

## Knowing Who I Am: Love Yourself and Make a Difference

**Nianell**

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South African singer and songwriter Sonia Aletta Nel, better known as Nianell, credits her success to a long process of learning to love herself and feeling the love around her, as she takes her talent to greater heights of international stardom. *Knowing Who I Am* is her autobiography even though it's categorized as a self-help title.

Empathetic and sensitive, Nianell shares the knowledge she has acquired during her forty years of creative living. If the book suffers from any failing, it is the simple fact that there isn't enough of it, and she has relied too heavily on quotes and commentary from family, friends, and acquaintances. One chapter, in particular, is devoted to a compilation, a varied definition of love obtained from countless sources. Interwoven throughout her text are anecdotes and impressions that are priceless, especially as these enlightening incidents and life-changing events are presented in the context of her experiences, rather than set off to stand on their own.

Her song lyrics, which are carefully integrated, along with her music CD, will give an unfamiliar American the opportunity to listen to her voice, perhaps for the first time. Nianell is clearly reaching out to capture a new US audience.

English is her second language, yet pitfalls typically seen in the non-native literary work of an author are not present. Composed of seven chapters as well as supplemental material such as endnotes and recommended reading list, this inspirational book will open the heart of anyone who never mastered the art of self-esteem. The importance of loving yourself before attempting to love another applies to this look about an ambitious woman's professional and personal endeavors. "My creativity and entrepreneurial skills weren't recognized," she remembers. "I think I would have lasted one month as a secretary; after that, I would either be fired or running the company!"

Far from being conceited or egotistical, Nianell projects sincerity in her efforts to uplift and motivate. "We cannot change others, no matter how hard we try; we can only change ourselves. When we are confronted with difficult people, we have to ask ourselves what we can learn from them and how we can grow from our experience."

Down-to-earth, funny, and warm, Nianell's charming personality graces the pages in *Knowing Who I Am*, which reads like a natural conversation with a reader seeking assistance in pursuing a latent dream or a stifled aspiration. Recommended for people who have put their lives on hold for apathetic or even sacrificial reasons.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (November 1, 2012)

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