

# Zora Neale Hurston: An exemplar of the Intersectionality of Black Womanhood, Professionalism, and Artistic Talent

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3 PM University Center 208

*The perennial work of Zora Neale Hurston is a grand model for women of color to exemplify. Her intersectionality of being an HBCU graduate and sorority member resonates in our lives and informs our individual talents and professional development as women.*

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**DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PEMBROKE

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*~ Zora Neale Hurston ~  
An Exemplar of the Intersectionality  
of Black Womanhood,  
Professionalism, and Artistic Talent*

Authentic Self

Education and  
Profession

Literary Talent

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# Authentic Self

“I belong to no race nor time. I am the eternal feminine with its string of beads.”

A decorative border composed of a repeating pattern of small triangles in various colors (red, green, purple, blue, pink, white) arranged in a zig-zag pattern around the perimeter of the page. The central area is a solid blue rectangle.

# Education

## Zora Neale Hurston: The Howard University Years

- She attended Howard University from 1919 to 1924;
- Zeta Phi Beta Sorority
- Received an associate degree in 1924.
- 1925 won a scholarship to Barnard College, where she studied anthropology under Franz Boas. She graduated from Barnard in 1928 with a bachelor of arts degree and for two years pursued graduate studies in anthropology at Columbia University.



# A moment about sorority

<http://zphib1920.org/our-history/>

<https://stateofhbcus.wordpress.com/2011/07/20/zora-neale-hurston-the-howard-university-years/>

The image features a central blue rectangular area with the word "Professionalism" written in a white, serif font. This central area is framed by a decorative border composed of a repeating pattern of small, colorful triangles in shades of purple, teal, pink, and white, set against a black background.

# Professionalism



# Afro-Centric HBCU Professor

- Throughout her life, Hurston, dedicated herself to promoting and studying black culture.
- Hurston often incorporated her research into her fictional writing.
- She dedicated her life to educating others about the arts. In 1934, she established a school of dramatic arts at Bethune-Cookman College.
- Five years later she worked as a drama teacher at the North Carolina College for Negroes at Durham.



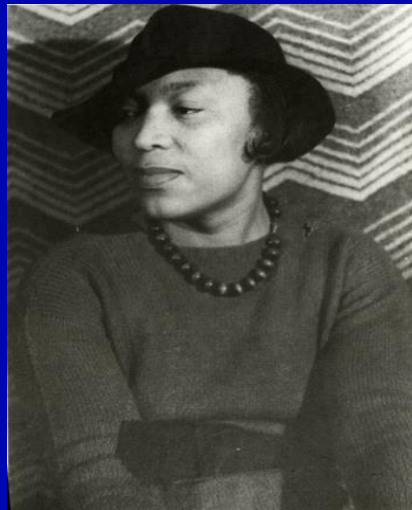
Zora Neale Hurston "How It Feels to Be Colored Me" (1928)

"I am not tragically colored. I do not belong to the sobbing school of Negrohood who hold that nature somehow has given them a low-down dirty deal and whose feelings are all hurt about it."

