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# Writing Makes Writers Immortal.

These are the words of a tolki

mind.

Wakini Kuria
Chief editor, WSA,
Kenya



The resonating bell from the church jerks her from sleep. Twelve! It's New Year, she whispers. She grabs her torchlight and scurry downstairs, praying to be the first arrival at the rendezvous.

Her torchlight spots John resting on the Christmas tree in the field, fireworks in hand.

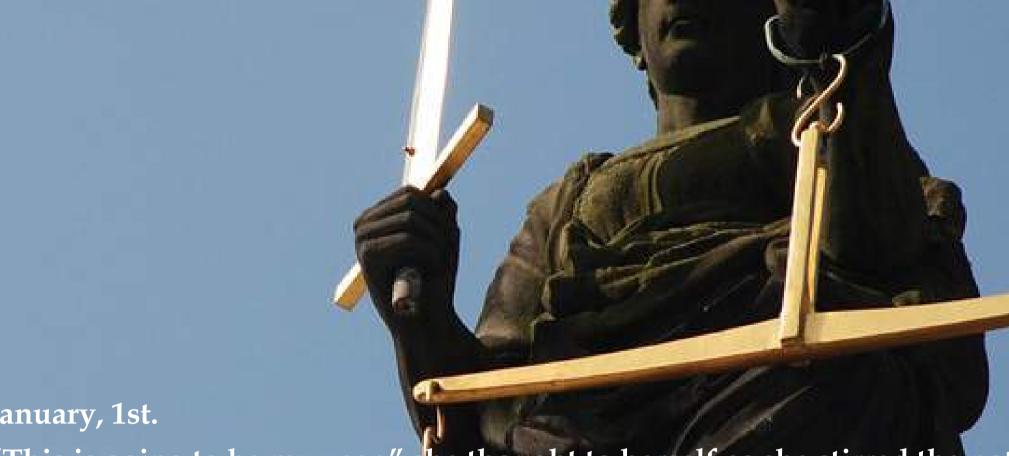
Gosh! He's first. She breathes. Closer, she gives him a slight push and he falls; facedown, the bangers scattering. C'mon, how many shots did you take at the party? She yells.

She tries to drag him up and feels his body cold, a note lying beside him.

Happy New Year Alice! You're next.

Soledad, Nigeria

# BLOODY NEW YEAR



January, 1st.

"This is going to be my year," she thought to herself as she stirred the pot of stew. She had stayed up so many sleepless nights plotting. Her parents being around didn't make it any easier. Finally, they were out of town for the New Year celebrations, and she knew he would definitely go out to party, then they'd stab him just as planned.

Indeed it became her year: her year of court dates, standing before a jury and the year that she was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for the murder of her brother. Stupid sibling rivalry!

Nyambura Gitonga, Kenya

# LOST TRUST

120 Kilometres per hour yet I felt like I wasn't fast enough. I stepped on the accelerator even more the speedometer gauge went up. My throat was so heavy; my heart ached as tears rolled down my face in disappointment. And I just wanted to get away.

"How could she sleep with my husband? I trusted her. She is my sister!" I busted in tears.

Fast I drove away not that I was running away but I wanted my heart to heal and start afresh as I focused on the future, the just started New Year.

Wanangwa Mwale,

Zambia

### THE BURIAL IS CANCELLED



...while waiting for her only son to arrive, just at the eve of New Year, Mercy laid lifeless on the roadside amidst wailers.

In spite the hot chase by irate mob, the driver however escaped but not with the company's van.

The Pro; Hilltop Plc arrived, but then it was too late; hence the victim is allegedly dead.

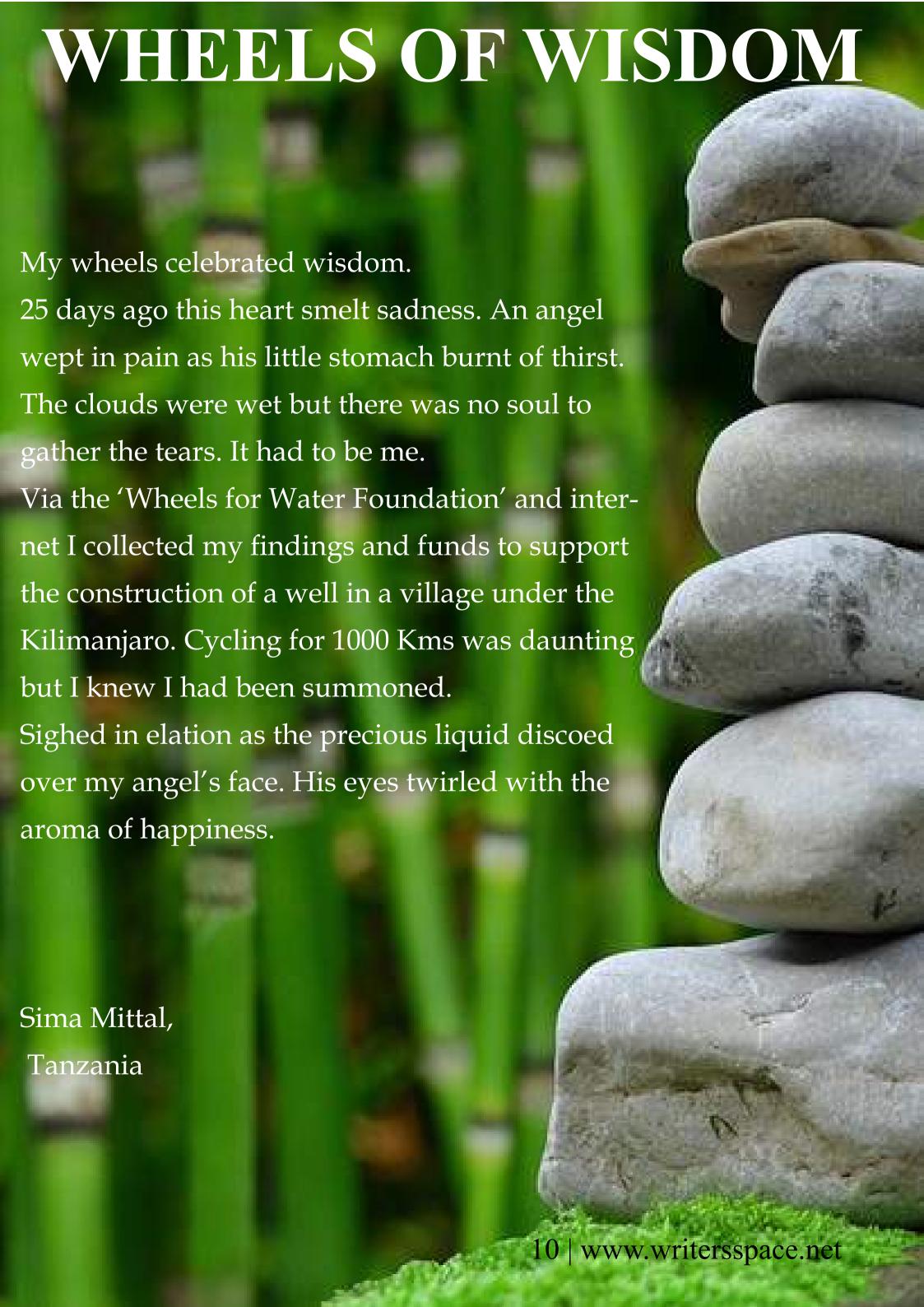
The family has filed a suit against the Company.

At the graveside, while Rev. Frank led mourners in this solemn Hymn:

"Must I go~ and empty handed? Thus my dear Redeemer meet? Not one day of service give Him, lay no trophy at His feet..."

"God's mercy" spoke for Mercy, she sneezed twice, the atmosphere turned into jubilation, overwhelmed with awe of god's wonders, she was rushed to St. Paul's hospital Owerri; sympathizers were stupefied but waited to see what becomes the fate of this poor widow and the reckless driver.

ADM. Uche Henry ~ACIA, Nigeria





# LITERARY NEWS with Gabbie

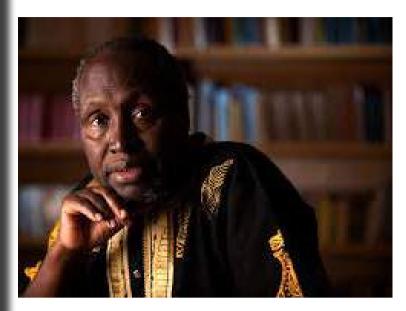
## CHIMAMANDA ADICHIE TO BE HONOURED

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Nigeria writer, has been announced as one of the recipients of 2018 Barnes and Nobles Writers for Writers Awards. This honour is owing to her work with the Farafina Trust Creative Writing Workshop in Nigeria. She will receive the award alongside other writers such as Steve Cannon and Richard Russo. The chairman of poets and writers, Susan Isaacs, said that the honourees are models of the qualities: service, integrity, inclusivity, and excellence. In her words, "The board is delighted to be honouring them."

The Barnes & Noble Writers for Writers Award celebrates authors who have given generously to other writers or to the broader literary community. The award, which is presented each year at Poets & Writers' annual dinner, is named for Barnes & Noble in appreciation of its long-standing support.



### KENYAN WRITER, NGUGI WA THIONG'O, MISSES OUT ON ANOTHER NOBEL PRIZE



79 year old Ngugi wa
Thiong'o, who had been
tipped to win the Nobel Prize
for Literature since 2010,
once again missed it. He was
shortlisted among 350 nominations made by literary experts and former Nobel Lau-

reates from around the world. If he had won the 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature, he would have been the second African laureate since 1986 when Nigerian writer Professor Wole Soyinka won the prize.

The 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature laureate gets a citation and an 18-carat gold medal that bears the face of the founder Alfred Nobel at an award ceremony on December 10. The prize includes SEK 9,000,000 (\$1,110,000) which will be paid next year.

The Kenyan writer is a distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature, and the Director of the International Center for Writing and Translation. He has several works including novels such as Weep Not Child, The River Between, A Grain of Wheat, among others.

#### BUSHRA AL-FADIL WINS THE CAINE PRIZE

Sudanese Bushra Al-Fadil emerged winner for the 2017 Caine Prize for African Writing. The winning entry, a short story titled "The Story of the Girl Whose Birds Flew Away" was Translated by Max Shmookler, with support from Najlaa Osman Eltom.

The Caine Prize for African Writing is a literature prize awarded to an African writer of a short story published in English. The prize was launched in 2000 to encourage and highlight the richness and diversity of African writing by bringing it to a wider audience internationally. The focus on the short story reflects the contemporary development of the African story-telling tradition.

Gabrielina Gabriel is a writer and editor. She writes novels, poetry, scripts for television and essays. She is also trained in News writing and reporting from The Nigerian Institute of Journalism, and the editor of the book "Why Only A Few succeed".



# Primacy of Love

Little did I ever thought of love.

Little did I sense you in my wildest dreams.

Nor did our path cross in a close range.

Did I smell the delicious rays emitting from your dark skin With.

Two tribal marks stationed on each cheek.

Handsome.

Not by face but the strangeness of your heart.

The coral flames blazing love

in the hidden cabin of your chest,

For feeling the sensation without reasons,

They called you crazy.

They questioned your sight and choices in love.

I bet you, they got you almost believing, Them.

But you made it easier than my thoughts suggested.

Making the pool of love cold

for the two of us in a new dawn

of a new beginning.

Neimatu Abdul Samadu, Ghana

### To Keep the Lamp Lit

To keep the lamp glowing, brightly lit
You have to keep putting oil in it
To keep the candle lighting
Your hands need make for its hiding
The lamp keeps not burning
When you lag in fueling;
So it lags in lighting
So it lags in heating!

Keep the lamp burning, warming
Keep the candle lighting, defrosting
Winds and storms roll over
Currents and torrents all over
But, for your life you need be a rover
Struggling to succeed till all is over
If Rome was built, it wasn't in a day
And its blocks stood not by just a say
Forget not: To keep the lamp lit
You have to keep putting oil in it!
Its never too late for new beginnings.

Poem idea from a saying of Mother Theresa: "To keep a lamp burning we have to keep putting oil in it."

by Pastory, Tanzania

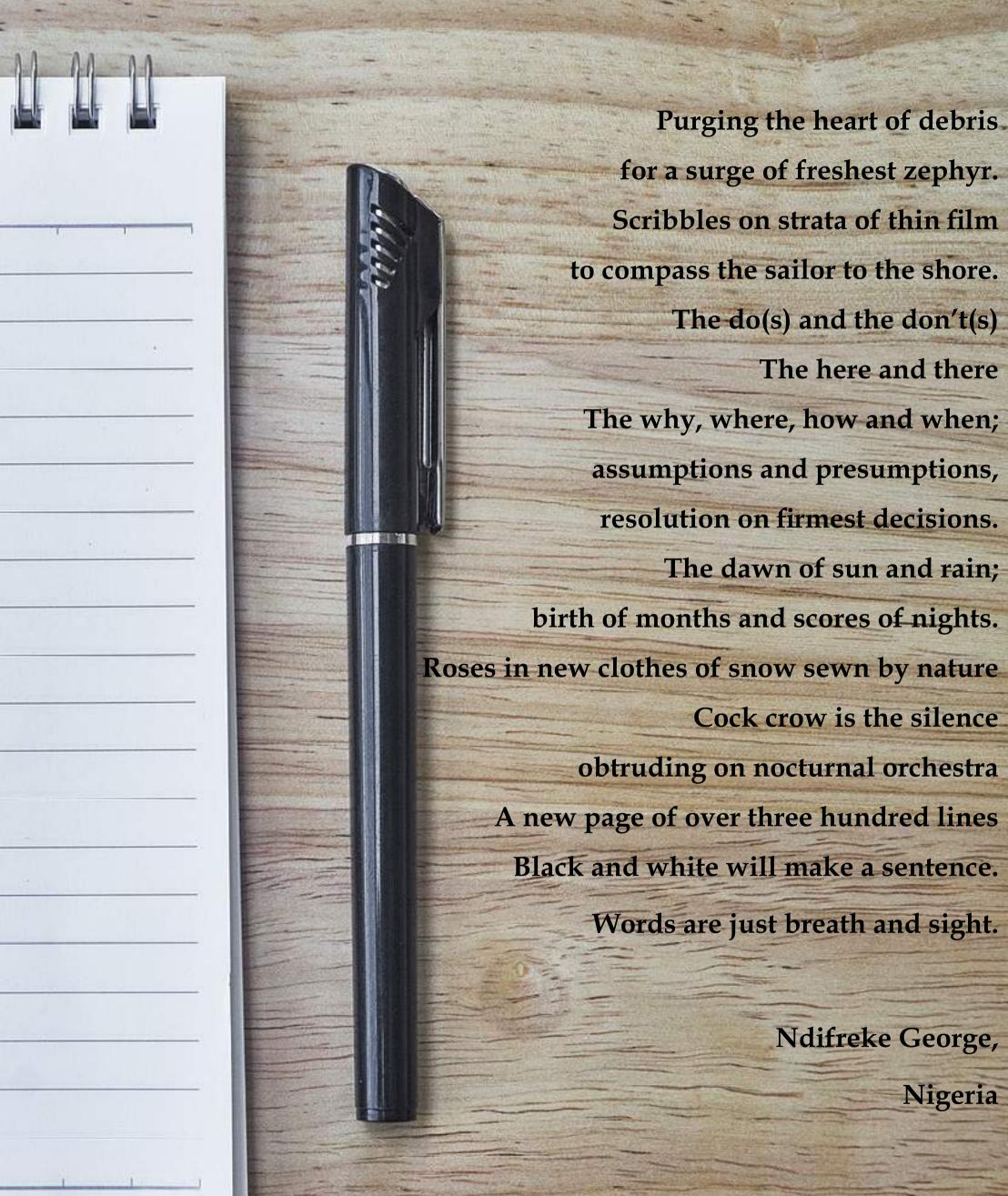


### The Countdown

Ten, nine, eight, He's seeking sanctuary in the midst of sin, Seated at the bar's highest seat, His palms engulf his empty glass, As bodies move over every beat, His thoughts draw him closer to his fears, Seven, six, five, His curved image stares right back of his glass, Drives him down to his dark past, To those that define pain as his life, To those lost loves by death's hand, And those still chained in fear of what might come, Four, three, two, He still taking his shots in twos, Scorching his pain at the liver's expense, In the midst of sinners in sin, One, Cheers to hope for a little less of life's tragedy in this new year.

Pinkett Muiruri, Kenya

# A New Page



for a surge of freshest zephyr. Scribbles on strata of thin film to compass the sailor to the shore. The do(s) and the don't(s) The here and there The why, where, how and when; assumptions and presumptions,

The dawn of sun and rain; birth of months and scores of nights. Roses in new clothes of snow sewn by nature Cock crow is the silence obtruding on nocturnal orchestra A new page of over three hundred lines Black and white will make a sentence.

> Ndifreke George, Nigeria

# Recommendations for a Better Health through Food



cannot undermine the impact of good food.

Over the years, nutritional security has de- dustrial fast foods. clined. The balance between healthy meals and just a meal has been lost. Teeth are being Living a healthy fruit and vegetable based clenched through the pain of diabetes and other lifestyle is both expensive and affordable. In diseases because of less concern and attention the world where chemicals in forms of fertiliztowards healthy eating. Sugars and fats are all ers and pesticides have become a necessity for around in vast unneeded forms and lives have plant growth due to soil depletion and loss of been lost to this unhealthy lifestyle.

Throwing it back to a historic book called the fruit and vegetables can be expensive. Bible, in certain chapters, we were made to re-



for 40years. I mean 40 years! Of course they anyone to fancy fruits and vegetables? did not walk all 40 years at a go; they made life, rested, made homes and above all, ate healthy However, vegetables too can be turned into to have enough strength for the journey. For us art. Today, chefs understand the importance food plan, better nutrition and better health one bowl of yumminess. This implies that in for you in three points;

### **Take Fruits and Vegetables**

Another year is here and it's a good time to get I urge you to take fruits and vegetables. Fruits recommendations for a better health through and vegetables have recorded high health supfood. The year commenced beautifully with port reports that qualify them to be part of festivity. Everyone is wining and dining to another human year. The arrays of vitamins, the joy of being part of another year. How- minerals and phytonutrients present in them ever, some people are doing otherwise; some have been proven to provide the body with people didn't make it to 2018. Destiny some an improved immune system and reduces the would call it. But, a nutrition freak would find risk for non-communicable diseases. Fruits a fault in their diet and wonder maybe if their and vegetables possess anti - aging properties, health was built on a better diet, they would contain low calories and cholesterols that can have made it. In this millennial generation, we be harmful to health when consumed in extra ordinary amount like we find in junks and in-

its vitality, getting varieties of healthy organic

alize that some men walked to a Canaan land But, for individuals who know their ways around farming or would not mind consuming limited varieties of organic vegetables and fruits, getting them in healthy form is affordable. Whichever category you belong, try to get vegetables and fruits included in your diet.

### **Have Fun Eating**

Excuse me! Who said eating healthy has to boring? This happens to be one sadistic myth that flies across countries whenever the average human beings hear 'Veg'. An African hears of a vegetarian and they are thinking of how boring their food life can be. People do not find vegetables as interesting as meat or cereal. The brownness of meat, the numerous kitchen arts that can be carried out of animal products; grilling, frying, roasting, slow cooking, etc. are quite fascinating! Why then would one expect

to walk our life years' journey, we need to be of having radiant colors in food plating. The cautious of our body and take conscious deci- most attractively plated foods have more than sion to feed it with good food. We are what we one color. You can have strawberries, rasp bereat! So, this year, I am recommending a better ries, banana, pineapple, milk and some nuts in that one bowl I have colors red, black, yellow, cream and the nuts; brown. So, if you want colors, fruits and vegetables can also give you col-

ors. A bit of garnishing with green colors of ipes and a pot of yummy goodness. vegetables would take the taste and look of a Ingredients food to another realm. You can have fruit and • vegetable tarts, fruits and or vegetable salads • and, you can take your cereals, meat and vegetables in a meal! You do not have to stick to • boring recipes because you want to eat healthy.

Cook, get a Cook or Choose Restaurants • Wisely

**Experimenting and trying out food varieties is** • fun and healthy when it is done at home. This is simply because of transparency. When a meal • is prepared at home, you know what goes into it and you have this peace of mind about your Directions nutrition. Of course, we've had food poison- • ing happen at home but whatever the record of oil and the spaghetti and cook till spaghetti tiples of that for 'not- home' food poisoning. red pepper), chop spring onions and set aside. Get your kitchen stocked up and cook or get • Drain the spaghetti to remove water and of the lack of effort and palatability of the ing parboiled canned peas. food. However, I read on medium in early De- • Heat saucepan on medium heat and melt pired movement is one towards better health. so as to get some beef lumps and not crumbs. I currently offer a mini food service where I • Toss the spaghetti into the beef sauce and cook at home and do deliveries and really do stir well. Cover to steam together for 3minute hope to set up a restaurant soon but not too on very low heat and serve. soon. Not too soon to not be able to afford my customers healthy meals.

Cooking and eating at home is healthy and fun and you should make a move towards that this year, if you really care about your health. Alternatively, be wise with your choice of restaurants.

Believing that you're going to have fun while eating more fruits and vegetables this year as well as cooking or making wise restaurants choices, here is a fun recipe you should try;

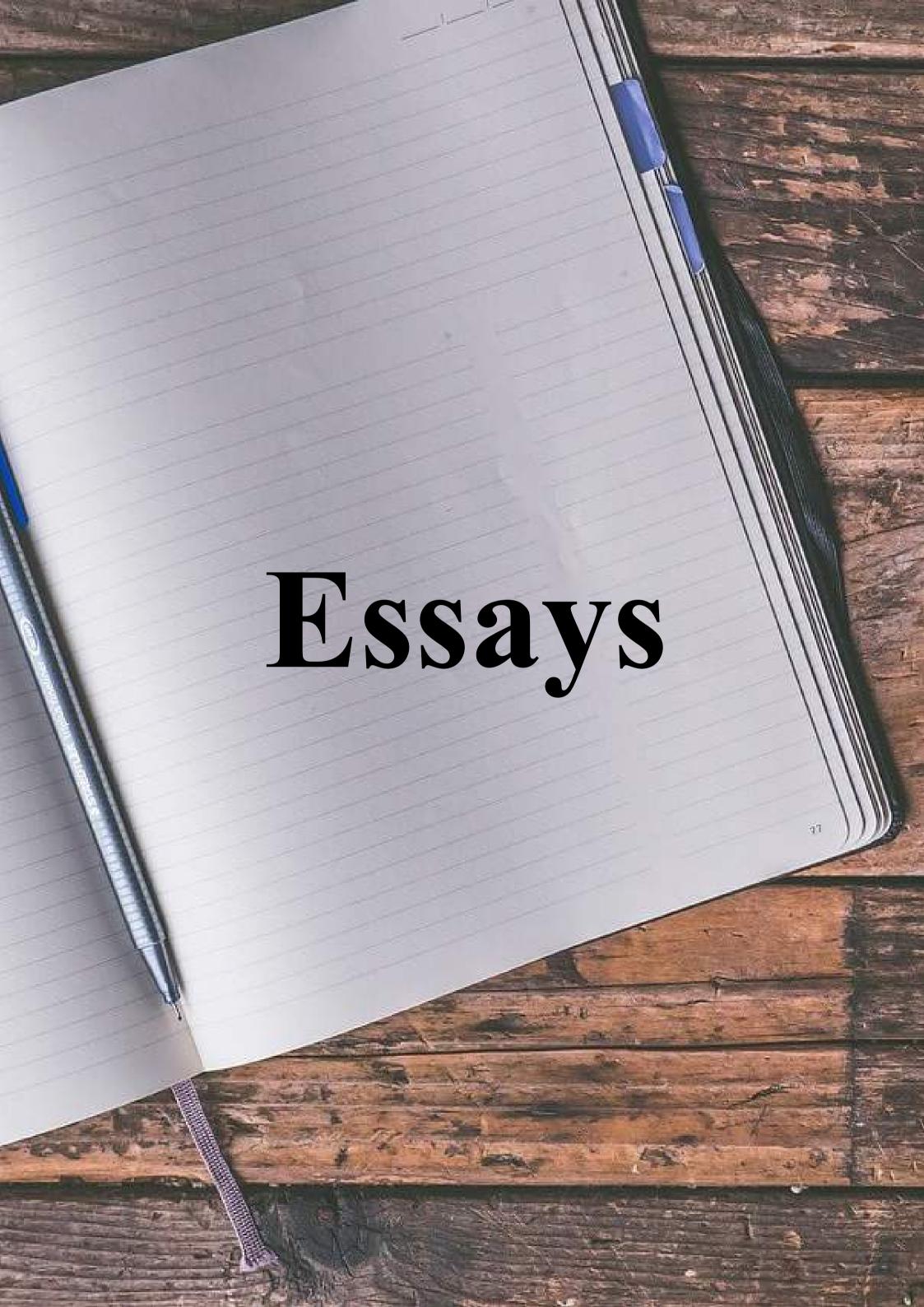
Beef Spaghetti Vegetable 1. As the name implies, this recipe contains spaghetti, vegetables and beef. It is one of my rec-

- 500 g Spaghetti 1 spaghetti pack
- 200g Ground beef or corn beef
- 3 medium sized Carrots
- 3 10 inches long Spring onions
- 1 small bulb Onion
- 3 Large Habaneros or 1 large Red pepper
- 1 fistful Green peas
- 4 Table spoon Margarine
- 2 seasoning cubes
- 1/2 Table spoon salt
- 1 Table spoon curry

- Bring salt water to boil, add a table spoon of home food poisoning reads, we have mul- al dente. Dice carrots, onions, habaneros (or
- a cook. I have been to eateries and restaurants starch. Set aside. Boil little water and steam and my overall remark about eating out is not carrots for 3minutes to soften it. Drain and set a good one. A good number of times, I've sat in aside. Parboil green peas in salted water for restaurants and ate out of frustration because about 10minutes. Skip this step if you are us-
- cember about how restaurants and food com- margarine. Pour the onions and the habaneros panies will move toward total transparency in and fry for 2 minutes. Add the ground beef, sea-2018 and that is a great idea. It will be so nice son and add the steamed carrots, springs and to see what kind of water the food we eat gets parboiled peas. Fry for 2minutes. You need to cooked with, how neat the cook preparing the stir constantly while frying to allow heat penfood and his or her environment is. This as- etrates the beef well. However, stir carefully to



Damilo-**Tominsin** Aladesuru an agriculturist and food blogger foodiedame. com.ng "I love food. I advocate increased vegetable intake."





It's the dawn of a new year which symbolises a new beginning. Another 365 days with opportunity to start afresh and explore a new adventure, to embrace new perspectives and ideas, take up new challenge, etc. It is also a time to build new relationships with people, learn new skills, start new projects, as well as improve on previous ones.

With much festivities and celebration in the air, most people often neglect the needful plans and preparations for the new year. Many make a lot of resolutions in a time like this and end up forgetting and forsaking them during the course of the year.

A few others start out very optimistic with a positive attitude and willingness to improve on their lives. However, they fail at this because they refuse to back up their good intentions with the right actions to produce the required or desired results. They thus end up resigning to fate and going back to the status quo.

Yet another set of people begin the year with the right attitude, optimism and corresponding action but fail in the pursuit of their dreams due to lack of knowledge, right information, keeping wrong company, etc.

Do you find yourself in any of the categories listed above? Have you made several resolutions every year only to end up with little or no progress? Would you like to make a difference in 2018 and give testimonies of improvements and achievements of goals by the end of the year? If yes, then sit back and relax as I share a few tips on how to maximize the new year for effectiveness and more productivity.

### Reflection

There is need to cast one's glance at the past and reflect on the previous year, 2017. Reflection on the past is very important as it helps you evaluate your progress so far, note mistakes and lessons learnt from them and know what works and what doesn't. This implies taking a mental note of important happenings, decisions, choices, actions and their consequences in the past. This would help to analyze one's present situation and what to expect or prepare for in the future (new year in this case). You may also need to jot down your thoughts for future reference.

