in her

makeup. It's about how, with or without privilege, be it via race, socioeconomic background, or access to mental health care, the lens for the world changes. It's about using a voice when you have it, for those who have been silenced.

The second discusses economic security -- the ability to have a safety net if needed. It also ventures into homelessness, and how any of us could be in the same situation. How poverty, just like racism, is systematically set up to be almost impossible to escape.

The third veers into mental and physical health, and how it can affect every fiber of a relationship. It's about feeling ashamed and isolated. It's about how the healthcare system fails most of us.

The fourth and final piece is about the importance of boundaries, or rather the dissolution of the self-created ones that women use time and time again in a man's world. It's about taking shit from men, and working twice as hard for the same recognition, and finally being done with it.

Relationships and the challenges that come with them are also discussed in several tracks; "California," a mid-tempo track replete with an atmospheric percussion and Ali's arresting alto on full display, parallels the vast landscape with ups and downs, hot and cold of a romantic relationship.

"Take Me As I Am," about marriage, examines therapy as a beneficial tool for both individuals and relationships, offering a way to accept someone as they are. "Bad Wife" ponders identity in a relationship. "When I was first married, I felt as if I had lost my identity," she says. "Learning how to find who I was within my marriage with a huge transition and learning process for me."

"Nova" uses space metaphors in terms of marriage; finding ways to cut through the darkness. "Lightning Rods" ponders the idea of creativity as inherent electricity we each have: "As creative people we all have electricity inside of us," Ali says. "Sometimes when we're around other creatives it can be a warm glow. Other times it can be a full-on house fire."

"Reborn" discusses chronic pain, and perspective: "I have lived with migraines for the last 20 years, and vulvodynia for the last eight," Ali says. "Instead of being worn down by them, feeling ashamed about it, I decided I would rather be reborn into a new perspective."

"You can choose to focus on the negative or the positive. I am making a choice for the positive. All this in hopes that someone else can hear it and feel less alone about their own pain."