

Feb 8th-Feb 14th  
2026

# The Underground Lou

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Issue  
#149

## Audaciously Abra

*The Audacity to Be Alone*

By Abra Sickles

"Loneliness is the poverty of self, solitude is the richness of."

—Mary Sarton

Me, myself, and I is not a sad thing.

It's an interesting one.

Somewhere along the way, being alone got mislabeled as lonely, as if the two are interchangeable. They're not. Being alone doesn't mean you're always lonely. Yes, loneliness can creep in depending on the season you're in, what you're carrying, what you're healing from. That part is real. But I would be lying if I said being alone hasn't also become my newfound peace.

I have friends. I have family. I have people who walk alongside me. And still, there are moments when you look around and notice the world is full of duos and trios. Couples. Best friends. Families moving in sync. Society has a way of telling us that we should be attached at the hip to someone. A partner. A spouse. A child. A constant.

Sometimes, you just have yourself.

Your thoughts.

Your space.

Your becoming.

In my 34 years of existence, being alone has shown up naturally in my life. And there were moments when I fought against that. Moments when I chased relationships because I thought they would bring me something new. Something missing. Something that would complete a picture I hadn't finished painting myself.

Looking back, I realize I wasn't fighting for love. I was fighting against the quiet. Against sitting long enough to hear what I actually needed.

Deep down, I knew I needed time alone. And I still do.

Bobbing and weaving in and out of relationships taught me something important. It's okay to explore. It's okay to feel deeply. It's okay to want companionship. But (cont. pg. 2)



ABRA SICKLES IS AN EMERGING WRITER WHO EXPLORES PERSONAL GROWTH, COURAGE, AND THE POWER OF AUTHENTICITY. THROUGH THOUGHTFUL AND INTROSPECTIVE STORYTELLING, ABRA FOSTERS DEEP CONNECTIONS BY SHARING EXPERIENCES AND STORIES THAT RESONATE. SHE INVITES READERS TO EMBRACE THEIR AUTHENTIC SELVES AND TO SEE HOW WE ALL FIT TOGETHER LIKE PUZZLE PIECES IN THE LARGER TAPESTRY OF LIFE, INSPIRING REFLECTION, GROWTH, AND PURPOSEFUL LIVING.

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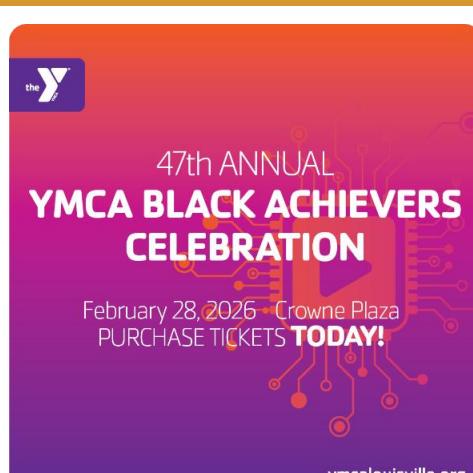
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(cont. from pg. 1) And if your sense of self is built on something external, what happens when it leaves.

Knowing yourself is not optional, it's necessary.

There will be moments when you have to stand alone. Moments when you have to speak for yourself. Advocate for yourself. Choose yourself. Moments when borrowed strength will not hold you. In those moments, self-knowing is what keeps you upright.

Being alone taught me how to build that strength.

It gave me the freedom to paint the canvas of my life the way I want it to look. To move in ways I never thought I could. To trust my instincts. To stop relying on people, places, or things to define me. It taught me how to sit with myself without reaching for distraction.

Along the way, I found communities that support without suffocating. Connections that honor autonomy. People who understand that independence and belonging can exist in the same breath.

And for anyone reading this who is alone, let me say this clearly.

You are not alone.

You are in between chapters.

You are in the quiet before clarity.

You are in the space where roots grow before anything blooms.

Being alone is not an empty room.

It's a room being prepared.

I stopped fearing being alone when I realized it was where I was becoming whole.

