



REEMA BANIABBASI

Public health student with 7.5 years' global experience providing mental healthcare, community outreach, and consultancy. Co-founder of one of the only United Arab Emirates-based public health networking groups. Interested in co-designing social connection and peer support programs to address loneliness in global cities.

Mailing Address: P.O. BOX 8453, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Website with contact form: <https://reemabaniabbasi.com>

Education:

Johns Hopkins, Baltimore, MD, USA (anticipated)

- Master of Public Health, Starting June 1, 2025

Lesley University, Cambridge, MA, USA

- Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Counseling Psychology, January 2017-June 2018

Northeastern University, Boston, MA, USA

- Master of Science in Counseling Psychology, September 2013-August 2015
- Bachelor of Science in Psychology, September 2008-May 2013, Graduated with Magna Cum Laude Honors

Honor Societies Memberships:

Golden Key International Honor Society

- Member since April 13, 2010

The National Society of Collegiate Scholars

- Member since June 17, 2009

Certifications:

Intentional Peer Support Core Training, October 2-October 30, 2024

- Intentional Peer Support with Steven Morgan, Amanda Francis, and Nina Eck

Narrative Therapy Certificate, September 29, 2023-May 17, 2024

- Narrative Therapy Initiative with Drs. Matt Mooney, Suzanne Gazzolo, and Guadalupe Morales

Integrative Somatic Trauma Therapy Certificate, September 23-December 14, 2022

- The Embody Lab with Drs. Scott Lyons, Arielle Schwartz, and Nkem Ndefo



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Certificate in Mindfulness and Psychotherapy, September 11, 2020-May 10, 2021

- Institute for Meditation and Psychotherapy with Dr. Paul R. Fulton

Additional Coursework:

Introduction to Insight Dialogue and the Caring Relationship, September 10-October 1, 2024

- Insight Dialogue Community with Dave Leggat, Jessica Mui, and Genevevie Heng

Creating Trauma Informed and Healing Policies and Practices, June 5-6, 2024

- Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Summer Institute 2024 with Dr. Philip J. Leaf.

Tree of Life Level 2: Using the Tree of Life Metaphor to Respond to Loss and Grief, June 13, 2022

- Phola Organization with Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo

Reclaiming Pleasure: Embodied Joy in Trauma Recovery and Social Change, February 21-March 21, 2022

- The Embody Lab with Kai Cheng Thom

Psychedelic Assisted Psychotherapy, February 1-March 1, 2022

- Harvard Medical School with Drs. Christopher K. Germer, Ronald D. Siegel, Laura Warren, and Karen J. Kuc

Tree of Life Level 1: Introduction to Tree of Life Training, February 4, 2022

- Phola Organization with Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo

Narrative Therapy with More than One Person, November 4, 2016

- Narrative Therapy Initiative with Dr. Stephen Gaddis



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Externalizing Practice Intensive, October 7-8, 2016

- Narrative Therapy Initiative with Dr. Stephen Gaddis

Anthropology and Film, June 2012-August 2012

- Harvard Summer School 2012 with Dr. Jayasinhji Jahala

Law and Psychology, June 2012-August 2012

- Harvard Summer School 2012 with Dr. Ellsworth Lapham Fersch

Rape Crisis Counselor Training, August 3, 2009-February 3, 2010

- Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

Professional Affiliations:

UAE Public Health Connection

- Co-founder of one of the only active United Arab Emirates-based public health networking groups since January 1, 2025
- Facilitating monthly meetings and group trips to locally-based conferences
- Ensuring that members feel included through sharing detailed meeting notes and encouraging them to help in facilitating meetings and in contributing professional resources to a shared Excel sheet

International Social Prescribing Collaborative

- Member since July 10, 2024

Advising Experience:

Takalam, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Psychology Advisor, December 24, 2020—September 2, 2024

- Proposed the creation of online support groups as part of the startup's services.
- Outlined online workplace and university student emotional wellbeing programs and advised founders on ways to navigate barriers to delivery and engagement.



