

## The power of connections with others and one's self through *Becoming*

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**ABSTRACT:** The main aim of this article is to emphasize the importance of the genre of the biography in order to express an own voice. In this sense, women voices are specially taken into account through history until the 21<sup>st</sup> century where female models like Michelle Robinson Obama uses her own voice to legitimise her story and provide girls all over the world with powerful weapons to fight against injustice, racism and the difficulties of being oneself. Besides, in her recent biography *Becoming* (2018), she analyses in-depth the power of connections with others and one's self through her life. In this line of argument, she pays attention to how others contribute to her path and the significance of feeling unique and loved.

**KEYWORDS:** *Biography, Becoming, connections, racism, women voice*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Personal identity is, undoubtedly, one of the most intrinsic themes in biographies. It represents the struggle of trying to become oneself and connect with others. The idea is accurately portrayed in the recently published autobiography written by Michelle Robinson Obama. What we could expect is an autobiography of a former First Lady who tells the advantages and disadvantages of such an important position. However, we find the story of a girl and the woman she wanted to become. Along this identity process, the relevance of her relationships with the others is essential. In this line of thought, *Becoming* (2018) is a compendium of honest and authentic experiences with unknown and well-known people who influence decisively in her maturity and place in life. Taking all this into account, in the present paper we will try to decipher the feelings, thoughts and opinions of a black girl who was born in South Side Chicago.

Regarding the contents of this research, in the first place, some theoretical framework about the genre of biographies will be shown, paying special attention to personal traits and the close relationship between the Self and the Other based on connections. In this way, we pretend to humanize famous characters who try to show their "ordinariness" covered by extraordinary aspects. In the case of Michelle, her last autobiography can be considered an attempt to give voice to a black girl with an ordinary life who becomes First Lady of the United States. Therefore, a detailed analysis of concerns and goals of an "ordinary person who found herself on an extraordinary journey" (2018:420-421) will be developed following her own *Becoming*. Through this analysis, the main aim is to approach the reader the image of a real black woman who uses autobiographical writing to make a major impact on today's young people, because they are not alone.

### II. BIOGRAPHIES FROM A FIRST PERSON PERSPECTIVE: GIVING VOICE TO FEMALE'S SELF

Ortiz (2018:86) offers an interesting view of the reasons why people write biographies. He underlines that the origin of the "problem" is probably the fact of the awakensness of mortality. Thus, in an attempt to be immortal, many people write their life experiences to be alive forever. In this way, they still have voices although centuries pass. This is the case of Gilgamesh, thanks of some clay pieces we know about his existence. Furthermore, the author insists on the longevity of this genre, from Plutarco and Aristotle, Saints' lives, ancient chivalry novels, or princes' lives in the Renaissance. It is interesting the figure of the Scottish Carlyle who emphasizes not only the life facts but also the messages these facts send to the others, to the rest of mankind (2018: 92). This is one of the most noticeable characteristics of a biography, the intention of becoming significant for others, for your country. In this line of argument, Riera y Tuèbols (2007:29) reflects about the crucial role History plays in the genre of the biography. This means that all historical events that happen around the existence of a person embody his/her life contributing to their relationships with the Other and in his/her vision of the world itself.

As it can be seen, biography is a complex genre that involves many aspects. However, authors like the previous ones, coincide in the fact that becoming immortal and help make a significant contribution to others and future generations is a top priority. This is also the main feature of an autobiography. Semantically speaking, this term

means that the author him/herself is in charge of telling his/her own story. He/she wants to be alive forever through the voice giving the readers the opportunity of seeing the path they follow from unknown to known, from the invisibility to visibility, from the first steps to the construction of an own identity (all these aspects will be depicted in detail in next sections applied to Michelle Robinson Obama's case).

It is already known that the profession or simply the art of writing was not a female issue. From ancient times, women were invisible, her concerns, visions and feelings were kept at home, in private spheres. They usually had two clear destinations: an arranged marriage or life in a convent. In this last case, some women acquired a not such an invisible role since they wrote their own stories and the stories of other women. For instance, Romero (2011:2017-219) comments the importance the convents had in female writing because they let some women write and express their "own" views. It is necessary to insist on their "own" views since there was always a male approval behind. Moreover, a big difference is found between the nuns who write their own story and the ones who write the story of others. While in the first case they treat themselves as inferior human beings, in the second one prevails the good qualities of others (2011:221). From this, we can infer that there was a fear to value the Self among these female writers. It was more "impersonal" to write about the virtues of others. Therefore, in these early examples of female autobiographies a male influence can be clearly observed.

