

## CANDICE BRATHWAITE

## A NEW VOICE

*The blogger and author determined to shake up the stereotyped image of motherhood – and hold on to an identity beyond her children*

**W**hen Candice Brathwaite became a mother in 2013, little did she know where the experience would take her. Seven years on, the “mummy blogger” has gained thousands of Instagram followers for her insights into family life at home in Milton Keynes – sharing a colourful and often frank account of being a black British mother and co-parent with husband Bodé (aka Papa B) to their two children Esmé, six, and Richard Jr, two.

“It’s been a journey of a lifetime,” she tells **HELLO!**. “I don’t say this lightly, but I wouldn’t have the career I do if I didn’t have kids. We wouldn’t be having this conversation. I often think about my 16-year-old self, sitting in the corner of every room, looking at me like: ‘Who is this lady?’”

Not your average influencer, the 32-year-old is also founder of Make Motherhood Diverse, an online initiative to encourage a more accurate and diverse depiction of motherhood in the media – something she struggled to see after the birth of her daughter.

“I had a really traumatic birth with Esmé, and I came out of hospital five weeks later and I’m on Instagram looking at these parenting and motherhood tags – I couldn’t bloody see myself,” she says.

“Where are the Asian mums? Where are disabled mums? Where are the mothers in same-sex relationships? On and on it went, with motherhood being positioned as this entirely middle-class, stripy T-shirt, shiny bob, pushchair-worth-a-grand-or-over type vibe.”

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**Candice with husband and podcast co-star Bodé, aka Papa B, and their children Esmé and Richard Jr at their home in Milton Keynes (above) – Candice previously lived in London – and (below far left) with Bodé at an awards event last year**

experiences of being a black British mother today in her debut novel *I Am Not Your Baby Mother*. It's part memoir, part self-help guide. "The title alone makes people go: 'Oh my God what is that?' It's trying to pull readers in, and I think we accomplished that."

Dismantling the term "baby mother" – often associated with African-Americans and describing a mother not married to her child's father – her book shares some eye-opening facts, such as that black British mothers in the UK are five times more likely to die in childbirth than white women. The statistic is one that prompted the NHS last month to announce they are rolling out additional support for BAME women during their pregnancies.

### THE RIGHT TIME

Candice's book became a *Sunday Times* bestseller, a feat that makes her both proud and "uncomfortable", with its May release coinciding with the Black Lives Matter resurgence, which she admits "helped amplify the book".

"The book had been out four days and then George Floyd's murder went viral and then I see that I'm being constantly tagged on Instagram," she says. "Even the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan – his Instagram mentioned me as one of the people you need to follow for anti-racism.

"My Instagram following grew by 100,000 in three days. I never thought the way I share my family or the way I share racial injustice in Britain was activism.

"It's just been a whirlwind – perhaps one that I've unknowingly been preparing for, for a long time."

Indeed, she says racism is a reality of her mothering role, with Esmé ostracised in reception class at the age of four. "A girl refused to play with her because she was black, and we had to pull her out of school because of it," she says.

"So I've been having this conversation for a really long time. It's just now that there is this movement and this is what we are trying to do – she now understands what racism is and what anti-racism work is."

Candice says motherhood and her life has been an "indescribable" journey. "I couldn't imagine a life without my kids," she says, but she is equally proud to be building a life and business separate from them.

"I hear all the time: 'Oh, my kids are my world,' and I'm like: 'Well, my kids aren't my world.' I'm my world and they are theirs and we orbit in the same atmosphere," she says. "I want them to know that we exist in the same space but we're not the same planets, and to carve out a life for themselves."

INTERVIEW: EMILY STEDMAN

**I Am Not Your Baby Mother: What it's like to be a black British mother by Candice Brathwaite (Quercus, £16.99).**

## DON'T MISS THIS WEEK...

### BOOK NOW THIS IS ME

*Strictly Come Dancing* pro Giovanni Pernice makes a spectacular return to the stage next year with his rescheduled *This Is Me* tour. With a cast of dancers, Giovanni will showcase beautiful choreography to a fabulous soundtrack, paying homage to the music and dances that have inspired his career. **Starts 22 February 2021. For tickets, visit [giovannipernice.com](http://giovannipernice.com).**



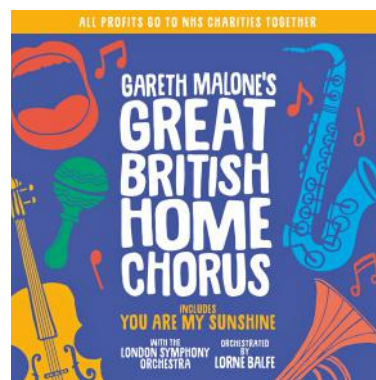
### PODCAST AT HOME WITH THE LALLAS

Hollywood actress Rose McGowan, rapper Big Narstie and *Liar* star Joanne Froggatt are guests on actress Laura Pradelska and DJ Lara Fraser's podcast covering life in lockdown. Laura and Lara – *The Lallas* – share their own stories and discuss social complexities. **Available on all podcast platforms.**

### STREAMING KATY KEENE

Fans of US drama *Riverdale* will love this spin-off. Lucy Hale plays Katy Keene, a bold, big-hearted personal shopper who dreams of being a fashion designer. Based on Archie Comics characters, the musical comedy-drama follows her and three other New Yorkers as they find careers and long-lasting friendships.

**On BBC iPlayer from 25 July.**



### ALBUM GARETH MALONE'S GREAT BRITISH HOME CHORUS

This new album from TV's favourite choirmaster features 11,000 voices from around the world and musicians from the London Symphony Orchestra. All profits will be donated to NHS Charities Together.

**Out now on Decca Records.**

### BOOK THE END OF HER

Newlyweds Stephanie and Patrick are content with their lives and their baby twins. Even while battling sleep deprivation, Stephanie thinks she has everything she has ever wanted – until a woman from Patrick's past arrives and announces that his first wife was murdered. Patrick has always claimed her death was an accident and he is innocent. But is he?

**Out on 23 July. Published by Bantam Press at £12.99.**