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- Created and provided feedback on counselor recruitment policy, webinar outlines, journaling prompts, mood tracking, toolkits, outcome measures, and psychoeducational articles and videos.

Clinical Experience:

The Psychiatry & Therapy Centre, DHCC, Dubai, UAE

Counseling Psychologist, July 15, 2019–February 28, 2025

- Provided individual in-person and online psychotherapy in Arabic and English for adults ages 18+.
- Mentored a clinical master's-level trainee from October 2021-January 2023
- Contributed psychoeducational articles for an award-winning magazine called Sail E-Magazine from March 2020 to January 2022.
- Led psycho-educational workshops in community settings, online and in person.

The Lighthouse Arabia, Dubai, UAE

Pre-Licensed Counselor Under Supervision, October 1, 2018–March 30, 2019

- Provided individual coaching sessions for ages 18-49.
- Led two 1-hour workshops for participants age 18+ on creativity and mindfulness as part of an annual public wellbeing event.

Renewal House Domestic Violence Shelter, Roxbury, MA, USA

Clinical Intern, August 23, 2017 - June 29, 2018

- Provided milieu therapy for 5 multilingual families with members ranging from ages 2 to 50 living in the shelter.
- Supported a single mother and her toddler in therapy and advocacy.
- Provided individual support for participants of a career development and parenting support program for survivors of domestic violence.
- Designed and led trauma-informed adult groups using mindfulness, expressive therapy, narrative therapy, and psycho-education.
- Trained staff on implementing a narrative therapy exercise called the Tree of Life.
- Served as a mental health consultant for advocates.
- Assisted hotline callers in locating shelter and community resources.



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Lynn Community Health Center, Lynn, MA, USA

Pre-Licensed Behavioral Health Therapist Under Supervision, October 5, 2015 - September 30, 2016

- Provided individual psychotherapy, advocacy, and care coordination in Arabic and English and utilized interpreters for clients who spoke other languages.
- Majority of the 70 clients served were ages 20s-60s with trauma histories, mood disorders, drug addiction, chronic pain, adjustment difficulties, and financial problems.
- Initiated a referral database of community resources to support clients.
- Translated client outreach letters to coordinate communications with Arabic-speaking clients.

Clinical Intern, June 8, 2015 – August 22, 2015

- Assessed overall mental health functioning of adult newcomers to the US using the Refugee Health Screening (RHS-15) and provided referrals to behavioral health services when requested or needed.
- Supported adult clients with trauma histories, adjustment difficulties, and chronic pain through individual psychotherapy in Arabic and English.
- Presented clinical cases in weekly interdisciplinary meetings of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma.

Refugee & Immigrant Assistance Center, Jamaica Plain, MA, USA *Clinical Intern, February 14, 2014 – April 29, 2015*

- Shadowed individual psychotherapy and psychiatry sessions and psycho-educational groups serving mostly adult Somali refugees and immigrants.
- Provided PTSD symptoms assessment via the PTSD Checklist with the help of Somali interpreters.
- Wrote a psychological affidavit for an asylum seeker.

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, Boston, MA, USA

Hotline Volunteer, January 4, 2010 – June 4, 2012

- Supported survivors of sexual assault and their significant others through crisis counseling and referrals to community resources.
- Re-trained and supported a returning hotline volunteer



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Phoenix House Dorchester Center, Dorchester, MA, USA

Clinical Intern, July 5, 2011 – December 6, 2011

- Led & shadowed group counseling sessions for adult women in a residential Teaching Community substance abuse rehabilitation center.
- Organized and updated group counseling materials utilizing literature on mindfulness for future group facilitators to use as a reference.

Patient Family Housing Program, Children's Hospital, Boston, MA, USA

Clinical Operations Support Intern, July 4, 2011 – December 5, 2011

- Cared for families who traveled 50+ miles to see their children receiving intensive care by booking them in 2 temporary & affordable accommodations, giving them tours of the houses, and answering questions about the program.
- Initiated data collection of similar programs to refer families if the program cannot accommodate them.