The conclusion we draw after studying the previous cases is that female autobiography writing has been a hard and long path through History. Coming back to Michelle Robinson Obama, although she is now a 21st century woman, stereotypes and prejudices are still alive since she was a black girl from a working family of the South Side Chicago. However, as we will realize in following sections, education and positive life vision can make a difference. Regarding ethnical matters, being black and African American is another handicap for a woman, even nowadays. Having been born as a slave, Phillis Wheatley becomes the first African American poet woman. Although, she never wrote her own autobiography, through her poem *On being brought from Africa to America*(1773) her life vision can be observed. She identifies herself as a slave and in part she thanks it for introducing her to Christianity. Another life where Christianity played an essential role was Old Elizabeth who states in her biography:

was born in Maryland in the year 1766. My parents were slaves. Both my father and mother were religious people, and belonged to the Methodist Society. It was my father's practice to read in the Bible aloud to his children every sabbath morning. (1863:3).

She narrates this moment like the beginning of her attachment to God in order to overcome slavery struggle. Through these words, she pretended to give her own view about slavery and problems of those times. As we can observe, these first examples provide us with issues women have to face. In that case, slavery; now, Michelle Robinson Obama will talk to the readers her current concerns. There is always a female perspective.

At this point, it is crucial to remind that being a woman who writes about her personal issues and "taboo" aspects like sexuality, the negative face of motherhood, the difficulties between combining her profession and motherhood, the dilemma of choosing between the work progress and a qualitative motherhood. Women and even more black ones live among edges. Life consists of choices; indeed, it is very difficult to combine "both women" to build one, professional and mother. This controversy has existed for ages. Nevertheless, it is now, in the 21st century when many voices have the desire to share their own stories to inspire future women in search of happiness trying to get a good balance between these two spheres. They are trying to look for their own identities by writing their own stories. Regarding current troubles, black women have decided to tell their own experiences. Although they are not slaves, they are still stigmatized and must carry with the heaviness of their African origins as goods instead of human beings. For instance, Janet Mock is a LGTB activist who defends the rights of transsexual women. Women who were born in the wrong body. In her book *Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love, & So Much More* (2014) [7] she uses her own experience to empower other girls in her situation. It is a kind of plea in favour of basic civil rights for mankind. Their ancestors fought from slavery to freedom, she fights for body and mind freedom.

Chiamamanda Ngozi Adichie is a Nigerian author who tells her own story in *We Should All Be Feminist* (2014). Adapted from her TEDX Talk, in this writing she emphasizes the urgent need of being equal and having an appropriate understanding of gender injustices. From her own vision, she claims for raising children with the focus on interests and abilities instead of gender: "What if, in raising children, we focus on ability instead of gender? What if we focus on interest instead of gender?" (from TEDX Talk, 2012). In her writing, readers can appreciate her long journey searching for her own identity and how others influence her path. For example, her friend Okolama, the first one who called her "Feminist" or her friend Louis, who called her "Feminist", too; but, this time, in a tone that she felt herself like being a sort of terrorist. Moreover, in *We Should All Be Feminists* she is all the time pursuing to connect with the Other, trying to understand the stories of other men and women.

All these previous ones are examples of black women who must face problems of today society and want to have their own voice and talk freely about their thoughts, feelings and opinions. From Phillis Wheatley to Michelle Robinson Obama, all are black women who use their writings to make a great difference. In the next section, we will put special emphasis on *Becoming*, Michelle Robinson Obama's biography as an ordinary

African American woman who has had the opportunity of being witness of outstanding historical events: “I’m an ordinary person who found herself on an extraordinary journey” (2018:420-421).

### III. MICHELLE ROBINSON OBAMA: *BECOMING*, A CONTINUOUS DISCOVERY OF HER OWN SELF AND A CONNECTION WITH THE OTHER

Like the previous cases, the protagonist of *Becoming* believes in the power of writing as a multicultural literary strategy to give voice to herself and others. In her own words (2018:421):

In sharing my story, I hope to help create space for other stories and other voices, to widen the pathway for who belongs and why. I’ve been lucky enough to get to walk into stone castles, urban classrooms, and Iowa kitchens, just trying to be myself, just trying to connect. For every door that’s been opened to me, I’ve tried to open my door to others. And here is what I have to say, finally: Let’s invite one another in. Maybe then we can begin to fear less, to make fewer wrong assumptions, to let go of the biases and stereotypes that unnecessarily divide us. Maybe we can better embrace the ways we are the same. It’s not about being perfect. It’s not about where you get yourself in the end. There’s power in allowing yourself to be known and heard, in owning your unique story, in using your authentic voice. And there’s grace in being willing to know and hear others. This, for me, is how we become.

