

Empowering Narratives: Female Solidarity and Religious Education in Leila Aboulela's *Minaret*

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Abstract:

This article examines the transformative impact of women's solidarity and the profound role of religious education in disrupting traditional power dynamics fostering critical thinking and self-discovery for the protagonist Najwa in Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* (2005). Drawing inspiration from the theories of feminism and bell hooks' insights on the empowering potential of education, the study illuminates Aboulela's narrative exploration within the framework of established feminist and critical discourse. By delving into Aboulela's evocative storytelling, the article underscores the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression that the protagonist, Najwa, endures and the transformative capacity of religious education to challenge societal norms and empower her in complex and nuanced ways.

Keywords: Religious education; traditional power dynamics; feminism; female solidarity; oppression and empowerment; *Minaret*



I. Introduction:

Leila Aboulela's novel *Minaret* (2005) is a rich and thought-provoking exploration of identity, faith, and empowerment. As an acclaimed work in contemporary literature, it delves into the life of its protagonist, Najwa, a Sudanese woman living in London as she navigates the complexities of her intersecting identity encompassing age, race, religion, class, and gender. This novel captures the intricate interplay between these parts of identity and provides a unique platform for examining the transformative potential of both female solidarity and religious education in disrupting traditional power dynamics and fostering critical thinking and self-discovery.

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The examination of religious education in *Minaret* holds a significant position in contemporary discourse. Literary studies on the novel have often emphasized themes and issues of identity, representation, migration, and diaspora. Critics like Sadia Abbas (2014) and Wail Hassan (2008) have criticized Aboulela's work specifically focusing on the submissive nature portrayed by Najwa, the protagonist in *Minaret*. They argue that the novel seems to support a form of female sacrifice and strict religious beliefs linked to the rising influence of Salafi theology in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia. This perspective is viewed by some as excessively conservative or even fundamentalist. Abbas (2014) contends that Leila Aboulela intricately presents in *Minaret* and her other novels: “deft visions of Muslim women who desire their own subordination” (150). Sadia Abbas (2011) also raises doubts about the feasibility of writing a religious novel. Even though she argues that Aboulela's didactically religious fiction hints at the complexities and conflicts inherent in such an endeavor (452), this exploration scrutinizes the extent and instances through which the protagonist's personality transforms due to religious influences within the novel. Hassan asserts that within Aboulela's narratives regarding Islam, there is: “a complete disavowal of personal liberty as incompatible with Islam, of feminism as a secular and godless ideology, of individual agency in favor of an all-encompassing notion of predetermination and of political agency as well” (313). Morey (2017), on the other hand, reconsiders oversimplified perceptions of the post-Enlightenment West as consistently secular and the Islamic world as persistently spiritual, urging a deeper exploration of shared narrative elements across cultures while analyzing Leila Aboulela's novel within the realm of postsecular literature. He contends that *Minaret* vividly highlights the challenge of steering the novel's secular, individualistic framework toward its spiritual beginnings, emphasizing the importance of considering this aspect in its analysis (4). This paper, diverging from conventional views, employs feminism—deemed secular and godless by Hassan—as a tool for arguing a positive evolution in Najwa's character. It posits that Najwa, despite initial portrayals of submission, demonstrates growth and resilience by virtue of her religiosity. Her refusal to succumb to an abusive, Marxist-atheist Anwar and her choice to relinquish her loving Islamist Tamer for the greater good of everyone showcase her agency and development. By intertwining these perspectives, the paper aims to shed light on the complexities within Aboulela's narratives, showcasing how religiosity can empower characters like Najwa, challenging traditional views of submission and advocating for a nuanced understanding of feminism within

an Islamic context. The study not only focuses on the narrative's exploration of religious education's significance but also on the profound influence of women's solidarity in guiding the protagonist toward self-improvement and growth. In doing so, it addresses an underexplored aspect of the novel's thematic richness. By investigating how religious education, and not fundamental or school education that women usually resort to when looking for self-affirmation and independence, functions within the story, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the broader implications of religious learning and its potential to challenge societal norms, empower individuals, and reshape their identities.

This analysis of *Minaret* centers on feminism and specifically on the empowering potential of education, a concept extensively explored by bell hooks

. This emphasizes the synergy between Aboulela's narrative and established feminist and critical theories, even though these theories do not explicitly delve into the specific experience of a Muslim Arab woman in the Western context. The objective is to intricately explore how religious education catalyzes transformation and empowerment within the storyline, revealing its profound implications. The research objectives are twofold: first, scrutinizing Najwa's multifaceted experience and the role of female solidarity in shaping her experiences; second, exploring the character's capacity to challenge traditional power dynamics and reshape her identity within the broader discourse on education.