One major advantage of reflection is that it helps reduce or prevent the repetition of past mistakes. It is often said that it is only a fool that does the same thing over and over again and expects a different result. Reflection however excludes brooding and blaming oneself for disappointments and failures in the past year. There is need to learn from the mistakes and let go of the hurts and pain that the memories may carry with them. Remember failure is not falling down, but staying down. What better time to stand up and make progress than the beginning of a new year?

### Vision

Vision is defined as the ability or an instance of great perception, especially of future developments. It is simply the ability to see beyond the present into the future, that is, foresight. While reflection is a mental picture of what has happened in the past, vision is a mental picture of what you would love to see in the future. A vision can also be defined as a thought, concept or object formed by the imagination. In the season of new beginning, you need to take time out to visualize and imagine what you would like to achieve in the new year. Remember that many great innovations and inventions today started as thoughts in people's mind. Therefore, don't be myopic in your vision, dream big regardless of your present circumstances. Even the Holy Bible stresses the power of the mind and the importance of vision, it says, "as he thinks in his heart, so he is". This implies that you cannot make remarkable changes or record commendable progress without a change in perspective, perception and visualization.

However, as much as it is necessary to "dream big", there is also need to make your dreams as realistic and attainable as possible. You don't want to dream ridiculously high and end up achieving nothing eventually!

### Planning

After having a clear vision and proper understanding of what you would like to achieve,

the next important step is to make plans towards the fulfilment of your dreams. Failure to plan, is planning to fail. Planning requires that you count the cost, consider sacrifices you'll have to make, map out strategies and gather as much relevant information as you can before embarking on this journey.

For example, if your vision is to start your own business, you cannot just go ahead and open up a store. You need to consider how much you'll need as capital, understand the nature of business you want to venture into, understand how profitable or marketable it is, the kind of prospective clients or customers to expect, learn insurance policies, how to manage crisis that face newly established businesses, etc.

One of the major aspects of planning is to cut down your vision into sizeable chunks that you can achieve a step at a time. These sizeable chunks are known as goals. No one goes to the market, buys a quarter of a cow and cooks it whole! Sounds ridiculous, right? That's exactly how it is to think you can go ahead and achieve your aim without setting goals to achieve per time.

Planning is very essential as it forms the bedrock on which every other decision and action lies. And of course, making plans ahead saves you unnecessary stress when opportunities comes; for you already know what to spend your money and resources on.

### Corresponding Action.

Visualization and proper planning are of no use when they are not backed up with corresponding action. It is as futile as the efforts of a farmer who clears a piece of land, plants his seeds and leaves without watering, the seeds will most likely not germinate. Important actions defer based on each person's vision. Someone who wants to lose weight may have to exercise more often, another person might need to attend more business conferences and read books on financial management, another might need to acquire new skills for more effectiveness at work, a student might need to take more time to study and cut down his/her leisure time, etc. Whatever is required for the fulfilment of your vision and achievement of your goals is worth giving your time to. Taking action is not always easy, I must confess, yet it is possible with focus, determination and hard work. Discipline is also required to do what is expected of you whether it is convenient or not. You don't wait till it's convenient before you follow your plan, but rather you follow it meticulously and religiously.

When you feel weary, look forward to the end you desire and let it motivate you, close your eyes and dream anew, look within and draw your strength from there. It's a new year and you can decide to make a difference. All it takes is to visualize, make plans, and act. Dream big, go for it. It is absolutely possible. I believe in you!

Fadare Mary Moyinoluwa, Nigeria



5...4...3...2...Happy 2018, January is here. If you are familiar with Kiswahili, you know how the prefix 'n' added to this month defines the mood. This January 2018, I wish everyone would get a fresh start by forgetting time. Yes, I know how hard it is to do so; when the purse is drained, the sun is scorching and each date of the calendar is split into fractions to give a month with 60 days.

To first forget about time, we must not be very stringent with resolutions if we do not have the patience for the journey of achieving them. Resolutions come with deadlines and very few will admit to being motivated once April sets in and you are below par. Do not count days to your birthday, surprise yourself by forgetting it. After all, you will be a year older and it will just remind you how much little time you have left. Let those who care to say so remind you of what a happy birthday it is.

For new beginnings, you must erase all this fuss about time. Imagine a newborn baby growing because its body knows it should and not because the child wills it. If anything, the body's interpretation of time has been proven to be a function of mind control. One could have a sixty year old body with a thirty year old mind which could translate to a sixty year old body. That is precisely the notion I have when I ask you to ignore the resolutions.

A fresh start is by reflection, seeing yourself in the mirror and absorbing that. Approach this January as you would a mirror; no one rushes to fix the reflection. Instead, we use the image to tweak the little mistakes we see. But once you are away from the mirror, you trust that you look good and have faith in your corrections.

A fresh start need not be marked on significant dates like New Year. Everyday is signifi-

or forge ahead in the Gregorian calendar. living. You would live on.

ference.

When we forget about time, I believe we of tasks, that is your time well spent. start living in abundance. Who says you do Just bear in mind that with new dates comes not have a whole week to learn a new lan- the same old you. That is not such a bad thing, guage? Perhaps the same person who insist it is in fact better if you endeavor to improve that you should have time for a week-long on this. The journey of new beginnings can activity by their standards. Time is flexible wear one out but if you just remember to in everyone's hands, malleable to the will of forget time, you might be shocked to find a person. Hence everyone should get stan- yourself at the end. Happy new beginnings dards for their own time.

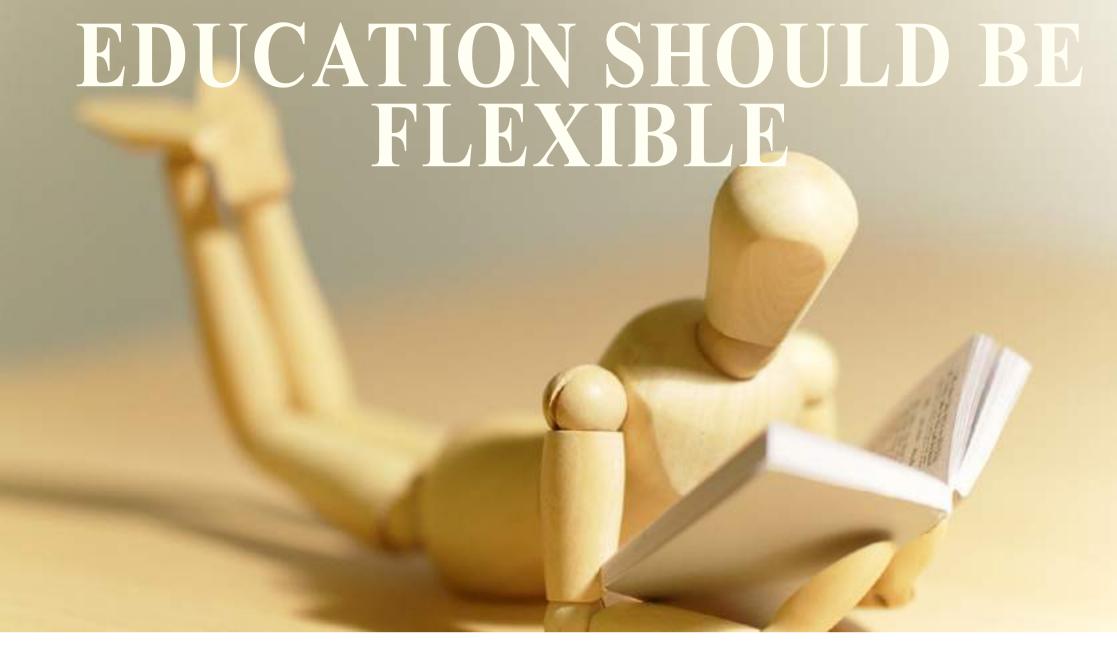
King Solomon says that some experiences in this life are a given. But dwelling too much Edith Adhiambo, on what next time or year will bring kills Kenya the fun of the middle passage between birth and death. It is not easy to stay calm during mourning. Neither is it acceptable to have the blues in a party. But do you know why time heals wounds? Time waits for no man. Time does not obey human definition. Is that not why we have imperfections in our calender? Like leap years or daylight saving?

cant enough to start a change. Imagine the Last year, with all its horrors and sucesses is calendar difference you would experience simply setting stage for this year with all its when you land in Ethiopia and find out that splendour and tears. Time will move on and they are still in 2009. Would it make you feel everyone will line up hopelessly to claim younger or reduce your age? Would you dis- their minutes and nanoseconds, filling that qualify the years ahead that you have lived vacuum of the continuum occupied by the

Forgetting about time is not being late, Time is a continuum, but when it imprisons throwing caution to the wind or betting on you to constantly chase after the wind, it is a chance at the expense of hardwork. It is plannotion. For all we know, we might be 11.86 ning for everyday like a gift, cashing in on years younger by the standards of Jupiter's its value and appreciating it. You had betrevolution. All nuances of time oscillate be- ter enjoy doing one thing for eons than hate tween two concepts: birth and death. You doing a million tasks in a week. If you learn are then, you are not. The continuum be- how to value a new day, can you imagine tween these two concepts makes all the dif- the magnanimity of a whole year's value? This means that if one enjoys handling a lot

and many more to come.





Some of us have got tough times in school, others have not, do not and will not. But until I see Education become what it ought to be, I will not be quite satisfied with our educational system, neither will I let any school teacher take the glory of having made me whom I am or who I will be as regards to career success. I say so because only a few teachers are doing a great job, and that is because they do not have all the power to change the system.

Education is an all-round thing. There is much more to it than what comes into our minds when we hear that word. Have you eaten chicken today? Now, take a sip of orange juice. It's not always sober and frowned faces when it has to do with 'Education'. I need you to follow me through this journey. While I write, please read, consider, relate, register and share your views. It is a beautiful part of education to share opinions, to unlearn and relearn.

We know that lots of people have written books on why students fail, and how to make a distinction in an examination. Students have read these books and they keep failing tests and examinations. But there is something that marvels me about some students who have tough time making good grades in examinations and class tests. I will cite my examples with persons involved in this reality. It is something that I have taken my time to observe and I will not entertain any pride blowing their trumpet.

You know, Sarah is young girl I met at school. She is my junior, who spends lots of her time watching movies, especially Korean movies. Some people attribute her poor grades to her watching movies, but I have seen Sarah read during exams and I don't think so. One need not turn the head upside down before they can read and understand as much as they should for an examination.

But you know what? she thrills me when it comes to being smart. I mean that she's good in tough games and current affairs that I'm far from. Sarah knows the Bible better than an average Christian and better than I do. I think she was exposed to lots of reading and watching that built her brain of information to an admirable level. For me, she knows enough that compensates and advocates for her lack of A1 grade.

A software company director had recruited employees and the best of his workers turned out to be the one with the least of school grade. Being a man of experience and open minded fellow about life, he didn't fear to give her a trial, on seeing her CV and interviewing her.

Oh! Don't start chewing me up yet. I am not saying that you, as a first class student is unappreciated or invaluable. If all the first class students in my class were the only students we had, class would have been boring beyond our imagination because right now, it is quite boring. But I also have backbenchers sit like dummies! but most of the time, it is the low grade students who bring up innovative ideas and click a button of laughter and liveliness once in a while. I Hope you're not planning on alighting from this first class train. The journey has just begun and I see you liking this last part of it.

Everything that I have written up there boils down to saying that Education is not exactly what it ought to be! Here is a fact; we don't have dull students, we have inflexible teachers! All living things digest food; but in different processes. What exactly I want us to know and discuss is that most times, it is not the students being unable to learn, understand and reproduce; it is the teachers being unable to feed, or say, impact.

What we expect today is; students should sit in a class and listen to boring speeches in the name of lectures every day. It is worse in West Africa from my research and observations. Children are expected to be in school from morning till evening. There are no practical, intelligent and recreating extracurricular activities. People are so busy starting up academic institutions, not having innovative ideas of how to impact knowledge. There are so many forms of impacting knowledge, and a person cannot be expected to fit into a particular method. That is a height of ignorance on the part of teachers, as long as education is concerned.

#### A teacher be flexible.

The younger generation need to be better than we are. They shouldn't be penalized for not being able to pass an exam and forget that they can do better in a system of not having to read a textbook and memorize it, remembering its pages and sub-headings, and reproducing it in a black sheet to be marked and graded. Everyone have different memory capacity. Anyone can understand a thing that she/he is meant to understand if they were taught in the different ways which they tend to understand better. But what happens? A particular way of teaching; a particular expected way of learning.

I hate a system of education which forces students to do something that will not help them through life. I hate this system of education which makes a fish dwell on ground. I hate a system of education which confines her students in a classroom, that when they come out to the world, they are confused. I hate a system of education that confines students within the four walls of boredom. I hate a system of education that ignore values, etiquette of communication, etc., and fail to encourage decency.

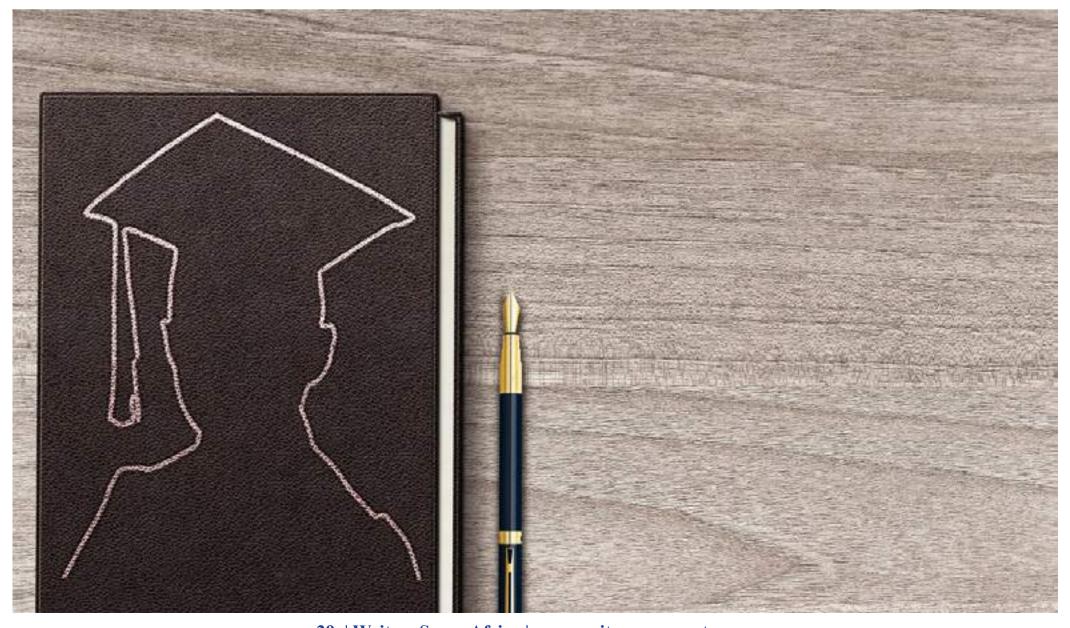
Education is beyond a teacher pointing at the board. Education is beyond imparting. For me, "EDUCATION IS DEVELOPING OR TRAINING THE MIND OF A PERSON TO THINK BIGGER AND BETTER, AND EMPOWERING THEIR HANDS TO ACT BIGGER AND INVENT SOLUTIONS".

No one is perfect, definitely, but then, there is a level of perfection education should bring to us, starting from how we speak to people, to how we relate with them, even to being able to come up with solutions, both personal and societal. I feel like we have a system of education which brings unnecessary excitement; excitement that "Oh, I got an admission", and after all, a graduate cannot make a simple CV to find a job. A graduate cannot critically analyse situations. A graduate cannot speak in a way that attracts and keep attention. It is unfortunate where we are at.

If I were to be given an opportunity to suggest a system, it will be practically one that gives every child a chance to discover themselves, to think wild and be criticised, to invent within the four walls of school and to be confident at the time of graduation that "I have arrived and I am ready to face the world!"

This system of education that forces a fowl to live in the river shrinks creativity, liveliness, initiative, and should be discouraged. It's time to start anew.

Blessing Chidinma Amadi, India



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### EPISODE 1: ABOUT THE MAN

There is no doubt that our world is woman will love only the good side of mountable challenges.

man, the Adamic folly you hear about. stake. Man is polygamous in nature. Yes, like a butterfly bent on kissing every colour- This is one of the reasons men get anful flower that catches his attention.

Don't even compare an animal to man. mous right and the alarm is sounding! Not even the goat or doggy dog the Don't judge him for being a man and crown head of escapades because, none that is a whole lot if you ask me. of these has it that the housemaid can it becomes an issue. You don't even look for a saint, who doesn't exist. come across as an animal ready to conquer more women for his harem.

of her league of faults? Trouble is, a that animal instinct away from him.

changing fast from complex to compli- man and hate his faults with passion, cated with its attendant ills of unsur- even complaining to people who have no idea of what is actually at stake. Well, Every real man loves many women; some of these people even dare to bear you can bet that is the animal side of witness to what they believe is really at

> gry when women get jealous; just because the man displayed his polyga-

conveniently assist madam when no- My thinking is, if a woman wants to be body is looking. If she gets bolder then a man's one and only, then she must

Trouble is, the easiest things do not come easy; the boy will one day become A man believes anyone who loves me man and man will be man. However, must love me with all my faults. Don't the woman can always fight a man for we all know that the woman is also full unfaithfulness but she can never take



## Success by Endurance:

A TALE OF NAHIDA ESMAIL

### by Sandra Oma Etubiebi

Every lazy person will suddenly become filthy rich on the very day excuses become a trade commodity on the Stock Market. Excuses are the bane of lazy people who will most likely never succeed. Many tangible and genuine successes are traceable to series of actions and consistencies despite daunting opposing situations. At Writer's Space Africa, one of the World's Best Empowering Platforms for African Writers, an evening spent x-raying the life of one of her indefatigable members is the backdrop of this narrative. Tanzanian Writer, Social Networker, Mother and Proud Muslim, Nahida Esmail epitomizes, for the community of writers, a picture of rising literary success, which is not a product of happenstance, but a lingering lasting tale of success by endurance.

A Writer's Unique Start time, Nahida was shop- da Esmail made a remark-Nahida

Esmail started ping for books for her little able decision to be that writing her first book to daughter's book collection missing Tanzanian author solve a nagging problem when she suddenly real- of children's books. When she just couldn't shake off: ized she could hardly find asked why, Nahida had the dearth of children's one written by a Tanzanian this to say, "I wanted my books for Tanzanians writ- author. Without prior book daughters to read about ten by Tanzanians. At that writing experience, Nahi- Tanzanian characters, and

I came across this quote by Toni Morri- writers to write fiction. Her four young read, but it hasn't been written yet, then the City Maasai, Detectives of Shangani, you must write it." This quote became and Living in the Shade: Aiming for the the underlying force that propelled her Summit have all received CODE's Burt voyage into an unknown territory with Award for African Literature. In 2015, faith and confidence. Her first book, "I she was also honoured with the Tanzania am Musa" is about a young Muslim boy Women's Achievement Award in the edliving in Durban, and how he was help- ucation category. Nahida owes her book's ful to his parents and enjoyed variety of participation in the BURT Awards to her Musa as "a well-balanced boy" while her challenge. It was a remarkable twist that full color, self-published children's book book collections into a literary voice for about an elephant taken from the Holy social causes in Tanzania. Quran but set in the plains of the Serengeti. With two books down, Nahida did Rising Influence of a Social Networker thing.

Books

to the therapeutic world of writing. Ac- tion that "everyone had a role to play," knowledging that she was indeed gifted prompted Nahida to visit a Publisher to express herself in ways that could help telling him she wanted to "write a book her give back to society, she continued to to educate people on albinism." The Pubwrite with even greater depth of creativi- lisher looked at her, and knowing she had ty and meaning. Her decision to continue never written such before, responded, writing paid off; now, Nahida Esmail is "Submit your story in 4 weeks and we an award-winning author of four young will enter it into the BURT award." That adult novels, author of four textbooks; was it. In 4 weeks, Nahida met the deadtwo for secondary and primary school line, and submitted a story about a girl levels each, and author of ten children's with albinism. Her title was shortlisted picture books; three of which have been and her book, Living in the Shade, won translated into Swahili and another into the 2nd prize for BURT in 2012. Maa, the language of the Maasai.

Nahida never fails to appreciate Cana- da is also an energetic athlete who furdian philanthropist, Mr William Burt, for ther amplifies her voice for social causes, starting the BURT Award for African Lit- outdoors. She has participated in a num-

son, 'If there's a book that you want to adult novels: Living in the Shade, Lesslie activities. Nahida's quest was to portray ability to meet the deadline of a writing second book, "Mahmood my Hero" is a elevated Nahida from a mother building

not stop there, she had discovered some- Nahida, having lived away from DarEsSalam for 15 years at the time, became overwhelmed by the ugly media cover-Amazing Journey to 4 Award Winning age attacks on people with albinism in Tanzania. Albinism affects one in ev-Nahida's first two books introduced her ery 1,400 Tanzanians. Her deep convic-

Beyond writing for social causes, Nahierature to promote and encourage African ber of outdoor events like cycling and

est once.

sively on her personal climb as well as tion. the climb of her characters via her blog at www.nahidaesmail.com and on other news media, spreading more love and awareness towards the plight of those Nahida describes herself as "part-time with albinism.

Education and Role Model Influences as rica WhatsApp platform, she was cajoled a Backdrop for Her Writing Nahida's rich repertoire of activities and revelation was inspiring. Nahida said, results raises curiosity about her educa- "My day starts as early as 4am. It gives

mountain climbing; in 2016, Nahida cy- many influences on her amazing personcled 377km from Mount Kilimanjaro to ality. Nahida graduated from Goldsmiths Ngorongoro Crater to raise funds for ac- College, University of London, with a BSc cess to clean water in Africa. In anoth- in Psychology and completed a Masters er event, she lead a team of women on in Child Development with Early Childa mountain climb to the peak of Mount hood Education at the Institute of Edu-Kilimanjaro for WHY PAUSE NGO as a cation, University of London. She is well way to create awareness on the need for travelled and has lived in London, UK; better healthcare education in rural Tan- Cairo, Egypt; and Durban, South Africa. zania due to alarming high infant mortal- She enjoys reading, cycling, mountain ity rates. Her efforts were rewarded with climbing, photography, and exploring enough funds used in purchasing prena-the world with her children. When asked tal equipment for a hospital in Karatu, whether her educational background had Tanzania. Nahida has reached the sum- a strong influence on her writing, she was mit of Mount Kilimanjaro twice, Mount quick to say, "Yes, my educational back-Toubkal (Morocco) once, Mount Fuji (Jaground, perspective on life and my role pan) once and reached Base Camp Ever- models do have a strong influence on my writings. My story about girls with albinism was not only an effort to edu-Nahida's latest young adult fiction in the cate the Tanzanians on the plight of those Living in the Shades series, Aiming for with albinism, but it was also to make me the Summit, infuses her love for moun- understand their feelings and empathize tain climbing with her support for the with them, so I could reach out and help. care and respect of girls with Albinism. In the same way, my writings are realis-She wrote about a group of girls with altic and relatable stories with strong social binism and their brave attempt to climb themes." She proudly spoke of her moth-Mount Kilimanjaro as a means of raising er, her elder brother, Jodi Picoult, Khaled an awareness of their unique condition. Hooseni, Toni Morrison, Oprah Winfrey, Aiming for the Summit won 2 BURT and the Prophets as role model influencawards. Nahida has since written exten- es from whom she draws a lot of inspira-

### A Day in her Life

writer and full time mother," and during an evening x-ray on the Writers Space Afto unveil a typical day in her life and the tional background, upbringing, and the me an opportunity to pray, reflect and

ready for the school bus. As soon as she writers in Tanzania and the rest of Africa. leaves, I wake up my younger daughter and repeat the same routine. I drop her We asked Nahida to counsel budding

niece. I try to fit in about a 10 to 15 min- endurance. You have an idea, you sit utes powernap in the afternoon.

dinner ready, making sure the girls finish be a writer." homework, and uniforms are ready for the next day. With great difficulty, I am da's daily schedule was simply awesome endurance. as it showed off the super woman in her.

### Her Lessons for Today's Young Writer

Nahida Esmail has shown initiative, resilience, and consistency in applying her

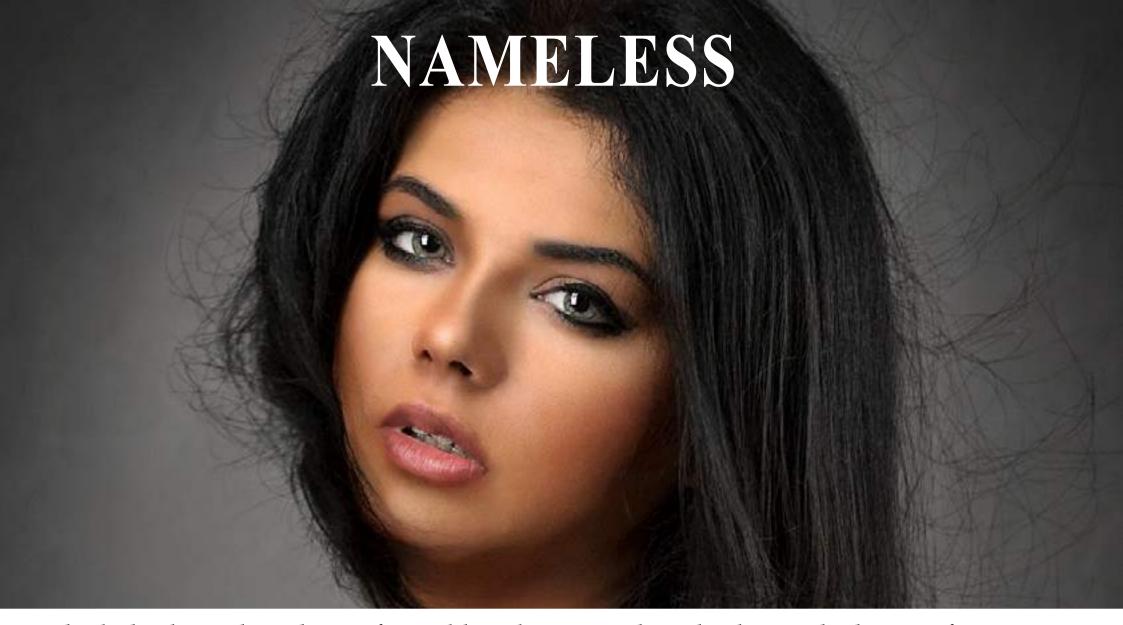
write while the world is sleeping. I wake innate writing ability to social good. An up my older daughter at about 5.35am, set amazing indefatigable personality, she is the breakfast table and make sure she's definitively a rising role model for young

off to school by 7.15am. Then, I go for a writers, and she gracefully obliged; "Read walk every other day for about an hour. a lot. Read a variety of genres. Read the I shower, eat breakfast and then my day classics. Read authors of different nationbegins. From about 9.30am to 1.00pm is alities. Read about your history. The first my work time for writing, phone calls etc. step to writing is actually writing, even if it's just one sentence. Don't allow nega-Depending on what day it is, I may cy-tive people to scare you off. Africa is in cle, play squash or go for a swim in the need of more writers. You don't know ocean. Keeping fit is my great way to get your potential till you try it out. Rememthe blood and ideas flowing. My younger ber, JK Rowling was rejected by about 9 daughter is back by 1.30pm. So, setting publishers for Harry Potter, and Jody Pithe table for lunch, picking her up, feed- coult was rejected 100 times! Writing is ing, praying, and homework make my not all about talent. I have many talented afternoons busy with my daughters and friends who don't write. Writing is about and you write it down. You write till you complete it. Then you re-write parts of it. Evenings are spent getting the table for That's endurance. That's what it takes to

Reading Nahida's unambiguous sometimes able to fit in about half an hour words and listening to her crystal clear of work somewhere in between. Reading voice, you cannot but applaud a unique time before sleep is an absolute must. I writer making Africa proud, helping let them read whatever book they want those with Albinism find hope, and showand also read a book for them. Lights go ing younger African writers that success off by 8.30 or 9pm. Not a lot of time to get is not by chance. Excuses will never trade creative, but that's my typical day!" At on the stock market and success does not Writers Space Africa, we thought Nahi- fall on the laps of the lazy. It comes by

> Sandra Oma Etubiebi (Sandra Unlimited) is the Billionaire Writer who writes for solutions. With an enviable portfolio of high profile clients, Sandra is renown for content & copy that moves readers to action. She can be reached via documentsbysandra@gmail.com





The light danced on the rooftops, like a lover sneaking back into the house after a moonlit rendezvous. Lightly it brushed the window and turned away only to come back once more. The occupants of the house slept quietly unaware of this scared dance of sunrise, expect one. She stood at the balcony letting the tender rays of the sun play mischievously with her hair. This was the only time she felt like she belonged; when this strange new world slept and she watched it from the balcony of the flat she shared with her uncle and his family. It was a year and a half since the Incident and she still felt like life was happening to someone else. Her cousin, Bertha found her half an hour later still on the balcony. "You'll need this; first day and all," Bertha pressed a hot cup of coffee into her hand. "Do you ever sleep at all?" It was a rhetorical question. Bertha slept in the room next to hers and Grace knew Bertha heard her nightmares and the restless shifting that followed.