Research Experience

Lifespan Emotional Development Lab, Northeastern University, Boston, MA, USA

Research Assistant, Research Lead: Professor Derek Isaacowitz, September 3, 2012—April 8, 2013

- Ran participants for a research study on emotion recognition & regulation in elderly adults using eye tracking devices.
- Collected stimuli needed to conduct the study & entered data to ease data analysis.

Massachusetts Healthy Families Evaluation (MHFE), Tufts University, Medford, MA, USA

Research Assistant, Supervised by: Claudia Miranda-Julian, July 5, 2010—December 6, 2010

- Collected quantitative data by assigning Emotional Availability Scores for teenage mothers who were videotaped while interacting with their children.
- Transcribed audio interviews of research participants using Express Scribe to ease qualitative data analysis.

Institute of Urban Health Research (IUHR), Northeastern University, Boston, MA, USA

Research Assistant, Research Lead: Dr. Kerith Conron, January 3, 2010—December 7, 2010



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- Entered and summarized data of client satisfaction surveys of a neighboring women's addiction treatment center.
- Conducted literature search, summary, & review on social determinants of child maltreatment & measures of parenting in the US.

Volunteer Experience

Letters to a Pre-Scientist, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Volunteer Pen Pal, October 1, 2020-February 15, 2021

- Educated a middle-school student on careers in psychology by exchanging digital letters in age-friendly language.

ReacHer, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Volunteer Helpline Counselor, July 8-August 8, 2020

- Provided emotional support to callers as part of a 1-month national helpline that served women impacted by the COVID pandemic.

Big Sister Association of Greater Boston, Boston, MA, USA

Volunteer Mentor, November 24, 2009-April 11, 2011

- Mentored a middle school-aged student

Multi-Faith Student Connection, Northeastern University, Boston, MA, USA

Student Member, September 10, 2008-December 1, 2010

- Facilitated and engaged in interfaith dialogue with fellow students.

Social Change through Peace Games, Roxbury, MA, USA

Volunteer, September 15-December 15, 2008

- Taught emotional and relational skills to kindergarten students using interactive games with the support of two fellow volunteers.



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Academic Publications

Baniabbasi, R. (2023). Perspectives: Shifting from Individual Wellbeing to Social Wellbeing: Implications for Dubai. *Middle East Journal of Positive Psychology*, 9, 100–113. Retrieved from

<https://www.middleeastjournalofpositivepsychology.org/index.php/mejpp/article/view/165>

- Provided an overview of global research on loneliness and social disconnection and the implications of these insights for Dubai, United Arab Emirates that experienced rapid urbanization since its inception in 1971.

Baniabbasi, R. & Kalayjian, A. (2015). International Graduate Student's Experience of the 2014 APA Convention. *International Psychology Bulletin*, 19(1), 25-28,

https://internationalpsychology.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/ipb_winter_2-9-15-1.pdf

- Reflections of experiences as an international student attending the 2014 APA Annual Convention in Washington, DC, USA.
- Highlighted suggestions for future convention programming for international psychology students.

Baniabbasi, R. & Kalayjian, A. (2014). Division 1 Conversation Hour: Ethnic Psychology Associations. *The General Psychologist*, 49 (1), 29-31,

<https://www.apadivisions.org/division-1/publications/newsletters/general/2014/09/issue.pdf>

- A report of APA Division 1's (General Psychology) Hospitality Suite event which brought together leaders of longstanding ethnic psychological associations during APA's Annual Convention.

Psychoeducational Publications

Baniabbasi, R. (2024-Present). Belonging Co-Lab, <https://belongingcolab.substack.com/>

- Started a free Substack newsletter where I share reflections and resources about connecting with people and places in rapidly changing cities.

Baniabbasi, R. (2023). Is self-esteem overrated? *Psych Wired: United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) Psychology Magazine*, 2, 14.

<https://academia.edu/resource/work/113681591>

- A psychoeducational article on the limitations of focusing on self-esteem as the sole measure of wellbeing and how self-compassion can be a healthy alternative.