1. Sisterhood and Strength: Women's Solidarity in Najwa's Journey

Najwa's life journey in London appears to pivot significantly around her father's unexpected shift in position, which plunges them into sudden poverty. Unpacking the layers of challenges that Najwa grapples with serves as a lens through which the true complexity of her identity is revealed. This exploration unveils not only the challenges she faces but also the resilience that propels her forward. In her remarkable journey toward success, two key factors stand out as instrumental in shaping her path to resolution and self-discovery. First, the unyielding support of women's solidarity provides her with the strength to navigate the tumultuous waters of alienation, poverty, and discrimination. This sisterhood, founded in the name of Islam, becomes a source of empowerment, enabling her to rise above adversity. Equally vital is her pursuit of knowledge—a transformational force that offers her the tools to

break free from the constraints imposed by racism, sexism, discrimination, and more. While rooted in religious teachings, this form of education proves to be a gateway to empowerment, demonstrating that knowledge, in any form, holds the power to uplift and emancipate. Najwa's journey reflects the truth that education, regardless of its origin, serves as a beacon guiding her toward a place of tranquility and self-assuredness.

Najwa and her family have always enjoyed a status akin to that of a bourgeois Sudanese family in the UK. However, the narrative shifts after her father's conviction in Sudan. Najwa reflects, "There are all kinds of pain, degrees of falling. In our first weeks in London, we sensed the ground tremble beneath us" (47). Subsequently, tragedy strikes with the loss of her mother and the imprisonment of her brother, Omar. Alone, she endures increased hardship, slipping into poverty and finding herself nearly bereft of family or friends for support. When she reunites with Anwar, their relationship reignites, yet despite this closeness, Anwar's assistance proves limited, leaving Najwa to endure additional suffering alongside him. Amidst these struggles, Najwa not only grapples with the challenge of invisibility within a white capitalist Western society but also confronts nuanced forms of discrimination from Anwar, despite their shared racial background. This resonates with hooks' ideas who emphasizes in her *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, the persistent devaluation of Black womanhood, highlighting how patriarchy, coupled with racism, perpetuates the marginalization of Black women (98). Anwar consistently criticizes and diminishes her in various aspects of her life, scrutinizing her adherence to Islam during Ramadan, her affluent background, and even her appearance. Anwar's disregard for her feelings persists, highlighting a lack of respect within their relationship, despite her love for him. Within the complex dynamics of discrimination, another layer emerges—Anwar's feelings of inferiority due to his limited English proficiency compared to Najwa's fluency. This language barrier triggers a sense of inadequacy and insecurity within Anwar, leading him to compensate by undermining Najwa. His attempts to belittle her knowledge about politics and life reflect his insecurities, adding another dimension to their relationship dynamics shaped by language proficiency and power imbalances. Throughout this period, a helping hand from a sister who was involved in shrouding her mother has consistently reached out to her. Wafaa maintains contact, calling once every two or three months, saying the usual things: "Top of Form

come with me to the mosque, come to a Ladies' Eid Party, so have you started to pray like you promised you would?" (131). Pivotal moments then prompt Najwa's transformation, particularly when she accepts an invitation to attend a class in a mosque. This decision marks a turning point in her life. Despite her lingering attachment to Anwar, the support and solidarity she finds among her new female companions empower her to break away from him.

Following the loss of her mother, brother, and everything tied to her family's wealth, the only remaining support she finds is in her Aunt Eva, her mother's close friend, who reassures her, "I'm like your mother now" (170). Najwa still receives occasional calls from Randa, her cousin and friend, yet the support feels more obligatory than genuinely healing, lacking the depth of connection she longs for. However, her interactions with Aunt Eva present a stark contrast in the quality of support and care she receives. WTop of Form

