

A photograph of Nicole C Mullen, an international singer-songwriter, sitting in a bright yellow armchair. She is wearing a yellow patterned top and dark blue jeans, smiling warmly at the camera. The background is a dark, textured wall.

GOD'S UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM

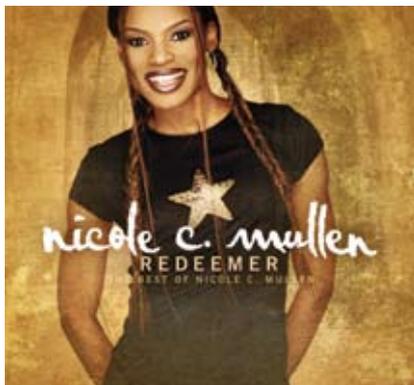
Christ takes broken, messed up situations and makes us new. This is the message of international singer songwriter Nicole C Mullen. Tamsyn Cornelius speaks to her before she heads to South Africa next month.

NICOLE C MULLEN IS A MUSICAL ICON BUT at the heart of it she's simply a woman with a faith that soars and touches the lives of many. Nicole is probably best known for her hit songs "On My Knees" and "Redeemer" (both received Dove Awards as Song of the Year in 1998 and 2001 respectively), but there is so much more to this international singer, songwriter, dancer, mother and mentor to young women.

As you can imagine, I was thrilled to hear that Nicole will be making her first trip ever to South Africa this September; and it was with even greater joy that I landed the opportunity to telephonically interview this multi-talented lady while she was at home in the country near Nashville, Tennessee.

THIS IS NICOLE SPEAKING

On the line, Nicole's voice is soft and



Dream to Believe In, covering topics such as love, respect and identity.

Her style of music is described as "Funkabilly," so I'm curious to find out more. "Yes," she giggles. "Funkabilly is a new hybrid of music – it's a bit of funk with hillbilly, folk, soul, and gospel – and it's all mixed together." (And with the creative God we serve, there is no stopping a resourceful musician, like Nicole, from producing unique music genres that honour God!)

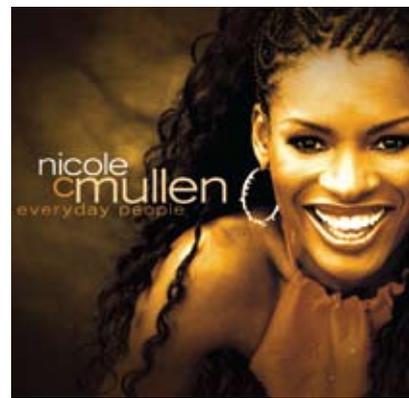
Furthermore, it seems that creativity abounds in Nicole's life. She started a clothing line called *Outta Nothin* – using old clothing to produce new garments. The first boutique opened in her home state in May. She says the concept works the same as it does with God who accepts us even when we're messed up, and He

family that will extend throughout the USA and much of the world. I let Nicole explain: "In the Baby Girls Club, it's all about community. Kids come from many different churches; some are unchurched; some come from low income homes, but every girl is welcomed and celebrated. It's a rainbow of young people being mentored for God."

ALWAYS TIME FOR FAMILY

Nicole and her husband David also have a happy and active family life of their own with three kids: Jasmine (15), Maxwell (almost 12) and Josiah (6). "I love my kids to bits," she says with motherly pride. "All three of them definitely have the Lord's Hand on their lives. My daughter Jasmine travels with me and our *Team NCM* (short for Nicole C Mullen)" which comprises

"I sing about many different things – real lives and real issues,"



soothing. It's morning in the USA, she explains, and as expected she has a number of things lined up for the day. So I get right into it and ask her about what makes her tick, to which she responds: "The Lord first... and family. I sing about many different things – real lives and real issues," she adds. "But whether my songs are about relationships, family or race relations, they all find their base in God. "It's through Christ that I write and sing."

Nicole tells me that besides her love relationship with Christ which motivates her song writing, she finds further inspiration in people and the situations we face. This definitely reveals itself in her music, with songs on her latest album, A

makes us new. "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come," (2 Cor 5:17).

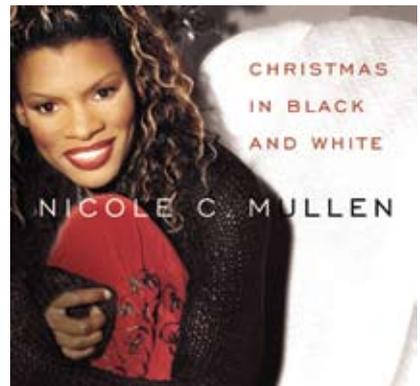
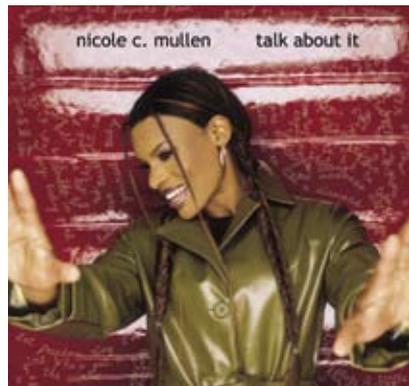
FOR GIRLS ONLY!