This is the main message she wants to send: an invitation to connect with the others, to try to understand their own realities and their own problems. This is what she calls *Becoming*, knowing herself in a better way and analyse how the connection with others contribute to her own existence. Nowadays, Michelle Robinson, more known as Michelle Obama, is a powerful public figure who defends the rights of girls and the visibility and empowerment of the female gender. However, she was born and raised in a middle class apartment in the South Side of Chicago. That was the moment her particular *Becoming* started.

Like a premonitory fact, she alludes to the concept “growing up” in the preface as it follows: “Now I think it’s one of the most useless questions an adult can ask a child- *what do you want to be when you grow up?* As if growing up is finite. As if at some point you become something and that’s the end” (2018:ix). Along her complete autobiography she insists on the ability to cope, on the understanding of education, reading, curiosity, creativity, imagination and critical thinking like main priorities to make something significant in the world and in the period of time you are living. Therefore, she recreates her life from her early childhood until her last day in the White House as a continuum growing up and learning process. In this view, with the aim of organizing this long and inspiring autobiographical writing, we will focus on some interesting themes she emphasizes taking into account her Self and her relationships with the Others.

#### 3.1. Early and late Childhood: Connections with family and classmates

It is already known that childhood is a vital phase for every single child. This is the period when the first friendships are developed and there is a higher physical connection with parents and siblings since they usually live with them in the same space: “I was just a kid, a girl with Barbies and blocks, with two parents and an older brother...My family was my world, the center of everything. My mother taught me how to read early, walking me to the public library, sitting with me as I sounded out words on a page.” (2018:4). As we can observe, the mother influences her and starts a close connection by giving her the opportunity of reading as the first step towards the discovery of herself and the others, as a powerful tool for her future. Besides, she talks about the importance of speaking in a calm atmosphere with parents that act like guides but never impose or force you to anything. In this way, she recreates how the conversations were at home:

As we grow, we spoke more about drugs and sex and life choices, about race and inequality and politics. My parents didn’t expect us to be saints. My father, I remember, made a point of saying that sex was and should be fun. They also never sugarcoated what they took to be the harder truths about life...The color of our skin made us vulnerable. It was a thing we’d always have to navigate (2018:25).

Readers can observe the grade of confidence they have among them as a close and loving family who support themselves and how children are conscious about the race struggle in the United States of America. These powerful lessons that go from parents to children are essential to “prepare” them to be better 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens.

Apart from parents, in many cases, grandmothers play a crucial role in their grandchildren’s education and behaviour. Michelle narrates an interesting episode of connection with her:

She cooked his meals (her husband) and absorbed his barrage of complaints and said nothing in her own defense. Even at a young age, there was something about my grandmother’s silence and passivity in her relationship with Dandy that got under my skin...it drove me crazy that my grandmother wouldn’t speak up for herself...Don’t be mean to Grandma” (2018:37).

In this example, readers can observe a non-positive connection since she thinks her grandma should use her own voice and say stop to be respected by her husband. This teaching will be a top priority along her life, not to be silenced, not to let others (especially minorities) be silenced.

Taking into account her relationships with others of her same age and at school, she points out two meaningful moments. On the one hand, when she cannot pronounce the word “white” and the following day her teacher said “no” to try it again (2018:19). This was the beginning of a non-easy life with many negative responses transforming into “Go on”, “I can”. On the other hand, she narrates in this way an incident that took place when she was ten with a cousin of hers:

how come you talk like a little girl?...I don't, I said...I did speak differently than some of my relatives, and so did Craig. Our parents had drilled into the importance of using proper diction...The idea was we were to transcend, to get ourselves further. They'd planned for it. They encouraged it. We were expected not just to be smart but to own our smartness- to inhabit it with pride-and this filtered down to how we spoke...Everyone seemed to fit in, except for me...I also realize that I was a long way, still, from finding my own voice (2018:40-41).

To sum up, the relationship and the connection with her parents is decisive: “I'm not raising babies, she'd tell us. I'm raising adults. She and my dad offered guidelines rather than rules” (2018:47) from her childhood until now since she lives in a continuum growing up trying to look for herself for her own voice, thinking big and positive and trying to connect with others.