hen the latter and her husband decide to move to a city far from London, Najwa feels adrift, realizing she is about to lose her last source of support. Reflecting on her aunt, Najwa observes, "She is always sweet, always, and now I would lose her too" (170). Aside from being kind and attentive, Aunt Eva provides Najwa with work opportunities, letting her help around the house and in her husband's office in exchange for payment. Najwa admits that while working for Aunt Eva, "I didn't feel like a maid with her" (64). As she prepares to leave London, she doesn't just leave; instead, she secures work through one of her Syrian connections. Recognizing Najwa's potential, Aunt Eva encourages her to pursue her studies, asking, "But are you sure you want to keep on doing this? You don't want to go to university and complete your education? There will be many opportunities for you if you have a degree" (170). However, the predicament resides in Najwa's continued interaction with Anwar. Instead of supporting her, he dissuades her and prioritizes his pursuit of a PhD. Najwa reveals that it is actually he who has been accepted to the London School of Economics, and she ends up lending him the last bit of money she has. Anwar consistently undermines her intellectual capabilities, as Najwa recounts, "Anwar always said I was not intellectual" (170).

Refusing to go see Anwar for the first time, Najwa confesses: "I felt a kind of peace. I lay in bed and fell deeply asleep. When I woke up I had a shower, but it was not an ordinary shower, it was like starting afresh, wanting to be clean, crying for it" (172). This act of cleansing can be seen as a

metaphorical cleansing from societal pressures or emotional distress, advocating for the importance of self-care and emotional well-being amidst adversity. Later, Najwa recounts her inaugural visit to a mosque in London. Upon noticing a girl seated with an open Qur'an on her lap, reciting Surat Ar-rahman, Najwa paused and listened to the repetition of a verse. Despite the presence of other women and their children, she found herself fixated on the girl's recitation, her detachment almost celestial. She declares:

'So which of your Lord's favours do you deny?' She must have taken lessons to be able to read so well. Or perhaps her mother taught her at home. She must be confident of herself, otherwise she would not be reading out loud. I wished I were like her. That in itself was strange. She was pale and serene, her clothes unremarkable, her face neither lush nor pretty. She did not shine with happiness or success, qualities I usually envied. But still I wished I were like her, good like her. I wanted to be good but I wasn't sure if I was prepared. (172)

This illustrates that from her initial encounter in the mosque with women different from those she was accustomed to befriending within her family's affluent circle, Najwa found solace and aspired to reclaim her independence and emotional rejuvenation. Despite the girl's lack of apparent happiness, which Najwa typically covets, the desire to mirror her signifies Najwa's recognition and experience of tranquility, self-care, and renewal from the very onset of encountering such a girl in the mosque. Najwa's willingness to acknowledge her vulnerabilities and seek solidarity among new female acquaintances at the mosque resonates with hooks' emphasis on recognizing and confronting the intersecting forces of oppression to empower women (*Ain't I a Woman* 98-9).

The atmosphere of the mosque, with its congregation of women, seems to motivate Najwa to finally accept an invitation from Wafaa that was extended to her two years prior. Despite Wafaa's attempts to reach out to her before, Najwa doesn't give much heed to those efforts. However, Wafaa shows no surprise when Najwa finally responds and warmly invites her to join the classes and regular gatherings where women delve into learning about Islam and the Quran within the mosque (174). The hospitable and inclusive nature of Wafaa serves as a gateway for Najwa, ushering her into a new and unfamiliar world distinct from her own, yet one where she undoubtedly finds a sense of belonging and comfort. Later, Najwa decides to cover her hair with a hijab, a choice that surprises Anwar when he visits her

at her apartment. Seeing her change, he is shocked and tries to dissuade her (179). However, Najwa views wearing the hijab as liberating. She sees it not as a sign of submissiveness, as many would think, but as a source of personal freedom and empowerment. Aboulela reflects on this idea in an interview with Claire Chambers (2009), highlighting similarities between herself and Najwa in the novel. She reveals that akin to Najwa, she once admired the university girls who wore the hijab. However, it was upon her arrival in Britain that she felt “free”. Away from the familiar confines of friends and family, she expressed a feeling of newfound liberation, where she could finally do as she pleased (92).

