

“Education is the Key to Life”

When people look at me,
They see I'm different from others.
My religion, my color, my blood.
They think I'm not educated.
But I'm proud of myself.
For not giving up.
For loving my family.
For wanting to help my country.
And for getting my education.
My religion is peaceful, my color is beautiful, my blood is Somali.
My mother pushed me to get my education.
Even though, when I was young,
I thought it was punishment.
But now I cherish what I have learned.
Knowing that without education I would be lifeless.
Education is what makes me to be a brave woman.

- *Mariama*

“Where I’m From” adapted by Levi Romero

Where I’m From...

I am from a river
from mountains and valleys.

I am from the joyful,
bright sunlight.

I am from the plumeria,
the flowers.

I’m from kindness and hard work,
from grandma and mother.
I’m from cooking rice and eating chicken
and from washing dinners.

I’m from quiet and shyness,
and from “Be brave.”

I’m from wrist-tying.

I’m from Mae La and Thailand,
Bamboo and sugarcane.

From falling in love.

- *Paw Lay*

“What People See When They See Me”

People see that I am Muslim

That I am a stranger

That I am dangerous

That I am inexperienced

And that I do not have

Many goals because I am a girl.

I am strong, emotional

I am powerful and passionate about helping others.

I will go to college

I will become a human right's lawyer

I will have an impact on this world

I will prove people wrong

- *Nada*

“I am Hope”

I connect with my old memories of Africa and I feel invincible because of what I overcame

I overcame fear of bombs that hurt and killed innocent people

I overcame loneliness as I saw my family get torn apart

I overcame the sadness of missing my mother

I overcame adversity to stand here today

I came to America as peace

I am a student

I am woman with a big ambition

I have a dream as big as the ocean to become a doctor

I want to stop the monster diseases that swallow up people's lives

I am capable of achieving any dream I dream

I am strong like an elephant

I am kind like a mother

I am hope.

- *Muhubo*

"I am a Survivor"

I am an African young lady
Who has faced difficult challenges
Including surviving the civil war
Bombs, fire, death surrounded me
Then there was starvation.

No one could understand what I have through or how I survived from it

As a little girl.

Sometimes I open the book of my life to an old page
To go back and see all there and see all the bad, the good, the terror that I went through.

I question myself sometimes, but when
I look to my left side there is no one who could answer me.

Look to my right side,
And, look to myself again
And find answers because

I, Merveille, the owner of the story and also the story teller,

I am who I am today
Because of all the challenges I went through
I survived and learned from those challenges

I am Merveille Kouekabakilaho.

Koue-ka-ba-ki-la-ho.

Koue-ka-ba-ki-la-ho.

Kouekabakilaho.

Who am I to be?

Brilliant, gorgeous, fabulous.

But...this I know

I am a survivor

Thank you

- *Merveille*