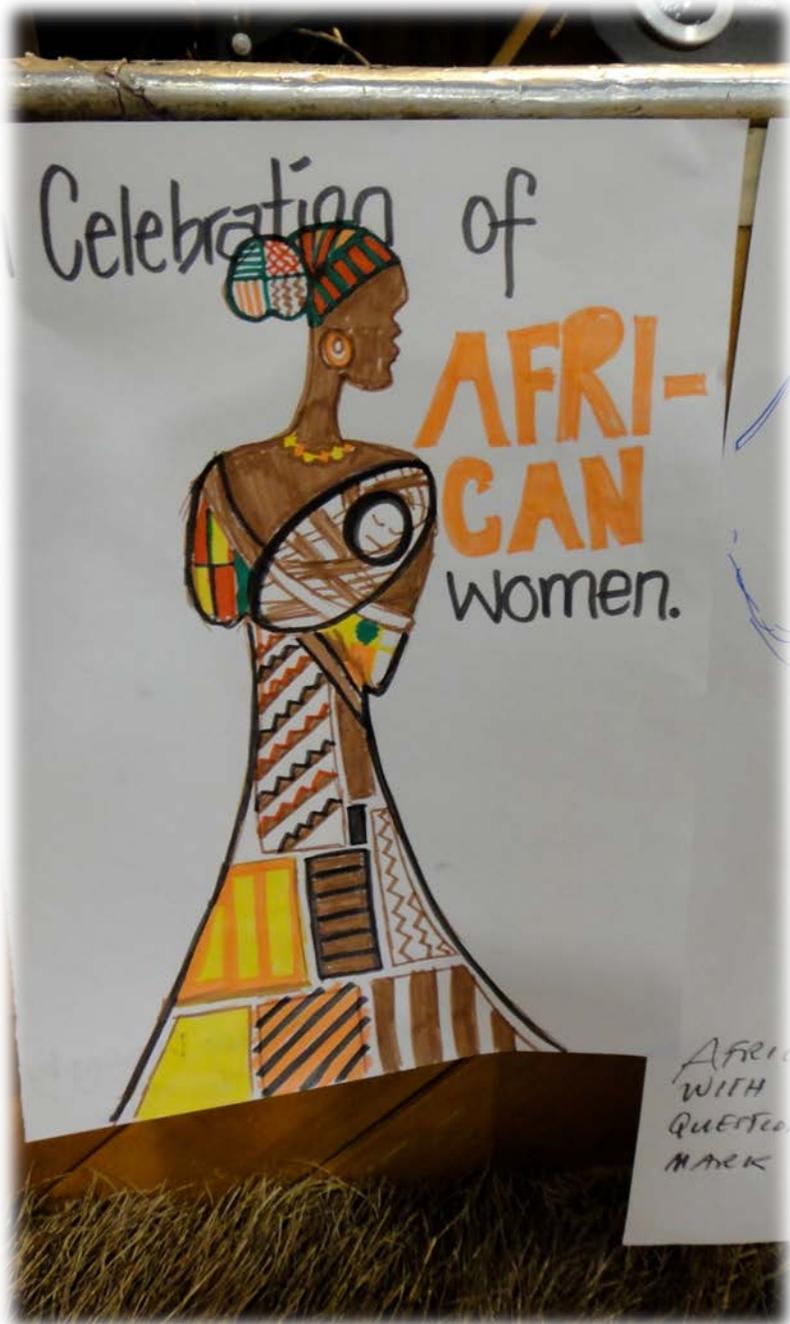




**FROM MAMA AFRICA TO
PAPATŪĀNUKU:
African mothers living in Auckland**

Helene Connor, Sue Elliott and Irene Ayallo



The women

- Research with a group of ten African mothers living in Auckland
- Arrived in NZ as asylum seekers, Quota refugees, skilled migrants or partners of skilled migrants
- From Eritrea; Ethiopia; Burundi; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Rwanda; Uganda; and Zimbabwe
- aged between 20 and 45 years.

The women

- biological children, adopted or fostered children or step-children and carers for their nieces or nephews
- Children aged between 2 - 18
- social workers, community development workers, nursing, care-givers and early childhood workers.
- Several studying at tertiary level, others were graduates.
- married women, women living with partners, separated, divorced or widowed women raising children on their own



Birthing new lives



women
give
Life
TO
AFRICA

- birthing new lives both metaphorical and literally
- Leaving Mama Africa for the unknown of Papatuanuku not only involved crossing international borders but also crossing emotional and cultural boundaries
- new identities had to be forged within an unfamiliar society and communities

Loneliness and being alone during birth....

“I went to hospital by myself...taking my first daughter with me as there was no one to look after her.

My volunteer sponsor came afterwards and looked after my baby while I was in the delivery room. But from home to the hospital, I drove myself.

I was scared because I could give birth anytime....in the car...I was tired, stressed...thinking a lot. My husband came 2 hours after I delivered the baby.

The next day my husband did not get any time to come because he was busy working.”



and after.....

“In NZ, you discover life is quite lonely – because you don’t have the same support. This is perhaps because people are busy working....and everyone minds their own business. The children are your own.”