*Live loud. Stay audacious.*

*Abra Sickles*

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 Molo Village 1219 W. Jefferson Street Suite 204  
 The Presley Post 734 W. Main Street Suite 106  
 The Gruv 434 W. Market Street  
 Rooftop Grill 414 W. Oak Street  
 Southern Express Soul Food 418 W. Oak Street  
 Roots 101: AA Museum 124 N. 1st Street  
 House of Earlijious 4925 Poplar Level Road  
 W.E.B. DuBois Academy 3901 Atkinson Square Drive  
 SKS Accounting 812 Lyndon Lane  
 D'Luxe Hair & Cuts 3707 Bardstown Road  
 Russell Neighborhood Health Ctr 1425 W Broadway  
 My Hub 2900 W. Broadway inside the NIA Ctr  
 Nia Center 2900 W. Broadway  
 Goodwill West Louisville 2820 W. Broadway  
 Chestnut Street YMCA 930 W. Chestnut Street  
 Republic Bank Foundation YMCA 1720 W. Broadway  
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 Wing Station 2119 Crums Lane  
 Greenwood Grocery Store 4501 Greenwood Ave  
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 Main Library Louisville 301 York Street  
 Wags Hair 801 W. Broadway  
 Smokeeasy Lounge 566 S. 5th Street  
 Mahogany Salon 1860 Mellwood Ave  
 Double Deuce 2529 W. Broadway  
 Smoke & Vape 2113 W. Broadway  
 Good Vibes Smoke Shop 2710 Rockford Lane  
 Zoe's Tattoos 1161 S. 4th Street  
 Opportunity Corner 636 S. 18th Street  
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 Shawnee Library 3912 W. Broadway  
 Ahrens Educational Resources 546 S. 1st Street  
 Bates Memorial Baptist Church 620 E. Lampton  
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**Finding Your Brand's Archetype** Tue, Feb 17<sup>th</sup> 2 PM-4 PM Virtual <https://digitalready.verizonwireless.com/>

Takicha Roundtree, alongside her husband Warrick Roundtree, founded The Brand Amplifiers in 2020, leveraging their early success from branding ventures that attracted high-profile clients like the Obamas, Sony, and Amazon, MTV, CNN, and so many others. Their full-service agency addresses the unique branding and marketing needs of small businesses, enhancing their growth through pivotal tools and strategies. As COO of The Brand Amplifiers, Warrick Roundtree brings invaluable experience in managing day-to-day operations, ensuring projects are delivered on time, within budget, and exceed expectations. His strategy emphasizes creative solutions and exceptional service as essentials for strong branding and sustainable business growth.

This event is ideal for business owners looking to cut through the guesswork and use simple, clear steps to uncover the brand archetype that aligns with their values, vision, and the kind of buyers who truly understand their brand.

At the end of this event, you'll have the tools to leave with simple frameworks to uncover your brand's core personality (without jargon). Know how to match your archetype to your values, vision, and audience expectations. Understand real-world examples of archetypes in action and how to spot your fit. Ditch the guesswork. Use clear steps to uncover the archetype that aligns with your values, vision, and the kind of buyers who actually get it.

**Muhammad Ali's Legacy Enters a New Chapter as Compassion Goes Global**

*As the U.S. honors Muhammad Ali with a Forever Stamp, the Muhammad Ali Index expands nationally and globally with Sharjah named as its first international city*

As the United States honors Muhammad Ali with a Forever Stamp in celebration of what would have been his 84th birthday, the Muhammad Ali Center today announced a major national and international expansion of the Muhammad Ali Index, naming Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, as its first global city partner.

The Muhammad Ali Index is a research-and-action platform designed to understand, measure, and strengthen compassion in everyday life, positioning compassion at the center of Muhammad Ali's legacy and a growing global force for change.

The international expansion will formally launch February 4, 2026, marking the start of a multi-year partnership in Sharjah with the American University of Sharjah. The launch will take place in the presence of Her Highness Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi, President and Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of AUS.

