
African Mother Scholar

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Abstract

African Mother Scholar is a poem born out of my disillusionment with life, love, and womanhood. As an African woman, immigrant, mother, and scholar, I am forced to come to terms with conflicting identities, a colonial past, and present patriarchal structures. In search of both who I am and who I want to become, I find myself questioning long held cultural beliefs on my role as a wife and mother and how these beliefs align with my desire for intellectual growth. It is in this state of ontological flux that I find a newfound sense of freedom, power, and control. My search for knowledge—for truth, healing, and identity—both unravels and remakes me. In these halls of knowledge, I experience never ending conversations, community, and laughter, as if returning from a distant homeland. I find myself dreaming of the impossible. I am finally the author of my own story.

Keywords

decolonize, patriarchy, womanhood, motherhood, Indigeneity, knowledge

Like a lioness roaming the plains,
She is courageous.
She is strong and yet vulnerable.
She emerges at dawn,
Half dreaming, half awake,
As her children drift in the realm of dreams.
What shall we eat today? What shall I learn today?
Research paradigms, questions, methods galore.
She is thinking, scribbling, journaling away,
Never a second to spare, or to lose.

She is born and bred in patriarchy,
Once one of its most excellent students.
Don't ask why?
Clean, cook, nurture, breathe, repeat!
You are the pillar that holds it all together.
At last, beneath that dark and smothering cloud,
She finds her own brand of womanhood.
One that blurs the lines,
Between the radical and the liberal.
Letting go of those old wives' tales.

Hopes and dreams surround her,
Boundlessly buzzing like a swarm of bees.
Like a shield of armor, her hopes, and dreams,
For her children, students, and community,
Give her strength and courage to do the impossible.
The strength to decolonize, deconstruct,
Colonial legacies, and ways of thinking.
The courage to reject, reclaim and reimagine,
Embracing reciprocity, Indigeneity, new ways of thinking.

To be an African Mother Scholar,
Is to have endless possibilities.
The ivory tower is ripe with knowledge and opportunity,
A foreign land next to her humble home.
It is where domesticity meets elasticity and innovation,
Critical paradigms, challenging, interrogating.
Through narrative inquiries,
Humanity's story comes to life.
Revealing the tensions and struggles,
Engraved in the heart of power and knowledge.¹

¹ Foucault, M., & Gordon, C., 1980.

To decolonize her research,
She must first decolonize the mind.
Pruning once held beliefs, values, and attitudes,
Towards new ontologies and ways of knowing.
As her mind sails along the sea of self-doubt,
Waves of inadequacy crushing down her ideas, dreams, and ambitions.
Reflecting on all her conflicting subject position,
Colonized, free, mother, scholar.
Who is she to occupy this space?
At long last it is I,
African Mother Scholar.

References

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Behind every African Mother Scholar is someone who diligently watches over her children as she learns. Allowing her the freedom to dream, to sail uncharted waters and break through barriers. Ellah, my dearest sister, you are the reason I can do it all.

Author Biography

My name is Runeni Ruth Mangwiza Zvemhara (She/Her). I am a mother of four wonderful human beings who are my greatest gift, and the reason why I write. My formative years were spent in Harare, Zimbabwe where I was born and raised. As a young 22-year-old woman, I immigrated to Canada in search of freedom, safety, economic and political stability. I began my undergraduate studies At Rhodes University in South Africa and completed my studies at the University of Toronto, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Sociology. I am an Ontario Certified Teacher and Registered Early Childhood Educator. My research areas include special education and inclusive learning. I am currently completing my Master of Education degree at York University.