“I found it. If you are lucky enough to have your family, they will not be there for that long because they have got busy lives as well; study, work. I see that being a big difference between the two.”



Views on breastfeeding

“That’s a cultural thing it’s like, for us breastfeeding is really good for the baby, every mother in Ethiopia knows this and it’s easy for you, automatically to pick, that’s the culture aspect of it; and also bonding with mum. They believe strongly you leave a baby close to your heart, build the relationship. Maybe that’s how we love our mothers so much because we can’t live without our parents. We can’t survive without our mum you know? I think that’s the relationship that our parents build with us and I think that’s it. “



Where babies sleep... with their mother

“Something I will never understand is the ‘sleeping arrangement’. This is because the closeness I have with my children cannot allow me to put them in the cot or in a separate room. I will never do that. I have had three daughters and none of them has had an ‘incident’ sleeping with me on my bed. For example, when I was in hospital to deliver my second baby... she cried every time they put on her on the hospital cot...but when the nurse brings her to my bed she stops crying. The nurse growled at me when I told her in Africa we don’t let our babies sleep on their own....she told me that I had to adapt. Well, the baby cried for 30 min and she brought her back to me”



and what they eat

- Feeding...here you sit the child in 'high chair' ...back home we don't. Back home you carry the child on your lap and feed them...here they insist you have to put the child on a high chair. It is too much process... too time demanding.



- “....this is what I was told in NZ...to give my child food according to the age group. But I must confess I didn't follow any of that. I followed what my parents fed me...and what I saw my aunties feed their children back home. Here you can follow what they advise (and I bought most of them from the supermarket) but my boy did not like any of that food.”

Importance of close friends replacing kin



“It was a totally different experience. Back home you have your parents and everyone around you; they help you and even realise how hard it is or how fast time flies. But in NZ, everyday you don't it is you looking after the kids...In saying that I was lucky to have good friends. When I gave birth to my daughter, my good friend even took leave to help me with the baby.

She took two weeks off (it was a surprise) to help me with the baby. While I was in hospital, she also looked after my son. She came every morning to bath my baby, cook, and clean the house.... I would have been so stressed without her.... There is no support. We rely on friends.

My husband works hard to provide for us; and I work hard too. My work takes so much energy.”

Difficulty of having children in child care

- “I took my daughter to day care at six months and I went for English courses, and the community - they don’t think of you good mother. “
- “... It was like, “Why are you leaving your child to the day care and go to work, and study?” I was strong enough to think what they think was wrong and because if I stay home, I get depressed; if I stay home, I don’t have a better life for my daughter and myself but it was very challenged. Everyone will say to you, “Oh, you're so mean; why you do this to your daughter? I was like, “I don’t have family, I don’t have friends who could come home and play with my daughter.”



Support for African mothers

- “I think...with all Africans and other mothers that we...are resilient, they come with a lot of knowledge, they come with a lot of ability. They could be a mother, a good mother and they need to be acknowledged that they are good mothers, and they need to be supported with the cultures and values they bring...”



The value of motherhood

“Being a mother is a blessing from God”

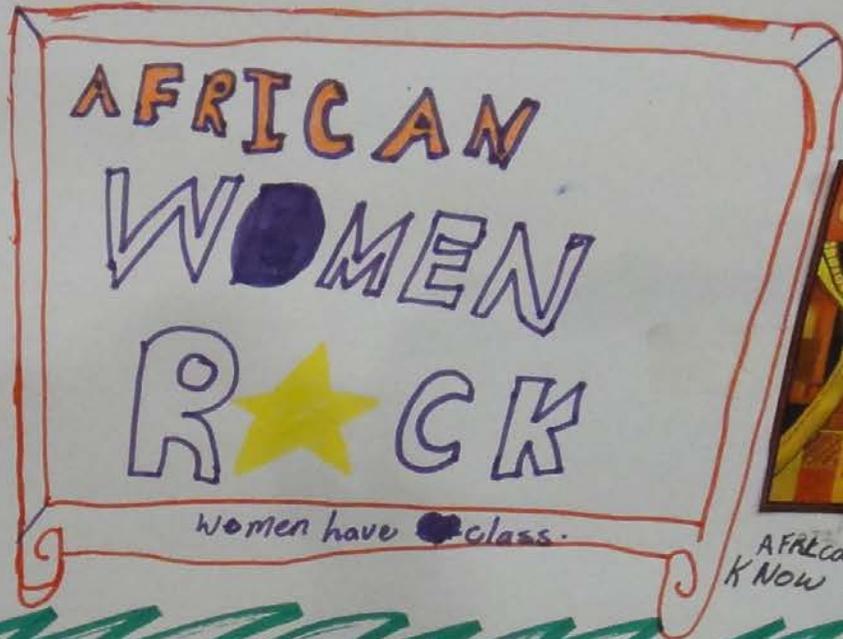
“I don’t even have a word that describes how much I love them and again”

“Knowing that you are responsible for a person - a part of you is outside of you”
“they give me sense of life”



I Love African Women

age 10
Year 6



↑
African Women
KNOW ART.



Mother and Women
are caring