Together, these moments send a powerful message: Muhammad Ali's compassion is not only remembered - it is alive, measurable, and going global.

Originally launched in 2025 as a 12-city U.S. pilot, the Muhammad Ali Index combines original research, pioneering AI tools, local insight, and its proprietary Net Compassion Score to assess how compassion is experienced on the ground, how people treat one another, how trust is built, and how communities come together across differences.

In 2026, the Index will expand to 20 U.S. cities, while Sharjah becomes the first international city partner, marking the beginning of the Index's global growth. Additional global cities will be announced in the coming months.

This expansion coincides with another milestone honoring Ali's legacy. The United States Postal Service announced the Muhammad Ali Forever Stamp, released on January 15 during Ali's birthday week (January 17). The stamp commemorates a life defined not only by athletic greatness, but by moral courage; from Ali's stand on conscience to his lifelong commitment to service, faith, and human dignity, and the belief that how we treat one another matters.

The expansion of the Index comes at a moment of deep social challenge. According to the Muhammad Ali Index's 2025 Compassion Report, 61 percent of people believe compassion is declining, yet nearly half remain hopeful it can be rebuilt.

Lonnie Ali, CEO and Co-Founder of the Muhammad Ali Center, said: "Muhammad believed that how we treat one another matters-especially when it's hard. Compassion wasn't something he spoke about in theory; it was how he lived, how he made choices, and how he showed up for others. That is why Sharjah is such a meaningful launch pad for the international expansion of the Muhammad Ali Index. Sharjah's commitment to education, culture, and civic wellbeing reflects the values Muhammad stood for. Through the Muhammad Ali Index, we're carrying his legacy forward in a way that helps people live compassion - not just admire it - in their daily lives."

Her Highness Sheikha Bodour said: "Sharjah has long invested in culture, education and community life as foundations for progress. This partnership positions Sharjah as the first international city to contribute to the Muhammad Ali Index and it signals a clear intent to approach civic wellbeing with the same seriousness we apply to economic and social development. Through AUS, we will help generate globally comparable evidence that can guide leaders, educators and institutions toward stronger trust, inclusion and social cohesion."

Simon Cohen, Chief of Compassion at the Muhammad Ali Center, said: "Ali showed the world that greatness isn't about who we knock down, but who we lift up. What the research now shows us is that compassion isn't fixed - it's a skill, a muscle we can grow. That means that even in a time of deep division, there is real hope."

Sharjah will become the first city in the world to produce its own Ali Compassion Report, contributing local insight to a growing global body of compassion research and establishing a blueprint for cities worldwide.

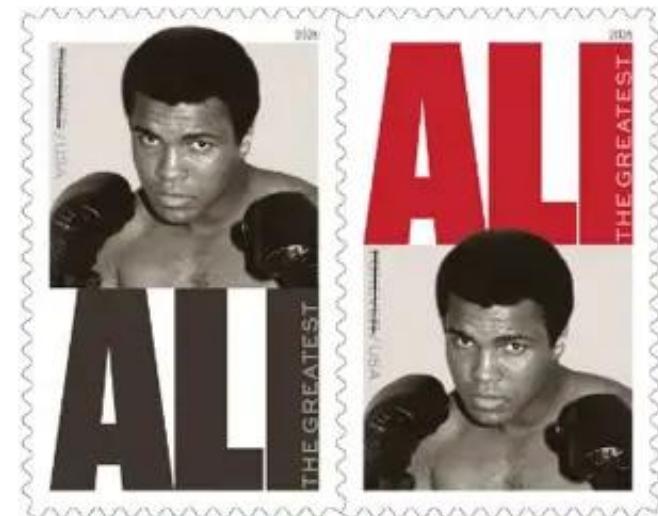
"Sharjah's role in the Muhammad Ali Index reflects a clear ambition: to treat compassion as a civic strength worth understanding through rigorous research and advancing through purposeful action," said Dr. Tod Laursen, Chancellor of AUS. "Through our partnership with the Muhammad Ali Center, AUS will support a dedicated compassion report for Sharjah grounded in careful analysis and informed by global benchmarking. This work will translate Sharjah's values and lived experience into credible insight that can strengthen leadership, education and community wellbeing here and contribute meaningfully to global learning."