"Are you excited?" Bertha asked now. "I feel like I'm going back into the real world. To be honest, it's a little unnerving," Grace confessed. Bertha patted her on the shoulder encouragingly. "Come find me when you are done. I'll drive you," she grinned and went back into the house. Grace nodded absently and forced down the swarm of anxieties that threatened to drown her resolve. The truth was that, she wanted her life back and as far as the legal system was concerned she had it. The only person holding her back these past months was her.

Four years ago when she was eighteen, she met Kuda. It was a typical whirlwind romance at first. In six months they got married and she had truly thought she had found her happily ever after. Her parents were angry at first that she had refused to pursue a degree in favour of marriage but Kuda had paid the bride price in full and given Grace a white wedding; that had seemed to placate them somewhat although they maintained that everything had moved too fast. A few months into the marriage, Kuda became overly possessive and quick to anger. "I am no longer taking you out to dinner. You are always dressed like that and other people smile at you," he would say.

Grace would frown because it was Kuda who had bought her the dress and it covered her completely.

The jealousy moved to baseless accusations, which in turn lead to him constantly going through her phone and bag. Within three months she was barely leaving the house at all. She was cut off from her family and her friends. Once, Bertha had come to visit unannounced whilst Kuda was at work. When he came back and saw her, he lost it, accusing Grace of conniving against him with her cousin. That was the first night he shoved her. "I do everything for you and you bring people into this house to talk about me behind my back," he had shouted at her after shoving her to the floor. She had lain there long after he had gone to bed wondering how she had ever mistaken that mad gleam in his eyes for mere jealousy.

Kuda came from an estranged family so she hardly knew anyone from his side to talk to. The one time she tried to talk to her mother had been a disaster. "You chose this against our wishes. Be strong. Marriage is hard." Grace was sure it wasn't supposed to be hard, at least not like this. The man she had married had seemed sweet and caring but the one she lived with was a monster filled with rage, jealousy and insecurities Grace had no hope of smoothing. Everyone kept telling her to be strong but she had no idea what that meant. Did it mean she shouldn't cry when he beat her until her teeth rolled on the bedroom tiles? Did it mean she should believe him when he told her she had made him do it?

The night Kuda died, he came home drunk on rage. The previous night he had raped her then told her it didn't count because she was his wife. That last night he came in and started beating her. The entire time he kept saying, "Look what you've made me into." Grace could tell that this time was different. He seemed to seek some sort of redemption by laying the blame at her feet. He had beat her within an inch of her life when she realised he meant to kill her. Some long forgotten self-preservation instinct kicked into gear and Grace crawled on the bloody kitchen floor to get to the knife she had been using to cut up vegetables. Without thinking she turned and slashed blindly. She heard the wet gurgle Kuda made before she saw his open throat.

In court she pleaded self-defence. Her family had disowned her. Her friends shunned her. The court granted her her freedom. Her uncle had taken her in and she had been in self-proclaimed solitary ever since. A few days ago she had realized that almost two years had passed since that night. She had realised that despite everything she had been through she was still here. That no matter what people said about her struggle and the darkness she had lived through, she had survived and perhaps one day she could help other broken people live with their sharp edges and ugly angles. So here she was in Bertha's car entering the university campus grounds. She waved Bertha goodbye and rushed into her first psychology class. She beamed at her classmates because for the first time in years she could envision a future for herself. She wasn't just another nameless victim of domestic abuse; she was starting a new chapter and her name would be brave.

Kimberly Chirodzero, Zimbabwe



The day I met you I couldn't believe it. You were sitting across from me, clad in a well-tailored blue suit, looking like a finer version of Boris Kodjoe, sipping on a glass of water and concentrating on the laptop in front of you. You looked like everything I ever dreamed about, my very own Mr. Right, except you hadn't noticed me yet or maybe you had and were just pretending.

There I was still nursing a broken heart, thinking I would never be lucky in love, little did I know my luck was about to change that day. Well, I was wearing my lucky dress, a flare mini floral dress that emphasized my curvy body and showed my perfect legs. So I wasn't too surprised. I had no makeup on because I dressed in a hurry and didn't feel like it, but now I wish I had taken my time to put on some makeup. I couldn't help but notice the way your eyes cringed as you concentrated on your laptop like you were trying to figure something out. As you looked up and caught me staring, I quickly removed my eyes and started rummaging in my purse as if there was something inside I needed to find. I took out my sunglasses and put them on so you wouldn't notice I was looking at you.

I looked up, you were standing right in front of me, much taller than I expected and even more handsome. For the first time in my life I was short of words. If I told my

friends they wouldn't believe me because they always said I was gifted with a sharp tongue and I never lacked what to say even in the most awkward situations. I heard you ask if the seat beside me was taken and I can't remember whether I answered or not because the next thing I knew you were seated next to me and every word you spoke took my breath away. You said I looked like the girl of your dreams, naturally beautiful and sexy as hell and even though I thought you were the sexiest man alive, I didn't tell you that because I was playing hard to get. Once we got to know each other, we realized that even though we were a bit different, we complemented each other. I hate that you loved football but I watched it with you because it made you happy. You hated my chick flicks but you watched them with me. I bet you secretly liked them because you watched the full season of Sex and the City with me, and till today, you still call me Carey because you think both of us are so much alike. Though we fight, we makeup and the sex is wonderfully crazy.

You said I am such a girly girl and I told you you needed to get in touch with your feminine side and quit being strong-headed all the time. You claimed you were a better cook and I just indulged you because I liked watching you in your briefs as you bustled around the kitchen trying to cook what you labeled the most delicious meal I will ever taste. We told each other everything, even the most stupid things and sometimes I still can't believe we are where we are.

Every day with you is like a new adventure; I never know what crazy agenda you have up your sleeves but I always look forward to it. I remember the day you made me breakfast in bed, I cried because no one had ever done something like that for me and when I wouldn't stop crying you promised you would never make breakfast in bed for me ever again if it upset me so much, but you did it again the morning after, and the morning after that saying till I get used to it and stopped tearing up, you would not stop. You have treated me like a queen and made me feel like the only special girl in the world. I can't imagine being with any other person but you; you are all I want and all I keep dreaming about. On Valentine's day you took me to the same restaurant where we met and after we had dessert you brought out the most beautiful ring I had ever seen and asked me to be the only one that will make you happy, laugh at your silly jokes, tell you you look hotter than Boris, and complete you for the rest of your life.

And as I opened my mouth to say yes, my alarm rang. It was 5:30am and I had been dreaming all along. Where are you my Mr. Right? It's high time you stop coming in dreams and show yourself.

Christine Anikpeh, Nigeria

#### With Rukewe in Italy

"This is Italy. It is risky for you. You should return to your people, unless you want to die young too." Those naked words continued to clang in Uloma's ears like some church bells by the wee hours of dawn. It was Rukewe who had pricked her soft 'yellow pawpaw' skin with the needle of her mouth, at the hospital, the other day. Uloma stood before the mirror on the wall, staring at the orange dots in between her breasts, the slight rings on her neck, and the wrinkles that glued to her forehead like three lines of tribal marks. With all those face primers and lotions lining up in the cabinet, she was dying slowly.

"Oh lord," she cried pulling her hair worn in rubbery dreadlocks. She snatched one container of Mary K face powder and smashed it against the wall as if there was solace in the pieces. "Please, lord, heal this dying creature."

The whole agita started some weeks ago, when Rukewe contracted a strange illness. And the red-head doctor said her condition would continue to deteriorate. She looked pale, her hairs thinning and falling out so easily like dry baobab leaves.

"Italy is not safe," Rukewe coughed and struggled to tell Uloma on the hospital bed. Uloma bobbed her head.

"You will be fine," she said stroking her friend's shoulder. Italy was harder than she'd thought, it was different from what Madam G had claimed.

"Italy is a business hub for smart Nigerian girls. They come in and make cool cash." Madam G, Uloma's pathfinder used to sing in her small office in Lagos. She had helped many girls into Italy. "When you get there, you will serve me until I recover my money," she would say. Uloma had agreed to Madam G's terms. Her freaking naive ass had then made its way into Italy.

It was during her fresh moments in Italy that she met Rukewe, an experienced prostitute who kept narrating her many escapades with dogs, dogs with thick and thin rods.

"Just fuck anything fuckable and your bank account swells with foreign currency," Rukewe would say.

"It is only a man's thing that will pass though my legs," Uloma would always contend, circling two fingers around her head and snapping them afterward.

But she had Madam G to refund, a mansion to build at home. Papa needed money to expand his clothing line, mama could buy more Hollandis wrappers, Gideon and Mary would go to University. With all these targets to meet, she was swayed into acting like Rukewe.

"Double the pay for the dog's thing or I'm off," She'd insist. "Okay I will," her clients would reply. And the dog's thing would make its way inside her.

Rukewe coughed again and Uloma took her fingers.

"You'll be fine," Uloma assured her.

"No I won't," Rukewe said in between chokes and coughs. "I'm going to die."

"Please, be kind to yourself. The doctor is working hard, come on."

Rukewe continued to make kpoho-kpoho sounds until she coughed out the words that Uloma was not prepared to hear.

"This is Italy. It is risky for you. You should return to your people, unless you want to die young too."

Uloma felt some hot coals burn through her chest. The hairs on her skin rose. Her lips quivered. She started to softly pull the strands of hair slanting on her forehead, suddenly Rukewe started to convulse on the bed. Uloma rushed out shouting for the doctor.

Rukewe kept shaking until she heaved a deep sigh and stopped moving. The doctor simply wagged his head and said, "I'm sorry, she's gone."

Uloma continued to smash every cosmetic her hand reached in the cabinet. She tore her skimpy top, the brassiere padding her breast, and then got out of her bump short. She was stack naked. She started to cry and cry until her whole body was like wet banana stem, and her eyes swollen.

"Lord, heal your possessed child," she cried. "Give me a chance for a new life."

She pulled her drawer and took out a pocket size bible. She hugged it, and on her knees, started to cast and bind and rebind the spirit of prostitution, until she had no more strength. She lay on the floor wheezing.

The following week, Uloma parked some clothes into her box. She had decided to return to Nigeria to begin a new life, a life devoid of sexual profligacy. But many things raced through her mind as she locked the door. The most perturbing: The orange dots on her breast.





#### The Caine Prize 2018 for African Writers

The Caine Prize for African Writing is a literature prize awarded to an African writer of a short story published in English. The prize was launched in 2000 to encourage and highlight the richness and diversity of African writing by bringing it to a wider audience internationally. The focus on the short story reflects the contemporary development of the African story-telling tradition.

The deadline to enter the 2018 Prize is 31st January 2018.

#### Eligibility

- 1. Unpublished work is not eligible for the Caine Prize.
- 2. Submissions should be made by publishers only.
- 3. Only fictional work is eligible.
- 4. Only one story per author will be considered in any one year.
- 5. Submissions should specify which African country the author comes from and the word count.
- 6. We require 6 copies of the work in its originally published version.
- 7. If the work is published in a book or journal, we would like to receive at least one copy of the book / journal and five photocopies; but particularly where several stories are submitted from one anthology we would like if possible to receive six copies of the book / journal itself.

If the work is published online, we would like to receive six photocopies.

For more, please visit - http://www.caineprize.com



#### **Calling all African Writers!**

Writers Space Africa, an international literary magazine which features rich diversity of writings from African writers to a global audience, is calling for submissions for the February Edition. The theme of the edition is LOVE. Please send us your creative piece but consider the following:

Articles/Essays: 1,200 Words

Drama: 1,000 Words

Flash Fiction: 100 Words

Poetry: 1 Poem, maximum of 18 lines

**Short Stories: 750 words** 

Visit: http://www.writersspace.net/submission/ to upload and read the terms. Entries close January 15, 2018





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## ASALSAOF VORDS

**DAVID NJUGUNA AND OPEN MIC NIGHTS** 





Writers Space Africa is an international literary magazine, which features rich diversity of writings from African writers to a global audience.

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# The friction between the pen and the paper can be lubricated by inspiration





Melissa Sanyati tightened the scarf around her head and looked away from the lovers walking along the Thames. She berated herself silently as she began walking back home. She was a fool for falling in love and today she felt even more foolish. She had never minded Valentine's Day before but this year with her heart foolishly longing for a man, who did not want it, she found herself hating the red roses, pretty gift bags and the ever-smiling thongs of lovers. She had no idea how she had ended up here; in love with her husband. Love was never part of the contract she and Chris Harper signed. All she had to do was sign her name on the dotted line and get a contract marriage and citizenship. That is what she had wanted; to stay in London and continue her hard-earned business. She had not considered she might develop real feelings for her fake husband.

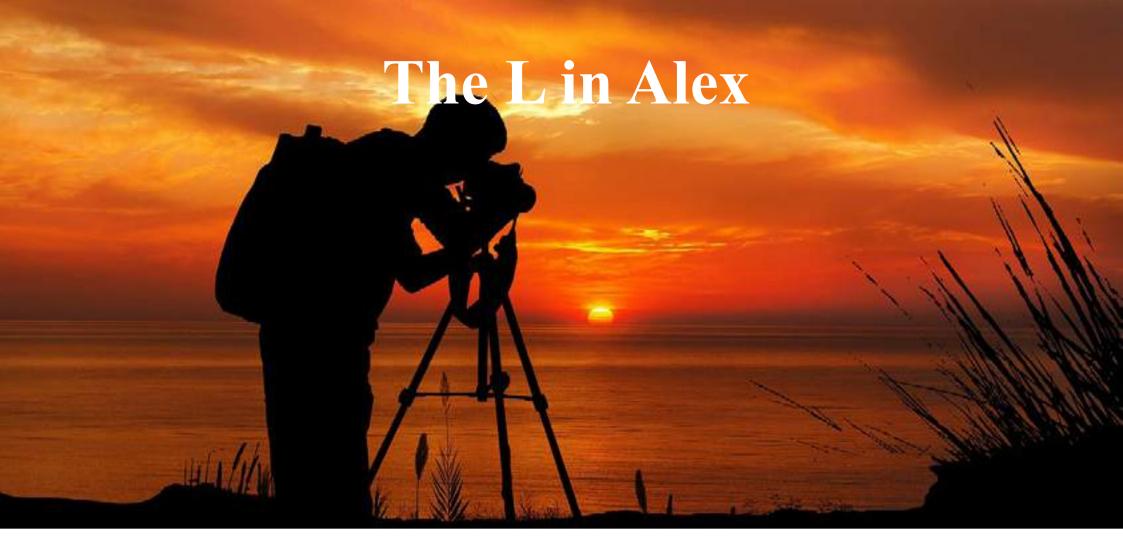
She might have been deported back to Zimbabwe if not for her friend, Vimbai Mufudze who had come up with the crazy plan to marry Mel off to her other childhood friend. Melissa had never met Chris before and he had returned to London to take over his late father's business at the same time Melissa's visa was almost up. Marrying for anything other than love seemed horribly immoral but considering the auditing and accounting company she had built from scratch in the past three years and the reputation she had gained as one of the elite best, Mel knew that she had to sacrifice her happily ever after. She had built a life for herself in London and leaving was impossible so she let Vimbai introduce her to Chris Harper.

Mel had been unprepared for the phenomenon that was Christopher Harper. He was singularly captivating, like a modern day Adonis. She could not understand why such a handsome and wealthy man would agree to a contract marriage. "He needs the best auditor for his father's business and you need a contract husband. Chris has been unlucky in love and it's not like he's waiting for true love so he'll sign his name next to yours on the dotted line," Vimbai had explained happily. Mel knew Chris only agreed to marry her because of the guilt over abandoning the family business and his father's dying wish that he continue that business. They agreed that it would be a marriage in name only and that after an acceptable time; they would both go their separate ways.

Their honeymoon was spent pouring over Chris' financial books. True to her reputation, Mel had Chris' business sorted out in no time and earned herself the genuine respect of her husband. The first month they were both awkward around each other and would sneak into the kitchen for snacks whilst the other was sleeping. The second month they became shy friends and discovered they had very similar interest. By the third month, they were going out together since they enjoyed the same things or so they claimed to themselves. By the fourth month, Mel knew she was in trouble when Chris began making her dinner.

Now Mel pushed open the front door to their house and froze. Red rose petals were strewn seductively on the floor beckoning her further into the house. Frowning she followed the trail all the way to the other side of the house. There on the patio, a table set for two with decadent dishes, a bouquet of white roses, and her favorite bottle of Italian red wine. Chris stepped out from the garden arch and came towards her. He took her hands into his trembling ones. "Mel, sweetheart, I know neither one of us got into this marriage for love but I must confess my love for you. Maybe mine isn't the love poets would write about but these past months with you my heart has opened and I am truly in love with you," he looked earnestly at her as he continued, "I'm violating our agreement but I didn't plan on this; I just woke up one day and realized if I had to get married again, I would choose you." By now, Mel was smiling and crying at the same time. "Please say something," Chris begged her. Mel did the only thing that she could; she stood on tiptoe and kissed her husband, igniting an explosion of emotion that had been lurking in wait since their wedding day.

BY
KIMBERLY CHIRODZERO ,
Zimbabwe



It was a day like any other. The rain poured; rustling, howling, wetting the shantytowns; claimed its supremacy and went it did. The sun shone high, defying the clouds that were dominating the mid-summer sky. Slick with the sleets of mud the earth seems to take pride. Regaling in its mighty traction-less surface it splashed, tripped and ruined all that came before it. Yet it was not a generic day for Alex.

He was a man of purpose. He knew what he wanted and went after it with lackadaisical zeal that made it seem as if he was not looking for anything. He was a man of few words and even fewer actions. His life was no different either; he never married, bore children, or lived with someone else. His days were spent roaming the streets as a photographer and his nights were spent on edit-ing his photos. He preys upon his trusty laptop fine-tuning his photos every night with a beer in his hand and a cigarette clenched between his teeth.

He took out his trusty FuJi X-1 camera from his pocket and fiddled with the dials. The screen on the back of the camera suddenly came alive with a magnificent spectacle of swirling colors and people. He smiled in a self-assured way. He loved the summer, the cascading rain, the commuters uninhibited rush to avoid wetness. You can only capture humanity at its best when no one is looking, he mused to himself. After setting the dials for optimum exposure, he surreptitiously pulled down his camera to his side. He had only two days to complete his submission for The World Press Photo Awards. He was feeling optimistic.

His eyes wandered on the vista before him to a middle-aged woman selling roasted corn by the side of the road. Scanning the street upward and downward in search of a customer, she continues fanning the ember of the dying coals up front. Alex toggled the dial on his camera to live view mode. The wide-angle lens did what it did best. The woman comforted herself in the mid-dle of his frame. He zoomed on her face marveling at the hardened and chiseled features. The penetrating eyes stared defiantly ahead. For a moment he thought she was looking straight at him. Blink,

Alex triggered the shutter to fire off successive shots in perfect synchronization with the moment. "Alex"

Her voice broke him out of the trance he was in, quickly pocketing his camera he replied sheepishly, "Yes, Weyzero Askale"

"Didn't see you there. What are you doing in the middle of the road?" she asked.

"Waiting for someone," Why was he lying to her about photographing her? He unceremoniously put the thought aside and changed the subject. "Can I have some corn?"

The woman smiled at him warmly; a simple unassuming grateful smile that seemed to radiate from her core.

"Here you go my son," she extended her hands with a freshly roasted corn. Alex reached out and took it. Handing her a 10 birr bill, "how's business?"

He already knew her response as she reached for her change purse "it's slow today…" she broke off mid-sentence then let out a piercing scream. Alex jumped in alarm. "What happened?" "It's gone!" tears flowed down her face in agony.

"What's gone?"

"My money! It was here! They took it all I'm ruined!"

"When?" Alex was flummoxed with the sudden purse theft that seemed to emanate unexpectedly.

"Here, just before you came. It was beside me when I was fanning" The woman stood up and started shouting "Leba! Leba", Thief! Thief! People swarmed the place. Alex spotted uniformed police officers coming through the crowd, as the woman sat desolately with the bystanders closing in.

His hands wandered towards his camera-laden pocket with instant worry. Alex kept silent even though he knew he had to say something. He had one camera, his trusty comrade. Admitting he was taking shots will most certainly cause him to hand it over as evidence. Even if the thief got apprehended through some sheer luck the chances of him going for another shoot seemed slim to none. He knew the photographer would be needed to give testimony. Such a shame, he pondered as he thumbed his pocket absent mindedly; the bulk in his pocket felt unusually inaccessible as his fingers strained to reach the camera strap. Two days to go and he had taken the perfect shot. Alex took out the camera from his pocket.

By Misak Workneh, Ethiopia

# Magic

Like a trick of magic it's thrilling to the eyes that see
And an art to the man who performs it
Love is a mystery to those who witness its pull
A blessing to those who live in it
But just like magic, believing is key to feeling the thrill.

Nicole Enwonwu Gandaho Benin Republic

## MY BIRD

I had a bird in hand who was one of a kind. With colours of every band, none like her I'll ever find.

Golden beak and silver claws,
Beauty not another bird comes close.
Purple feathers and eyes of pink,
Love was written in each of her blink.

I gave my all for her so, she would love me more But one day my bird escaped from her fold The cage she tore, with the very claws I adored.

Friends comforted me,
Said; if the bird was truly yours she would fly back to your tree.
If she doesn't then she wasn't meant to be.

Well, my bird hasn't come back then since,
May be she is afraid of her own sins.
Her memory is all I'm left with.
I had a bird in hand,
I loved her more than two in the bush..

David Gitau, Kenya

# Love with a gypsy woman

I sat with my sad mood in my usual nook At the park reading a book.

As she passed, my melancholic persuaded her to take a second look.

She got closer wearing a smile on her face

And said "Hi, my name is Grace"

"Why read all alone in this lone place?"

I replied with a smile

And said "such is my style"

"Whenever loneliness soak me up, I come out here to catch fan for a while"

With ease, she fell into deep love with me

So we kissed, we laughed as we walked along the sea.

As more days passed, our love only grew into fame and glory

So I got lost in love with this gypsy woman

Forgetting all I have is only but the moon and the sun.

Her company is so much fun

That I loved especially, when she become nude

But just like a dream, I woke up one night wearing my old mood

Because she is born a gypsy so she has gone away for good.

Wisdom Koffie Kpodo, Ghana

#### She had loved

Down the disturbed tunnel
Underneath the fiery eruptions
And the noisy prattling
Insults, rejection, and spanking,
There laid a fragile heart
Docile, tender, charming
Laved, charged with love
And tameness of a dove
All she can have
All she can serve

A heart crushed and rattled
Starved, bared, shattered
Battered, wounded, humbled
Had cried, and died, and settled
Her smile erratic, her soul fickle
She had loved and cared
Pushed, and followed.
But it's late. It's all torn apart.
The links ar'out of place

Shimbo Pastory, Tanzania

The centre cannot hold.

Tears cannot help, sadly,

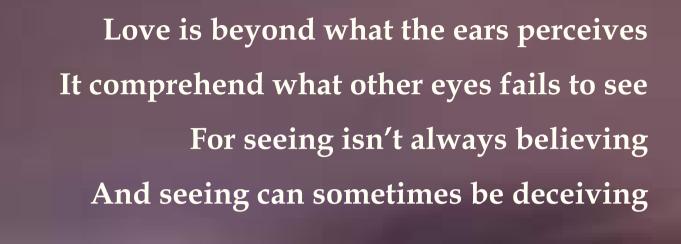
Though her soul had truly loved.

#### LET US BE ONE POEM

I know my soul is a complex of ballads &odes, A barn where harvested poems are stacked, But let me stare into your eyes, my fair one, For there are sonnets scribbled therein, Written in verses of infernous passion And if only you'd affix your hands in mine, We will become an anthology of poems, To be read by our estranged lovers-The ones who promised to be rainbows To scare away the floods of gloom, But left when clouds gathered in our eyes. The curvy figures of speech may become amoebic, For I have seen metaphors, melt like candle wax And oxymoron, made morons out of poets; But if we superimpose and become one poem, And heated arguments tear us apart and break us into lines, After enjambments have tried in vain to keep us together, My fair one, we will surely be re-united by verses.

Ogwiji Ehi-kowochio Blessing Nigeria.

## LOVE AREN'T BLIND



But love surmounts it all

Love is faith

For faith sees not

Rather believes in the unseen

It takes a leap of faith

To jump into love

Because love is unpredictable—but very believable

Love aren't blind LOVE is .....Love

Wanangwa Mwale,

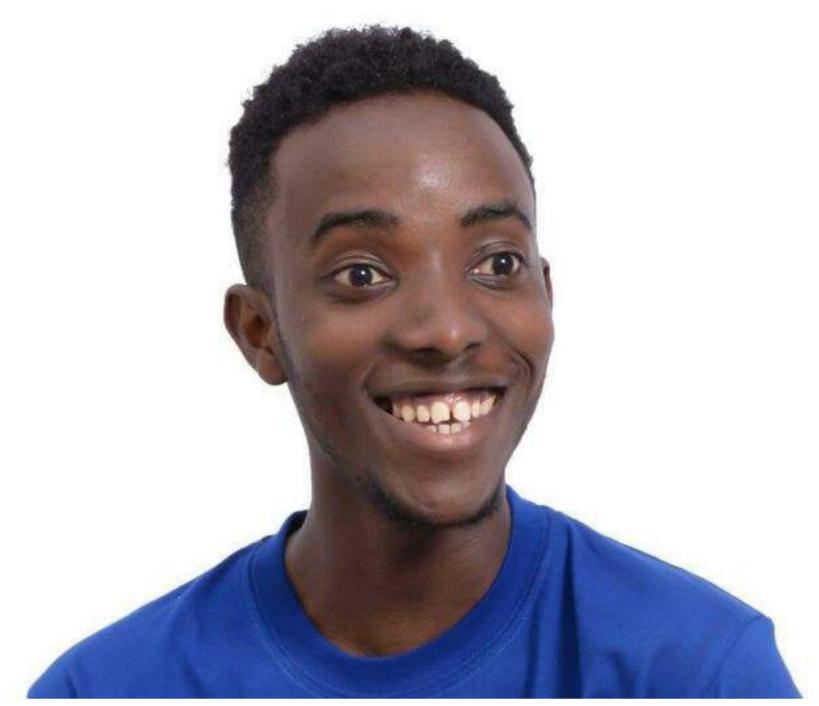
Zambia -

## Love, what art thou?

Shall I compare thee to a snowy day? A day so icy we miss the golden smile But you are more like a night in May A sky so dark you can't see a firefly I fail to fall and I know not why Love lies not within my grasp, If death be my only escape I seek my grave For love has defeated even the brave Who am I then to fight for love? Thou hast weakened mighty man of valour Yet we know not your touch .smell or colour Oh! Oh Love! What are you? If you be the food of the soul .I shall die starved For in all my life I know not what it is to be loved If you be the music of life .let silence drive me insane If you be the light of life I choose to remain in darkness If you be the source of warmth in this cold world I shall. shiver to death If you be the answer to all my questions let me die ignorant.

