

Hannah Hasan

On May 29, 1851 Freedom Fighter Sojourner Truth delivered a speech at a Women's Convention in Akron Ohio. That speech--Ain't I A Woman-- resonated with black women then, and it resonates now...still over 100 years later. I could read that speech right now, and black women all around the country would feel the connection, because the themes remain true. The speech is still relevant. There is a history there that reflects a truth that will ensure that black women and white women can never really work as one to change the world until there is an acknowledgement of what is in the ground, and what is going on even now. This poem reflects a truth that might be difficult for some to swallow, but is required if change is really what we desire.

There will be no subliminal messages
here No beating around anyone's
proverbial bush No metaphors or
hidden passages here
No sugar
coating Simply
truth
My truth
For I cannot speak truth to
power For or on behalf of
anyone else
Until I am willing to do the internal
work The bare naked vulnerability
The truth of
self So here I
stand
A physical, visual
representation Of a brutal
type of abuse
That has been kept strategically silent
I am healing, overcoming from generations and generations of toxic white woman
violence

It has been said that PTSD rests in the bones
Travels throughout your system and finds itself a
home And everything I know about our stories
All that I've come to learn about our human
experiences Is that they never really leave
Refuse to make an exit strategy
They are settled- deeply embedded into our
anatomy Trauma like this reproduces-- plants
seeds
And these experiences are haunting me
Staring back at me every time I look in my rearview
mirror They are taunting me
I'm still trying to find ways to heal through what the world doesn't want me to speak

Or maybe doesn't want me to
believe Because the reality
Is that the same abuse that has been dealt to me
Has been passed down from one toxic white woman to
the next To the women in my family
To the sisters in my village
Those connected by blood and not
Every black woman that I know has a war wound from one of
these women Who wanted her spot
Despised her presence
Who decided to use her own power and privilege to teach her a
lesson Used cruelty as her mode of operation
Used her tears as a weapon
Thought that she was going to break her
down So that she could truly be in control
Microaggression so much
That that aggression becomes macro
Internalized hatred
Internalized racism
So calculating in her choices
A perpetrator of intentional division
And If we are to build a world of equity and equality that we are all proud to
live in Then we must discuss dismantling the system
That is toxic white women.

And it is rare
To have the opportunity to look your abuser directly in the eye and say you
hurt me Chose your own comfort over my freedom
Chose to ignore the truth of my humanity

All of the times that you tokenized and
weaponized me Embarrassed and humiliated me
You've hid behind good intentions for generations
now-- Your intentions without any level of
accountability

Your well meaning that has done irreversible damage to my
own sanity And the fear of being ostracized has kept me from
speaking candidly But fear is what so many are counting on to
keep women like me mute It is what will uphold the silence that
is shrouded around this truth

It is what will pass down this same treatment to the next
generation too Fear of speaking up is the continuation of this
type of abuse

So for every toxic white woman with the ability to hear my
voice Take note Take heed
Make a different choice
If it is true sisterhood you desire

Across all borders--

Through all
boundaries With
women of color

Within
intersectionality

You've got some decisions to make
Some internalized racism and bias to
dissect Some dangerous patterns to
undo

Times up for the toxicity that has driven your
choices Times up for the abuse.