The Muhammad Ali Index launched in 2025 with an inaugural 12-city pilot, including Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas-Fort Worth, Denver, Jacksonville, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Louisville, New York City, Phoenix, San Antonio, and Seattle.

Building on that foundation, the Index is expanding to eight additional U.S. cities: **Houston, Philadelphia, Charlotte, Columbus, Indianapolis, San Francisco, Boston, and Washington, DC**. Together, these cities form a growing national network committed to strengthening dignity, social trust, and human connection at a time of deep division.

As part of this global moment, the Muhammad Ali Center is inviting the public to sign the Ali Compassion Pledge at <https://aliindex.org/get-involved/pledge/> A simple commitment to act with empathy, dignity, and courage in everyday life. Together, these milestones signal a defining shift: Muhammad Ali is not only remembered as "The Greatest," but as a global symbol of compassion in action.

For additional information visit [www.alicenter.org](http://www.alicenter.org).



## Happy Winter Wellness Tips: Ways to Keep Your Spirits Up During Dark/Cold Months

**Moving energies:** Play calm uplifting music like jazz, warm beverage daily ritual, share meals with loved ones, gratitude journal, check out library books

**Internal stimulation:** expose eyes & skin to sunlight, cook warm meals with spices, or drink some warming hot cacao.

**Community support:** bundle up for a brisk walk, take up a hobby using hands, play cards/board games with loved ones, perform a random act of kindness.

**Warming Spirit:** Give back through volunteer work in your local food pantry, food kitchen, or by donating unused items that you may have. Enjoy laughter & stories with others.

**Celebrate yourself:** remember your growth boundaries, gift yourself for continuing your journey, reward yourself for reaching your SMART goals.

MUIH Nutritional Outreach

## Healthy Recipes

MUIH

### Craisin Rice Pudding

Serves: 4-5 Est. cost: \$5.80 Est. cost per serving: \$1.80

#### Ingredients:

- 3 cups white rice, rinsed
- 5 cups water
- ½ cup milk (e.g. dairy, nut, oat)
- 2 tbsp butter (optional)
- ¼ cup sweetener (e.g. brown sugar, agave syrup, honey)
- 3 tsp pumpkin pie spice **or** 1 tsp nutmeg, ground
- 2 tsp cinnamon powder
- 1 pinch cardamom
- 1 tsp ginger, ground
- 1 cup craisins (or raisins, cranberries, golden raisins)

**Equipment:** Medium pot with lid, spoon, measuring spoons, stove, baking dish

#### Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. In a medium pot, over medium heat, boil water. Add rice and water and cook for 5 minutes. Turn the heat off.
3. Add milk, butter (optional), and sweetener to rice, mix, and cover. Let stand for 3-5 minutes.
4. Add spices and craisins to the rice. Mix well.
5. Pour rice into the baking dish and bake for 15 minutes, until the top is lightly golden brown.
6. Serve in a bowl topped with sliced almonds, for a snack or treat. Enjoy!

#### Chef's note:

1. Add even more flavor, by cooking your rice in your favorite tea blend. Try green tea, black tea, or white strawberry tea for a pleasant fragrant surprise.

