

MY DIVERSE & NATIVE LAND

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"My home and native land". The phrase sung by millions of Canadian students every morning while our anthem plays loudly carrying the ambition of creating a better world we will all be proud of, not only for our citizens, but also for those who come seeking refuge. Stories upon stories are written to explain the series of events as men, children and women begun to see our Northern land as more than just a land and more like a home. I was born into this country with the weight of living a better life on my shoulders, every day was a fight to live out the life that my parents intended for me to live when they moved to Canada. I found freedom in writing and learning about cultural and political events happening around me. In doing so my goal has been to make my new home land better for those that occupied it. In doing this, there has been a woman that has inspired me to continue in my pursuit. This woman has diverse influences with a desire to make Canada a better place for people of all races, cultures, social statuses, and genders in order to have their story heard. Michaëlle Jean is a woman that symbolizes the movement of freedom and diversity in the knowledge, for not just Women, French Canadians and Black Canadians but for all Canadians.

I remember falling in love with Michaëlle Jean at the tender age of 9 . The way that she carried herself with pride portrayed the pride I wanted to have someday. Not the pride in myself, but pride in Canada, and how aware and empowering it was for cultural minorities. Michaëlle Jean was born in Haiti on September 6th, 1957. She grew up in an educated environment with her father Robert and her mother Luce. Her father was the principal of a Protestant Preparatory School and allowed Jean to learn at home in order for her not to swear allegiance to the Haitian President François "Papa Doc" Duvalier.

This resistance to surrender to the regime played a key role in Jean's life when her father was tortured in 1965 and fled to Thetford Mines, Quebec, Canada in 1967. Her dad was left tormented by the pain and his violence tore apart their family; this led Jean, her sister and mother to move away to a small basement apartment in Little Burgundy. Jean attended the University of Montreal and gained a degree in Italian and Spanish, but went on to obtain a Master's in Comparative Literature which enabled her to travel to Perugia, Florence and Milan; which eventually enabled her to become fluent in French, Italian, Creole, Spanish and English). She has become an inspiration to many by merely acquiring those accreditations alone, but she has also become a beacon for women's rights and domestic violence advocacy.

Michaëlle Jean is not only a remarkable Canadian because she was an advocate, but because she went beyond speaking about it and instead took action. In 1986, Jean proceeded to conduct research on the lives of island women, providing her with recognition that eventually led to her becoming a vital voice for French Canadians on CBC as she would become the host of shows like *le Journal RDI*, *Virages* and eventually her own show called *Michaëlle*, where she addressed a wide range of current affairs and became the first black Canadian woman to have her own show on CBC. From then on it is known that she became Governor General of Canada where she touched not only my life, but the lives of many other Black-Canadian women as she embodied the desire to be represented more within our country, as she says; " believe in the power of ideas. I believe in empowering people ".

There are many key moments in history that outline the structure for Black Canadians to follow, but when it comes to pivotal moments in my life that encouraged me and many others to not just advocate for what we believe, but to do something about it. Whether it is by writing, researching, or learning; Michäelle Jean has been an example to not only black women, but all people to be a voice for others and to be active in our search in creating a more diverse and considerate 'home and native land'.

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