### 3.2. University times, first jobs and the first encounter with her Other

“I'm not sure” she said, giving me a perfunctory, patronizing smile, “that you're Princeton material” (2018:66). These are the words a teacher told Michelle about her intention to study in Princeton. “She was telling me to lower my sights, which was absolute reverse of every last thing my parents had told me” (2018:66). Again, she decides to raise her voice as her parents allowed her. At this point, she continues the narration from a current perspective:

I've been lucky enough now in my life to meet all sorts of extraordinary and accomplished people- world leaders, inventors, musicians, astronauts, athletes, professors, entrepreneurs, artists and writers, pioneering doctors and researchers. Some (though not enough) of them were women. Some (though not enough) are black or of color...What I've learned is this: All of them had doubters” (2018:66).

Here, we observe how the connections with others have made her stronger, braver and more self-confident. Finally, she got the admission for Princeton. She kept going with her education while trying to connect with new people, different from the Chicago ones. She shared room with white girls who were nice but they weren't close friends. Indeed, Michelle thinks it was her fault for trying to look after her excessively not to feel bad for not belonging. Another case was Cathy's mother who felt shame that her daughter had shared room with a black girl (2018:75). She was learning, trying to find herself: “I was learning all the time now. I was learning...how to think critically” (2018:78). All these experiences and contacts with others help her develop her professional and personal sides to keep on growing up and learning how to empathise because “there are simply other ways of being” (2018:81).

After many refusals and rejections, her own effort, discipline and work prevail and she arrives to an important point in her life, a black girl born in the South Side Chicago from a working class family who:

...saw myself as smart, analytical and ambitious. I'd been raised on feisty dinner-table debates with my parents...You live, as you always have, by the code of effort/result, and with it you keep achieving until you think you know the answers to all the questions-including the most important one. *Am I good enough? Yes, in fact I am* (2018:91-92).

This is essential, the personal approval, and the acceptance of herself with her good and negative aspects: an African American working class woman who still tries to connect. The next connection she portrays is especially significant: “Like you, he's black and from Harvard” (2018:93). This relationship began like a journey of discovery: “Barack Hussein Obama- and the complicated rubric of his identity. He was black and white, African and American” (2018:101). It is interesting to underline the fact that Michelle is all the time expressing the importance of learning from others, and this is the case with Barack, too: “Barack intrigued me...he seemed so secure. He was openly affectionate... He made me feel good...His money went largely toward books (2018:112). This is, without any doubt, a special connection that provokes a major change in Michelle's life: “It was as close as I'd come to understanding what motivated Barack. The world as it should be” (2018:118). This last one is another recurrent motif along the narrative, the idea of working hard to build the world as it should be not as it actually is.

### 3.3 Working Woman, Mother and First Lady

Michelle defines herself as a working mum and expresses the difficulties to find an adequate balance. This fact is reflected from her times in law firms and Health Service until her last days in the White House. Although she was a very good lawyer and she had a good job, she feels she needed something more, something where she could help the others, something where she could connect even more:

I was interested in possibly working for a foundation or a non-profit. I was interested in helping unprivileged kids. I wondered if I could find a job that engaged my mind and still left me enough time

to do volunteer work, or appreciate art, or have children. I wanted a life, basically. I wanted to feel whole. I made a list of issues that interested me: education, teen pregnancy, black self-esteem (2018:133).

Apart from job matters, she also starts to think critically about a marriage with Barack and like an ordinary working woman who wants to promote professionally and personally, many questions arise in her head: "I do recognize the value of individuals having their own interests, ambitions, and dreams...But I don't believe that the pursuit of one person's dreams should come at the expense of the couple" (2018:140). At that point, she reflects about the situation and how she should face the marriage and her future as a working and professional woman, without being the wife of Barack. A year before the wedding, she loses one of her most powerful connections, her father: "I felt certain that I had something more to offer the world. It was time to make a move" (2018:146). Readers can observe here how important the connections are in life since they provoke deep changes in our mindset. In her new professional side she met Susan and Valerie, another striking connection that empowers herself:

These were women who knew their own voices and were unafraid to use them... Also, importantly, they were working moms...They weren't striving for perfect, but managed somehow to be always excellent...They'd dropped any masquerade and were just wonderfully, powerfully, and instructively themselves (2018:168-169).

She pays special attention to the fact they are able and proud of using their own voice. They express their own ideas, although they are in a room full of men. They are enthusiastic and try to do their best every day to contribute to get a fairer world, a world like Barack had projected on his mind: a world as it should be. In her own way, Michelle was also contributed: "For the first time in my life, really, I felt I was doing something immediately meaningful, directly impacting the lives of others while also staying connected to both my city and my culture" (2018:180). Therefore, these connections make a deep impact in her professional and personal life.