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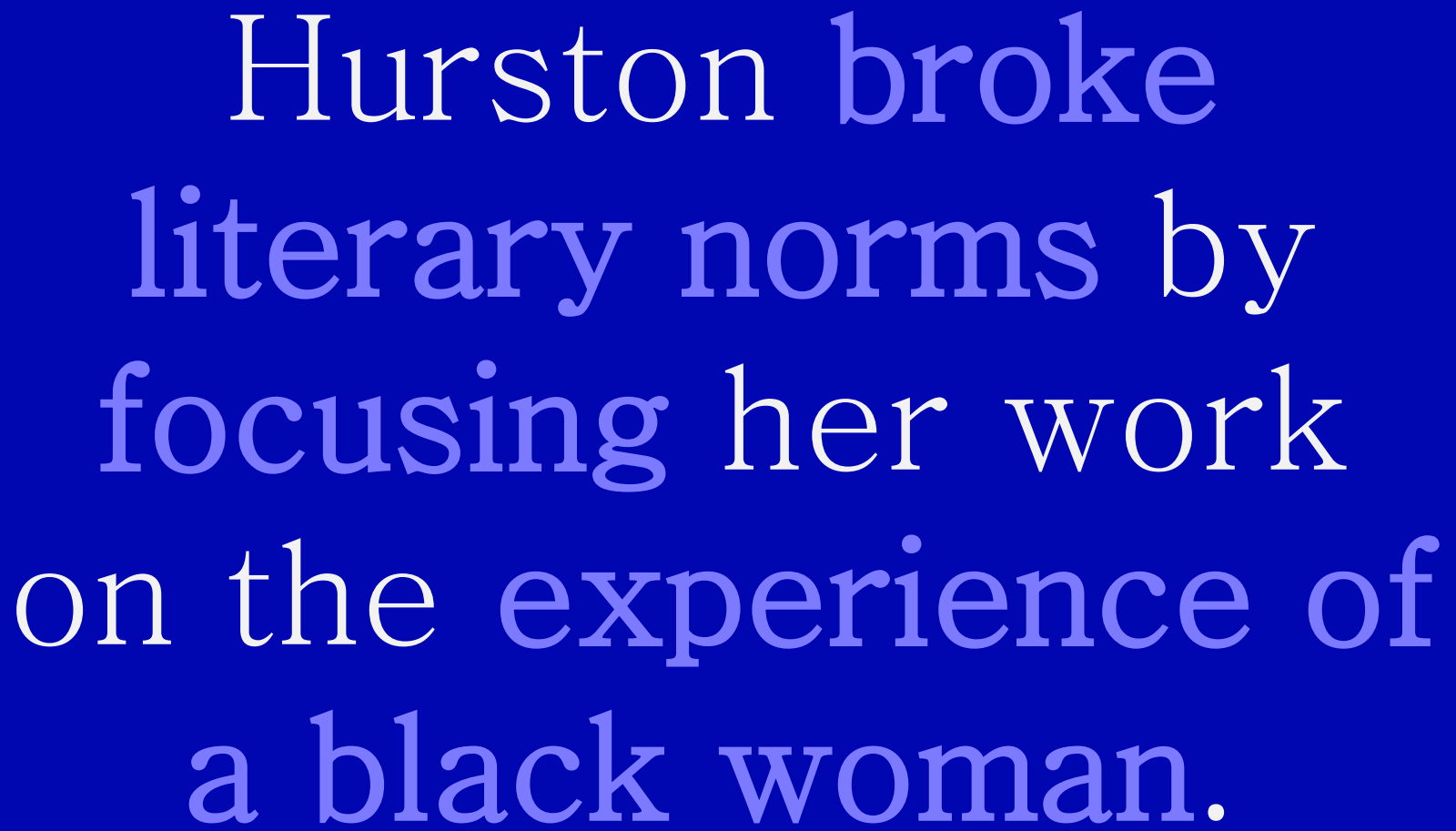
# Artistry – Literary Talent

[https://www.floridamemory.com/onlineclassroom/zora\\_hurston/photos/](https://www.floridamemory.com/onlineclassroom/zora_hurston/photos/)



# “Queen of the Harlem Renaissance”

- She has historical significance for her research, her craft, and creativity.
- <https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=c3R1ZGVudC5iY3Nkbmkub3JnfG1yLWFsYmFuby1ob21lcGFnZXxneDo2MmNhNTJhNGM4OWI0YTY3>
- <http://infactcollaborative.com/people/facts-about-zora-neale-hurston.html>
- Among her contemporaries, she always “kept it real”.  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/22/books/review/miss-anne-in-harlem-by-carla-kaplan.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/22/books/review/miss-anne-in-harlem-by-carla-kaplan.html?_r=0)

A decorative border composed of a repeating pattern of small, colorful triangles in shades of red, green, purple, blue, and white, arranged in a zig-zag or chevron pattern around the central text area.

Hurston broke  
literary norms by  
focusing her work  
on the experience of  
a black woman.



# Professionalism and Artistry

“I want a busy life, a just mind,  
and a timely death.”



# Intersectionality at its best...

<http://www.youbelongtome.net/>



# *“Paramour Rights”*

- <https://beta.worldcat.org/archivegrid/data/50750945>
- <https://www.amazon.com/Zora-Hurston-Strange-Case-McCollum/dp/0982094043>
- <https://www.amazon.com/Silencing-Ruby-McCollum-Class-Gender/dp/0813029732>
- <http://chicagodefender.com/2016/03/23/the-strange-case-of-ruby-mccollum/>
- <http://www.library.ufl.edu/spec/manuscript/guides/mccollum.htm>

# *"Paramour Rights"*

"Paramour Rights" refers to the assumption that white men have a "right" to use Black women for sex regardless of whether or not they are willing, or married to someone else. Back in slavery times, Black women were the sexual property of white slave owners. After the Civil War, that attitude continued. At the time of Ruby's trial, many white men who have some position of economic, social, or judicial power over a Black woman assume their power includes "Paramour Rights".