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Baniabbasi, R. (2020-2022). *Sail E-Magazine*, <https://sailemagazine.com/author/reema-baniabbasi/>

- Contributed psychoeducational articles for an award-winning UAE-based online magazine.

Baniabbasi, R. (2020). *How to Help the Healers Heal. LiveHealthy.AE*, <https://livehealthy.ae/when-healers-reach-their-limit/>

- A psychoeducational article clarifying differences between compassion fatigue, burnout, and vicarious trauma in the healing professions and what can help address them.

Public Speaking:

Loneliness and Social Connection in Dubai: Implications for Social Prescribing, International Social Prescribing Collaborative, November 13, 2024

- Lead a 10-minute webinar to global members based on insights from my perspective paper.

Beyond Isolation: Finding Real Connection in a Disconnected World, Mintea Platform and Soul Side Studio, Dubai, UAE, October 26, 2024

- Contributed to a psychoeducational panel with 3 other psychologists about loneliness and social connection.

Loneliness and Belonging in Dubai, The Psychiatry and Therapy Centre, Dubai, UAE, October 18, 2023

- Lead a 1-hour discussion with colleagues on individual and systemic factors that contribute to the loneliness we have observed in the clients we serve.
- Colleagues expressed strong interest in brainstorming what solutions can we as a team come up with in a future conversation. This also led to our managing director leading free weekly “walk and talks” in the community.

Boston to Dubai, How Emirati Therapist, Reema, Belongs in an Ever-Changing City, Third Culture Therapy Podcast, London, England, UK, June 14, 2023, <https://open.spotify.com/episode/24ZmMV1kDD1P3bMh2h7tP?si=PgH7P9gbSPexqKkP9CwC5w&nd=1>



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- Interviewed by UK-based journalist, Layla Maghribi, on my experiences transitioning back to Dubai after a decade away and the common concerns I hear from therapy clients based in Dubai.

Therapist Answering Most Common Problems of Young People, The Gist with Jessica YouTube Channel, India, May 5, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9y-VXCRPpk&feature=youtu.be>

- Interviewed on emotional wellbeing for young people by an Indian-based university student who resonated with my articles that were published in a UAE-based magazine.

How to Provide Psychotherapy while Grieving, The Psychiatry and Therapy Centre, Dubai, UAE, January 19, 2022

- Lead a 1-hour discussion with colleagues on what has been helpful to us in navigating grief in our personal lives while supporting clients in their grief, traumas, and stressors.
- Colleagues reached out to share how much they appreciated having this vulnerable conversation and it helped them feel closer to each other.

Individual and Systemic Factors that Impact “Sense of Belonging,” International Psychology Conference Dubai, Dubai, UAE, October 8, 2021

- Presented about the importance of sense of belonging for wellbeing and what the research says individuals, schools, workplaces, and cities can do to improve it.

Mindfulness in Our Daily Lives, Kun: The Journey to Be Podcast, Dubai, UAE, August 21, 2021, <https://podcasts.apple.com/ae/podcast/kun-the-journey-to-be-with-reem-shaheen/id1572791003>

- Interviewed by psychologist, Reem Shaheen, on ways to incorporate mindfulness into our daily lives and how Western psychology and the commodification of mindfulness have watered down all it can offer.

Making Meaning: Spirituality & Mental Health Discussion Series, Center for Spirituality, Dialogue & Service, Northeastern University, Boston, MA, USA, October 2020-February 2021

- Co-facilitated an online discussion series for students on links between spirituality and mental health in Fall and Spring semesters.



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SEHA Psychological Taskforce Webinar Series, Abu Dhabi, UAE, September-November 2020 & February 2021

- Contributed 3 free webinars for SEHA's webinar series for employees on mental wellbeing for healthcare providers.

Counseling Muslim Clients, The Psychiatry & Therapy Centre, Dubai, UAE, November 11, 2020

- Led a 1-hour online workshop for colleagues on providing therapy to Muslim clients while taking into account therapist biases.

