

Almost Me: Reflections and Responses to Writing About Miscarriage and Postpartum Depression as A Muslim Woman in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Almost Me, an autobiographical account of my journey through miscarriage and postpartum depression was published in 2020. Reflecting on the seven-year writing journey, the book represents the processing of grief through writing. As a cathartic release through the journey of writing, this chapter offers an autoethnographic reflection on the process of writing, publishing and its role in my response to grief since. It locates itself within the Muslim community in South Africa, which heralds motherhood as a cornerstone of identity, such that conversations around miscarriage or postpartum depression are quite rare. Based on the publication of the book which sparked conversation around these usually silent subjects, the chapter explores reactions and responses to the book from readers. This autoethnographic study, based on personal narratives as well as responses from readers underscores the role of writing and reading while grieving the loss of a baby as well as the loss of one's identity as one enters motherhood. This is particularly nuanced by the cultural and societal expectations that are placed on Muslim women in South Africa.

Keywords: grief, miscarriage, Muslim postpartum depression, South Africa