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In New Memoir, African-American Muslim Woman Living in South Africa Reflects on the Meaning of “Home”

Using an unconventional mix of poetry, essays, and short stories, in Khayalami: My Home author Ruqayyah K. Muhammad discusses creating a home, and a life, at the intersection of multiple identities.

(Photos available from www.deeprootsbooks.com/press-kit or from info@deeprootsbooks.com.)

June 2018/Boksburg, South Africa. African American. Woman. Muslim. Expatriate from the United States of America to South Africa. These are just a few of the identities that author Ruqayyah K. Muhammad inhabits as she builds a home, and a life, for herself and her family in her new country of South Africa. As the subtitle of her newly published memoir Khayalami: My Home suggests: *it's complicated*.

The author simplifies the complicated subject matter by approaching it through multiple mediums—including poetry, essays and short stories—and by breaking it down into five sections which reflect different dimensions of life.

The first part of the book, titled “Love Story,” discusses different aspects of love, including romantic love, motherly love, friendship, and heartbreak. The author also takes us through her own love story and how she came to live in South Africa and marry to a Zulu-speaking citizen of the country.

In the next part, titled “These Good Old Days,” about motherhood and family life, the author takes us through her transition from a college student on track to attend graduate school and enter a high-powered career to becoming a full-time wife and mother in a foreign land. In addition to expressing the joy she finds in motherhood, she also reflects on her struggles to embrace her newly chosen life.

The third part is titled “The Bottom of the World.” In this section, the author puts her political science degree to use and reflects on various public aspects of both South Africa and the USA. She explores connections between her birth and adopted homes on multiple levels including political leadership, newly emergent grass-roots political activism, and more subtle experiential and emotional connections between Africans living on the continent and those of the diaspora.

The following part, titled “Ellipses” is an exploration of grief, loss and transitions. In this poignant section, the author reflects on different forms of loss whether it be the physical loss of a parent, sibling, spouse or child or the psychic loss of one’s dreams or self-concept.

The final part of the book is titled “Magic Hour” and is a meditation on spirituality and self-awareness. The author shines light on the role of her chosen religion and spiritual path in her life and on her journey towards knowledge of self.

This varied approach ensures that nearly every reader will find something of interest in the book. “Although my specific biography may be somewhat unique, the need and desire to

create home is universal,” says Muhammad. “The title of the book ‘Khayalami’ means ‘my home’ in Zulu and my hope is that Khayalami will contribute to the reader’s understanding of home as a state of being rather than a place. Because when you understand home as any space—whether physical, emotional, or spiritual—where you feel loved, nurtured, protected, and accepted, it broadens the parameters of what home can be and therefore expands our own lives.”

Author Ruqayyah K. Muhammad is an African-American Muslim wife, mother, and writer who has resided in South Africa since 2004. She lives in Dawn Park (a suburb of Johannesburg) with her husband and their three children. Her work has appeared in publications such as *The Muslim Journal*, *Azizah Magazine*, and *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*. Khayalami is her first book.

Khayalami is the premier title of the author’s own publishing company Deep Roots Books, which plans to expand to other authors and genres including children’s, young adult, and adult fiction and non-fiction. Khayalami is available from Amazon.com, in the Kindle Store, and at bookstores worldwide. Visit www.DeepRootsBooks.com for more information about the book and author.

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CONTACT: +27 82-454-0223 or info@deeprrootsbooks.com