> Sostina C. Magorimbo, Zimbabwe





#### Salsa of Words

David Njuguna and Open Mic Nights by Sandra Oma Etubiebi

"Poetry is to me a salsa of words dancing with emotions on paper and speech. And I love it." - **David Njuguna** 

He loves writing so much that if both his hands were cut off, he'd still write! Loving anything artsy fancy, music, poetry, photography; David Njuguna is a sucker for the Arts.

David and I settled into a comfy chat about his writing and spoken word adventures which trailed off into chats on cats and writing with no hands. This amiable sappy and sensitive writer fell in love with the world of books and writing from the first moment he could comprehend words.

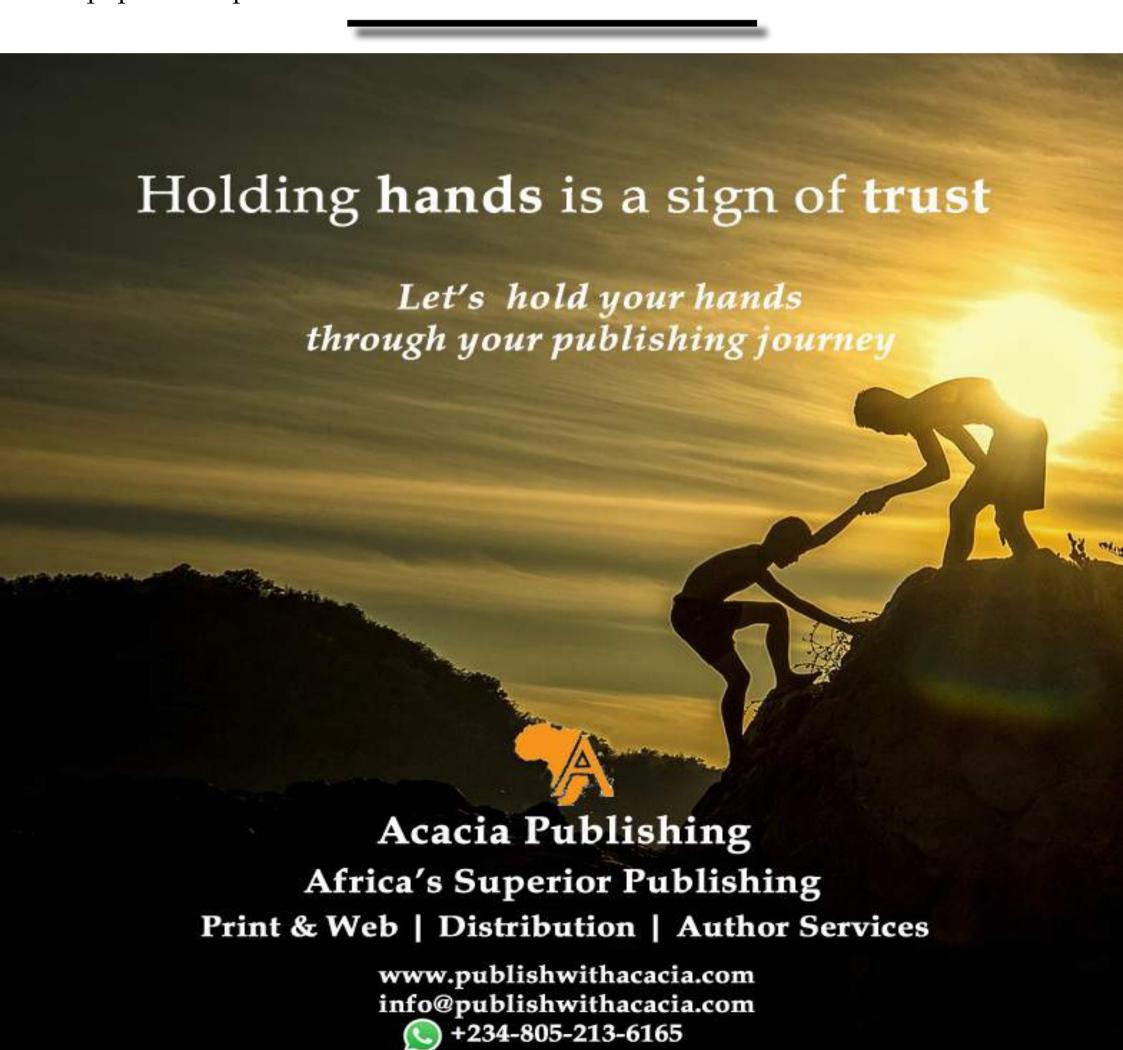
He performs at Open Mic Nights at the Kenya National Theatre in front of large audiences that number in their hundreds, and alongside artistes who brace diverse themes and socio cultural perspectives. David's first open mic night was at a camp experience in the year 2015. It was an amateur attempt that would lead him higher and higher to breathtaking stages of lights and thunderous applause. The competitive nature of open mic nights, the poets in their genres, and excitement of words blending with more words have made David no stranger to the open mic nights at

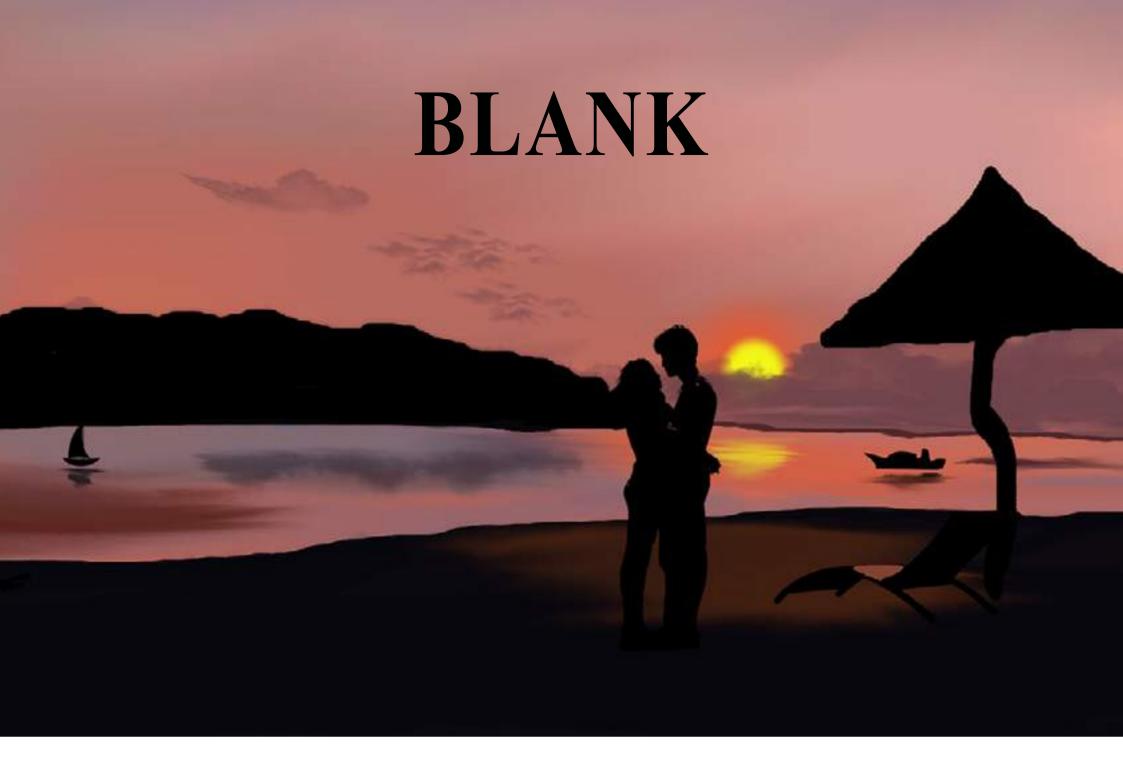
the 'pawa254' and Goethe Institute in Kenya.

David Njuguna is a young poet rising from obscurity as he blazes his unique trail in a masterful blend of words, words, and more words. He believes in the relevance of poetry in everything happening around us. Quick to point out that poetry was one of the oldest art forms used for teaching and giving instructions, David strongly advocates that to make changes in our world, we can pull the heartstrings of humanity through the instrumentality of poetry matched with action.

Studying for a degree in The Creative Arts, Film, and Media at the Kenyatta University, David Njuguna is optimistic that school presents a minefield of ideas and social interactions that greatly benefit any word artist. His artistic expressions can be read via his blog www.poartblog.wordpress.com.

And as the young poet and I kept chattering about cats and writing with no hands, David intently whispered, "Poetry is to me a salsa of words dancing with emotions on paper and speech. And I love it."





'So I don't know if I should start asking you out,' he said, holding my soft hands with his firm, strong ones, and his eyes not the wide, bright ones I used to know, were now slightly closed, red, and laced with affection.

I smiled and told him I didn't know, the choice was his after all, mine was to enjoy the attention, the attraction, and to say No. But as I looked at him, I knew I had made a terrible mistake, I should have just started another conversation to cover it up. God! His gaze was enough to undress me. I quickly moved my hands and he looked away, trying to secure my hands again, anything to stop him from looking at me like he would make love to me at the spot.

'I love you,' he blurted. I knew that whatever would keep me in check would have to be God's miracle. 'Not only do I love you, I want you,' he stressed. Those words shook me as an earthquake shakes houses, and I went blank, not knowing what to say, do or look at, because he already had my face turned to face his. I couldn't but look into his lit up eyes, our noses up close to each other, I could feel him breathe, and I found myself praying, God please help me, please.

Nanaaysha - Shittu Aisha Adetoun Nigeria



Machozi walked along the dark and lonely street; her thoughts louder than the sound of her own footsteps. The Almighty had denied her a fair shake of life; for what was a wealthy woman without a womb, if not empty?

Then she came across him. The crying months-old angel was wrapped in a bundle of torn lesos and dumped among the stench-filled garbage bins.

When she picked him up, he smiled, and his coffee-brown eyes shone like the sun melting her heart like ice. And just like that, two strangers from two different worlds; but love at first sight!

Joyce Nawiri, Kenya



She sat pensively by his deathbed, reflecting back on the years they had shared. It had been a sad violent marriage but she had endured.

Now after twenty years, death had knocked at her husband's door and brought her life.

As he breathed in his last, she breathed in her first of freedom.

She would be inherited by her husband's brother as custom dictated. Into the arms of her only true love, the elders would unknowingly thrust her. She had loved him from the days they played kalongolongo by the river, And now death had brought her love to her.

Edith Knight, Kenya



We are accepting submissions from African writers, for the March Edition of Writer Space Africa. Published every month, Writers Space Africa is an international literary magazine, which features rich diversity of writings from African writers to a global audience.

#### Please submit either of the following:

Articles/Essays - 1,200 Words

Drama - 1,000 Words

Flash Fiction - 100 Words

Poetry - 1 poem, maximum of 18 lines

Short Stories - 750 words

#### Please note the following:

Due to the number of entries we receive only selected authors will be published. Your work must be neatly typed and uploaded in MS Word format Only. Remember to edit your work. We are allergic to unedited works although we will edit all selected entries. Your work must not have been published anywhere and please submit in one genre only. Author retains copyright.

Some selected published works will be featured on our website.

Deadline is February 10, 2018.

Please fill the form below and use it to upload your work. In case of difficulty, contact editorial@writersspace.net. We always reply our emails.



Empowering African Writers

THE STATE OF LOVE IN A MAN'S HEART

Kweku Sarkwa, Ghana

MAMA, ME AND MY GIRL

Meaza AkliluHade Ethiopia

THIS LENT Shimbo Pastory, Tanzania HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC: SHOULD IT BE A WORK PLACE ISSUE?

> lohan Osadiaye, Nigeria

THE PHYSIOPSYCHO-NEUROENDOCRINOLOGY
OF LOVE:
GOOD CHEMISTRY
Edith Osiro Administor

THE PROMISE

Kenya

Kimberly Chirodzero Zimbabwe

UNBOXING A LITERARY DIVA:

The Untold Story of

Sbonelo Mgilane

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MARCH 2018 EDITION

# Editorial

Growing up, we had that most treasured one toy. It was outside. This toy outside had many thrills and adventures than any video game ever invented.

We would sweat out our little brows climbing trees, skipping rope, racing, football, swimming and all those outdoor games you enjoyed.

Fast-forward to today, just look around you. What's there to smile about?

Dry riverbeds, dusty fields and dry air under the scorching sun. By the human hand, forest paths paved way to streets.

Massive logging, where day in day out, trucks drive out of forests loaded with fresh cut trees. I don't hear of replanting.

Nobel laureate Prof. Wangari Mathaai once said "If you destroy nature, nature will destroy you!"

Nature and human beings should play the 'rub my back I rub yours'. Its our responsibility to conserve and protect the forests and wildlife and use natural resources responsibly.

We must mind the welfare of the next generation and set a good example from the word go.

Global warming is our punishment for destructive logging, improper disposal of chemicals and plastics.

There is enough for everyone and everybody, if everyone took the responsibility of managing and conserving nature.

Lets celebrate our important dates in style. Plant a tree during your birthday, anniversaries and commemorations.

Imagine of clean flowing streams, green vast forests and plenty of healthy wildlife. Nirvana country it must be! Plant a tree, save a life!

Wakini Kuria, Chief Editor, Writers Space Africa





Writers Space Africa is an international literary magazine, which features rich diversity of writings from African writers to a global audience.

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# THE PHYSIO-PSYCHO-NEURO-ENDOCRINOLOGY OF LOVE: GOOD CHEMISTRY Edith Osiro Adhiambo, Kenya

Ever wonder why good chemistry is a component of courtship or dating? I mean, why not good mathematics, where good debt scorers date frugal spenders? (BassanioOneSide.) Or why not good social studies where gossip bloggers date paparazzi? (SnoopyNosesOneSide.)

The long of it is that we need CHEMISTRY to love, whether eros, philia, storge, philautia or mania. Love is partly pegged to chemistry; that checklist of "xxx things I love about you". Those of the Christian faith [like me] assent to God's authorship of love. In the same breath, we assent to the existence of science to deduce explanations from God's amazing and powerful creations, like love.

Our bodies are more than cells and tissues that are anatomically linked; there are intricate communication systems between the hairs at the tip of the cranium to the nails at the tip of the toes. These systems consist of nerves and chemicals that physiologists call neurotransmitters. These chemicals produce a diverse chain of reactions which teach the brain to love.

What psychologists postulate in their science has been tried and tested experimentally to conclude that various love stages are linked to various chemicals. Lust, the first stage, is an estrogen-testosterone game, and largely the latter's. Adolescents, when they have a surge in these hormones, experience human sexuality with an intercourse angle to it. Punishing or ignoring this sexual phase of teenagers' growth will serve more trouble

than counseling or guiding would avert.

This infatuation or attraction stage is blamed on Dopamine, the body chemical implicated in addiction. Dopamine says "You're my all/crazy in love/love is blind/if loving you is wrong." The fight-or-flight adrenalin hormone literally activates the heart to produce testimony to the cliché lines of "can't sleep/ tongue-tied/sweat at your sight/ belly butterflies/check me out/Bolt heartbeat/love is heaven". Some quarters suggest that increasing Dopamine levels can boost romance. This, theoretically, can be achieved by eating foods rich in the dopamine-forming protein tyrosine. Pharmacologically speaking, drugs with dopamine-like activity tend to cause side effects like abnormal dreams, confusion, dry mouth and decreased blood pressure which might affect mental acuity or hallucinations. It is safe to say that some people are present with these symptoms when they fall in love.

Did you know that the reason morphine, heroine or codeine (collectively called opioids) work in the human body, is because the body naturally produces its own opioids complete with their own sites of action? This pharmacological fact supports the healing, loving and euphoric properties of endorphins, the human opioids. Dynorphin, enkephalin and leuenkephalin are three endorphins that leave us elated after hearing, dreaming or being with our laazizi. In Kiswahili, a proverb advises about "that which the heart loves being a drug". In the case of a broken heart, endorphins and oxytocin can cure that. Tears produce endorphins and relief; trust a woman to confirm that. Now you know why love is analgesic and how an aroma therapeutic bath of lavender spikes endorphins for a romantic feeling.

So what about non-sexual love? Science pins it on oxytocin and vasopressin. Produced on the brain's pituitary, oxytocin acts on the uterus to expel fetus during labour and stimulates bonding between a lactating baby and mother. It is suggested that hugging, presence of an infant or eye contact boosts oxytocin which drives stage four of love, attachment. Now we see the science in spending time together with one's beloved, as oxytocin does not cultivate the abandonment habits of reptiles to their young. Rather, oxytocin makes humans, eagles, wolves and prairie voles unique because they choose to stay-attachment, commitment- pinnacles of love.

Vasopressin, also used to adjust the body's hydration status, is the territorial chemical that defends a loved one. It is higher in males which supports the provider-protector role of men while higher levels of oxytocin support the nurturing role of women.

We are only beginning to grasp the psycho-physio-neuro-endocrinology of love. Isn't it amazing that emotion might have logic behind it? Therein lays the potential to pharmacologically decipher autism, postpartum depression, emotional impact of parenting or lack thereof, and interpersonal relationships. Have a chemically loving year.



I am my mother's first child. I used to think that she barely loved me. She neither spoke to me nor told me how much she loved me. One flabbergasting fact was that she let me do anything without word from her mouth. And whenever I asked why she was stiff in her expression of love toward me, all she did was whimper. There were times I pondered how much pain I may have caused my mother during conception or delivery to warrant her supposed "lack of love" toward me. Only God knows!

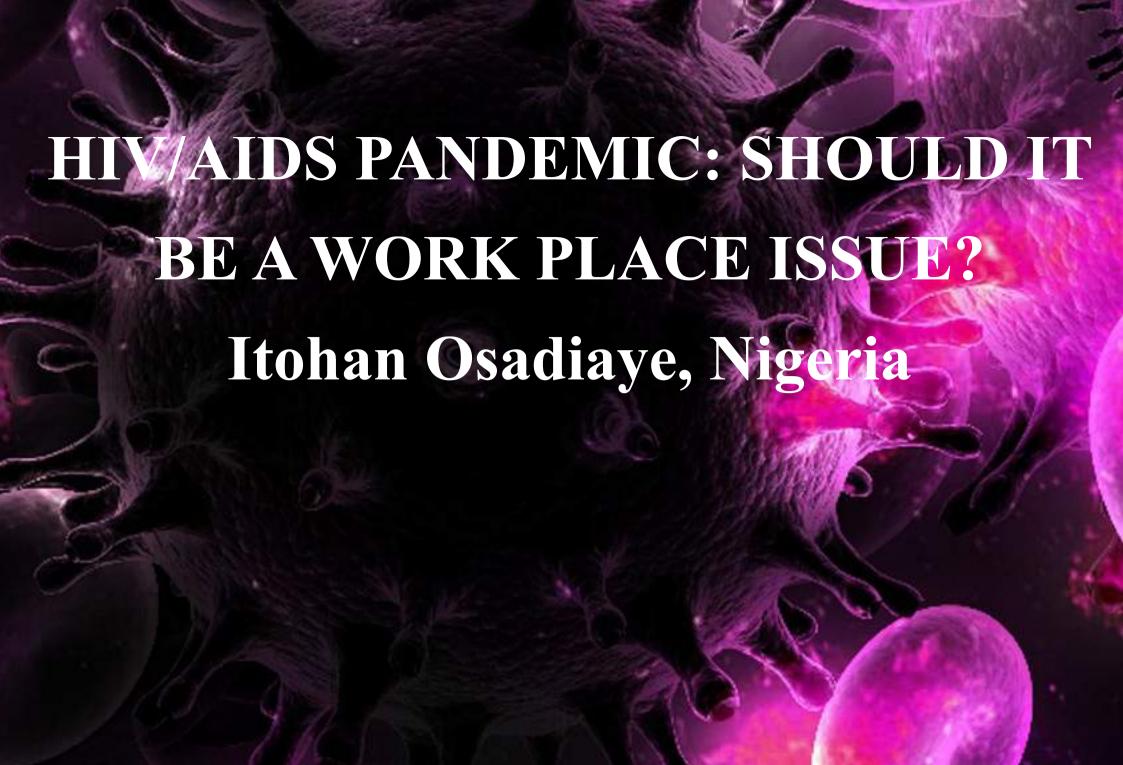
All of these thoughts clamored in my head until now. Today I mother a beautiful baby girl. And I believe that I understand better, and have answers to the questions to which I sought answers. I may not know everything, but I definitely understand what motherhood is and how it feels.

My mother was a construction worker. She wanted the best for me, so she handed me over to my grandma while she got busy on site. She was simply protecting me from all the daily labours, hustles, bustles and jostles. She wanted me to grow up in a more familiar neighbourhood filled with love, care, and calmness.

As at the time I was grown and admitted into the university, she didn't show signs of sobriety. I could almost hear myself yell in my heart why the hell is mama not crying? Hell no! She doesn't miss me. Little did I know that she was only putting up a show of confidence in me. Oh, sweet mama.

Then I fell in love. He was my first boyfriend. Still my mom said nothing about him. Her reason: she didn't want to interfere with my decision, and as well, scared that if she said anything contrary, I might not share my ideas another time. And when she freely accommodated my boyfriend in our home during his visit, in spite of side talks, she was only making sure that she was next to me in case of anything bad, and ensuring that she watched every move of his.

Today I am pretty sure that she loves me a lot. I find myself being jealous and over protective of my baby girl; just like mama. I know I will do the same, even when I am not talking or speaking. And I know that someday, too, my girl will grow up to understand this and follow suit.



HIV/AIDS is a dreadful illness that is presenting organizations or the workplace with challenges. According to the International labour organization, "HIV/AIDS is a major threat to the world of work. It is affecting the most productive segment of the labour force, reducing earnings, and imposing huge costs and loss of skills and experience. In addition, HIV/AIDS is affecting fundamental rights at work, particularly with respect to discrimination and stigmatization aimed at workers and people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS".

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a global issue and has eaten deep into the very fabric of every society. The rate at which people are infected with the virus is increasing daily. Aids kills people at the prime of their lives, which are most likely to be the work force of an organization. Due consideration has not been given to tackle this as a work-place issue. Most organizations do not give adequate attention to the issue of HIV/AIDS, particularly here in Nigeria. Should HIV/AIDS be a work-place issue? And if it is, how should it be handled?

Let's take a look at the history and the definition of HIV/AIDS. The first known case of HIV/AIDS was reported in 1981 in the United States of America. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which causes AIDS, is a virus that breaks down the immune system of the infected person. The virus, once contracted by the human body, evades the immune system defenses and attacks it, rendering the body defenseless. Following the weakening of the immune system, the body becomes vulnerable to opportunistic infections such as diarrhea, tuberculosis and the

likes. HIV by itself is not an illness but a virus and does not instantly lead to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome). It should be noted that HIV takes time before it becomes full blown AIDS. A HIV infected person can live a normal life for several years before he/she develops AIDS. There is usually an incubation period between HIV infection and the onset of AIDS. A drug was actually developed called the anti-retroviral drug, to reduce or suppress the rate at which the infected person is attacked by opportunistic infections.

The emergence and spread of this disease has had a dramatic impact on every facet of life, particularly the work-force. The International Labour Organization (ILO) recognizes HIV/AIDS has a threat to the world of work. The ILO has, therefore, developed a code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work. This includes prevention of the spread of the disease, management and mitigation of the impact of HIV/AIDS on the world of work, care of and support for workers infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, non-discrimination in the case of employment and continuing of work, confidentiality and a whole lot of others.

This code of practice formulated by the ILO was to help organizations tackle the issue of HIV/AIDS in the world of work, but most organizations are not aware neither have they taken cognisance of it.

The human resources are the most valuable assets of any organization. The persons that are most susceptible to the virus are those in the prime of their lives, which happens to be the work force of any organization. HIV/AIDS is already a work-place issue whether organizations recognize it or not. It would be a grave negligence with severe consequences if organizations do not regard HIV/AIDS as a work-place issue. The issue is that organizations do not want to be public about the disease because of fear of tarnishing their image. It should be noted that the improved management of employees will lead to improved performance for organizations. This goes to show that a sound performance of an employee will lead to greater output which of course, leads to an increase in organizational growth and stability. The productivity of an employee depends to a large extent on his/her health, and HIV/AIDS poses a great threat to the health of the employee.

The question that might arise then will be: should an employee be terminated based on his/her HIV status or based on his/her productivity? Agreed, every organization had a purpose in mind before its establishment which was [and still is] to make profit at the highest rate, and anything that seems to thwart on that purpose should be dealt with. An employee knowing his/her HIV status has nothing to do with the company's level of profit, as long as the employee is productive in his assignment. What if the possibility of having infected persons to non-infected persons in the organization is on a ratio of ten to three and the infected ones are the most productive and the best employees the organization has got, will they all be sacked?

As mentioned earlier, HIV infected persons are those in the prime of their lives and which

happens to be the work force. It is also evident that these persons spend most of their lives on their job, thus, it is the responsibility of an organization to take steps to recognize, prevent and tackle this issue alongside the ILO code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work. The fight against prevention, discrimination, stigmatization and a whole lot of others is not only the responsibility of the government, but a collective effort as the disease is also a threat to economic prosperity of a nation which definitely, starts from the organization. The organization should therefore not turn a blind eye to this issue.

Actions should be taken by every organization to combat the spread of the disease by putting in place preventive measures; providing information to employees and educating them about the disease; treatment, care and support should be given to the infected persons; equal rights to basic allowances and treatment with non-infected persons; and also put modalities in place in the area of non-stigmatization and non-discrimination of infected persons.

The need for the management of this disease is crucial because the 21st century organization is a knowledge based organization and the knowledge or skill needed might just reside only in HIV/AIDS infected persons. Infected persons should be allowed to provide their skills, knowledge and ability until when they are no longer able to discharge their duties due to complications arising from opportunistic infections associated with HIV/AIDS. The organization also has the responsibility to keep matters of health confidentially, and give cognisance to the ILO code of practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work, putting the necessary things

in place.