2. Add a pinch of salt while cooking your rice for added minerals and boosting flavor.

#### Health Benefits:

*Craisins are sweetened dried cranberries. Cranberries contain about 90% water, loaded with vitamins and minerals like Vitamin C, Vitamin E, Vitamin K and manganese. It is known as a 'functional food' by promoting general health, and reduction of various health disease risks, naturally.*

*Rice is known as a global food staple, that has shown to improve nutrition, lose weight, boost energy, and nourish the body. As a gluten-free grain, it provides more than 15 essential vitamins and minerals, including fiber.*

#### References:

1. Recipe from LA Dixon 2023.
2. Are Cranberries Healthy? 6 Surprising Benefits. (2022, January). Retrieved from Cleveland Clinic website: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/benefits-of-cranberries>
3. Nenzer, B. V., Al-Taher, F., Yashin, A., Revelsky, I., & Yashin, Y. (2022). Cranberry: Chemical Composition, Antioxidant Activity and Impact on Human Health: Overview. *Molecules*, 27(5), 1503. <https://doi.org/10.3390/molecules27051503>
4. Photo: Staff, T. S. (2023, June 26). Southern Rice Pudding Recipe. Retrieved December 5, 2023, from Southern Plate website: <https://www.southernplate.com/baked-rice-pudding-recipe/>
5. Rice Nutrition. (2020). Retrieved from Default website: <https://www.usarice.com/thinkrice/health-nutrition/rice-nutrition>

## Fire Cider

Serves: 3-5 Est. cost: \$4.10 Est. cost per serving: \$1.80

**Ingredients:** Garlic, Ginger rhizome, Horseradish root, Ginseng root (optional), Turmeric root, Cayenne peppers, Rosemary sprig, Apple, cider vinegar

**Optional:** you may add other ingredients as onions, lemon peel, orange peel, different kinds of hot peppers.

#### Directions:

1. Take a glass jar with a tight lid. Clean and peel all ingredients and chop them in rough pieces\*.
2. Place all items in the jar; pour the apple cider vinegar over it to cover all ingredients and it should fill your jar to the top. Cover with the lid, shake it well and let sit for two to four weeks.
3. Shake daily. After four weeks you can strain the juice and add half amount of honey in ratio to your juice (1 cup juice, 1/2 cup honey).
4. You can pour new apple cider vinegar over your chopped ingredients and you can add more chopped ingredients to your jar.
5. Keep it going all winter long. \*The smaller the pieces the more exposure and greater extraction occurs.

It can be added to salad dressings, used over steamed vegetables or over whole grains. Also you can take it daily one teaspoon to support your immune system. Honey and maple syrup also bring trace minerals and antioxidants to the mix

MUIH Nutritional Outreach



Craisin Rice Pudding	
Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size	1 Serving
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>279.7</b>
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat	5.7 g 7 %
Saturated Fat	3.5 g 18 %
Trans Fat	0.2 g
Cholesterol	12.2 mg 4 %
Sodium	44.4 mg 2 %
Total Carbohydrate	54.8 g 20 %
Dietary Fiber	3.2 g 11 %
Total Sugars	23.3 g
Added Sugars	21.7 g 43 %
Protein	2.9 g
	% Daily Value*
Vitamin D	0.3 mcg 1 %
Calcium	41.3 mg 3 %
Iron	1.4 mg 8 %
Potassium	68.1 mg 1 %

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

## Horoscopes

**Aries 3/21-4/19** Let the good times flow! The 3 of Cups is a card of celebration and friendship, so you could find yourself in "party mode" this week with those closest to you. Organize a night out on the town with friends. Host a dinner party for family. Gather a few coworkers and hit up a happy hour. This isn't so much about what you do as it is the camaraderie you'll feel with those around you. Life isn't all about responsibilities and commitments, so let loose and enjoy yourself right now!

**Taurus 4/20-5/20** The 2 of Wands is urging you to spend time in the present planning for what's going to happen in your future. You have a whole world of possibilities in front of you right now, but this isn't the time to act on impulse or instinct. This week you're being called to weigh all your options, carefully considering the pros and cons of each path. But this doesn't mean you should be afraid of going outside of your comfort zone! Uncharted territory can lead to long-term success if you go into it with realistic expectations and a clear plan in place.

**Gemini 5/21-6/20** You're going to learn that life is a balancing act this week! The 2 of Pentacles represents achieving harmony with opposing forces. Have you been called in different directions recently? Are what you want and what you need conflicting? Has work taken time away from your personal life or vice versa? This card wants you to take a step back and figure out where your priorities are. By knowing where you want to spend your time and energy, you can come up with a solution that sets you up for long-term success in all areas of your life.