In addition to her professional profile, she wanted to become a mother, like Susan and Valerie. However, at the beginning another "no" came: "Fertility is not something you conquer. Rather maddeningly, there's no straight line between effort and reward" (2018: 187). In this part, she wants to share her story trying to get pregnant, the doubts, the fears and the insecurities this process provoked on her mind and body. She was black, she was a woman, she was about to be the first black first lady but like many women in the world she was trying to become, she was trying to be a mom, a working mom. She had miscarriages; she doesn't want to silence the emptiness a woman feels when she thinks she cannot be a mom. It is something you do not choose. It is something that affects the woman psychologically and physically. Besides, she wants to give voice to women who need an "in vitro" treatment and all the changes she must face:

...or maybe I was just feeling the acute burden of being female. Either way, he was gone and I was here, carrying the responsibility. I sensed already that the sacrifices would be more mine than his. In the weeks to come, he'd go about his regular business while I went in for daily ultrasounds to monitor my eggs. He wouldn't have his blood drawn. He wouldn't have to cancel any meetings to have a cervix inspection. He was doting and invested, my husband, doing what he could do...None of this was his fault, but it wasn't equal, either, and for any woman who lives by the mantra that equality is important, this can be a little confusing. It was me who'd alter everything, putting my passions and career dreams on hold, to fulfil this piece of our dream. I found myself in a small moment of reckoning. Did I want it? Yes, I wanted it so much. And with this, I hoisted the needle and sank into my flesh (2018:189).

The previous paragraph is a vivid description of how a feminist and empowered professional woman feels about the difficulties of being pregnant, a couple's objective but with more female sacrifice. Again, she has the desire of giving voice to all women that have lived or are living these problems trying to send the message that they are not alone. Motherhood is not an easy issue for nobody, especially for women. When you get your dream: "Motherhood became my motivator. It dictates my movements, my decisions, the rhythm of every day" (2018:191). At that time, there is the dilemma of combining family and work, the so-called family conciliation. And, in this case, family, work and politics.

Politics start to occupy a major space in the family. However, Michelle does not want her daughters to suffer the consequences of the hard work of their father: "I didn't want them ever to believe that life began when the man of the house arrived home. We didn't wait for Dad. It was his job to catch up with us" (2018:207). Like a lot of mums in the world, she is not an exception, she tries to maintain the stability in the family, providing girls with adequate timetables, school routines, just a normal life. She narrates how difficult it is when politics involved everything, even more, when your family live in the White House. At the beginning, she had doubts; she had suffered from ethnic and gender discrimination. However, she was an educated woman who knew that discipline, hard work and effort can make the difference. "Who were we? What mattered to us? What could we do?... the possibility that Barack could be the kind of president who helped make life better for millions of people? I said yes because I loved him and had faith in what he could do" (2018:226). From now onwards, Michelle became an important support for her husband campaign:

Let me tell you about me. I'm Michelle Obama, raised on the South Side of Chicago, in a little apartment on the top floor of a two-story house that felt a lot like this one. My dad was a water-pump operator for the city. My mom stayed at home to raise my brother and me (2018:236).

She wanted to help him, to support him, but not being just the wife of Barack Obama. She wanted to be Michelle Robinson: "When I spoke to reporters, they rarely asked about my work" (2018:241). She highlights that nobody should lose his/her identity and individuality. She wanted to make significant things to improve others' lives; she was still interested in connecting. In fact, from her position as a First Lady, she could connect with people from different origins, with different worries, men, women and children. All of them with their own stories and voices that deserve to be listened and encouraged. She was eager to start this special "job" but she knew it was not easy: "Nobody who has the words "first" and "black" attached to them ever would. I stood at the foot of the mountain, knowing I'd need to climb my way into favour...*Am good enough? Yes I am*" (2018:284). From her childhood, everything had been a kind of obstacles race and now she feels energetic and confident to transforming the "no" in "go on", again.