# THE STATE OF LOVE IN A MAN'S HEART

Kweku Sarkwa (The Romantic Writer), Ghana



the minds of many people including great poets. lationship experiences. Some people call it the Love is unconditional, love is not selfish, love theory of two halves. One has his own half and is not jealous, love is not painful and sorrow- the partner has her own as well. When we love ful. So people say. But we forget one thing that each other, we would concentrate on our half by always judges us of our guilt. Because we have clearing all kinds of garbage in our lives in order been hurt once, twice or even countless number to gain appreciation from the partner. The other of times in relationships that we presumed to be half represents our parents, friends, neighbours, full of everlasting happiness, which later turned siblings, family, society as well as partners. If out to be a disaster, we develop the mindset that we truly love that person, we wouldn't interfere we now want to be with someone who needs in each other's businesses. Love is respectful. It us rather than us needing them. Let us have a is best appreciable even if we say no, when our keen observation at this scenario, where there partner politely asks of our help in making deciis a strong relationship between a drug peddler sions. When you love someone, you love everyand a drug addict. The seller has in mind that thing about that person including his decisions. since the buyer is in drastic need of what I'm Let us consider a relationship between a dog and selling, even if I increase the price of the prod- its owner. The dog barks and wiggles its tail to uct, he or she will buy, notwithstanding, and the show happiness, when it sees its owner coming addict has this thought of slavery to the drug. home, and loves to play with the owner. The seller, as well, is continuously manipulated

True love is not selfish because when two peo-ry. Love does not compel but rather accepts every ple fall in love, there wouldn't be any bargain as decision that the partner makes. In times when

What is love? This has being a big question on When in love, there is this issue that every re-

with threats such as if I don't agree to the buy- The owner feeds it every day, baths it and makes er's terms, he is going to find another customer. sure it is attractive. They both do their duties because they love to do it not because it is obligatoto how responsibilities are shared and executed. the dog expresses happiness through the signs

or not without the dog getting disappointed be- being strongly made. A lot of people are in recause it knows that the owner doesn't get in the lationships because they believe situations will mood all of the time. The dog does not give up change, and that is the behaviour of a dreamer, but continues to display those actions each and but a stalker has his own choice as to stay and every day upon several rejections because of the suffer or leave for good. strong love it has for its owner. If a person loves a dog but buys a cat, how can the cat become a Since love is not expected to inflict pain, it is dog, you can never train a cat to bark. If you want better to quit a relationship that can never floura cat, go for a cat likewise a dog. We can nev- ish in any sense. When you love your partner, er change someone to suit our expectations as you would let go for him or her for someone many people lie to themselves that I can change with whom your partner shall find contenthim or her when we get married. It is painful to ment. Imagine that a woman meets a guy for the let go but it is much more painful and unreason- first time, immediately her hormones are proable to hold onto someone who does not best voked and all she sees is a tall handsome guy fit our expectations. Love does not feel ashamed who smiles at her. Her friends advise her on since every moment spent together privately or the social life of the guy having the possibility publicly with the partner feels fabulous.

swered. Love is the good impression we create engage herself much with him, but she ignores emotionally towards a person internally and ex- them saying it is my life and I choose whoever I ternally. Love does not hurt, love does not cause please to be with not thinking of the risks since emotional injury, and love does not hate. How she thinks she sees stars whenever the guy is can one love and at the same time hate. When around her. A man meets a lady for the first time one sees something beautiful, he appreciates and all he can see is the sparkling eyes of the its beauty, before developing the desire and go- woman, the long stretching eyelashes and eyeing for it. The same phenomenon goes on be- lids, slim pointed nose, long waving brown hair, fore love is completely established. A man or a red succulent kissable lips, well positioned and woman sees the opposite sex, they appreciate protruding nipples in her blouse, staggering their beauty, develop lust before later growing curvy waist, shaking, popping and dropping to form love. So when a relationship destroys, butt and he thinks he is on top of the world. it is because there is no love but only lust. We They both ignore the advice from friends, parare responsible for our own sufferings, since we ents and loved ones because they really think have choices over every decision we take. There that they are deeply in love. The relationship are two types of people in this world, those who does not end well and they both regret but canare dreamers and those who are stalkers. Dream- not go back. ers live in illusions and believe everything is permanent and can never be changed, but ob- Since true love does not regret, they deceive served while stalkers take advantage of oppor- themselves again with this saying and remain

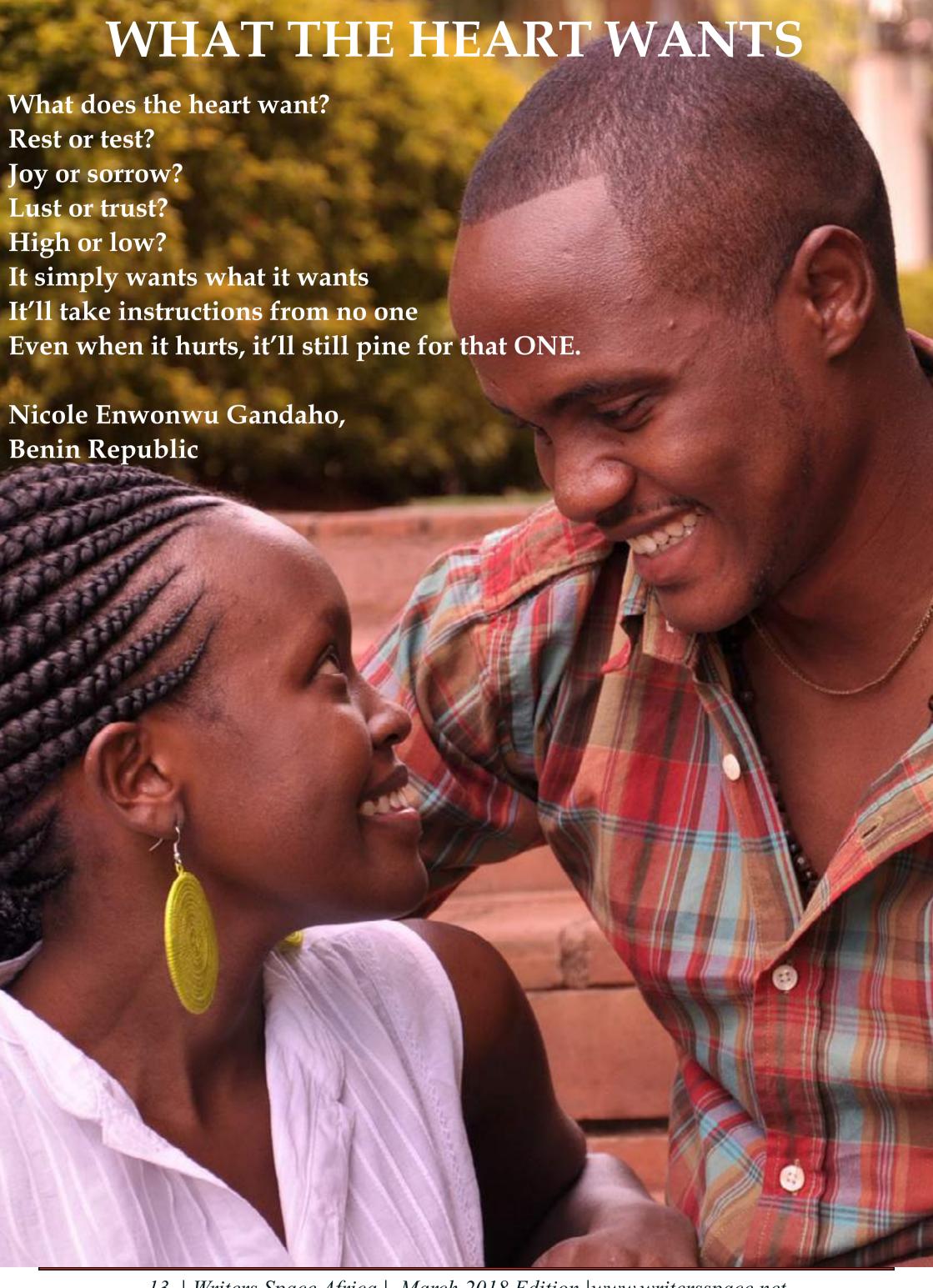
it exhibits, the owner can choose to play with it tunities and take actions after decisions have

of being a drug addict, thief, disrespectful, and abusive but all she can think of is her desire to Is love painful? This question remains unan- crave for him. Her parents also advise her not to

together. That is not love but lust. A person who is in love is like a person having in possession a magic cupboard, where there are all types of food. Many people come and eat from his house without paying a dime and he does not take anything in return so none of the guests tries to hurt him because there wouldn't be any food available for them even if they dare try. Someone comes and knocks on his door saying she has pizza, so, she will give it to him if and only if he does everything she asks of him. He laughs uncontrollably and tells her he has more than enough and that she can even come and eat from the magic cupboard. This explains how people behave when they are in love. One feels it is best to be nice and kind to the partner only because he loves to do it without expecting to get anything in return and loves to be with the partner since he finds comfort in her, and everything about her is desirable. The guests are like the partners who would never hurt you because they love you and would never let go. Even if they have thousand reasons to leave, they will find just one reason to stay because life is beautiful when we are with the right people.

So be with someone who wants to be with you but not someone who has to be with you. That is love in its state of beauty without any misery and mystery.





## Poetry

To listen closely, not just hear, To love deeply, not merely care, To really look, not simply see, To experience an epiphany, To seek the truth, remove delusion, To lift the veil of your illusion, To resist the urge to conform, To bend the rules, challenge the norm, To stand apart from the crowd, To unabashedly think out loud, To break the shackles of society, To be uniquely you, set yourself free, Ideas and emotions in rhythm, with intensity, To express thoughts in such a way, is the mark of poetry.

Oghenede Fidelis, Nigeria



## THIS LENT

Where love is wanting
There my heart is waiting
Where food is lacking
There I bed my fasting
Poor, sick, sad, defeated man
Hungry souls eaten by the sun
Shall find strength when I'm done
Thus I live my Lent
Whether little or much
It matters not as such
Than a change of heart
A conversion on my part.

If I fast a plate
And cannot uproot my hate
Or I pray all day
But cannot tame my say
Or I give out sums
But justice bid not welcome
Or I build God a Church
But oppress the wretch
All is loss, all is distress
Lent goes vain, all hopeless.
Save only a change of heart,
A conversion on my part.

Shimbo Pastory, Tanzania

### CRISIS!

Crisis! Crisis! Crisis!

In our homes, school, offices and country;

Drums of war rolled out everywhere;

Voices crying in awe of a quandary.

**Crisis! Crisis! Crisis!** 

Daughters against mothers, sons against fathers;

Employees versus bosses, all eat at each other;

Institutions leave students to ponder;

Left or right, which way to go, they cannot tell.

Crisis! Crisis! Crisis!

The world's in rumble and tumble;

People gagged by the fear of what's next;

Trepid and foreboding, everyone's in a state of perplexity.

Crisis! Crisis! Crisis!

Tales of war, rumble or tumble, I'm at peace;

For in me dwells the Prince of Peace;

Who calls out 'I'll keep in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on me."

Esho Oluwakemi,

Nigeria

# BACHELOR'S PLIGHT

Alone alone, all alone in the dumb night
On the cold bed where the breeze lain still,
Where silence was loud beyond my hearing,
Where sleep blinded every eye of the earth,
Where the communication of dogs
And cocks echoed in a distance,
Where sleep abandoned me before my plights.
I was only in the company of my irritating thoughts
And the beautiful wishes in my heart.

As my mind wandered away, I felt anxiety Because the man in me yearned for a woman.

A breast to suck, a lip to kiss,

A body to caress, a beauty to adore,

A pleasure to moan, a reason to unlash

My long detained feelings.

But the young night was not nigher to daylight

So that I can go on a search for the love of my own.

But tell me, now that the day is here with me

How can I go on a search when I am a prisoner of doubts and fears?

Wisdom Koffie Kpodo,

Ghana

#### MR HERDSMAN

Mr Herdsman,
Why are you such a hard-man?
You care no less for another's ground,
Invading farms with your long wand.

Mr Herdsman,
Why are you such a bad-man?
You turned your staff and rods into a gun,
and become a life-taking don.

Mr Herdsman,
Are you not a madman?
For your cows, you went on a killing spree,
You closed your ears to a fellow man's plea,
and caused innocent blood to flow like the red sea.
Juwon,
Nigeria





Anne Stuart wrote in her Dark Journey: Strangers in the Night, 'I've always been fascinated with the relationship between love and death. One is the ultimate light, the other is the ultimate darkness and the joining of the two is deliciously terrifying extreme'.

Writing further she said: 'This is a beauty and the beast fantasy taken to the very limit. There is no pulling back from death, no settling down in an apartment with a car garage with the Grim Reaper. In order to love death, you have to be willing to give it all, with no future, no past, nothing but a deep, velvet now. That kind of complete surrender and triumph, can provide the ultimate satisfaction. Small things no longer matter, destiny is in force now and the real world slips away'. For a woman to accept Death as her lover, she must be very brave, selfless and loving. For Death to succumb to human weakness, to a female, he has to be willing to risk everything, as well.

Human emotions are foreign and dangerous. But Death and life are true. For love, life is willing to give everything for the happy ending even as such a union is doomed to be bitter-sweet. But the greatest victories are always so prepared to take a dark ride on life's most fascinating amusement park attraction. Death and it's polar opposite, love. And the mesmerizing union the two create.

In The Dark journey, we see death always in his dark glasses that hides his bottomless eyes. He was in love with Laura who was sickly. The two met for the first time on a troubled night that he was to take Laura into the other world of darkness.

Death was an agent of the dark world but in love he asked his Lord to give him a short while. His plan was to have the chance to love Laura

They finally met and after the façade Death was identified for what he is. Still Laura was not afraid. She cannot imagine life without Alex her loving Death. She was ready to go with him even to the unknown.

Our conclusion is a strong tie between love and death. Little wonder then that lovers are ever ready to die for their love. And death has a promise for Laura, a healthy life in the next world. Well, just maybe, Death is a better Lover than life.



## **Unboxing a Literary Diva**

The Untold Story of SBONELO MGILANE

by Sandra Oma Etubiebi

"Never stop writing. You only get better by practice. Write about everyone. Write well. Write."

- Sbonelo Mgilane

She is the crazy type that won't stop studying. Aspiring for the point where she would no longer have to introduce herself because her professional reputation precedes her; she longs for fame.

Her name is Sbonelo Mgilane, a lover of life, wine, and the arts.

Life, wine, and the arts. Those three elements quickly unwrap the many layered intricacies in the personality of Sbonelo, as she takes us into her world of fine wine and the creative academic.

Her love for wine is legendary. With glowing fondness and a naughty smirk she said, "I love my wine. I love discovering new kinds of wine. I enjoy wine while read-

ing, writing, and socializing. I'm not much of a connoisseur, but in five more years, hopefully, that would have changed."

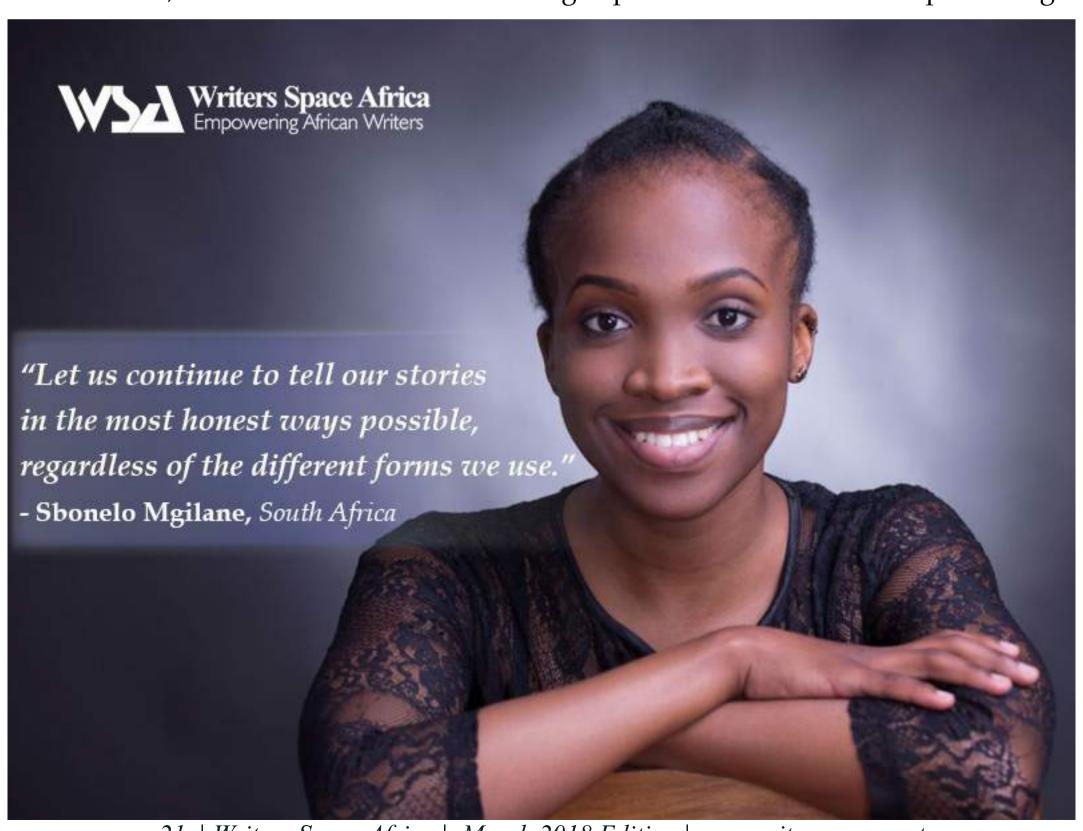
Regardless of her wine loving nature, Sbonelo isn't much of an extrovert. While she enjoys good food and great company, she would rather avoid large crowds. They overwhelm her.

On the professional front, there's a matching glow.

Sbonelo Mgilane is a lecturer of Performing Arts & Production at Creative Arts College, Durban, South Africa. And, as an emerging frontline diva, Sbonelo in collaboration with her partner founded the Durban Women Playwrights DWP focused on developing female playwrights around the city of Durban to make up for the glaring shortage of women in the industry.

She has done a lot of work on the more technical side of theatre; stage management, community theatre work and writing. At the moment of her interview, Sbonelo was preparing for a production piece where she was the stage manager.

She tells us, that she is focused on amassing experience in her field and producing



work that matters. This diva regards a true writer's life as one that worries only about delivering works of quality.

When asked how this studious scholastic mentality began, we unboxed another layer from her history:

Sbonelo grew up with strict parents who held high regard for education, and that quickly distilled into a literary culture for young Sbonelo.

She wanted more books than toys. They gave her exactly that. It was in those moments that she discovered the joys of reading, and developed an unquenchable thirst for learning about the richness of diverse subjects.

"I have never been cool or popular. One would call me a bit of a nerd because when you read a lot, you tend to know quite a bit."

Her family enjoyed her scholastic personality, and Sbonelo was encouraged never to give it up.

Sbonelo Mgilane has grown to become a creative academic who applies her robust knowledge and skills to solve real life problems.

"I would like to inspire others to follow this path as well; a lot of people have so much to share with the world and it is through writing that such stories can reach audiences."

Surely, being a lecturer has its pecks for our fine diva. In her own words, "It's a great feeling knowing, that I always have an audience for the work I produce. Whether it's material I author for my students, or readings we host with other playwrights at the Durban Women Playwrights, it is a great feeling."

In 2017, Sbonelo Mgilane authored plays selected for reading at the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, as well as during Durban Women Playwrights' events, and also published in the Writers Space Africa Magazine.

When we dug deeper to unbox some of the sparks to her creative edge;

We found something dark...

Sbonelo confessed.

She struggles with depression.

There are times it would, like major chronic illnesses, seemingly cripple her.

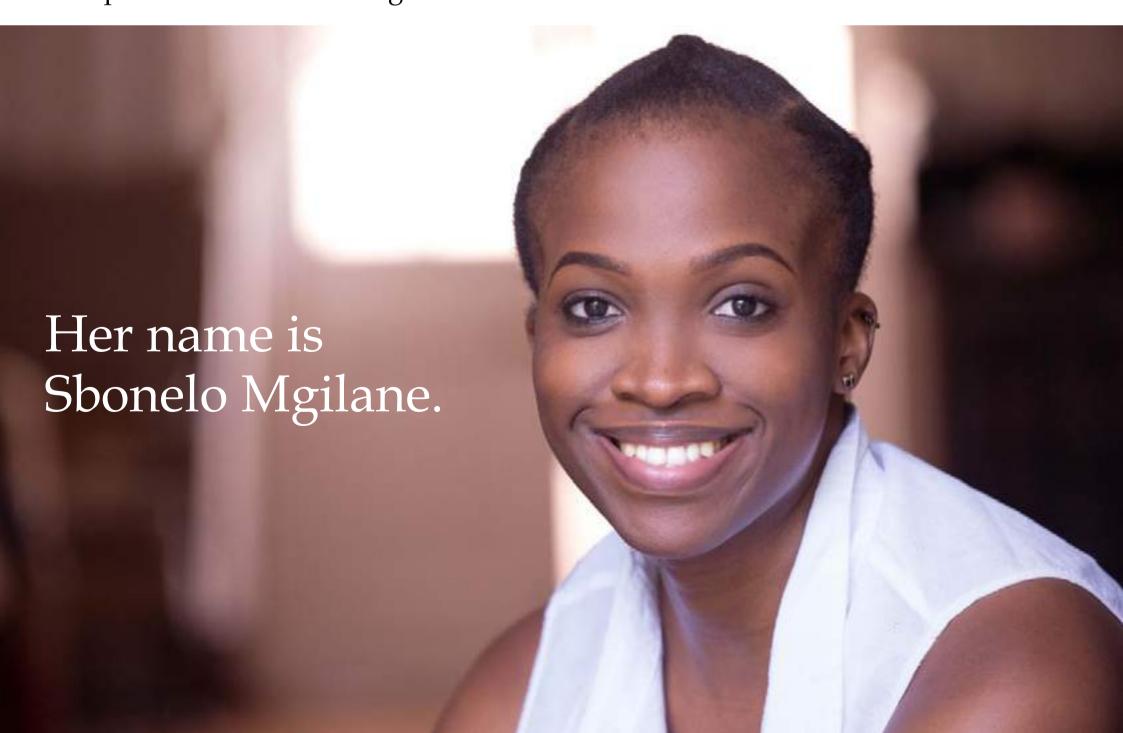
Surprisingly, she is often most creative at these times. "I can't understand why?" She admitted.

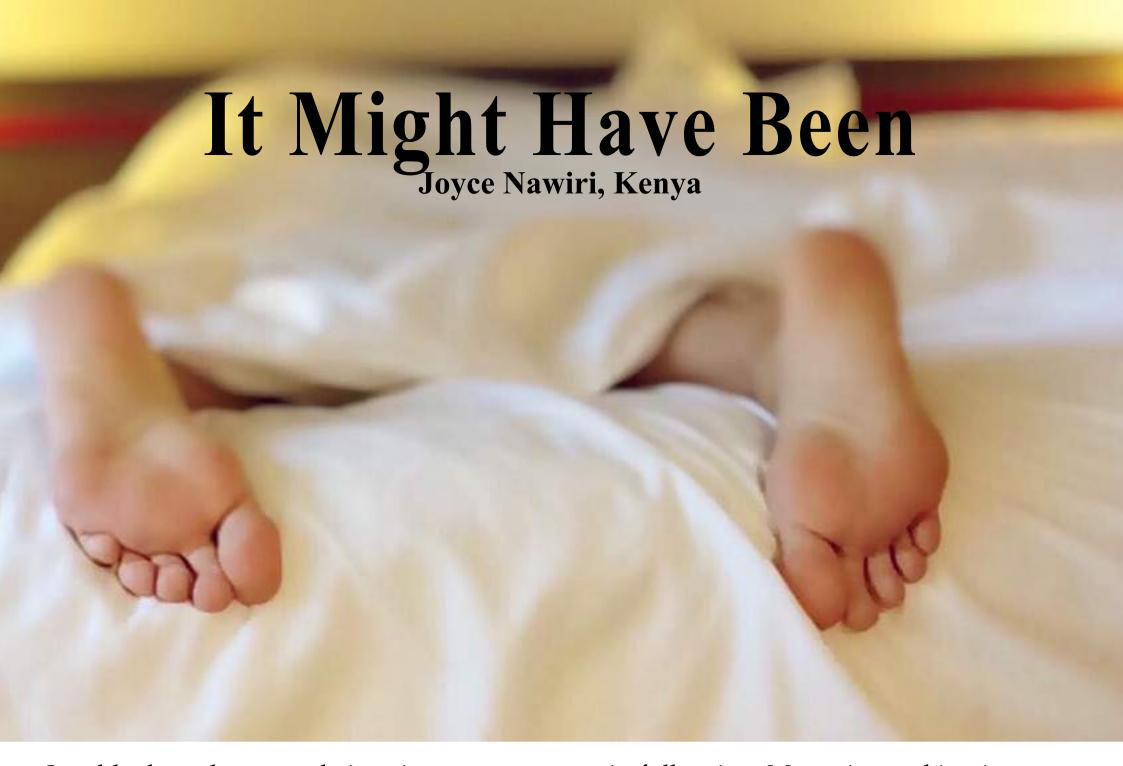
"Writing is something that's very important to me because, like for some people, it has saved me at the darkest times in my life. It's something I do to escape, I do when I'm inspired, and also when I need to document and archive certain information."

"I get most of my ideas at 3am. So, I write because I have something to get off my chest. As a person who journals a lot, creative writing is like me journaling on someone else's behalf. Those who have met me will tell you how animated I get when recalling even the most mundane events, from doing impersonations to weaving a story in a way that makes you feel like you were present. I try to do the same with my writing."

Her parting words for other writers: "Never stop writing. You only get better by practice. Write about everything. Write about everyone. Write well. Write."

This study-crazy, fine wine loving, depression overcoming, and unstoppable creative isn't really sure how she gets things done –even though she does a lot! She finds the push every day to go through her many to-do lists consciously clutching on her stress-inhaler. But, she never stops. She doesn't intend to –until she gets to that point where she no longer needs an introduction.





I suddenly wake up to their voices, an argument in full swing. Mama is speaking in a crescendo and not even the thick solid beige walls can mask their ugly fight. It's been eleven months now and I know I should have gotten used to it, but I'm doing such a poor job at adjusting. I sit at the right corner of my bed with my knees to my chest and my hands tightly covering my ears.

A few minutes after, silence reigns, before it is suddenly rent by the sound of shattering glass. It only gets at this point when Mama is at the end of her rope. I can tell what is about to follow next. Papa will furiously storm out of the house to seek solace in a brothel while Mama will find sanctuary in puffs of weed and glasses of whiskey. Then she will break down in bitter sobs. This has become the anthem of my childhood days in this cold mansion. When Mama begins to breakdown uncontrollably, I get out of bed and sit on the cold tiled floor under my bedroom window with my rugged doll in my arms. Her name is Helena and she's my only companion during such dark moments.

The sound of the rain; now falling in thick, dark and opaque sheets drowns Mama's cries. It's quite a relief because my heart is filled with rich agony to hear her cry all alone. I cannot go and comfort her no matter how badly I want to, because she'll just scold me or chase me

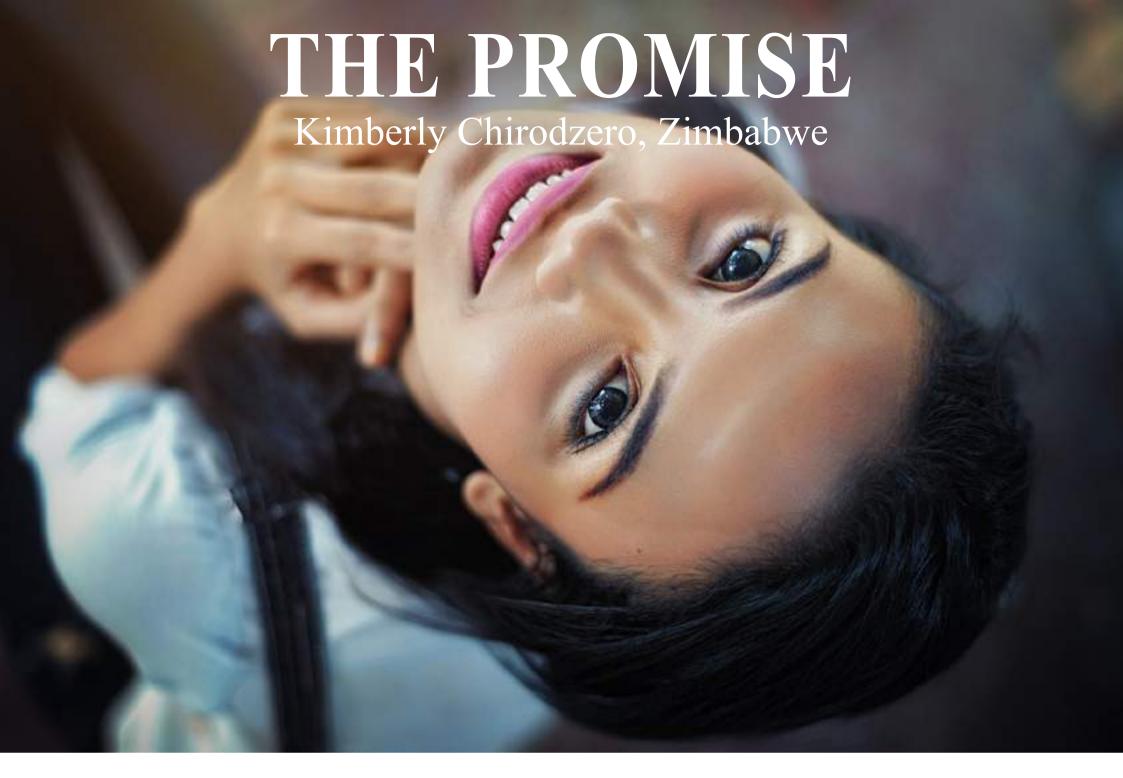
away or hit me. Of late, this is who she's left of; an irascible woman, but I understand her. For many months now, their marriage candle has burnt out and what is left of it is a lonely woman and a man that feels trapped in his marriage.