Even though Najwa considers Wafaa “a guide, not a friend” (178), she encounters a genuine display of warmth and kindness during her visits to Wafaa's home. There, she is guided through her first headscarf shopping and instructed on how to wear them. Recollecting the initial moment she dons the scarf in Wafaa's presence, Najwa remembers Wafaa's reaction vividly: “‘You look very nice,’ she said, all enthusiasm and encouragement” (178). Najwa now keeps going to the gatherings and Wafaa tells her, ‘I’m so pleased that you’re coming with us to the mosque every week. I’m so pleased you like our gatherings.’ (175). Najwa admits that she is drawn to their ways. She appreciates the casualness of sitting on the floor, away from the presence of men. Their absence means an escape from tension, uncertainty, and the unpredictable energy they often bring. In their absence, the atmosphere feels serene, gentle, and innocent, with children surrounding them. Little girls nestle close to their mothers, chubby cheeks aglow, while baby boys crawl and unsteadily stand against the wall (175). This is proof that women's solidarity plays a significant role in the improvement that Najwa is experiencing. She values the discussions held in these gatherings; they are sincere, simple, and filled with vitality, lacking cleverness or wit. What she absorbs in these conversations is unique, something beyond the realm of TV or magazines. It resonates within her, finding a profound connection (175).

Whenever Najwa loses support or a sister departs or relocates far from her, another source of support emerges. Najwa acknowledges this pattern, stating, “People move on, sisters leave, and new ones take their place” (185). After Wafaa and her husband depart London for Birmingham, Najwa finds solace and guidance at the mosque through Um Waleed, who conducts classes on Islam and the Quran. Um Waleed becomes invaluable to Najwa, who asserts, “Um Waleed has a way of drawing anyone out of their personal

struggles and captivating their attention. Perhaps it's the urgency in her voice” (185). She also adds that Um Waleed is: “someone else now, someone I love, my teacher, specific in everything she says, sharp and to the point” (60). Shahinaz is a close friend Najwa met through the mosque community. Their first encounter was during a Tajweed class led by Um Waleed (60). Shahinaz's warmth and supportiveness shine through in various facets of Najwa's life. Top of Form Shahinaz consistently extends her kindness to Najwa, exemplified by offering her a ride home after class, and insisting it is unsafe to go alone when it is late (61). Their friendship deepens beyond class hours, as they frequently visit each other's homes. Interestingly, Najwa prefers to be the guest, relishing the vibrant atmosphere created by Shahinaz's children and mother-in-law, who all reside together. Najwa firmly expresses her perspective, affirming that:

They are the kindest people I have ever met in the mosque, kind enough not to ask me questions or expect confessions in return for their favours. Why Shahinaz chose me as a friend, and how Sohayl approved her choice, is one of those strokes of good fortune I don't question. We have little in common. If I tell her that, I think she will say, very matter-of-fact, ‘But we both want to become better Muslims.’ (78)

Najwa's assertion about her friendship with Shahinaz and the approval from her husband Sohayl echoes some of the intersectional themes highlighted by bell hooks in *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. In hooks' exploration of intersectionality, she delves into how societal hierarchies, including race and gender, intersect to shape a woman's experiences. Najwa's reflection on her friendship with Shahinaz touches upon this intersectionality. Despite having little in common on the surface, their shared desire to deepen their faith and become better Muslims forms a bond that transcends their differences and feeds on women's solidarity. Najwa's appreciation of the kindness without an expectation of confession or intrusive questions parallels hooks' discussion about the neglect of sexist oppression among non-white women due to the pervasive concern about racism (*Ain't I a Woman* 102). It underscores how the kindness Najwa experiences isn't coupled with invasive curiosity, allowing her a sense of comfort within the community despite potential differences. Furthermore, Shahinaz emerges as Najwa's sole pillar of support during the devastating loss of Tamer. Sharing the night with her, Shahinaz's presence becomes a comforting embrace for Najwa, whose heart is

shattered by grief. Najwa reflects on this moment, recounting, “Shahinaz reaches for my hand. ‘You’re finding it hard, aren’t you – but you did the right thing’” (179), encapsulating the solace and affirmation offered by Shahinaz during her darkest hour. So, the support Najwa receives from Shahinaz and others (especially women) not only contribute to her spiritual growth but also empower her within her cultural and religious context, emphasizing the transformative power of female support.

2. Empowerment Through Knowledge: Religious Education and Najwa's Self-Discovery

Education has long been recognized as a powerful tool for personal and social empowerment. It equips individuals with the knowledge and critical thinking skills necessary to challenge existing power structures and to better understand and address issues related to inequality and oppression. Education can serve as a catalyst for change, enabling individuals to question societal norms, articulate their experiences, and advocate for their rights. Scholars like bell hooks have emphasized the transformative potential of education, arguing that it can be a liberating force when approached in a way that encourages critical thinking and self-discovery. In the following, we will examine how *Minaret* portrays the role of education, particularly religious education, in empowering its characters and challenging traditional power dynamics.

