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My Muse of Fire is Ubuntu: My Black Lives Matter Re-awakening of Purpose

Gwendolyn C. Webb

Texas A&M University, gwebbj@tamu.edu

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Cover Page Footnote

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Gwendolyn C. Webb, Texas A&M University

Strangely, I *knew* Shakespeare before I
knew me.
My love for *the* theatre, fueled by a Heston
Disguised by a story, poised as the
greatest,
And sprinkles of being mother earth at age
five,
Easter speeches, then high school roles,
and college roles
With peripheral visions of being a *star*,
Yet never good enough in the eyes of
those who taught me.
My desire for stardom was steeped
In someone else's perceptions of me
And who I *should* or *could* be?

I embraced Shakespeare through Henry the
Fifth,
*O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention.*
Fascinated by a professor
Who quoted the chorus and taught of a
Muse
In deep and dreamy thought
With no *thought* for who I was
And how my stage *should* or *could* be
wrought

Galvanized by his passion,
For his Shakespeare and *his* heaven of
invention.
But oh, how excited I was at that muse of a
thought.
Yet, it led me to genres that did not echo
or channel *me*
But on how excited I was, as I was easily
bought.

I sought *my stage*, while beaconing
Broadway
To welcome *me*
Bought miseducation, as Woodson (1933)
did decree
Reality, set for my muse, was not *me!*
Turned to education and found a stage to
share,
Then confronted by learners,
Their *Mis-education*
Personified by the fraud in *me!*
With no foundation to teach
What it means to be *me*
What it means to be *them*
In a world where the stage of make believe
Continued Mis-education of purpose in
me!

I needed purpose to see, to live, and to *be*.
My charges, who looked like me,
Had no kingdom for a stage,
A stage of self-identity,

Built on *their* right to *be*
In the context of a world hostile to their
beauty and worth
I floundered searching for hope in the thrill
A thrill without foundation of who I was,
who they were,
And how I was to reach and teach them to
be

My world began to change, reflections
flooded in ...
I taught African American children,
African American learners,
African American young adults.
Became an African American mother
Of an African American girl and an
African American boy.
Became an African American
grandmother
Of an African American boy and two
African American girls.
Fueled by the murder of George Floyd,
Addie Mae, Cynthia,
Carole and Carol Denise,
(three African American girls, bombed to
death in 1963),
Trayvon, Tamir, Alhaji,
Michael, George, Daunte,
Ahmaud, and Ryan,
Janisha, Sandra, Breonna,
Atatiana and Ma'Khia

Every day, I saw my life as one without
that fire
No flame in my wisdom
No knowledge in my waking.
But now, I am *Ubuntu!!* (Nussaum, 2003)
I am, because we are,
Because we are, therefore, I am
My re-awakening has been enlightened by
the power of "Black Lives Matter!"
Fire is a generator of energy
Fire had been shut up in my bones
The last two years, in a freeze-framed
pandemic
Have shown me and taught me
Who I am and who I must be ...*me,*
As a leader, an educator, a researcher, a
mother, a grandmother,
Who teaches in and through each *Muse*

I do not and will not apologize for loving
my people
For loving our children,
For laboring in my passion better,
For effectively teaching those who lead
and *teach* our children
O for a Muse of Black Lives Matter fire,
that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention.
Our children have a right to know, to
think, to aspire (DuBois, 1900).
I have a renewed purpose to see, to do, to
live, to be,
Black Lives Matter and their self-identity
development collectively, must be.

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