

Bella Brom - Cape Town



My memories as a young girl are not always happy ones. I had three things 'against' being my authentic self. I was female, Jewish, and white. These three issues made me aware of "how to behave" because I represented at least one of them if not all. One of my early memories:

My father's African driver used to come and fetch me from school. I loved his big smile, white teeth, and happy greeting. "Hi, Miss Bella; how are you doing today?" He would open the car's back door, and I used to hop in.

One day, I said: "Today, I want to sit in front, next to you!"

If his face could have turned white, that is what would have happened. He adamantly said, in a tone of almost anger, which I had never heard before. "No, Miss Bella, that is impossible!"

"Why not?" I innocently asked, "You are my friend; I am not the queen of England. I want to sit next to you."

"If you are my friend, you must understand me and sit at the back!"

"But why?" I insisted. His answer made no sense to me.

"Because I am black, and you are white!"

The little girl inside of me reacted, insulted. "once again, I am at fault, this time because I am white. But that is no fault of mine. That is how I was born. So why do I deserve to sit at the back?"