In the narrative of Najwa's journey, religious education emerges as a compelling catalyst for empowerment and self-discovery. Eva Hunter asserts that Najwa's profound embrace of religion and spiritual growth stemmed significantly from a profound loss—stripping away of familial ties, wealth, social status, and the hope for a heterosexual connection (92). The intricate layers of Najwa's tale subtly underscore the transformative potential inherent in religious learning, illuminating its pivotal role in shaping characters' identities and moral compasses. Seda Canpolat admits that: “Najwa chooses to embrace Islam as a positive source of identification when she finds herself bereaved and isolated in London” (11). Through Najwa's experiences and interactions with others in her religious education class, a compelling exploration unfolds—a narrative woven with themes of empowerment, ethical decision-making, and the delicate balance between faith and familial dynamics. This section delves into how religious education becomes a formidable force, not only in nurturing critical thinking and self-discovery but also in challenging prevailing power

structures and norms. This examination unveils the nuanced ways in which religious teachings can reshape relationships, redefine identities, and embolden individuals to navigate life's complexities with conviction and faith-based principles. As the narrative unfolds, it subtly suggests that religious education can serve as a powerful tool for individuals to forge their paths, even when it necessitates a divergence from societal conventions, offering a profound insight into the transformative potential of spiritual knowledge in fostering personal growth and societal change.

Najwa's empowerment to make a serious decision, severing ties with Anwar, stems from a culmination of personal growth and newfound understanding through her exploration of Islam. Their relationship is seemingly troubled by Anwar's manipulation. This manipulation has led Najwa to an affair without any commitment or marriage. Despite her feelings for him, she endures his verbal abuse. However, her decision to depart from this toxic relationship is fortified by her evolving Islamic learning in addition to her financial independence. Despite her modest income from work, it is still a significant aspect of her liberation. As bell hooks underscores, economic self-sufficiency is pivotal for women's liberation. In *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*, hooks also addresses the role of work in women's liberation, stating that: "Most women know now what some of us knew when the movement began, that work would not necessarily liberate us, but that this fact does not change the reality that economic self-sufficiency is needed if women are to be liberated" (42-3). This quote emphasizes that work alone does not necessarily lead to women's liberation but underscores the significance of economic self-sufficiency as a fundamental aspect of women's empowerment. For Najwa, her financial independence, coupled with her burgeoning religious education, becomes the cornerstone of her emancipation from a suffocating relationship and her pursuit of a more fulfilling future guided by her faith.

Najwa finds empowerment through her expanding knowledge of Islam rather than pursuing conventional university studies. Scrutinizing the fact that Najwa was raised in a luxurious and spiritually hollow environment in Sudan, we can notice that she has always harbored a silent admiration for male students devoted to prayer and girls adorned in hijabs at Khartoum University. Even amidst her friend Randa's dismissal of Sudanese women in hijabs at the British university she goes to, these veiled figures hold an inexplicable allure for Najwa. Memories of Khartoum University, where she

would quietly observe students at prayer, stay vivid to her. The deliberate motions and melodic verses of the Qur'an during these moments intrigued her evoking an unspoken longing she couldn't define. Najwa recounts how the haunting resonance of the call to prayer or Qur'anic recitations used to leave her feeling hollow and disconnected signifying a deeper yearning within her (99). This gradual immersion in Islamic teachings provides Najwa with the strength to part ways with Anwar, despite his attempts to dissuade her and belittle her guilt toward their intimate relationship over straying from societal norms (128). The shift from a life of material luxury to a pursuit of spiritual fulfillment through Islam aligns with Najwa's transformation and her determination to forge her path, detached from the man she once loved but whose toxicity she has ultimately resisted.

Najwa's journey, deeply influenced by her religious education, mirrors bell hooks' insights into empowerment, education, and feminist solidarity. The transformative power of religious education on Najwa's identity and choices echoes hooks' emphasis on education as a tool for freedom and self-discovery (*Sisters of the Yam* 17). Najwa's evolution, shaped by classes on Islam and Quran, showcases how religious education contributes to her self-discovery. Her assertion, "I only want Allah to forgive me" (147), underscores the centrality of divine forgiveness in her character, echoing hooks' emphasis on embracing truths for personal growth (*Sisters of the Yam* 34). The impact of religious education on her forgiveness towards her imprisoned brother, Omar, and her belief in Allah's mercy highlights its role in shaping her moral compass and fostering empathy. Moreover, Najwa's recognition of the potential benefits of religious practice within her family, wishing her parents had prayed for stability, aligns with hooks' advocacy for creating inclusive and transformative environments, here within familial dynamics (*Feminism is for Everybody* 39). Najwa asserts that: "If Baba and Mama had prayed . . . We would have stayed a normal family" (72). This reflects how religious education can contribute to shaping worldviews and fostering a sense of normalcy and protection within families.