# Murder Trial of Ruby McCollum

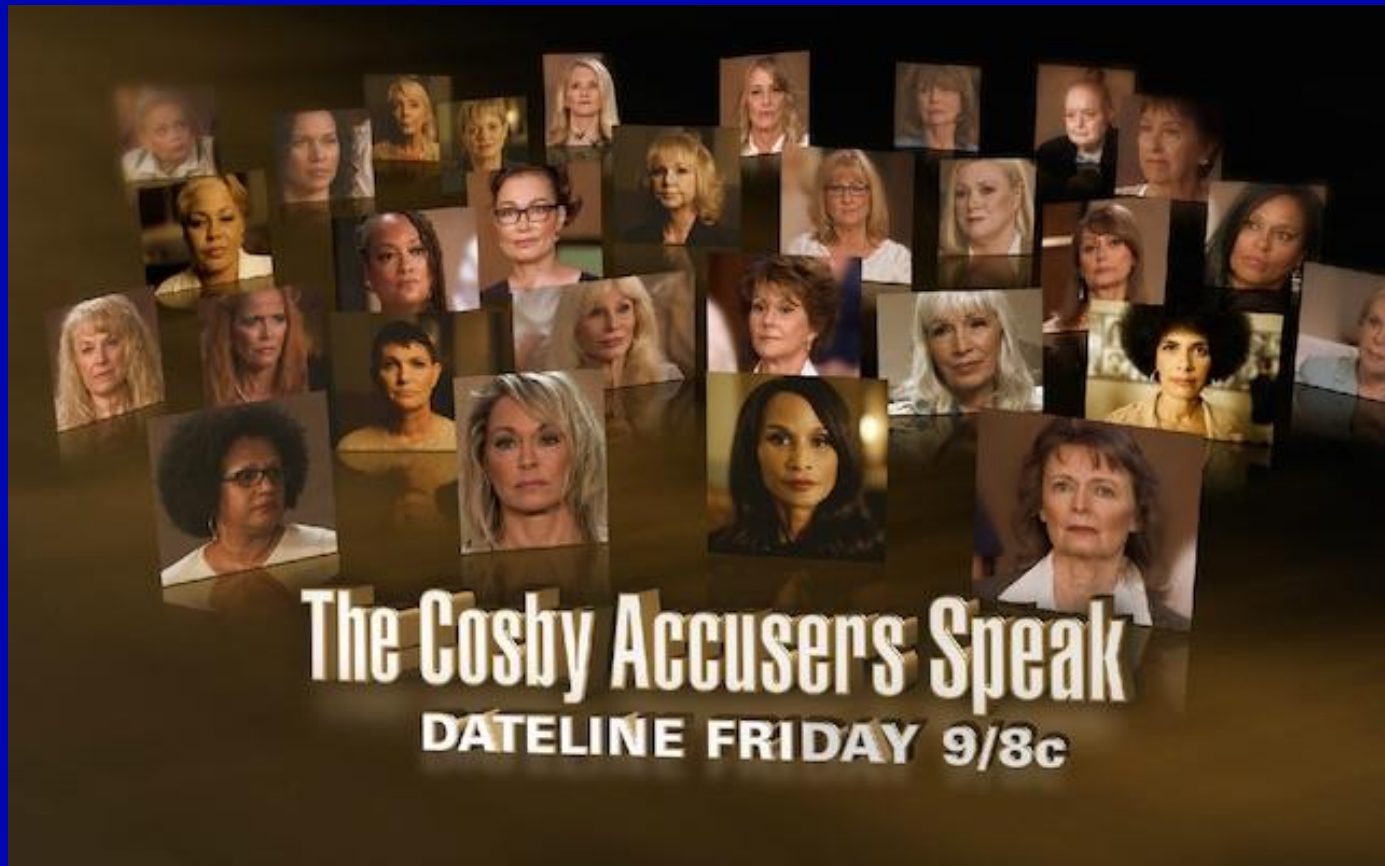
Back in 1952, Ruby McCollum, a Black woman, shot her white doctor who was also a prominent politician. At her 1954 trial in Live Oak FL — a small town half way between Jacksonville and Tallahassee — she testifies that he raped her and forced her to bear his child. And that he continued to force sex on her, and that she was pregnant with his second child at the time of the murder. She also testifies that her husband had threatened to kill her if she bore another child by the doctor, and the doctor had threatened to kill her if she had an abortion. Her trial is covered by Zora Neal Hurston for the *Pittsburgh Courier* and William Bradford Huie later writes a book about the case. Through her testimony, McCollum publicly exposes the southern practice of what Hurston calls "Paramour Rights."

# The end of paramour rights?

This practice is known in southern white communities who, through their silence, condone it. When McCollum testifies in her 1954 trial that her doctor had forced her to bear his child, and then threatened to kill her if she refused to bear him a second child, she exposes the practice and forces the community to admit what they have known all along.

The judge in the 1954 murder trial is a close friend and pall-bearer of the white doctor. Ruby McCollum is convicted and sentenced to death. The conviction is later overturned by the Florida Supreme Court. Rather than retry her — which would raise the "Paramour Rights" issue again — a court declares her "insane" and incarcerates her for many years in a mental institution.

In our time...





