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                                        The Real Face Behind the Mask

[The Mask You Live In](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3983674/) is a film produced by the Feminist film maker Jennifer Siebel Newsom. The film explores the way masculinity is perceived and teaches in the American society. The film is also composed of small clips with  boys and man who share their stories about how they were taught to act like a man or be a man. The part of the documentary that struck me was the scene of the middle school boys and the mentor where they wrote down on the paper the faces they present every day which are  happy, silly , and fun. But deep inside them these boys were angry, sad, and hurt. I connected to this particular scene as us women in the African culture woman have to wear different masks especially the masks, of toughness and happiness. I was born and raised in Ivory Coast a country located in West Africa. Women are raised in a differently than men. Women are responsible of the household tasks such as cooking , cleaning and childcare. The Ivorian women  have to stick to those role. Like in the film where men have be a man . Women have also to be women, act like women. I have two masks I live in: the mask of toughness and happiness while my real emotions are fear and sadness.

      First, the mask I live in is the mask of toughness. I was raised in the Ivorian culture where women are the pillar of the family. She is the one who takes care of everything in the house, men are only providers. The woman is responsible of educating the children, cooking, completing house shores, and making big decisions concerning the family. Every little girl are raise with that conception. Little girl are thought to be ready to leave the parents to get marry and be able to manage a house .When I got married at the age of 24 I taught to be ready to fulfill this expectation. Every morning when I woke up I act like a tough person ready to do face any obstacle , like in the film where every morning those boys have to prepared their mask how they are going to work to school. I am always going to my job, take care of the kids and house. The truth is right now, I am afraid ,I am scared. This modern life is not easy. I  find it difficult to follow this standard of being a good African women. It is hard . I need help to take care of the house. I found myself cleaning my house ten times a day just because we are taught that a house were the is a women has to always be clean in case somebody come visits. I always look serious. People always tell me that my facial expression is cold, that I don’t share my feelings. How can I you share my personal life if your not sure of what people real intentions are .We live in a society where everyday something bad happen and most of the time involving close friend or family member .Yes I am scare, yes I don’t trust anybody. I have trust people in the past and have been alone when I need help . Thus, like the boys in the Film I use a mask of toughness to hide my fear.

         The second mask I live in is the mask of happiness. I always smile ,help others but in reality I am sad. I am the one who needs  help. My friends always call me to ask for help or advice as they all call me the “ Mama”, They say that I give them wise advice but who is really there for me. I need a shoulder to cry or somebody to talk.  The film suggests boys do not have the support system to be a men. I feel the same way. For example I am going in a rough time in my life my parents stop talking to each other .My dad stops talking to me just because  he is no longer with his wife, my mom. What have I done to him? That the question I ask myself every single day and can find a reasonable answer. He just stops talking to me. When I see my husband play with our kids talking to them ,cherishing them, I am sad and even jealous because I am thinking of my dad. But I can’t show this sadness or jealousy because of the mask I wear , make everything look right and act like I am happy. I also wear the mask of happiness because I wanted to hide my personal story. Life is filled of all kind of events, happy, sad, stressful but I will never forget about that particular moment of my life where I developed that sense of grit. It was on February two thousand eleven during the war in Ivory Coast that my family decided to send me in the USA to continue my education. I left my country, and family to pursue the American dream . I left Ivory Coast with a lot of excitement, no more fear to be struck by a bullet. Yes the sound of the AK 47 gun were part of our daily routine. The rest of my family escaped in one of our neighbor country Ghana. I entered the USA border on Valentine’s Day, 2011, the next day they closed our border due to the extreme violence. The civil war started. My only state of mine was to succeed because they were no hope for a better life in Ivory Coast. My host family was nice at first until they started to use me as a maid. I was the cook house cleaner babysitter. Despite all the challenges I  faced I was still hoping to pursue my education. My host family wasn’t helping to find a school. It was hard to find information because I couldn’t speak one word in English.

          On December 2012 on a snowing day I became homeless. They just put me outside because I was asking them to put me in school. A friend of mine shelter me until I found a job and started to save and take  my own apartment. After two years I was ready to finally started school after six years in the USA, Furthermore ,I registered for my first class fear and happiness invade me on my first day of class. I knew that it was not going to be easy but finally started school after all those years was amazing. I had a lot of think to learn but perseverance and never give up despite all situation I still find a way back school. The film said that men have to grow some ball, experiencing those difficult moment in my life made me grow some ball.

        The masks of toughness and happiness really help me . They have made my life easier to face difficult situation, but I know that I have to face those personal problems and solve them in order not to wear masks and be my actual self. We have to teach African women that is okay to be scare, to cry in front of others. Women can seek help to another women and it ok , the pride has to be put aside so that women can be truly happy.