Najwa's admiration for her friend Shahinaz's educational pursuits and her desire to emulate her reflect hooks' ideas on education empowering women to pursue goals (*Teaching to Transgress* 95). The contrast between Shahinaz's progressive, empowered life and Najwa's feelings of stagnation emphasizes the transformative potential of the religious education she receives, pushing Najwa to reconsider her choices and aspirations. Moreover,

Najwa's decision to sacrifice her relationship with Tamer for his betterment resonates with hooks' advocacy for making difficult choices, guided in Najwa's case by religious convictions. Her intention to perform Hajj to heal also demonstrates the influence of religious education on her future plans and healing process. Hooks' exploration of feminism emphasizes the significance of intersectionality and inclusivity. Najwa's experiences, shaped by her religious education, showcase how education can disrupt traditional power dynamics and contribute to personal growth, even within the context of gender dynamics and relationships. Najwa's journey parallels hooks' insights into the transformative potential of education, intersectionality, and the importance of embracing truths for personal growth and empowerment. It highlights how religious education serves as a tool for self-discovery, moral guidance, and transformative decision-making in Najwa's life.

Najwa's poignant reflection on her past relationship with Anwar resonates deeply with bell hooks' ideas about self-recovery and the transformative power of education. Her admission, "I did not have the words, the education or the courage" (175), reflects a lack of empowerment and agency in that relationship. This acknowledgment aligns with hooks' emphasis on education as a tool for empowerment, suggesting that without the necessary knowledge or courage, Najwa felt unable to challenge or resist Anwar's influence. Her yearning for a "restoration of innocence" (175) and a return to feeling safe with God reflects hooks' notions of self-recovery and the transformative nature of spirituality. Through her religious education and the support of the women around her, Najwa finds a path toward this restoration. The classes and lectures she attends become spaces where she gains the words, knowledge, and courage that were previously lacking, enabling her to navigate her past experiences and seek solace in her faith. Najwa's journey toward self-restoration and seeking solace in her faith aligns with hooks' ideas on the transformative power of education and spirituality. It showcases how religious education, combined with supportive communities, becomes instrumental in Najwa's quest for healing, empowerment, and a renewed sense of self.

II. Conclusion:

In examining Najwa's journey, the profound significance of women's solidarity and education in shaping her transformation becomes unmistakably evident. The first part of her narrative illuminates the immense strength derived from the collective support of women like Wafaa, Um Waleed, Aunt

Eva, and Shahinaz. Their roles go beyond mere companionship; they serve as guiding lights, reshaping Najwa's self-perception and bolstering her resilience amidst daunting trials. Through their collective presence, the narrative highlights the vital role of solidarity in navigating adversity and fostering inner strength. The second part delves into the transformative power of religious education in Najwa's journey toward empowerment and self-discovery. Her immersion in Islamic teachings becomes a catalyst for challenging societal norms, liberating her from toxic relationships, and guiding her moral compass toward personal growth. This journey mirrors bell hooks' advocacy for education as a tool for empowerment, emphasizing its role in reshaping perspectives, fostering independence, and driving transformative change. The interplay between Najwa's intersecting identities and religious education serves as a focal point, revealing the intricate layers of her evolution. Her story isn't confined to a single narrative but rather emerges as a vibrant tapestry woven from diverse experiences. It encapsulates the resilience of the human spirit, showcasing the capacity to thrive and find equilibrium despite intersecting challenges.

Ultimately, Najwa's narrative stands as a testament to the enduring power of solidarity among women, the transformative force of education, and the resilience of the human spirit. It emphasizes the importance of interconnected elements—solidarity, education, and intersecting identities—in shaping one's journey toward empowerment, self-discovery, and the pursuit of equilibrium amid life's complexities. Her story serves as an inspiring testament to the triumph of the human spirit over adversity and the transformative potential of collective strength and knowledge. Her resolution, self-discovery, and tranquility stem from two core sources: the solidarity of women, offering empathy and shared strength, and her pursuit of knowledge—particularly religious, yet inherently empowering education.

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