# In our time...



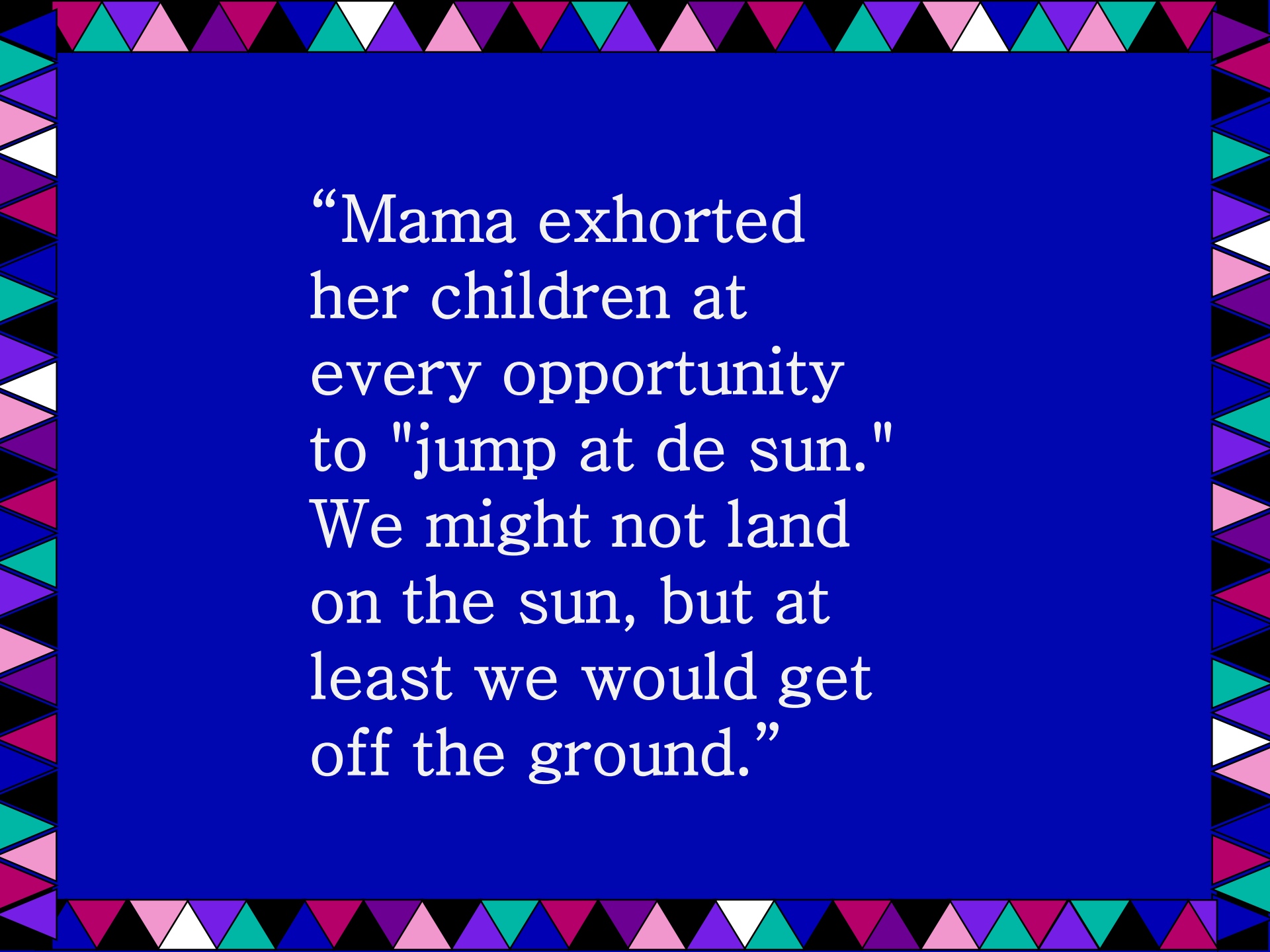
The image features a central blue rectangular area with the text "In YOUR time..." written in white. This central area is framed by a decorative border consisting of a repeating pattern of small, colorful triangles in shades of purple, teal, pink, and white, set against a dark blue background.

In YOUR time...

## Embracing herself – as is – rather than “Becoming”

- (handout); You?
- Why did she choose anthropology? You?
- What is your Authentic Self?
- What is your Talent?
- What is your (pre)Professional development?



A decorative border of colorful triangles (red, green, purple, blue, pink, black) surrounds the text. The text is centered on a dark blue background.

“Mama exhorted  
her children at  
every opportunity  
to "jump at de sun."  
We might not land  
on the sun, but at  
least we would get  
off the ground.”





Thank you.

My wish for you is that **you**, like  
Zora, (and sorors/sisters), like  
me, like other women of color...  
**“get off the ground”**.