The rains almost immediately stop after Mama stops crying. Meanwhile I pass out on the floor. The following morning I am woken up by the amber rays slanting through my window. Outside the sun is glowing like a shy virgin. I slowly sneak into their bedroom which is countable steps away from mine. Inside the silky lurid red duvet is Mama deep in slumber. How peaceful she looks in her sleep! The only messy thing on her beautiful pawpaw-toned face is her mascara which has fallen below her eyes. I wipe it off with the end of my sweater before kissing her lightly on the forehead. I want to wake her up and remind her it's her birthday but during these extraordinary months, this is the most peaceful she's been. Birthday can wait.

But that's not the only thing that has brought me here. I have a throbbing headache. I'm looking for the bottle of her turquoise pills that she keeps on her dressing table. She takes them for her headaches. So I scramble around the glamorous surface, among the designer make up collection and jewelry until I find it. Inside, there are a couple of them, six maybe seven. I tiptoe out of the room to get drinking water in the kitchen. When I take them, they're tasteless which makes them easier to swallow. I know an adult should be administering my medication but during these gnarly months they have forgotten that I exist. I cannot remember the last time I had a home cooked meal. Since mum stopped cooking, I order take outs and have lonely supper on the huge dining table. Daddy no longer drives me to or picks me up from school so I take the bus. Both of them even forgot my birthday. I turned eight this year on March the nineteenth. Not long after, I begin to feel drowsy so I go back to sleep. I'll have breakfast when I wake up. Maybe mum will wake up before me with a hangover and reach out for her drugs, only to find the bottle of her favorite pills; empty in the dustbin. She may remember that she wasn't the last person who took them and then her instincts will push her to check up on me.

Or maybe dad will come back home for mum's birthday and he'll come to wake me up so that, together, we can go sing for mum.

Whichever it is, they'll find me warmly tucked in my duvet only to discover that I went to sleep never to wake up again.



May 15, 2014

Tina settled into the chair the young waitress had shown her to. She was flustered because she was alone but this was what she had promised Simba. "Excuse me, is this seat taken?" a strange new voice asked. Tina looked up to find a fairly handsome Eastern European young man in a t-shirt and jeans smiling down at her with his dark grey eyes. She opened her mouth to tell him to leave then realized all other seats in the restaurant had been taken. Simba wasn't coming anyway so she shrugged. "You may take the seat if you like," she replied absently. "I'm Amir Hassan," the stranger said as he sat. "Tinashe Masuwo," Tina replied wishing he would just stop talking.

"Are you here to see the play too?" Amir asked, seemingly unaware of Tina's disinterest. "I promised someone I would come for the play every year," she said. Amir opened his mouth to say something else but Tina held up a hand. "Please, I really just want quiet," she snapped. Amir frowned. "Why are you so sad?" he asked.

Tina turned to face him fully, unaware of the vision she made in her sweetheart red dress with her braids piled on top of her head into a neat bun. She did not notice how Amir looked appreciatively at her. "I am sad because you are sitting there, in his chair but you are not Simba and all I want is him to be here not you," she told Amir, despair ringing in every syllable.

#### May 15, 2015

Tina was nursing her second drink when Amir walked up to her table. "Hello, Tina. How has your year been?" Amir asked as if they were old friends. Tina groaned and covered her face with her hands. "Amir, is it? There are other free chairs," she said indicating several vacant seats although they were filling up quickly. "I like this one. I grew attached last time." With that Amir sat down and smiled at her. Tina noticed grudgingly that he became more handsome when he smiled. He talked until the play started although Tina made it obvious she wanted him to keep quiet. She answered his probing questions with monosyllables. Tina was relieved when the play finally started because Amir seemed as enraptured with the play as much as she was.

#### May 15, 2016

"I got you a drink, Tina," Amir announced happily as he sat down at Tina's table. "For God's sake Amir, can't you just skip the play at least once?" Tina grumbled, but her hostility was considerably less this year. Amir seemed to pick up on this and beamed. "Well, if you let me see you any other day besides May 15, I might finally give you one year at this table alone," he replied. Tina rolled her eyes at him but said nothing. Amir kept up the conversation. "So Simba still not showing up?" he asked. Tina frowned, Amir had never asked about Simba before. "We don't talk about him," she said quietly. Amir must have seen something dangerous in her eyes because he didn't push the matter.

"Hello, Amir," Tina said dejectedly as Amir took the seat across from her. "This is progress, you greeted me first today." Amir was overjoyed. "It doesn't mean anything," Tina said but she felt oddly excited to see him. To her surprise, Amir looked hurt. He sat down and said nothing. Tina stole a look at him and realised he was just staring at his drink. "You are quiet today," she said. "Maybe I'm finally obeying your wishes," he replied. After a palpable silence Tina blurted, "Simba was my fiancé. He died in September 2013. We used to come here every May 15. In the hospital before he died, he made me promise I would continue our tradition."

"I'm sorry. I didn't know," Amir said, understanding lighting his eyes. "I think he knew that I would shut myself off from the world and he hoped May 15 would help me stay social or something. To be honest that's exactly what I did but then I came here that first year and there you were. I hadn't really talked to anyone in months," Tina confessed. "Maybe this is the wrong time to ask, but will you go out with me on a day that isn't May 15?" Amir asked. Tina laughed nervously. "I think I'm ready now, thank you for not giving up on me." She smiled at Amir for the first time.





We are now accepting submissions from African writers for the April edition of Writers Space Africa.

Published every month, Writers Space Africa is an international literary magazine, which features rich diversity of writings from African writers to a global audience. The theme for April edition is EASTER.

Please submit either of the following
Articles/Essays - 1,000 words
Drama - 1,000 words
Flash Fiction - 50 words
Poetry - 1 poem, maximum of 14 lines
Short Stories - 500 words

Please note the following

- 1. Due to the number of entries we receive only selected authors will be published.
- Your work must be neatly typed and uploaded in MS Word format only. Remember to edit your work. We are allergic to unedited works although we will edit all selected entries.
- 3. Your work must not have been published anywhere and please submit in one genre only.
- 4. Author retains copyright.
- Some selected published works will be featured on our website.
- 6. Deadline is March 12, 2018.
- Please visit www.writersspace.net to submit your entry or mail to publish@writersspace.net



WRITERSSPACE AFRICA Empowering African Writers



LOVE AND THE RESURRECTION

Adrian Matebesi SDB

Zambia

SOUND OF LIFE

Maria Nicole Enwonwu

Gandaho

Benin Republic

THE SPECTRUM

**Wendy Wongani Hara** 

Malawi

MOTHER AFRICA

Kweku Sarkwa

Ghana

CHAPTERS AND VERSES FA LITERARY COLOSSUS

APRIL 2018 EDITION SAKA DBOSZ JINIOR BOOK
REVIEW
CONSTIMOCRAZY
Nsah Mala

A CHERRY BLOSSOM EASTER

Kimberly Chirodzero

Zimbabwe

BLUNTNESS IS BRUTAL

Gabrielina Gabriel-

**Abhiele** 

Nigeria

#### Editorial

Man is on a serious self-destruct spree. Life is fast moving I agree, and man, trying to impress or rather keep up is expensively buying himself a hospital bed. We want things to happen fast or with the press of a button, easily without breaking a single sweat.

Let's start with the factory processed food we consume in tonnes. You know, fast foods, GMOs and all those taste buds appearing foods we enjoy only to cry foul when we crash-land in the surgery room.

Moving on to the next self-destruction apparatus, products that we are buying expensively in pursuit of cosmetic beauty. From creams, lotions, colognes, gels, pills and even wigs. Do your math. Are they'll really necessary?

Apparatus number three, the air we breathe is polluted with car fumes, factory wastes and all other enemies of the respiratory system. Why? Riding bicycles to work is a wayward life and how else will people see your latest guzzler?

Apparatus number four. We long kicked physical exercises out together with the old. You drive to work, use the elevator, swing on your office chair all day and drive back home to feed on junk and the series continues.

Only when things run south, do you panic and hurriedly enrol into a gym and start your workouts.

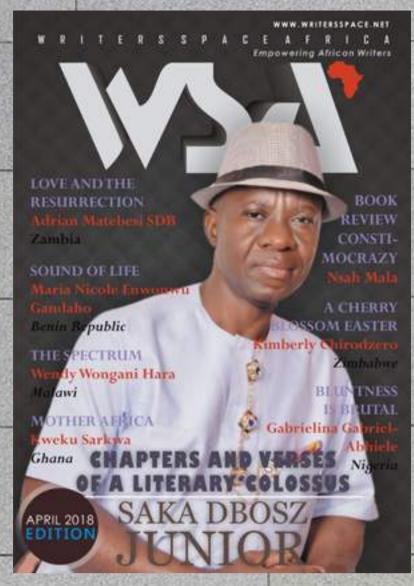
As if that is not enough destruction, you keep your eyes glued to your screen, head bent and fingers typing. Eye problems and back problems are added to your cart of misery.

So, why feign surprise when you later leak of lifestyle diseases? We leak of cancer, diabetes, arthritis, asthma, obesity, amongst other lethal self-imposed chilling diseases.

You may want to assume that scientists are not sleeping researching for a cure. Whom do you think, they have in mind?

What is on your plate? What is that content in your glass? How well are you looking after your body? Tell your doctor I said hello.

Wakini Kuria, Chief Editor, WSA, Kenya



#### About WSA

WSA is an international literary magazine, which features rich diversity of writingsfrom African writers to a global audience.

For previous issues, please visit our website - www. writersspace.net

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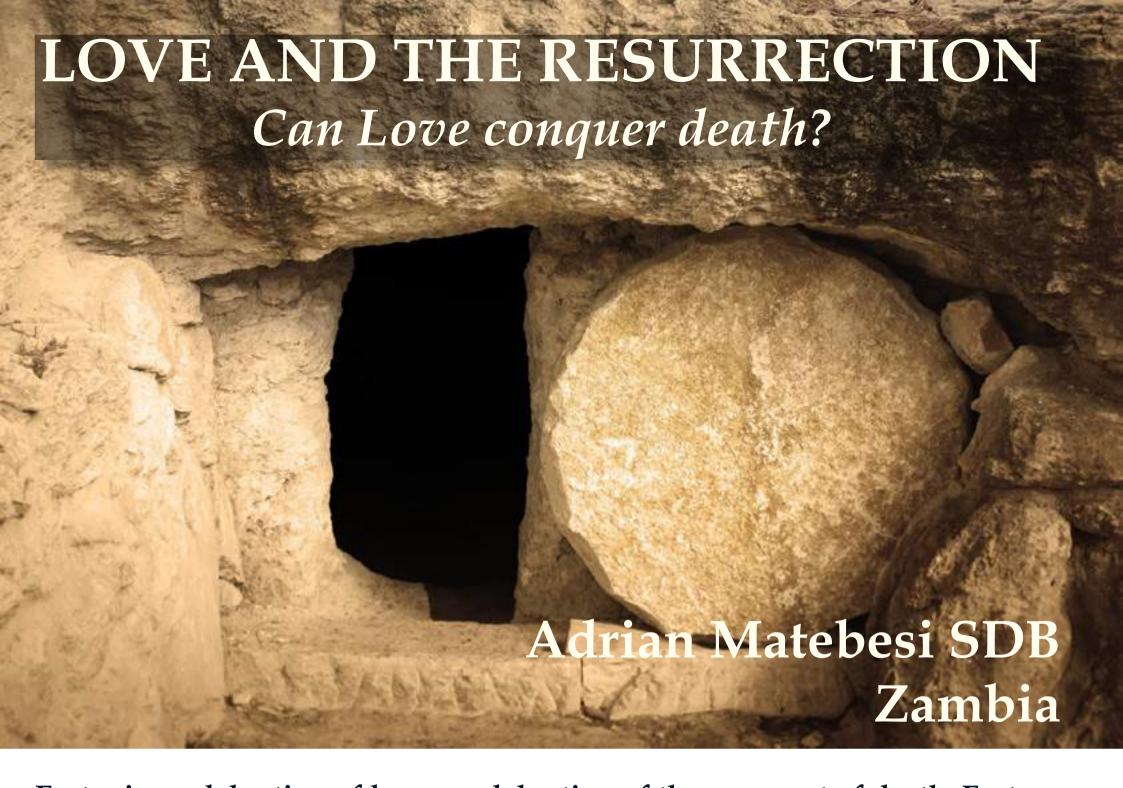
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Anthony Onugba Logistics

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Easter is a celebration of love; a celebration of the conquest of death. Easter assures us of timelessness and eternal love. Easter points to the life beyond the grave. Simply, life eternal implies a mode of existence that knows no end; a life that knows no death. However, the notion of the resurrection is best understood within the framework and background of love. In this season, what every lover longs for is guaranteed. They long for immortality, timelessness and eternity. Love is eternal, love is free, love knows no limits and love is infinite.

In a casual discussion about the resurrection, a newly wedded passionate young man passed a comment, "I cannot imagine that death is final. I cannot imagine that my death is the end of my love. I cannot fathom the fact that death will annihilate all my love for her. I love her beyond death." In his deeply emotional expression, I grasped a unique insight; that human love has got a lot to say about human mortality.

Human love is usually best described by poets. This is so because Love beyond life is a constant poetic theme. One simply has to read Elizabeth Barrett Brown-

#### ing's "How Do I Love Thee" to believe this:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.

I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death

Love. The most sublime of the human experiences has been told by the most beautiful lines in literature and poetry. Love is more than a red rose, a romantic and candle-lit dinner or a kiss. It is rather the thoughtless need to have, to accept, to cherish and to be with another person in their totality and entirety. Love is a feeling of safety, of silence, of belonging. It is simply completeness, oneness with the other. No matter how profound and sublime, love is simple! Love is straight forward, uncomplicated and has no hubris.

Love is completeness. In Plato's symposium, Aristophanes tells a story in which human beings were originally four- legged and two-headed creatures who were later cut into two by Zeus – Love is therefore what happens when you find the other half. It is no surprise then that Plato asserts that, "Love is the name for our pursuit of wholeness, for our desire to be complete."

What is love? Love is a relationship to another. Love assures us of the resurrection because of an unconditional relationship to the God of Love. The very nature of God as love binds us to Him in a way that knows no death. In the very Otherness of God, life is grounded. Eternity and immortality is due to a

#### divine relationship.

What is love? God is love. He who dwells in God dwells in love. This Love is stronger than death. The love of Christ has conquered death by his death. Indeed, "when Christ died, death died." The love of Christ unlike any other has the power to open the doors of death and bestow timelessness and bliss. In the supreme act of love and suffering, Christ accomplished what every lover longs for and that is, endlessness and eternity.

After the resurrection, Jesus asked peter, "Do you love me?" In this everyday question, one grasps a whole new world – an invitation, a mission, the re-creating of man after betrayal, of the refashioning of life and love itself. Easter is a call to live a new life in a new world, a world defined by a new kind of love, a love which knows no end or limit. Without doubt, It is love that believes the resurrection because only love can conquer death.





HIV/AIDS is a dreadful illness that is presenting organizations or the workplace with chal He had never been so happy. His wife had made him proud, she had given him a son a few days ago, some days to Easter. He had never felt as manly and content as he did when he first carried his little Prince and watched his gusty and energetic wails for food and care. Today he was going to surprise her, he had reserved a table at a five star hotel where they would dine, have fun and then retire for the night. He had even arranged for his sister to come babysit.

"Hunny Bunny," he called as he entered the house. "The Easter Bunny is here." He was greeted by silence. "That monster should have finally slept by now," he thought and smiled wistfully.

He walked gently, tip-toeing to the room so as not to disturb the baby. He opened the door slowly, full of smiles. And as his eyes became accustomed to the dim light cast off from the lamp by the bed, he froze. He felt fear grip his heart, and went blank for seconds. Everywhere he looked, he saw blood! The colour of red so deep it stood out in sharp contrast with the white bedspread, and the yellow paint of the wall, and then the strange lumps on the bed. "Jesus!" he exclaimed breathlessly, and looking by the bedpost, he saw her. The devil! She held a small axe coated in blood in one hand, and a gun in the other, aimed directly at his head.

Looking at her face, he remembered the surge of adrenaline he had felt alongside his friend Sam that night after having fun at the bar, the pleas, the screams, the feeling of domination, the power, and the blood as they took her in different ways. "You killed Sam!" He gasped and fell on his butt, thinking back to the news of the gas explosion at Sam's home a few days ago that claimed his life. "You're dead, a ghost!" And then she moved, removing the scarf around her neck, still pointing the gun at him. The last thing he saw was the thin scar around her neck, and then......darkness. in place.

by Olofinnika Omobolaji, Nigeria

# A CHERRY BLOSSOM EASTER

Rudo stuffed the purple blossoms down the pockets of her jeans as she hurried past the huge gate. Rudo had always believed the cherry blossom legend that if you stand beneath a cherry blossom tree with a good heart then whatever you asked for would come true and since it was almost Easter, she figured the magic would be stronger somehow. Ever since she was a little girl she would always stop at any Jacaranda tree, Zimbabwe's own version of a cherry blossom tree. Her wish was always the same. Rudo wished only for family. Of course now that she was sixteen the hope that someone might actually come to the orphanage to adopt her had waned but she could never pass by an avenue of Jacarandas and not stop to make a wish.

"Sister Maria has been asking for you," Dani told her as she rounded the corner to the girls' quarters. Rudo rolled her eyes at Dani. The sisters at Saint Augustine were always trying to keep her inside the fence but it was pointless because Rudo was infinitely curious. She liked to explore the town centre and botanical gardens especially the Borrowdale Botanical because of the various Jacarandas there. "I'm serious Rudo, Sister Maria wants you in her office now," Dani persisted. Rudo began to feel nervous at Dani's tone but she pushed her fear down and headed straight to the administration building.

Sister Maria opened the door after only one knock. Rudo entered slowly expecting to be reprimanded for sneaking out yet again. A young man in a well-tailored suit sat in one of the visitors' chairs. "Sit down Rudo," Sister Maria smiled at her gently. "I just went

to the gardens, I swear," Rudo blurted. The man was looking at her strangely and that combined with Sister Maria's unnatural gentleness was starting to freak her out. "Making wishes, no doubt," Sister Maria said but her words had no bite to them. Rudo sat, keeping a wary eye on the stranger.

"Rudo, as you know we found you on our doorstep when you were only a few weeks old. It seems your mother left you here perhaps meaning to come find you when she got on her feet but that never happened. This young man is Roland Hotera, he is your brother." Sister Maria nodded to the young man. Rudo felt the world spin, turn upside down and stay that way. She turned to the young man and almost laughed. If he wasn't a decade or so older, they would have been mistaken for twins.

"Family..." she managed to say like a fool, her hand gripping the blossoms in her jean pocket. "I have been looking for you almost all my life." Roland told her with tears in his eyes. "I want you to come live with me and my wife. The process might take some time but Sister Maria has agreed to let you come with me for the Easter holiday. We can celebrate at the gardens I hear you love so much."

By
Kimberly Chirodzero
- Zimbabwe



#### Sound of Life



Do you smell the change in the air? The clouds are dark; heavy with the promise of rain Little flower buds thrust their heads to the sky; thirsty for its mighty cry Trees bring forth new fruits; dancing to the melodious roaring of the wind Sheep feed in open fields; feasting gleefully on rich green grass Lightning makes a colourful canvas across the sky As thunder rolls with its deafening clap Christ is risen, nature testifies it Earth bubbles with renewed beauty and life Oh! I hear it now The loud thumping of rain on fertile ground Do you hear it? The sound of triumph; the sound of life.

Nicole Enwonwu Gandaho, Benin Republic

#### WE ARE ALL HUMAN

It is the sobs of misery that wakes us up every new dawn

Listen to the gong, this must be Armageddon!

They said we cannot fetch water from the Ngene River

For its pathway has turned blood from our brother's machete

We would have picked up our guns too

**But God forbid it!** 

That our kids should wear armoured kit

What love would make us lynch another's beloved?

To what end is this killer games that have left us all terror gloved?

Little wonder I, do our leaders also cry?

Has their conscience all gone dry?

My soul, yet dreams of the day we shall all be human

And submit to the wisdom of being all born by a woman.



# The Spectrum

Last night, I fell out of the sky.
I shattered the clouds
I broke the moon in half
I ripped the stars apart

The crash tore us from our sleep, petals in our palms and seeds on our pillows

You saw red, like you always do
Your hands on my neck
Me on my back
Moaning
Or maybe screaming
I can never tell.

I felt blue.

Running to the bathroom sink

Pink chunks of whatever we had for dinner last night.

I open the drawer and pulled out the stick

and poured yellow onto the white.

We made purple.

By Wendy Wongani Hara Malawi

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### Paschal Season in the West

On the Ash day, I set out for Lent:

Two scores of sacred abstinence
The period of penitence,

To draw me nigh to Easter tent

Wherein: spy owns mid-week,

Maundy scours Thursday,

Good seizes Friday, Holy takes Saturday;

Then, Easter Vigil welcomes Palm Sunday.

Easter Triduum is the identity of the West,
Ditto, Easter counting from Palming day,
To another Saturday wrapping up the celebration;
For the day of Pentecost to set in.

This cycle continues year in year out in the west, As a moveable feast of the resurrection of Christ.

> by Abdulhafeez T. Oyewole Nigeria

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A mother is the one capable of bringing a great person into this world with struggling and tears, She goes through a lot of difficulties trying to bring up her offspring with good teachings for years, In order for him to suit the environment, the society as well as be tolerated by his peers,

A mother does everything within her power to train the younger generations wholly to benefit the nation,

Without considering where they originate from whether from a small or a big home and ignores their location,

Because she is ever prepared to give in all she has just for the welfare of her children as a donation, For where the mother is, there shall always be joy, satisfaction and contentment moving around her in a cycle or rotation,

She makes sure and puts in all efforts to cater for her children even if it causes all her properties and resources to drain,

Mother left us well equipped with courteousness, good habits and kindness so that we could move to all corners of the world without difficulty and rejection on a peaceful rail just like a train,

And this indeed grooms us to live happily with our neighbours as enjoyable as a group of lines in a poem or song called a refrain,

I remember how mother would direct me onto the right path to be a person through the infliction of pain,

She would call me and tie me down with her single arm that is as strong as a chain,

Without hesitation, she spanks me heavily with a strong slim cane,

At that moment, I thought mother hated me but that has rather made me a better person,

So now I pray she receives more blessing,

Which no evil one can try cursing,

For she did me a greater good than harm as it vividly shows through my dressing.

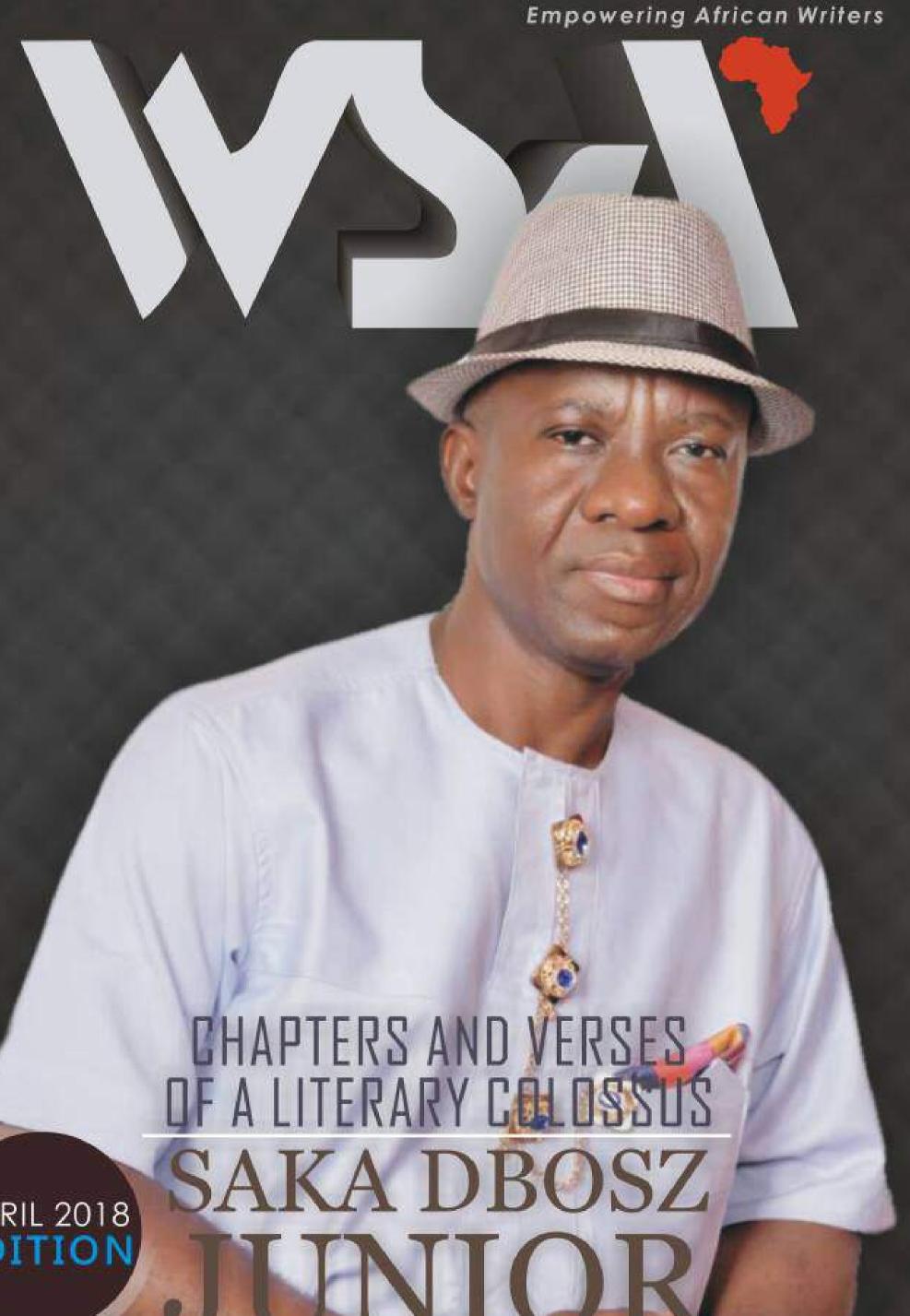
By

Kweku Sarkwa (The Romantic Writer)

Ghana

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# Chapters and Verses of a Literary Colossus: Saka DBosz Junior

by Sandra Oma Etubiebi

There are book series that seem to go on forever. They create endless journeys, take up entire shelves of bookcases, and provide a rich vocabulary of words, thoughts, and ideas that cater to our lifelong learning. I was privileged to interview a dynamic personality of mythical proportion: HRL Saka Dbosz Junior, the man many refer to as "Chief." My time with the chief was a rewarding experience that got me thinking these thoughts; "If Saka was a book!"

