

Comparison Will Steal Your Joy

As a child my mother had a strict rule about basing wants on comparison. She would always say;

“Never desire something just because someone else has it. Comparison will steal your joy.”

Of course as a child this went right over my head. To tell you the truth I didn't give it much thought until I became an adult and a mother myself. It wasn't until then that I found myself repeating these same words to my own children.

“Baby comparison is the thief of joy? Don't get in the habit of wanting what others have.” I'd explain. For the most part I'm sure it goes in one ear and out the other, just as it did with me when I was a child. Nonetheless I'll keep reiterating it, mainly because it's a concept that has stuck with me, one that I also hope sticks with them.

In *Across The Sands* Awa Camara longs for a life of unpredictability and adventure. However as can be the case; life will deal you some cards that you may be more than willing to throw back. Betrothed to the son of Mali's Musa(King) Awa feels forced into a life that will be predictable and absent of adventure. If Awa could have things her way she would have been born a boy like her brother Mahmaudou. Awa believes that this is the only way that she would be able to fulfill her dream of traveling on a caravan. She completely ignores the possibility that life as a Princess could also hold adventure. Comparing her circumstance to Mahmaudou's does nothing to improve her feelings towards the matter, but I guess comparing ourselves to others is just one of those things that we all find ourselves doing at some point or the other.

A few days ago a friend and I attended a BYOB painting class. It was a great outing that reminded me of how comparison can steal your joy. As the class began we were given templates and the instructor lead us through the steps required to create our paintings. As I began painting I found it difficult to keep my lines delicate and thin. I also started to realize that my masterpiece looked very different from the instructors. As a matter of fact it varied greatly from my friend's as well as everyone else's in the class. I was beginning to get dismayed but then my mother's words began echoing loudly. Why was I comparing my skill to anyone else's? I was there to have a good time. I decided that I would do my best to create a meaningful and worthy

piece. I completed my painting, and it wasn't as neat and it sure didn't look like the instructors, but it reflected my dedication, my spirit and I was proud of it.

The whole experience reinforced why it is so pointless to make comparisons when it comes to self accomplishments and fulfillment. It's something Awa learns in *Across The Sands* and something I've been learning and re-learning since I was a child.

Day to day fulfillment in life is mainly a product of your approach. So next time you find yourself ready to compare your experiences and life goals to someone else's, do yourself a favor and re-focus that energy. Instead utilize that time and space to value your own experiences; the good and the bad, the happy and the sad; because once woven together these create the masterpiece that makes you uniquely and splendidly you.

