

Chapter 18

Through the Eyes of the Beholder: Experiences of a Woman Living in a Patriarchal Society

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents experiences of an elderly woman living in Africa from a Feminist theoretical perspective. Feminism is a theory that argues that men and women should be treated equally, politically, economically and socially. It includes sensitivity to all sorts of gender biases such as excluding voices of women in life debates. The aim of this chapter is to map the challenges and constraints posed by patriarchal value system, as it relates to the right to reproduction, child rearing practices and legal connotation, the discussion also includes opportunities in socio-cultural, Educational, economic and political participation. These experiences are situated in both public and private life. As the author wrote this narrative of her experiences, she went through major literature sources and could only locate a few relevant sources with similar narrations.

INTRODUCTION

A feminist standpoint epistemology suggests that women's experiences be the lens or point of departure in understanding women's affairs and the social world. (Smith, 1983). Dorothy Smith, teaching at the University of California at Berkeley, was inspired by KarlMax, and conducted studies on experiences of female academics. She used their life stories to advance the course of understanding gender issues. These studies and more led her to being one of the founding theorists of the feminist standpoint theory which looks at the social world from the perspectives of women in their everyday world's experiences. The study included the ways in which women see the world. In this chapter the author shares her experience through the eyes of the beholder. The focus is on the hegemonic reality created by those in power in the part of the world where the author's home is. This reality is passed down and imposed on the

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powerless by those in power. Although the feminist theory is chosen as a guide, it is not at the exclusion of the acknowledgement that life is a multifaceted process with intertwined impact on lived experiences. For example, the combined effect of gender, class, ethnicity, power and race on people's lives may need more than one type of theory to discuss.

BACKGROUND

According to the medical records at Kanye hospital in the Southern District of Botswana, I was born on November 8th 1958 during the colonial Botswana. When I was eight years old Botswana became independent in 1966. I was born to a mixed tribe couple. My mother Orapeleng Wantwa was born and raised in Kanye from the Ngwaketse tribe. According to the traditional family history of her tribe she is from the royal family. Her tribe made history in Botswana as one of my mother's great uncle contributed in protecting the now Botswana from being raided during the Southern Africa wars for land. According to unreferenced notes by lonelyplanet on Pre-colonial history, archaeologists and anthropologists using fragmented trail of ancient pottery, have been able to piece together the complex, crisscrossing migration of different tribal groups into southern Africa. Between AD 200 and 500 Bantu-speaking farmers started to appear on the southern landscape from the north and east of Africa. The significant development in Botswana's long history for me is the evolution of the three main branches of the Tswana tribes during the 14th century. It is a story of family disharmony, where three brothers, Kwena, Ngwaketse and Ngwato broke away from their father Chief Malope to establish their own territories in Molepolole, Kanye and Serowe respectively. (Lonelyplanet 2013) My mother is a descendant of the brother Ngwaketse.

During the colonial history, in the 1820s the Boers began their Great Trek across the Vaal River. Many Boers (20,000) crossed into Tswana and Zulu territory and established themselves as though the lands were unclaimed and uninhabited. In my village the white settlers are the minority but still live in one ward, a few have married locals. At the Sand River Convention of 1852, Britain recognized the Transvaal's Boers independence and the Boers informed Batswana (people of Botswana) that they were now subjects of the South African Republic. Prominent Tswana leaders Sechele I and Mosielele refused to accept white rule and incurred the violent wrath of the Boers. After heavy losses of life and land, Batswana sent their leaders to petition the British for protection. As recorded by lonely planet, in 1885, Britain resigned itself to the inevitable. (Lonelyplanet, 2013)

Lands south of the Molopo River became the British Crown Colony of Bechuanaland and were attached to the Cape Colony, (now one of South Africa's District) while the area north became the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland. The official borders of the republic of Botswana now are such that she shares the border with South Africa in the south and east, Zimbabwe and Zambia in the north and Namibia in the west. She is also a member of 10 countries in southern Africa which constitutes Southern African Development Community (SADC). Due to other threats to Botswana, a delegation of Tswana chiefs Bathoeng 1, Khama and Sebele accompanied by a sympathetic man of Christian faith, Missionary WC Willoughby, sailed to England on a mission to get protection from the Boers and other incoming white settlers. My mother was born to one of the great grandchildren of this Bathoeng.

My father Burns Ralobakeng Losike originated from the line of the rebellious chief Mosielele of the Kgatla tribe. He is just as rebellious as it can get. My parents met at a teacher training college during

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