Meditation on a Peaceful Place, Amity University Dubai Campus, Dubai, UAE, October 15, 2020

- Facilitated a 30-minute online creative and meditative activity for students.
- Students were asked to describe their peaceful place in writing before practicing a visual meditation and then choosing or creating an object that would represent this peaceful place after the workshop.

Navigating Conflicts in Relationships, Instagram Live with Hima Mammen, Dubai, UAE, August 29, 2020,

<https://www.instagram.com/tv/CEeVdQnJsbH/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D>

- Co-facilitated an Instagram Live conversation with couples/family therapist Hima Mammen on relational conflict.

Artist Mental Health Series, Tashkeel, Dubai, UAE, April 2020

- Created a downloadable handbook containing tips, reflective questions, and online mental health resources for artists struggling during the pandemic.
- Interviewed an artist using Insider-Outsider Witnessing from Narrative Therapy about what has been helpful to him during shutdowns.
- Created two videos, one introducing the project and the other reflecting back on the exchanges.
- Handbook was featured in an article by Harper's Bazaar Arabia



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Maintaining Emotional Health While Practicing Social Distancing Series, Badiri Academy, Sharjah, UAE, April 2020

- Created two psychoeducational videos on ways to maintain emotional health and self-reflect in the midst of the pandemic.
- Taught an online Zoom course of 30 attendees on how to use a Narrative Therapy practice called The Tree of Life for personal and career growth.

The Power of Imagery and Language in Therapy, The Mind of a Therapist Podcast, Colorado, USA, April 9, 2020, <https://podcasts.apple.com/ae/podcast/the-mind-of-a-therapist/id1500333162?i=1000472263240>

- Got interviewed for a US-based podcast for therapists and laypeople on how imagery, that is inherently found in language, can be used therapeutically and ways this connects with Narrative Therapy.

Emotional Health Whilst Social Distancing for Mums, Mama ME App, Dubai, UAE, April 5, 2020

- Got interviewed on Instagram Live by the founder of an app that connects and supports UAE-based mothers about ways they can maintain their emotional health during the pandemic.

Bullying Series, Wellbeing Initiative, Dubai Gems Private School, Dubai, UAE, October 10 & 13, 2019

- Co-facilitated a presentation on bullying to 50 parents on October 10, 2019
- Co-facilitated an interactive narrative therapy exercise and Q&A session for 200 students from grades 9-11 on October 13, 2019

Your Creativity Unlocked, Wellbeing Day: Discover Your Light, The Lighthouse Arabia, Dubai, UAE, Jan 25, 2019

- Led two 1-hour experiential workshops on how to use mindfulness as one way to foster a creative mindset.
- Workshops were led as part of an annual public wellness event.



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Psychological Associations in the Middle East, Conversation Hour: Ethnic Psychology Associations, APA Annual Convention, Washington, DC, USA, Aug 9, 2014

- Presented about an introductory review of the history & current status of Middle Eastern psychological associations during APA Division 1's (General Psychology) Hospitality Suite event which brought together leaders of longstanding ethnic psychological associations.

Newspaper/Magazine Features

Palat, L. (2024). Is it acceptance or defeat? Discover the key to emotional growth. Gulf News, <https://gulfnews.com/friday/wellbeing/is-it-acceptance-or-defeat-discovering-the-key-to-emotional-growth-1.1728991357120>

- Interviewed by a UAE-based newspaper on the difference between acceptance and resignation.

Palat, L. (2024). Beyond happiness: Unlock a psychologically rich life for more meaning. Gulf News, <https://gulfnews.com/friday/wellbeing/beyond-happiness-unlock-a-psychologically-rich-life-for-more-meaning-1.1718186188697>

- Interviewed by UAE-based newspaper on living meaningfully.

Palat, L. (2024). From hamster wheel to happiness: How to overcome stagnation and rediscover joy. Gulf News, <https://gulfnews.com/friday/wellbeing/from-hamster-wheel-to-happiness-how-to-overcome-stagnation-and-rediscover-joy-1.1706529694202>

- Interviewed by a UAE-based newspaper on dealing with stagnation and loss of sense of self during major life transitions.