If Saka was a book, he would be an epic tale told in world-record lengthy series spanning several decades, yet keeping fans enthralled with every new turn of the page. On the introductory pages, we would read of Saka's early years and evergrowing love for writing as he said in his own words: "My deep love for writing has always been there. Actually, I will say deep love for storytelling because, before ev-

erything, I loved telling stories. Writing was just a medium of telling my stories and it came after drawing, which I gave up when I found out I could tell more stories faster by writing. My career in Journalism came later and it was just another manifestation of my love for storytelling. For the record, I was born into a polygamous family in Eleme, Rivers State, Nigeria. Due to the heat and tensions of a polygamous home, my maternal grandmother High Chief (Madam) Osila Ngegwe, sister to the then reigning King of ELEME Kingdom, King Walter Ngegwe, took me away. At that time, there was no TV or radio around, they did all they could to entertain me with endless stories; family stories, folk tales, historical events of the kingdom, tales of war, and land cases. As a child, I knew the history of most of the families around. You can find most of these stories in my books like Nightlight, People of the Hills, The Last Drum, The Shrine, and The Village Lovers."

If Saka was a book, he would be a carton series captivating the young and young at heart with riveting tales of life as an indefatigable speed reader and writer, which was captured in his many responses to our probing questions: "My life as a writer is simply that of love. People ask me how I make out time to write considering my workload and other family activities. Writing does not affect my work. I wake up and write for a few minutes, exercise and go to work. When I come back, I play my fatherly role to my kids till they are all sleeping. Then, I return to write till I fall asleep between 1 to 2 am. I write at great speeds so you will be surprised what I can put down in 5 minutes. Another secret to my ability to write despite my schedules is that I prefer to be driven about rather than drive. I read and write, and take notes all the way. I read and write on the plane with no time for side talks. On the plane to Kenya recently, the Ethiopian woman sitting next to me asked if I was going to Kenya for an exam. She wanted to see what I was writing and was shocked to discover I had read 2 books on leadership from cover to cover taking notes as I read. Also, I carry stories in my head. I plan all my stories in my head before writing it so if I told you I wrote a book in one week, don't think it started that week. I must have been planning and keeping the dialogue and characters in my head for years."

If Saka was a book, he would be an inspiring epistle of many chapters and verses with every thought cataloguing his acts of valour on the battlefront as he fights for African writers and their writings. The Chief said, "When I was an amateur boxer, the coach told us that you must love what you do and respect your opponents. So, I love writing and respect other writers. I also try to assist where I can and that is why with the help of my very good friend Mr Anthony Onugba, I came up with HRL PRINCE SAKA DBOSZ JUNIOR WRITERS AID. I use my personal money to train young writers, assist them in preparing their manuscripts, publish their blogs or pay for their materials to be edited. I love people and want to help see more writers and readers around. As a writer, all I do is watch society, interpret life through

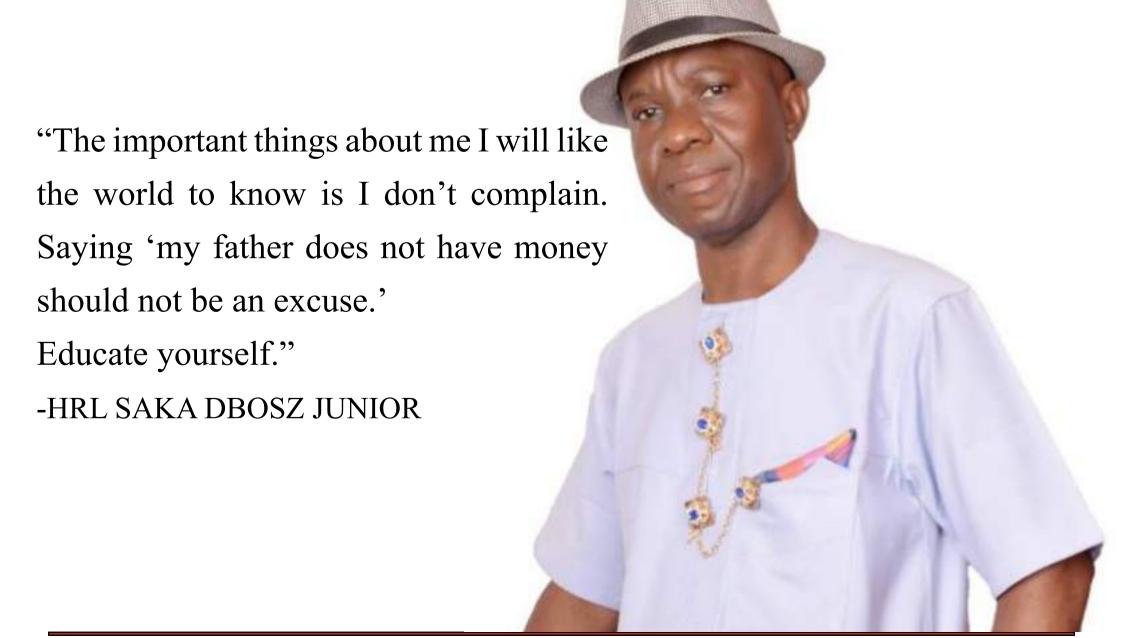
my writings, and proffer solutions. If you read my books; On the Margin, My Point Exactly, The Road We Walked and This Is What I Said, you will find everything that is happening around us, even today. When an African Country defeated Nigeria, I wrote that it would happen again unless certain things were done. It happened 2 more times. Who in government read these books? None. You see, I am not one of those celebrated foreign writers that we quote without reading their works. I am neither a part of a lucky government nor a Sponsored writer, so our knowledge remains in our works and nobody is trying to test it out."

If Saka was a book, he could be a beatitude of blessings and warnings, for the next generation, serving a digital guide for writers everywhere, as captured in his advice: "The digital era is a blessing to writing. I wished I was born in this era. I believe it will continue growing. Some of us have tried to recruit young writers and readers by establishing platforms online including WhatsApp. My friend Emeka of the Blood At Noon fame created something on WhatsApp, and when he called me I gave the name AFRICAN LITERARY NETWORK. It brought in so many writers even Pilots and Top Engineers. That was where I met Mr Anthony Onugba who is today a blessing to my talent. He dreamt of a larger platform where seminars and competitions could take place. He called it Writers Space. I said 'let's define our Space' and added Africa. So, we have WRITERS SPACE AFRICA aka WSA. This is a one-stop online Writers hub, and I have not seen another like it. With several creative personalities aboard this community of a thousand talents with seminars, roundtable discussions, literary competitions and rich literary writing that would fill volumes; WSA has no rival. One week on the WSA Platform is equivalent to 2 years in the University. It is my desire that the young ones keep writing and seeking for help. Join groups and learn the skills. Just like on WSA where you learn both the skills and discipline. You learn to interview others and to respond when interviewed. Writers are even grouped and published. Critiques are everywhere so you get all the help you need. The youth should forget politicians and pick mentors among people who know the meaning of love for humanity. People who love God and want to see a better world."

If Saka was not a book, what then would he be? Perhaps, he would be exactly what he is right now: A passionate philanthropic writer who has given more than he has taken from the world as he humbly tells us in very few words; "The important things about me I will like the world to know is I don't complain. Saying 'my father does not have money should not be an excuse.' Educate yourself. My father gave me money just once when I was in my second year at the University of Port Harcourt. I joined a literary group, turned it into a commercial magazine, and increased it to five magazines at the time. I love myself and use every opportunity to

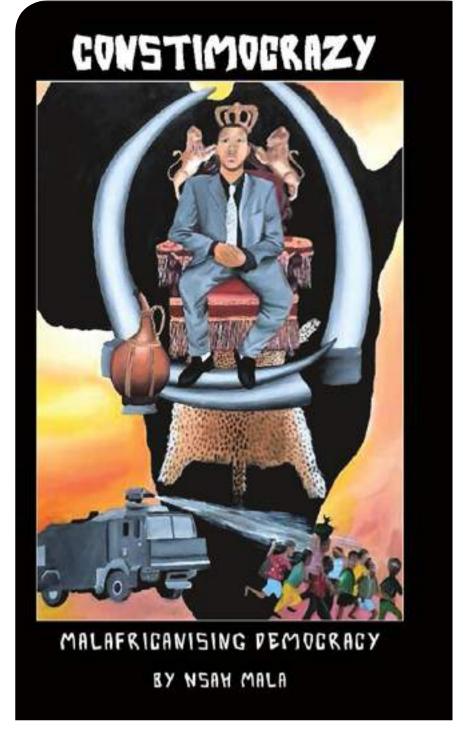
step up. I look up to nobody. Jesus is my role model. I love people. I love my family. I am somebody who loves staying in the crowd, achieving modest things and refusing to shine. I don't want to rule the world and I don't want it all. I love happiness and life itself. I do my best to help people. I spend my money in what I believe in and I will rather put somebody in school than ride a sports car. Now, I have setup the HRL PRINCE SAKA DBOSZ JUNIOR MERIT AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AND MENTORING. I decided to sponsor a merit award so that others may get the recognition I am not getting. The current winner is Mr Anthony Onugba aka The Pen Boss of Writers Space Africa. Some people hate me because I cannot lie or gossip, others think I have money everywhere but it's just the joy of loving people and placing my God first. I can give anything I have, except my life. Although I thank God for my intelligence, sometimes I wish I was just a fool with the Tony-Montana-kind-of-heaps-of-money to give to the suffering in society."

Yes, there are book series that seem to go on forever, enveloping us in the beauty of life as seen from different perspectives, experiences, and conclusions. If Chief Saka Dbosz Junior was a book; his words, writings, notes, thoughts, experiences, and acts of valour would take up entire shelves of bookcases, and provide a rich vocabulary that will cater to our lifelong learning. With a total of 5 degrees, numerous certificates, and a PhD fast approaching, the Chief is a breathtaking real-life mystery whose chapters and verses can be summarized as a literal literary gift that keeps on giving.



# **BOOK REVIEW**

# Notes on Constimocrazy By Brian



Constimocrazy is like music to me. Music has the tendency to mean different things to different people. To me, music is much more. It's a collection of sounds and most often beautifully braided words that remind me of the past, animate the present, but enforce the future. In short, it reminds me that I am alive. A new piece of music sets a mark on the present. When I listen to this music in some future, the mark that was set in the past, that is the first time I

experienced the said music, is rekindled. As such, music when experienced the first time, fills my soul with a mark that will illuminate my world in some future present :-)

The more I read Constimocrazy, the more I realize that it has the same effects like music. It educates my being. It rekindles memories, lessons, passions and above all my very quest to read and re-read more of the poems. The following lines can't escape my mind:

Hurdles sprout all the times but I exploit them in my favor

A burst of what I know not arises in me and a host of memories flow through my mind. From the advice poured into me by my parents and other wise ones to tidbits

of self-discovered truths. In effect, it's music to my mind. There are many genres of music: bikutsi, ben sikin, country dance and so on. All these kinds of music trigger various moods in us. Some make us jump and dance, some make us sit down and productively reflect about our lives and eventually make big moves, and others do what they do.

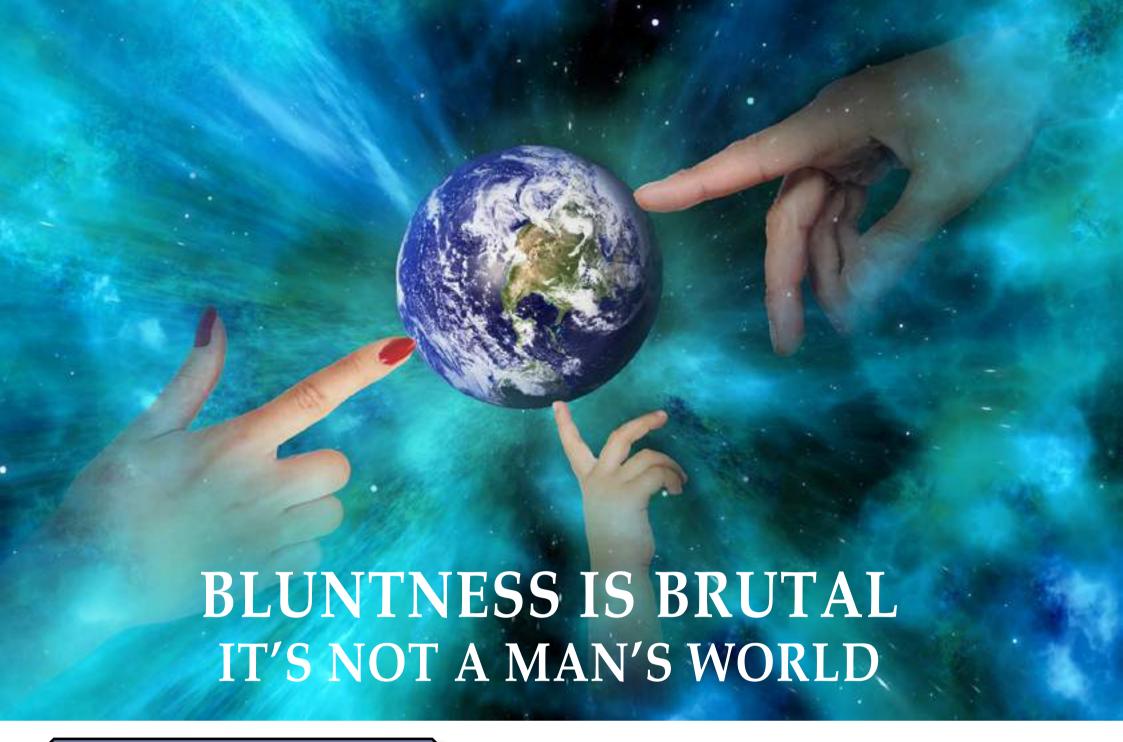
Constimocrazy is like a buffet of all kinds of music in the guise of poems. Some make you sad but developed, others make you joyous, but all the poems uncover secrets of life in a deceptively simple manner. At one point you are lavished with deeply philosophical statements like we swam in wandering waters. For the master himself knows that "you can't step into the same river twice" like Hipocrates of ancient Greece told his compatriots.

At some other point, you are faced with a playful but educative poem like The Magic of Female Buttocks. A serious reader may turn back to the front page of the collection to ascertain that she is still reading the same book Constimocrazy. But the relaxed mind picks up the subtle messages that lies within the lines. Like another genre of music, the reader experiences a mood unique both in time and space. Hence, the collection of poems actualize themselves as a platform akin to a diverse collection of music albums of ineffable genres. Each magically striking chords in our very own souls in ways that are to be experienced to be believed.

And when you come to the poem and music, Of Law, you'll again experience the master's ability to reach into your very own existence as a human who's capable of reason and stimulate your understanding of humanity. You are led to the simplest conclusion, "The best law is love." At this point you see may as well realize with your whole being that this law is "the law":-)

Now, it is evident that writing about Constrimocrazy is a sisyphean task; for where will one start and where will one end?

Such works of beauty that are seasoned with inexhaustible elegance are truly free. And like all free things, they can't be captured, especially with words. If you truly want to test the truth of matter, you have to read it for yourself. If you do, please try to capture your feelings about what the poems open your mind to. Perhaps, you may also realize that you can't say what you feel. For me, I can go as far as I'm able to and I'll say it's a masterful album and it's music to my soul.



About the columnist:

Gabrielina Gabriel-Abhiele is a writer, editor, and broadcast journalist; a reporter with Writers Space Africa online magazine. She's a preacher of her propaganda and a believer in equality and truth. Her essay contents span various topics from child abuse, politics, to gender equality, racism, tribalism, and as many issues as can be touched. She is a general interest blogger too. According to her, her blog should not be mistaken for a rant but one that focuses on heart splitting issues.

This is a world where a woman without a crying lad is a man. This is a world where a woman who cannot stand at the fire in the kitchen is not virtuous. And more so, when she cannot lift a pestle to pound 'solid', she's lazy. This is a world where a woman with makeup on is a slut, or better still, ungodly. This is a world where a woman who walks on the lawn calculatively, disgusts the sight of the average man, and is perceived as a weakling, or unprepared for marriage. This is a world where a woman's tears are interpreted as her stupidity, and her silence, her powerlessness. This is a world where everything about her is WRONG.

This is Africa; my beloved continent.

I love Africa. I'm supposed to be proudly African; well, I am, but basically because I have, over time,

built my self esteem and learned to love myself as a woman- and this is my mother-land. I have a great father, who inculcated in me the mentality of true womanhood. He told me that I am a woman, not a slave. He made me understand that whatever I did in the past, do in the present, and will do in the future is purely borne out of love, responsibility, and godliness; none out of duty. The moment I do anything out of duty, I do with it with the mentality of slavery, and this is the truth that we evade in Africa.

A girl is trained to live for a man, which makes her possess the mentality of duty and over dependency. She's told that she needs to keep clean to attract the opposite sex; she's told that she needs to have good cooking skills and sex tactics to keep her husband; she's told that she needs to stay calm always, in order to be perceived by men as one with good home training; she's told to remain a virgin for her future husband, even if he's not one; she's told not to cross gutters, so that the guys won't judge her as razz; she's told that a woman is more decorated when she has the wedding ring on, and becomes a real woman, when she bears children. In fact, she's continually faced with the threat of sharing her husband with another woman, if she bares no male child. And when she bears both male and female children, but still shares her husband with another, she's told to learn to get on her knees and remain on it in prayer for the man. All duty.

What hurts me most is the gender degrading posts I see on social media, when a girl child is born: Bride price don confirm (translated in English as bride price is sure to be received. To aid the understanding of non-African readers, bride price is an amount of money paid to the family of a woman given out in marriage). They call it a joke, but underlying that joke is a sickening mentality of the woman. A baby girl being monetized so early in life.

A woman is trained from childhood to be a wife. She sees herself as a wife at a very tender age. A man is made to believe he is a man because of his physical strength and the difference in his sexual organ from that of a woman. He sees himself as a husband only when he eventually walks a woman down the aisle.

Several times, I have heard religious counselors advise women, whose husbands are jobless or have financial challenges, to stay supportive to them, until he becomes

financially buoyant again. I have also heard them advise young women to marry men despite their financial status. I do not speak against these as love is the determinant factor, but how many religious counselors advise men to marry women who cannot cook, or live with them in peace and love despite their cooking skills? The sermon is rather put this way: you are not ready for marriage as a woman if you cannot cook or, don't blame your husband for cheating on you if your meals are not appetizing. I speak truth, no ranting.

Listen man! I am human just like you, and entitled to my rights too. I might have a weakness for you called love, but that does not make me any less than you. I can do the world for you, but not without treating me as one ought to treat a human being who has a life and a right.

I am not throwing accusing stones at men, rather, I am painting a realistic mental picture of the inhumane treatment given women in Africa. Humorously, women have got used to these ill treatments for centuries that they get baffled when they are treated otherwise. Let me cite this amusing example. Once, my elder brother was walking into a monotechnic with a lady, and heading for the stairs. He stopped abruptly, stretched his hands forward and told the lady, "after you." Wow! She grew suspicious and in fact, found it offensive to be asked to take the stairs first, before him. She replied him rudely, "and why must it be after me? You're after my butt, right?"

#### Amazing!

Now, this isn't right, but that's the reaction a woman, who's not used to being treated nicely by a man, puts up. Being good to whoever shouldn't be difficult, gender regardless. My advise to men is: treat the woman nicely, the way you would treat yourself. She doesn't need to be your wife, girlfriend, sister, or mother before you do so. She's neither a sex symbol nor a maid.

The world would be a better place for a woman if she's brought up to be responsible and not dutiful. One with the mindset of responsibility is in charge, purposeful and independent. One with the mindset of duty is timid, dependent and weak. A woman once told me it's a man's world. Don't give me that crap. It's our world; both man and woman.



We are now accepting submissions from 1st to 12th Apri, 2018 for the May Edition of WSA.

Published every month, WSA is an international literary magazine, which features rich diversity of writings from African writers to a global audience.

Please Consider the following before sending:

Articles/Essays - 1,200 words

Drama - 1,000 words

Flash Fiction - 100 words

Poetry - 1 poem, maximum of 24 lines

Short Stories - 1,500 words

#### Please note the following

- 1. You can write on any theme
- Due to the number of entries we receive, only selected authors may be contacted
- Your work must be neatly typed and uploaded in MS Word format only. Remember to edit your work. We are allergic to unedited works although we will edit all selected entries.
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Nyashadzashe Chikumbu
Zimbabwe

FRANCA Awuah Mainoo Gabriel *Ghana* 

> SAVING MAMA Wanangwa Mwale Zambia

WRITING IS WHAT I DO MEAZA AKLILU HADERA



# Editorial

Are you being your brother's keeper?

If my brother is in trouble so am I... goes that famous song. It's your social media account alright. I'm not by any chance dictating what should go up. It's your personal social media account. You own it, I get it but do you stop to think of that other person? When you post pictures of your chubby beautiful baby with 49 others, have you ever thought of that poor woman who can't conceive yet you tag her along with your beautiful baby pictures. She likes your photos alright. Bursting in your happy bubble, you are ignorant of her wounds.

You recently got engaged and soon after got married. You won't let others breathe. Whats with you flooding the internet with glossy photos of the engagement ring and wedding photos? Give us a break! Taking your personal problems to Facebook won't save your marriage, won't salvage your dying business, won't add nothing of value in your life. Gloating, showing off and hurtful comments belong to the trash can, with no recycling.

The wrath that is twitter, the envy that is facebook and the pride that is instagram and those other apps that the e-generation indulge. Rather, use them to sell your brand, grow your business and all the while respecting other people's internet bundles. The question remains. Are you being your brother's keeper?

Wakini Kuria, Chief Editor, WSA, Kenya

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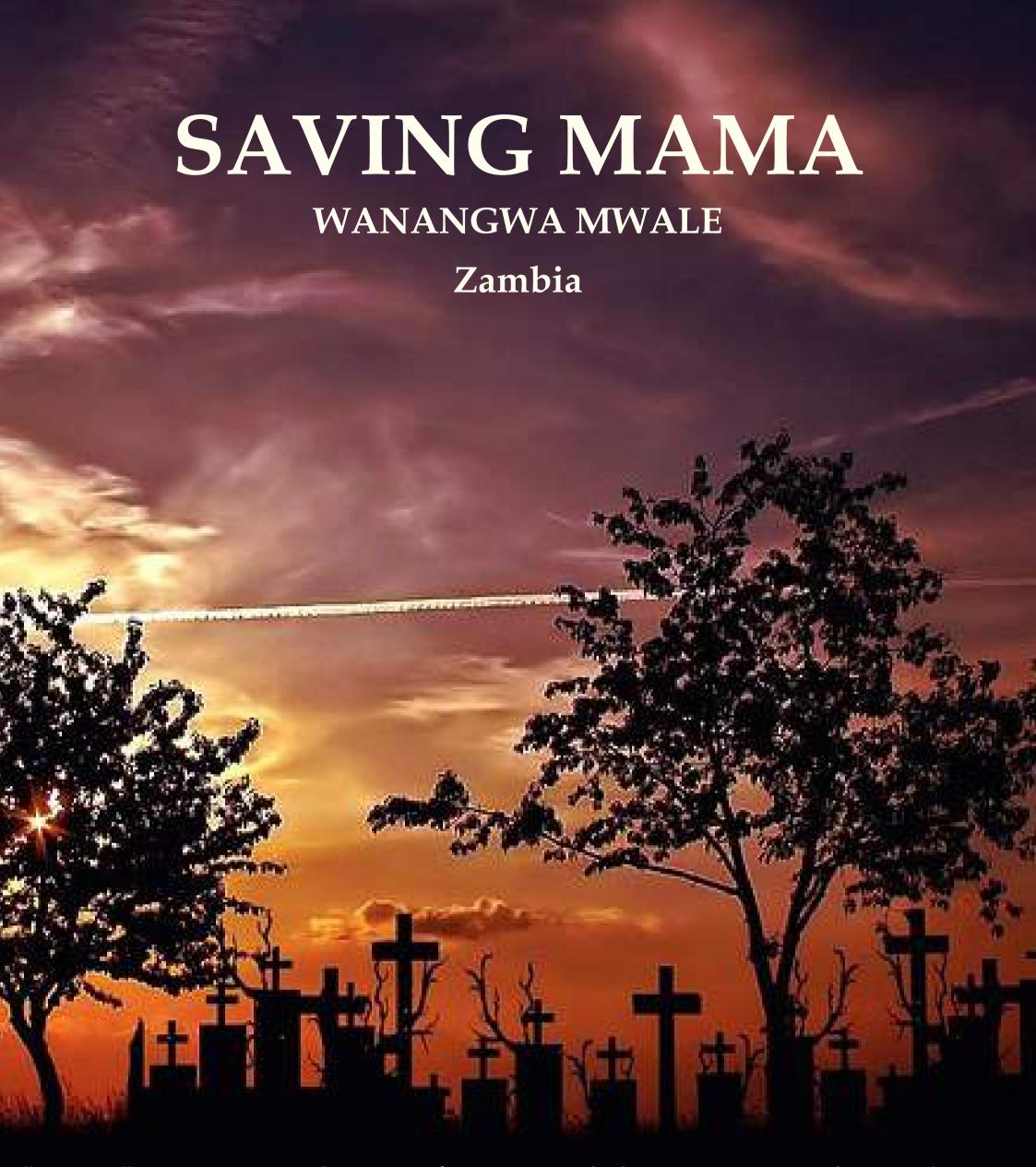
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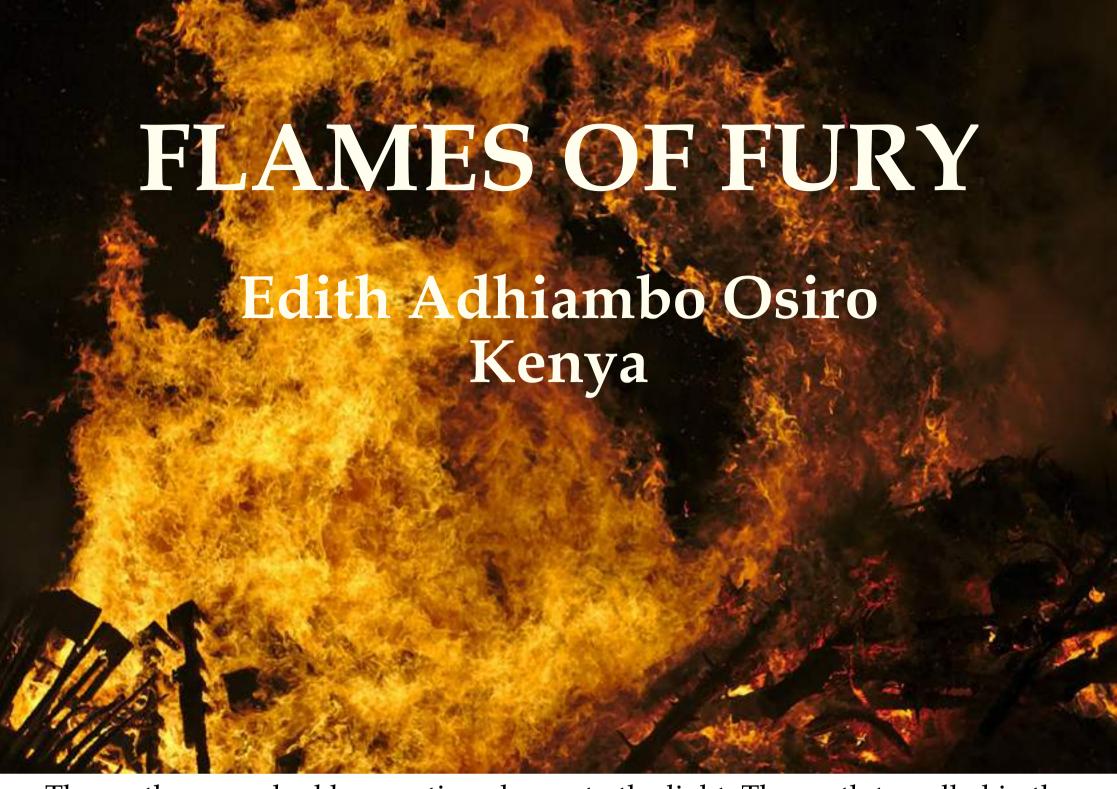


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"Mama," tears running down my face. I extended my arm as I tried to reach out and hug her one more time. "We have to save her, I will be her super hero." I tried to break free from my aunt's arms that were wrapped around my tiny body. Five years old, I didn't understand when my elder brother whispered, "Mama is in that box." As he wept, he covered his face between his folded arms. "They will bury her and we will never see her again."

