

## **Only**

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### **About the Work:**

In the poem "Only", the author takes us on a journey of her inner thoughts that are used to express feelings of apprehension, disregard, disillusionment, and hopelessness. This scenario is one example of many versions of the same story experienced over and over again by women and people of color in conference rooms across our nation.

### **About the Author:**

Sherrita Denson is a Strategic Planner who has worked with various non-profit, as well as for-profit organizations to help them develop creative action plans. Sherrita believes that the wisdom that is gained from intentional planning leads to understanding, peace, and goal achievement. Sherrita has worked with youth of all ages, with a specific passion for those that are at-risk. Her extensive involvement with non-profit organizations has allowed her to partner with community members as she works towards imparting strength and knowledge to those in need. Sherrita is pursuing a doctoral degree in Strategic Leadership from Southeastern University, preceded by an MBA and Bachelor's degree in Business Management from Saint Leo University.

## Only

Lights, camera, action!

Here I go again. Time for the show to start.

Big smile, bright eyes, soft voice, cheerful greeting.

"Hi, Tom! Good morning, Lisa! Sarah, how's your daughter doing? Love that tie, Bill!"

Laugh, laugh, laugh – smile.

Okay, find a seat. Oh, look at that. I've disappeared again. I guess I'll just read over the agenda.

I have an idea! I know what we can do!

Say it, say it, give them your idea.

Did they just dismiss my idea?

12 minutes later...Did he just rephrase my idea and present it as his own?

You know the image you get in your mind when an inflated balloon is released, but not yet tied? Yeah, that 's me. Sinking, sinking.

Follow that up with annoyance. No! Scratch that. Anger!

You better not show it. You better not say anything. Otherwise, you know what they'll call you.

But why can't I be angry?

He stole my idea and they are praising him for it! Yet, they dismissed the idea when I said it.

No, they didn't. They dismissed you...

You know, the more I enter these rooms, the more I realize they don't even hear me. Can you see me?

Guess what!?

I am angry and I am black. So what if I am an angry black woman. Why does that mean that I have to be The Angry Black Woman?

He did it. He set the tone. He created the definition, the label. You know him, the standard typical white man.

This is what he says about emotions:

Black Male = Aggressive

Black Female = The Angry Black Woman

White Female = Bitch

White Male = Passionate

But I digress.

"Great idea, Jim!", Phil says, as my mind returns from my disillusioned safe space, my little corner of peace where I can scream and yell and then give myself a pep talk to get back in the game.

Watch your face, nod your head, flash them a smile...

Because if you don't, they'll replace you with another Only black woman at their table.