As it has been already said, the fact of being First Lady of the United States of America gives you the opportunity of meeting people practically every day. Michelle underlines the importance of every single person because all are human beings. Among famous people, she stands out the figure of the Queen of England and how her humanity and "ordinariness" surprised her: "These shoes are unpleasant, are they not?, she said. Forget that she sometimes wore a diamond crown and that I'd flown to London on the presidential jet; we were just two tired ladies oppressed by our shoes" (2018:318). Moreover, Nelson Mandela became a noticeable connection for her. She felt especially connected to that man who had never left his ideals behind, even in prison, she insisted on this deep connection based on dignity, honesty and affection: "There was no one alive who'd had a more meaningful impact on the world than Nelson Mandela had, at least by my measure" (2018:368).

In her role as First Lady, she wanted to approach not only to the famous Other but also to the anonymous Other. In this way, she was a defendant of education as the key for success. Therefore, she visited schools and paid special attention to girls' education:

You had only to look around at their faces in the room to know that despite their strengths these girls would need to work hard to be seen...They'd need to fight the invisibility that comes with being poor, female, and of color. They'd have to work to find their voices and not be diminished, to keep themselves from getting beaten down. They would have to work just to learn.

But their faces were hopeful, and now so was I. For me it was a strange, quiet revelation: They were me, as I'd once been...Are you good enough? Yes, you are, all of you. (2018:319-320).

She wanted to help these girls to find their own voices, to work in favour of non-discrimination and respect. She pursued the goal of supporting those girls in the hard path of being themselves. She felt identified with them and she knew she could give her example to transform the "no" into "Let's go". She was sure she had doubts but they had to be strong and brave enough to raise her voice and shout they were good enough, for sure. This is, probably, one of the most exciting connections, with girls like her, black and female. She wanted to send them a real message: the First Lady was once like them. Education was her top priority: "Education had been the primary instrument of change in my own life, my lever upward in the world (2018:401).

I wasn't interested in ...appearing on Sunday morning news shows. Instead, I did interviews with health magazines...I hula-hooped on the South Lawn...talking about vegetables with Elmo... that was exactly the kind of work I liked...was a way to show my full self (2018:337-339).

Little by little, she was discovering her real passion: connections with others to know better herself and her role as a First Lady had clearly contributed on it. Apart from being a clothes or hairstyle example, Americans and the rest of citizens of the world could see a woman who worked, who had to take care and educate her children. This was the most important, being the light, a powerful light, not a simple companion for the president:

A First Lady's power is a curious thing-as soft and undefined as the role itself. And yet I was learning to harness it. I had no executive authority. I didn't command troops or engage in formal diplomacy. Tradition called for me to provide a kind of gentle light, flattering the president with my devotion...I was beginning to see...the light was more powerful than that...a black First Lady, a professional woman, a mother of young kids...they also had to see me in the context of where I was and why...I was learning how to connect my message to my image (2018:372).

In conclusion, Michelle is convinced about the power of literature and writing to provoke the change, to make a deep impact on society and especially on minorities like black poor girls. Through all the themes we have commented in this section, she expresses herself using her own voice transforming "no's" into "Let's go" and opportunities to connect with herself and with others.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Aristotle already said that we are social human beings, live in communities and get involved in all the inherent aspects of a society. Human beings have their own origins in an individual way but they are still part of a whole group. In this sense, problems can arise due to differences among them. Phillis Wheatley, Old Elizabeth, Janet

Mock, Chiamamanda Ngozi Adichie and Michelle Robinson share the traits of being black and female and of being part of a community where they had the opportunity to establish connections, positive and negative but all of them learning connections. At this point, a learning connection could be depicted as a link among different people who try to transform differences into knowledgeable experiences and into paths to reach their own identity and voice.

These connections, for the women quoted before, had made a real and profound impact in their lives in the construction of their own identities and voices. For example, Michelle's parents supported her and gave her guidelines to keep on with her perseverance so as to fight for her ideals. She wanted to share her story with her connections; she pretended to show her real side: "For me, the South Side was something entirely different from what got shown on TV. It was home...Home was my past, connected by gossamer threads to where I was now" (2018:85). Furthermore, these connections have helped her to be more confident and have increased her grade of self-esteem:

The important parts of my story...and the people who'd helped build my confidence over time. I remembered them all, every person who'd ever waved me forward, doing his or her best to inoculate me against the slights and indignities I was certain to encounter in the places I was headed- all those environments built primarily for and by people who were neither black nor female (2018:355).

Therefore, literature and especially the autobiographical writing let women like Michelle make her voice aloud and give a necessary example for future generations, especially of black girls. This kind of writing lets us discover the truthful side of women like suffer from discrimination but never stop learning, discovering and thinking. Connections are everywhere and help us build ourselves individually and socially. The important thing is to take advantage of them as learning stones where growing up never ends.

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