

To be a Feminist is (1994)

by Micere Githae Mugo

In an effort to liberate the concept of feminism from abduction by Western bourgeois appropriators and in the spirit of naming the essence, rather than simply peeling off the label.

To be a Feminist is

For me

to be a feminist is

to embrace by womanness
the womanness of
all my mothers
all my sisters
it is
to hug the female principle
and the metaphors of life
that decorate my being

To be a Feminist is

For me

to be a feminist is

to celebrate my birth
as a girl
to ululate the my gender
is female
it is
to make contact
with my being.

To be a Feminist is

For me

to be a feminist is

to denounce patriarchy
and the caging of women
it is
to wipe the fuzziness
of colonial hangers
to uproot the weeds

of neo-colonial pestilence.

To be a Feminist is

For me

to be a feminist is

to hurl
through the cannon
of my exploding
righteous fury
the cannibal
named capitalism
it is
to pronounce
a death sentence
on the ogre
named imperialism.

To be a Feminist is

For me

to be a feminist is

to unhood racism
to decry zionism
to detonate apartheid
to obliterate "tribalism"
it is
to necklace homophobia
to drown fanaticism
to strangulate classism
to fumigate ethnic cleansing.

To be a Feminist is

For me

to be a feminist is

to speak out loud
to articulate my name
to assert that I am
to declare that woman is
it is
to water my fertility
it is
to converse with my soul.

To be a Feminist is

For me

to be a feminist is

to burst all non-space

between the bedroom
and the kitchen
of my life
it is
to grow wings
and fly
to unlimited heights
it is
to ride the sun
of my visions.

To be a Feminist is

For me
to be a feminist is
to celebrate my mother
to poetize my sisters
to message their failures
it is
to savour their intellect
to drink their feelings
and to embrace
their achievements.

To be a Feminist is

For me
to be a feminist is
to curdle by children's hopes
to infuse their veins
with the spirit
of never-say-die
it is
to fan their wind
of resistance
to stroke them
with optimism
it is
to give them
to humanity.

To be a Feminist is

For me
to be a feminist is
to have dialogue
with my father
and my brother
to invite their partnership
as fellow guerillas

it is
to march with them
to the war-torn zone
of Afrikana survival
it is
to jointly raise with them
the victory salute.

To be a Feminist is

For me

to be a feminist is

to part ways
with the bulging haves
to merge paths
with the stricken have-nots
it is
to know that
deprivation consumes
it is
to see that
overeating constipates
it is
to level mountains
of obnoxious accumulation
it is
to rain upon deserts
of annihilating nothingness.

To be a Feminist is

For me

to be a feminist is

to breathe the air
of unpolluted peoplehood
and to sing
in harmony with nature
it is
to touch
the soft earth
it is
to speak
with the unknown
it is
to walk this life
it is
to hold up the sky.

To be a Feminist is

For me
to be a feminist is
to unseat domination
and forge a rock
out of powerlessness
it is
to shake hands
with people's struggles
it is
to disempower
superpower arrogance
it is
to conceive and deliver
a human world.

To be a Feminist is

For me
to be a feminist is
to be me
an Afrikan woman
all Afrikana women
and all who have walked
their path of thorns
it is
to know her story
word for word
it is
to look history
in the face
and declare
that I am
because woman is.

To be a Feminist is

For me
to be a feminist is
to be the mother
of my daughters
it is
to be the daughter
of my mother
it is
to be more than
a survivor
it is to be a creator
it is
to be a woman.

To be a Feminist is