

A Purposeful Life

Agitu Wodajo

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Reviewed by Jamie King for Reader Views (10/2023)

4*- Remarkable Journey!

“A Purposeful Life” is a memoir about one woman’s quest for freedom through faith, purpose, and women’s empowerment. Agitu Wodajo grew up in the patriarchal shadows of rural Ethiopia where girls weren’t expected to contribute to public society, let alone have an education. Escaping unwanted sexual assaults, gender discrimination, and familial discord, Wodajo holds tight to her faith that she was made to help women find voice, agency, and community worldwide.

Wodajo was raised by her paternal grandmother after her father abandoned the family and took only her mother and younger sister with him. It was during this time that Wodajo decided she would use her station in life to serve others. Her grandmother, an illiterate and kind woman, enrolled Wodajo in the Swedish Mission School, which began a succession of education in Wodajo’s formative years. During high school, she earned money for herself and her family, realizing that she could teach other women how to do the same.

However, discriminatory working conditions, unpaid labor, and an abusive marriage would threaten Wodajo’s path to leading women in business. From her hometown to Europe to the United States, Wodajo grapples with the juxtaposition of being faithful to her traditional Ethiopian commitments, while growing into a newly empowered and autonomous woman. What does it mean to be an ethical leader in a world that devalues women’s voices?

After emigrating with her five children to the United States in 1994, Wodajo returned to Ethiopia to expand her humanitarian work to adoption services. She partners with Children’s Home Society and Family Services in St. Paul, Minnesota to help Ethiopian children find homes in the United States. The bureaucracy of international NGOs, however, proves to be complicated and tests Wodajo’s spirit, faith, and dedication to her purpose of empowering women.

Wodajo’s retelling of her journey from a disempowered young girl to a woman in command of her life is captivating, harrowing, and filled with insight. Through her endurance, Wodajo utilizes her gifts in business to overcome adversity, reach women across the globe, and lead through faith every step of the way.