Palat, L. (2023). TikTok's orange peel theory of true love: A mind game or a relationship litmus test? Gulf News, <https://gulfnews.com/friday/wellbeing/tiktoks-orange-peel-theory-of-true-love-a-mind-game-or-a-relationship-litmus-test-1.1701867289747>

- Interviewed by a UAE-based newspaper on my perspectives about a trending TikTok video that claims there is a universal way to test if a romantic partner is caring.

Palat, L. (2023). Not being able to set boundaries at work? Find out how to get your life back. Gulf News, <https://gulfnews.com/friday/wellbeing/not-being-able-to-set-boundaries-at-work-find-out-how-to-get-your-life-back-1.1679657942974>



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- Interviewed by a UAE-based newspaper on my perspectives about boundary-setting at the workplace.

Ejaz, S. (2022). What Do Our Friendships Look Like in Adulthood? UAE Expats Speak, *Gulf News*, <https://gulfnews.com/friday/wellbeing/what-do-our-friendships-look-like-in-adulthood-uae-expats-speak-1.1649239121868>

- Interviewed by a UAE-based newspaper on the challenges of making and maintaining adult friendships and tips on how to make friends as an adult.

Hoopfull Blog (2022). Therapists Need in Dubai. <https://hoopfull.com/therapists-needed-in-dubai/>

- My comments on mental health needs in Dubai were featured in a locally-based psychology website.

Dimova, A. (2022). Mental Health in the United Arab Emirates: A Brief Overview and Career Guide. Effective Altruism New York University Abu Dhabi (EANYUAD). <https://www.eanyuad.org/mental-health>

- Interviewed by an NYUAD student on the status of mental health services and career in the United Arab Emirates.

Sabu, S. (2022). Slow Living is the Antidote You've Been Looking For, *Gulf News*, <https://gulfnews.com/friday/wellbeing/slow-living-is-the-antidote-youve-been-looking-for-1.1654080320915>

- Interviewed by a UAE-based newspaper on living more intentionally while resisting toxic positivity, fast culture, and consumerism.

Jereige, C. (2020). Tashkeel Introduces Mental Health Kit for Artists in Response to Global Meltdown. *Harper's Bazaar Arabia*, <https://www.harpersbazaararabia.com/culture/art/tashkeel-introduces-mental-health-kit-for-artists-in-response-to-global-meltdown>

- An article that summarizes my collaboration with Tashkeel, an artist organization in Dubai, UAE



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Poetry Publications

Baniabbasi, R. (2024). A Date in La Mer. *The Poetryhood Poetry Journal*.

<https://www.thepoetryhood.com/poetry-journal-2024/a-date-in-la-mer>

Baniabbasi, R. (2022). People Watching in a Virtual Writers' Hour. *Writing in Community: An Anthology of the Second Year, London Writers' Salon*, 9-10.

<https://shop.writershour.com/products/writing-in-community-anthology-2022>

Baniabbasi, R. (2021). Stitching with Smoke. *Complacency Kills*, 47.

https://issuu.com/mirageslight/docs/complacency_kills

Baniabbasi, R. (2020). Passing by with Dragonfly. *Pensive: A Global Journal of Spirituality and the Arts*, 1, 19.

<https://pensivejournal.com/poetry/passing-by-with-dragonfly/>

Baniabbasi, R. (2019). Plastic Violence. *Mingled Voices 4, The International Proverse Poetry Prize Anthology 2019, The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press*.

https://cup.cuhk.edu.hk/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=4033

Baniabbasi, R. (2017, October). Halal Pork. *ArtAscent: Art & Literature Journal*, 88.

<https://artascent.com/reema-baniabbasi-2/>

Baniabbasi, R. (2017, August). Glass Speak. *ArtAscent: Art & Literature Journal*, 33.

<https://artascent.com/reema-baniabbasi/>