**Cancer 6/21-7/22** Don't let fear get the best of you! The Moon indicates that lingering hang-ups from a past experience could creep up this week, flooding you with memories you'd just as soon forget. This could be something you tried to stuff down into your subconscious, hoping it would work itself out over time. Instead of attempting to ignore the issue, choose to bring it out of the shadows and heal yourself. It might be painful at first, but keep in mind that the burden you've been carrying has also hurt you over time.

**Leo 7/23-8/22** This week could be all about new beginnings for you! The Fool represents the start of a journey and embracing the unknown. If you've been wanting to move in a brand-new direction, this is your signal from the universe to finally go for it! Yes, exploring uncharted territory can be scary. It's always so much easier to stick with what you know. However, your safety zone is not where the greatest growth and fulfillment happens. Throw out the road map and take a leap of faith. You could end up somewhere better than you expected to. Rock bottom, take solace in the fact that there's nowhere else to go but up. Remember, obstacles can be opportunities in disguise.

**Virgo 8/23-9/22** The possibilities are truly endless for you right now! The 3 of Wands is signaling that you will have an abundance of opportunities to expand your horizons in some way. Look beyond your current circumstances for a moment and consider your future. What is it that you envision for yourself? Now is not the time to think small. Your potential is limitless, so take advantage of these opportunities as they present themselves to you. The greatest successes lie beyond your comfort zone.

**Libra 9/23-10/22** This week, the 8 of Pentacles is encouraging you to put your creative talents to good use and work hard at them. The more you create and hone your craft, the more others will take notice of what you're doing – and the more inspired you will become. By putting yourself out there, you give others the opportunity to recognize your unique abilities, and this can serve as the motivation needed to continue to produce things you're really proud of. So, get out there and become the master of your domain!

**Scorpio 10/23-11/21** This could be the week you finally release something that has been hanging over you for far too long. The 6 of Swords serves as a reminder that, although it may be difficult, sometimes we have no choice but to move on from a challenging situation. What have you been holding onto that has prevented you from creating a brighter future for yourself? Now is the time to let this go once and for all. This won't be an easy task, but ultimately, it is the right thing to do.

**Sagittarius 11/22-12/21** The 8 of Swords is indicating that you are feeling trapped right now, believing there isn't a way out of your current circumstances. This week you're being called to question whether you're truly stuck ... or if you're simply in a prison of your own design. Insecurity, fear, and doubt are often feelings that keep us in situations far longer than we need to be. Examine this matter more closely. You may find that self-imposed limitations have been holding you back this entire time.

**Capricorn 12/22-1/19** Lucky you! The 10 of Pentacles represents security, as well as success and accomplishment. Have you not been properly recognized for your professional efforts? Has it felt like the universe has put one obstacle after another in front of you? Has money been tight? Have you felt deflated in matters of the heart? Well, good news has arrived! You could finally see things coming together for you this week in one or more of these areas, rewarding you with a sense of satisfaction for staying the course no matter how tough things were.

**Aquarius 1/20-2/18** The 4 of Pentacles wants you to focus on your relationship with money this week. Are you saving your money, while also still indulging in life's little luxuries? Or are you hoarding every penny you have because you're afraid you're going to lose everything? Examine what is driving this mindset. Don't allow your feelings around finances to distract you from effectively managing your wealth and setting yourself up for long-term success. You can have fun now, while still having security later.

**Pisces 2/19-3/20** The 6 of Cups is about the past impacting the present. This week, you're being called to examine whether or not you're tethered to your past in some way. While it's true we sometimes need to look in the rearview mirror as a way of informing current or future decisions, we can easily become stuck living in the past if we're not careful. Don't let nostalgia or distorted memories prevent you from making progress and appreciating what's happening in the here and now. Allow your past to be a source of improvement rather than a source of stagnation. [Tarot.com](http://Tarot.com)