Nicole also runs The Baby Girls Club, a mentorship programme for young women that she started with a few of her friends in Nashville, Tennessee. "The Baby Girls Club is a safe place for young girls to meet weekly, between the ages of 6 and 18," she tells me. "We dance, sing, sew, and laugh together; we also do homework together – and it's really a way to mentor young women, raising leadership through the arts and in the community." And the vision is to create a sense of unity and

of a group of 25 young people (ages 10 to 16) who travel with Nicole and are trained in the arts – dancing, singing and memorising Scripture. What an adventure being mentored by this faithful woman of God!

The Mullen's adopted Maxwell over a decade ago when he was just three weeks old. Nicole emphasises: "Maxwell has really been a God-send. In many ways he is as strong as an ox yet as meek as a lamb. And finally, there is our little Josiah or 'King Josiah' as we've come to know him, and he definitely lives up to the name!"

Nicole seems to have a special place in her heart for young people, as she too was only eight years old when she



● gave her life to Christ. “It’s a funny story really,” she laughs out loud. “I’d grown up in a Christian home and we were always in church, but on this particular Friday evening when I was eight, I’d been up to some trouble and my father warned that I’d soon get a *whippin!*”

“Now you have to understand this right here,” she says enthusiastically, “There is a big difference between a *spankin* and a *whippin*... You see, a *whippin* comes with a song, as in *You - never - do - that - again!*” she shouts to a slow rhythm. “And I really didn’t want one of those,” she

giggles, “so as we got into the car, I turned to God and said: ‘Oh Lord, if you get me out of this *whippin* I’ll do anything You ask!’”

“And wouldn’t you know it, my father completely forgot about it – but I didn’t – so I got on my knees and I prayed: ‘Jesus thank You, use me God, forgive me.’” She says that from that moment on she knew that God was no respecter of persons. “I knew then that He didn’t look at age, or race, or upbringing; that He doesn’t only use the strong; He uses the weak too! He’s an equal opportunity God, and His is an ‘upside down kingdom’. So from then

on, I’ve been *compelled* to serve Him, to live for Him, to be used by Him!”

Wow! Nicole now lives to tell the world about this “upside down kingdom,” in which, “God makes the poor rich; He makes the weak strong!” she exclaims.

One of Nicole’s memorable journeys took her to Ghana where she encountered the ex-Trokosi slave women who are being ministered to there. “These are young girls who were given as slaves to the fetish priest to do with what he pleases. Only after negotiations take place will he perhaps let them go free. Many of these women are in

their 50s by the time they are freed! I had the opportunity to have my daughter with me as we ministered there. And as I began to sing my song entitled "Freedom", these women began to cry out to God and I just knew that that song was written for such a time as this. God is the One who brings deliverance and forgiveness! It was a moving experience for all of us," she says at a poignant moment in our interview.

GOD'S SECRETARY

"So how does it feel to hear that your songs are sung throughout the world?" I ask Nicole. She thinks for a moment and responds: "It's truly a humbling experience. I consider myself 'God's Secretary' as He writes the songs and I'm honoured to have Him write them through me and to sing them. It's a 'God thing' and it's amazing to see God use His songs - He blows on it and it does something beyond our expectations, making it grand and having it touch people - at the core it's all God really," she says convincingly.

Before Nicole embarks on another journey, this time to our diverse nation, I ask her what she expects to find here in South Africa. "Well now," she begins. "I'm looking forward to meeting warm people, experiencing a beautiful culture and exploring God's wonderful handiwork there. I also know that I'll see some of His 'upside down kingdom' at work," she chuckles!

As I drive home after the interview, I can't help but sing to myself... *"All of creation testifies, this life within me cries, I know my Redeemer lives..."* And I'll be praying for Nicole for the next few months as she prepares to bring her gift to our shores and to tell more women about her 'Redeemer'. 

MORE ABOUT NICOLE:

- Nicole has been married to singer, songwriter David Mullen for 16 years.
- Before they were a couple, David had hired Nicole as a singer for *Jonah: A VeggieTales Movie*.
- Best part about marriage: "Keeping the peace and getting along!"
- Favourite family outing: "Supper and a movie."
- Nicole sang backup for Michael W Smith and the Newsboys in the 90s, also writing for Jacqui Velasquez and dance choreographing with Amy Grant.
- She has authored two children's books called *Black, White and Tan* and *Baby Love*.
- Favourite Scripture: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty," (Psalm 91:1).



BEAUTY FOR ASHES WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

REAL
REAL
REAL

Women
Lives
Faith



WITH

Angela Thomas

Nicole C Mullen

Angela Thomas, the bestselling author of 'Do You Think I'm Beautiful?' and 'My Single Mom Life', ministers with great compassion from that time of deep brokenness when her marriage ended in divorce.

"So many women out there are 'just living', but deep inside there's a nagging emptiness. But," she insists, "I know that I know, this is not the life God has intended for us."

Angela is a favourite speaker at the Beauty for Ashes conferences and one you don't want to miss!

Nicole C. Mullen is an amazing singer/song-writer best known for her songs 'Redeemer' and 'Call on Jesus.' She has been nominated for an incredible 21 Dove Awards, winning 8. She has performed twice at the National Prayer Breakfast for President Bush, sang at his Inaugural Gala in 2005, sang at the NBA All Star Game, at the Billy & Franklin Graham crusades and at the Royal Albert Hall. Two of her songs were featured in the film 'Left Behind' and another in the film 'End of the Spear'.

Nicole is an artist you definitely don't want to miss!



Cape Town Johannesburg

4 - 5 September 2009

11 - 12 September 2009

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