"Don't take my Mama," I cried loudly, "we can still save her."



The moth season had been active, drawn to the light. The moth travelled in the dark of night to Molo and watched a bickering couple. "Look into the flames," it fluttered into the husband's eyes. "Don't you love the yellow-red intertwine soaring up like the rage inside you?" The husband rubbed the granite against the matchstick and lit his family orange. As the moth's ommatidium glared, the heat razed all his victim's bone and blood to unrecognizable ash that huddled together in the anguish of a father's lunacy. It was the nextday when the neighbours dared to sift through charred bedsheets to find the toddlers. Next time the moth would spice things up by inflaming a woman. When they say love is hot, the moth knew just how many couple's squabbles had ignited the heat. The moth had never lacked a fireplace by this heated love, and arguments that raged down families. What an opportunity to be positively phototactic when people are burning in love!

The moth found another flame in the slum. It was only two nights ago when two

old-timers lit his passion. Now, he heard a wife muttering with those sticks that the moth loved dearly. The bonfire was huge, like a spitting volcano. Amber like the dress she had wanted for her anniversary. "The fool said better to stock the house, let's show him otherwise," the moth churned her up. Never mind that her neighbours lost everything in their houses due to her rage, now the miserable wife hid in caves, too afraid to light the flame that could attract police to her. The residents were tented in schools turned refugee camps as they blamed some tycoon or their crafty electrical connections.

Neighbours blazed the trail by designing new arbitration methods. Shops were smouldering after the moth's night long parties by "accidental fires." How many times does Gikomba market need to char, little moth? "Enough times to shrink the largest wardrobe in East & Central Africa to a one-street thrifting expedition," the moth chuckled over a cup of chai.

Before you conclude that the moth is a sadistic arsonist, you should understand how he lights up a flame. The friction must be there, you just need to spark it. Friction can be strife, always strife, rarely a psychological disorder. Neighbours do not agree? The moth says land squabbles are best solved over a bonfire. Neighbours resorting to heated arguments to set things straight? Turn the heat up in the kitchen and blow the weak one's ashes out. Students don't want exams? The moth suggests holding parents and teachers ransom by charring dorms and books. High schools, all the way to universities must prepare for academic bonfires, be street smart and learn from protestors and police. An old woman looks at people funny with witch eyes? Burn her, but spare her plush lands.

They say hell is full of flames. It seems the world is ever incendiary, celebrating fire daily like the moth. But even the moth's travels grow duller with more light. Soon it will not be able to travel to every pyromaniac and unleash the volcanic eruption that simmers underneath. But you can be sure the inferno is not dying anytime soon...



At dusk on Thursday they came. Sam had waited all week. He knew their hair was due for a cut. The Ubani family was the only family that cut their hair in his shop. Every other person in the village went to the shop opposite. They were just two of them that came. He took his time knowing that no one else would come anytime soon.

When he was done, he sat in front of his shop and looked intensely at the shop opposite, at the coloured lights, at the people going inside and then with rage he looked at the owner. He was fat, short, and when he breathed, his body expanded as though it would explode. He sat on a plastic chair, laughing loudly and stupidly with nobody. The burning hatred was mutual and the short fat barber looked unwaveringly at Sam.

A strange looking old man stopped in front of Sam's shop. Sam hurried in the darkness and put on the generator. He couldn't hide his excitement. He behaved like a child who had just received a gift and doesn't know what to do with it. He acted silly, giggled and almost spilled every liquid on his desk. When the euphoria calmed, he began to cut the old man's hair. Again he took his time, as the old man might be the last customer for the week.

"He destroyed your business," the strange old man said out of nowhere. Sam stopped and looked at him through the mirror, and their eyes met. His beard wasgrey and dirty. There was something wicked and ominous about his look, something inexplicable.

Sam did not respond. He continued cutting the hair. "He destroyed your business," the

strange old man repeated. "Your shop is dirty, they say, not flashy, not modern and your haircut is ancient, but is that true?" The strange old man fixed his gaze at Sam through the mirror. "Is that true? Don't you think he did this on purpose? To send you home so he will own the whole street and even take away the Ubanis!" Sam never said anything, but he listened intently and the colour of his eyes turned red and his lips vibrated with rage and rancour. Despite the fan on the ceiling, tiny drops of sweat broke on his forehead.

"I think he buried it around here, whatever he did to make this possible, in front of your shop or in front of his shop, behind, wherever, but it's around here. You just have to find it."

When he was done cutting the man's hair he moved out and stood in front of his shop. The rage and hatred more intense, so fired up as though it was a beast living inside him trying to bust him open. Sam lived in the shop. His wife had left him for another man a year ago. She went away with their two children and he had no idea where they lived or whether they were still alive. He became uncomfortable and began to pace about the front of his shop. At 10pm, the fat barber closed. Sam watched him as he closed the first door. He watched him as he closed the second door and it took everything in him to remain seated by the wall, looking fiercely at the short fat barber.

The street was deserted. Only Sam lived on the street. The street was known as the Barber's Street. Whoever came through the street from the right was there to cut his or her hair because the left side of the street led to nowhere. Thirty minutes after the fat barber left, Sam brought a hoe and dug about his shop. When he found nothing, he went to the other shop. By three in the morning, exhausted and mad with fury for finding nothing, he had his bath and went to bed. He slept through the whole day and only opened his shop at five in the evening.

Once he opened the shop, the fat barber began to sing loudly with a voice that sounded as though the song was choking him.

Some people envy me

Some people envy me

Because I'm a big man.

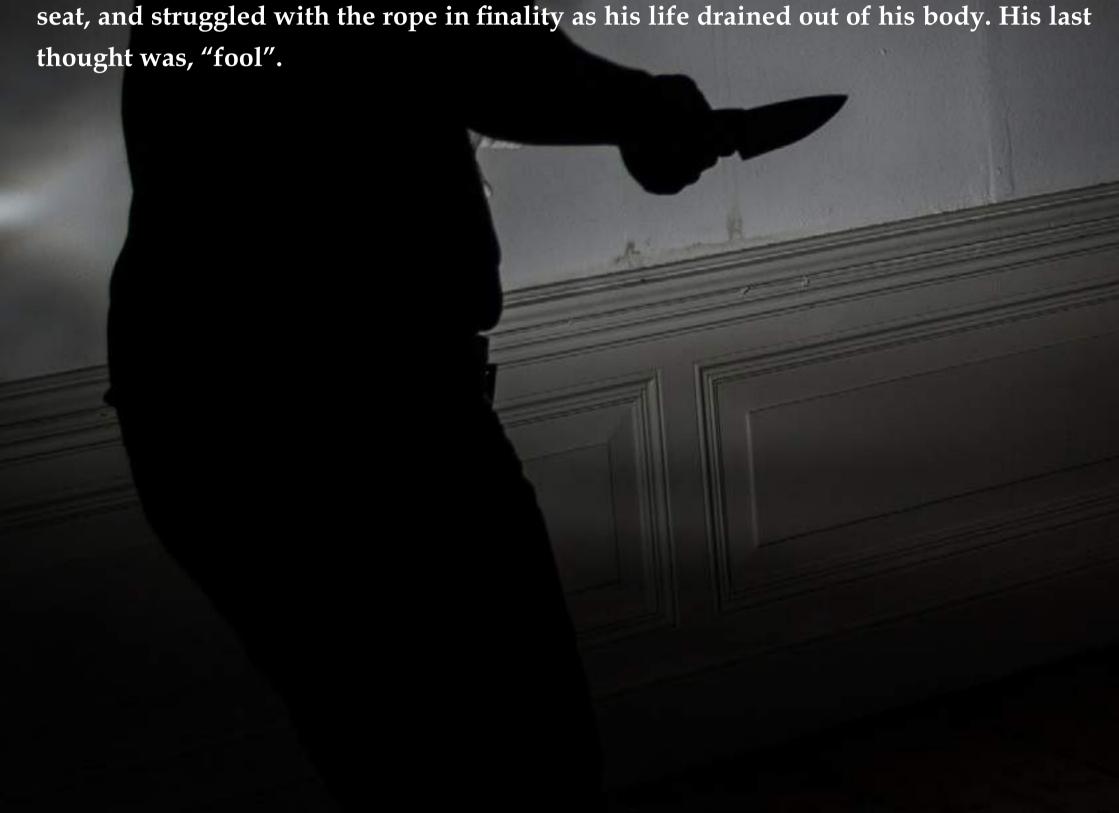
He sang it with fervour, pointing at the dug up earth, at Sam's miserable shop and then would turn to his own shop with his arms spread out wide and sing the praise of his

successful shop. That he built it with his ingenuity and knocked out an old out-of-date shop.

Sam sat by the wall watching the fat barber and when the beast of anger in him began to threaten to tear his skin out he went inside. When the song stopped, he came out. At dusk he saw the strange old man with the wicked eyes. The strange old man stopped in the middle of the shops and looked at the opposite sides. His eyes met those of Sam but he said nothing to him and moved on into the path that led nowhere.

Sam began to pace about his shop and a murderous sweat broke on his forehead. He sat by wall and waited.

At 10pm, when the fat barber closed, Sam watched him as he closed the first door, and when he began to close the second door, Sam charged at him with a knife and slit his throat from ear to ear. With lightning speed he went back into his shop. He had pulled out the ceiling fan from its hook and had a rope around the hook. He then climbed a seat he had placed right below the rope, he pulled the rope around his neck, kicked away the seat, and struggled with the rope in finality as his life drained out of his body. His last thought was, "fool".





#### Sirrrrr

The door cricked open

#### Sirrrr

It clicked shut again, in a seemingly routine manner that somehow managed to comprise its raison d'etre. A hand reached out and pushed it aside. The strong rays of the sun sifted through the cracks in the windows, peeling paint resting atop the flanges of the gate. The band of misfits who congregated around the bar didn't even flinch to the recurring sounds. Lost in the haze of smokes that resembled an old maiden's hair lock; they locked eyes with their glasses in a one-sided staring contest.

#### Sirrr

The door sighed, somehow the groan came off in the same manner as the ones that preceded it.

"I wonder where this one is going!" It mused. It seemed a bit early for such kind of commotion. Many hands had parted its hinges over the years; yet, this

seemed unusual, almost uncannily weird. The door didn't know what to make of it. It suddenly shook with a violent force.

"I can't take it!" the door said, its frame shook with a sudden surge of anger that seemed to emanate out of its innate being. "All this back and forth."

The wall kept silent, for it knew all, had seen all, and heard all. Its peeled paper skins rustled as if mirroring its whirling thoughts. "The back and forth is our nature," the wall suddenly spoke with a tone that seemed to convey a bit of mirth. "We were made to keep intruders out and provide privacy for our makers and inhabitants.... If not for this then what is the point of us being here?"

A hand suddenly pushed the door aside, "damn you!" the door screamed. Yet the scream came off as little more than a distinct creak as a guy who draped a young girl went passed the door. "You see!" it protested as it swung towards the wall. "The guy? He keeps coming back with different girls every day." The wall kept silent again; for it knew that this was something it had experienced, the zeal of youngsters.

How we all think we know better, we all think we know what we deserve and what we ought to have. Only the sands of time will put us in our place, the routine of day to day life corrodes one out of his self-value, respect, and delusion. The question of, "what's my purpose? What's my place?" eventually gets sanded away into a begrudging acceptance.

Yet, despite his inner monologue he dared not say it out aloud. The wall exhaled slowly, rustling the papers on it. The wall paper fluttered as if on the verge of being torn from its vantage point.

"Whoa, whoa. Calm down big guy." The wall paper warned jokingly. "What's

causing all this commotion?"

"He's having a bad day," the wall replied apprehensively.

"I'm not having a bad day; I'm having a bad life." the door said vehemently. "I cannot stand all this depravity."

"Depravity? What depravity?" the paper cackled.

"I'm tired of witnessing the depravity that's going on inside closed doors, I'm tired of the shady deals taking place, the cheating, the betrayal and the treachery of these people." It shook again in its frame. "I've had it; I shall not take part in this debauchery, I've had enough, I'm getting out." The wall paper laughed uncontrollably, shaking with amusement until one side of its edge came loose and draped downward, looking like a misshapen scowl of an old spinster. A man came and reattached the loose edge.

"Tell me man, how the hell are you planning to get out of this? With your legs?" The wall paper continued laughing.

"Do not mock me," the door growled, standing still.

"Oh, forgive me your holiness," the wall paper whispered. "I forgot you used to run with the church crowd." He guffawed, re-tearing the edgethat was fixed moments before.

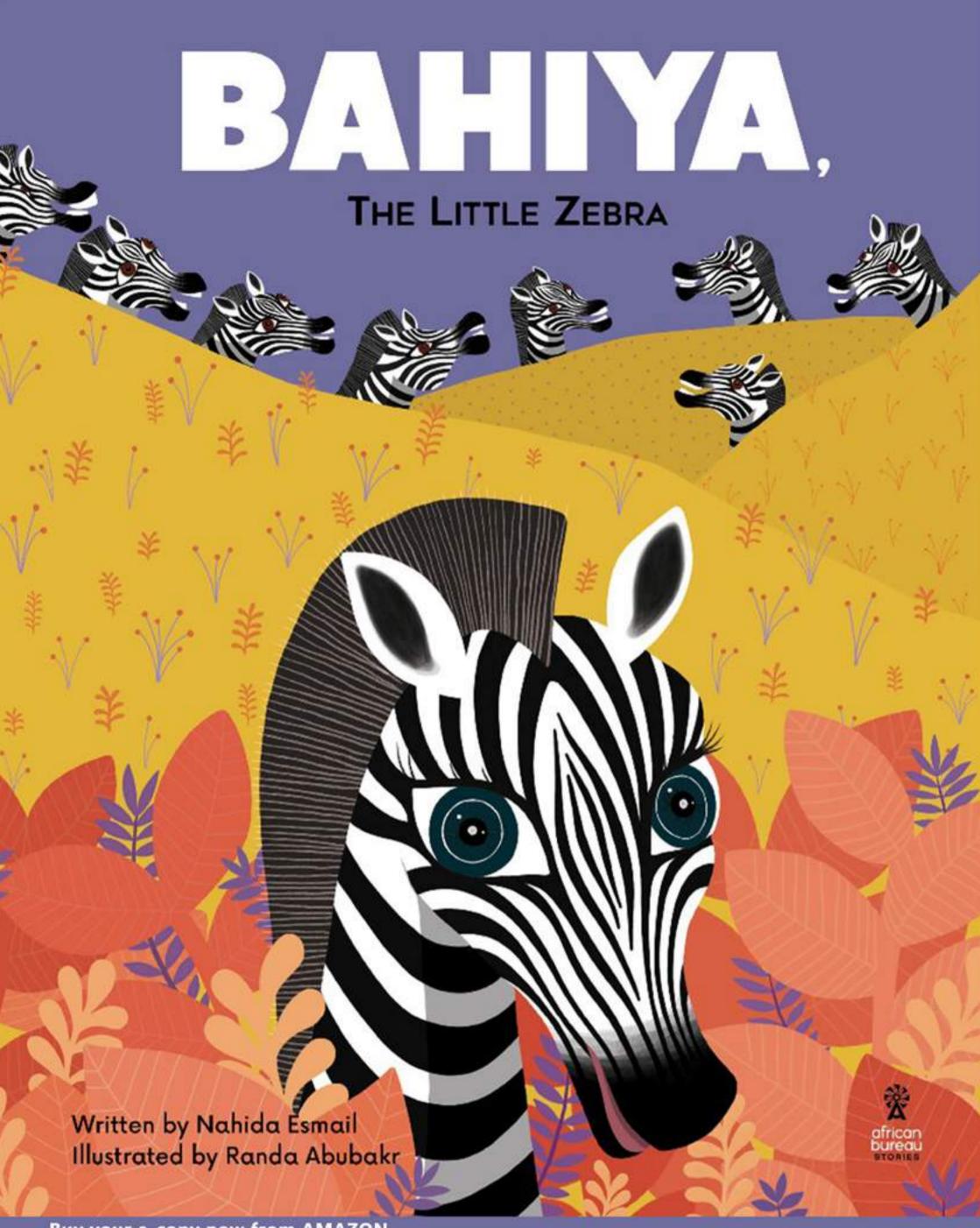
The man shuffled begrudgingly towards the wall paper. "Cursed paper, keeps pealing." He murmured while patching the paper in its place.

"You think I'm joking huh?" The door said in a menacing tone.

"What are you planning to do?" The wall asked.

"I'm going to refuse, no more getting through!" The door exclaimed determinedly.

"Sic Semper Tyrannis!" with a final scream the door sealed itself shut. Trapping all before it and after it with one final act of defiance.



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### THE SLUGGARD

Tomorrow crawls up your sleeves but you do not hearken.

Rather, you kick up dust

And play blame games in the mud

While the frail eyes of your mind

See other hands turning brown to green.

Tomorrow cries as you kick up more dust

You still do not listen

Rather, using your grimy brown fingers,

You lift seeds into your mouth.

Your teeth crush nearly all

Yet you blame enemies for their death.

Tomorrow comes.

You dash out of the mud

And spit your last seeds into your hand.

Finally ready to till, you rush to the field

The soil hisses and other hands wave at you.

You finally see: They could not turn your brown to green.

While their teeth chew fruits, yours gnash in pain

And your entire body weeps, for it is too late.

Ife Olatona,

Nigeria

# THESE TIMES SHALL PASS

The lyrics repeat themselves Again and again These times shall pass I understand the lyrics to a song when my heart aches When it fails to be understood When it cannot rise to meet expectation Hard times are going to pass I watch my eyes in the mirror Wondering, lacking commitment, wanting transparency, needing assurance My reflection is deep Tis uncertain, tis searching for answers But the winds came and the winds left And the numbers never came My black cardamom coffee is tipping Little bubbles go through it trying to come to the top I watch this drink that my ancestors drank Tis calling for me, I bring it to my lips and take a sip These times shall pass These hard times shall pass Shamsa Suleiman, Tanzania

### WAIT

When tomorrow comes and I'm gone
Spread my wings like dove in the sky
Remember
I led a good life while alive
And my reward on high I'll receive

When tomorrow comes and I'm set to leave

Prepare me for the groom to see

Remember

I've waited so long for this day

So I'll smile amidst flood of tears

When tomorrow comes and he never comes

I'll sit and stare at the sky

Remember

None can tell the time nor hour

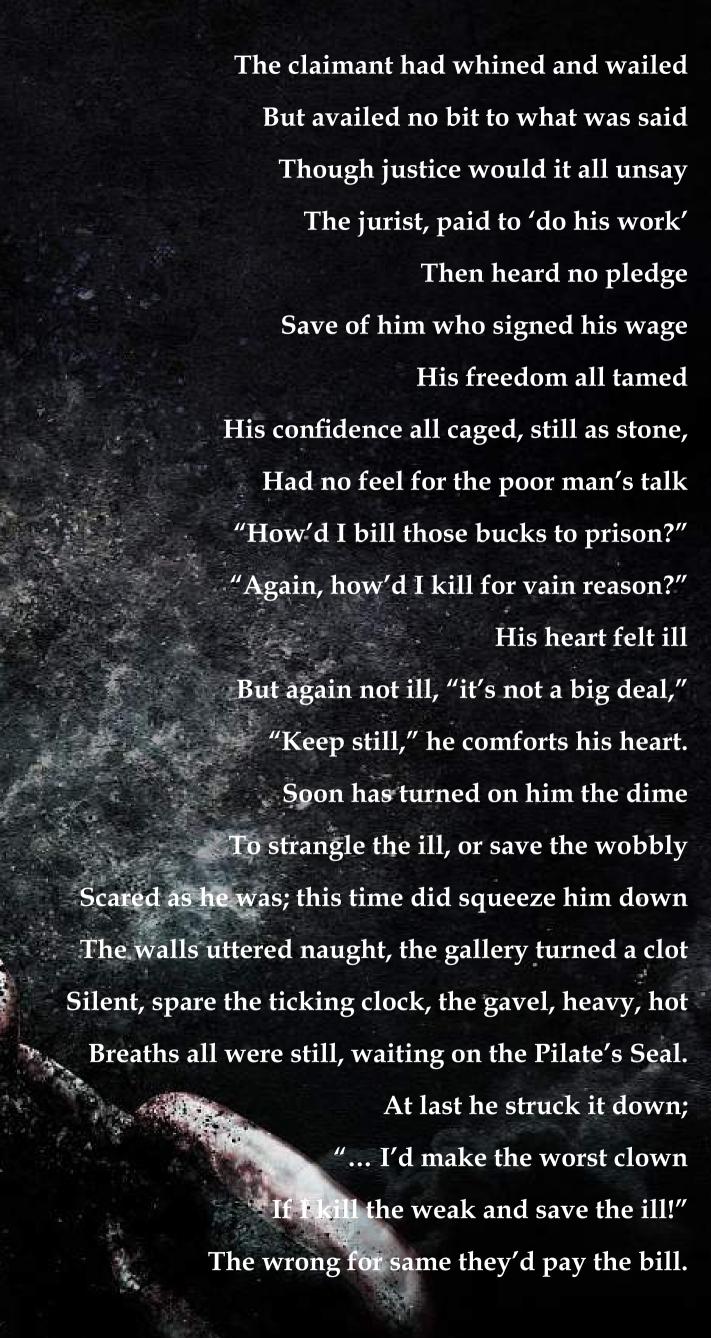
Though his time they say is best

Joy James,

Nigeria

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#### A DEAD DEAL



Shimbo Pastory, Tanzania

# Mother

You 'bearthed' me, Taught me speech Like the ground calls the chosen ones, Whisper it in their ears Like the wind, Hydrate and cleanse their souls Like the seas, Drown their pains and sorrows Like the Nile. I see heaven right below my feet. Those blinded don't believe. You found my purpose, Fed me with truth of light, At the time so right During the midst of night. Your 'Earthegy' bright as light within, Moves me like waters that flow with ease. Mother Earth I give my offerings You've taken care of our children. You've given birth to the unborn. You've fed the hunger stricken. You've clothed naked vessels. You've existed through lives not yet lived. Mother Earth. You are abundant.

> Theo 'Afrotist' Masilela, South Africa

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# HEALER

A tender heart, soft as rose petals A blossoming flower, striving for growth and power Her eyes are a window to her doubtful soul, You'll see the turmoil and feel her pain But she'll take your hands and ease yours away Voice tinted with humour and words carrying barrels of laughter She'll wipe your tears with hands made to heal And wrap you in an embrace filled with love and warmth She'll tear down your shield and make you believe, Telling you to seek Him who knows all things And when your sorrow's gone, she'll take on her fears in all forms, Thinking of what she'll become and struggling to be just a little more She knows not what she means to us She's a friend, a sister, a helper She's our healer.

Maria Nicole Enwonwu Gandaho, Benin Republic



# FRANCA

Franca!
Will thy c'science playback
To th't evening in the cavern?
And how I wish that eve never gone,
To talk of how thy flair outdid th' queenly stars
Thee was mine moon
When th' curtains hath eclipsed the nocturnal noon
Lady!
Thou wert mine evening salve
Thou chided mi endless aches

And Brought'st a cheerful heart
To a weeping chap like me
O, how I'd wish calendars could recur
For th't eve to wink again and again.

Awuah Mainoo Gabriel, (African-spear) Ghana

# THE JUDGE'S **BREECHES**

Despite our cleverness, Forget the so called ingenuity. No matter the education\_ We wear so high and mighty To spit on stupidity. **Democratically Still;** The big rapacious black rat With unprosecuted gluttony\_ Fattens of the hoi polloi's back. Oh, look councillor. The big loopy-hole in the Judge's breeches. From his stuffed head. **Corruption oozes\_** Eating the core of our finances Nyashadzashe chikumbu, Zimbabwe.



# FEAR

Oh, your presence is paralyzing, those multiple mental battles you have won.
Your ugly cousin doubt, jubilantly announcing your arrival, but who invited you here?
You infiltrate homesteads and nations alike; your roots have dug deep into innocent souls.
How long will our people have to endure your bitter fruits?

You are the ice-cold behind the feet of a bride-to-be, causing her to flee the alter Scared of a future with no forecasted honeymoons.

You know that she left behind a man with a bruised ego and shattered dreams?

You stood there watching another series of dreams evaporating into the sky

As you shamelessly flashed your toothless grin, doing your victory dance.

You quietly sneaked into my neighbour's yard, into her son's mind

He was dismissed from a meager job, but all he could see was you, disguised as the end

You told him that he was done for, about how useless he was

And he was found hanging from the poles of his mother's hut

With her favourite doek tied around his young neck.

If you were a colour, you would be an ugly shade of grey, black glazing for a glossy touch As you wear your cloak of pride adorned with spikes and thorny bits

You walk around carrying a box full of blades as you destroy the flesh on your way in and out

The discomfort that you are, heart pounding, sweaty palms and a mouth as dry as the Kalahari

A blackout later, after you have sucked the light out of a burning spirit.

A jealous lover beats his woman to a pulp for wanting to leave, the love died, she wanted out. You whispered to him, "Another man is going to touch her delicate skin, kiss the lips you have kissed, eat from the same plate you ate in" and he believed you.

If he couldn't have her, no one else would, her blood on his hands, splashed on his white shirt, a canvas of pain and regret, but it was too late. He will spend the rest of life running, from himself.

TSHEPO PHOKOJE, Motswana



# Writing is What I Do Meaza Aklilu Hadera

by Sandra Oma Etubiebi

There is a world where time seems to tick a second too quickly, a minute too early, and a lifetime faster. It is the world where journalism meets motherhood, and one woman bares it all. She is a mother, wife, journalist, and gender activist. Her work has gained national and international acceptance, being showcased all over Ethiopia and on three international festivals in Italy, London, and the United States of America. Her name is Meaza Aklilu Hadera, and she is quick to tell you that "writing is what I do."

Meaza Aklilu Hadera started writing long before she thought about what she would like to be. According to her, "I was so deep in love with writing just at the time I started learning how to write. I started writing when I was a kid. I used to write poems, short stories and drama scripts for parents' day in Tigrigna and Amharic languages. I won my first short story competition in the 8th grade. While at the university, I wrote my first novel in Amharic language. Although, I am yet to publish it, I have added three future length movie scripts, more short stories, and poems." This lover of writing has always led a life of putting thoughts to words as she admittedly said, "I think my passion for writing led me to journalism."

Hadera leads the ideal life of a journalist. She sheds more insight into her life as a journalist, explaining that "There are two sides to the life of a journalist; the good side and the hard. The good side makes you smart and strong because you come across a lot of ups and downs while gathering information. It gives you the opportunity to visit places, meet new people and experience life in a bigger picture. The hard side of the story is that journalism takes all of your time. It becomes difficult to find enough time for yourself and your family. I had a painful experience when I had to go far away to cover a traditional ceremony on my daughter's first birthday. Her first birthday meant a lot to me, and I missed it." Despite frequent heart breaking stories like these, Hadera is undeterred in her career pursuit, not without many thanks to her unique nuclear family support system.

Meaza Aklilu Hadera makes you realise that every professional writer needs a support system. Being a woman with a tasking to-do list, she revealed that "Words give me the strength to let it all out. I am a mother, wife and journalist. My job

needs all the concentration I can get and my baby girl is only 18 months old. You can imagine how much she needs her mom. So finding time to think and write is pretty hard. But my husband does help me. He is my number one fan. He always tries to give me all the space I need every time I write, and He is the first person I read my writing to." Her supportive structure must be paying off as Meaza's globally commendable work underscores.

Meaza writings are clearly influenced by her role as a gender activist. She writes a lot on gender based violence, and that was the theme for her internationally acclaimed work, "Gender's Gift." When asked to elaborate on her gender based writing, she responded that "Well, I am a gender activist, so gender based violence is basically what I work on most of the time. And in a country like mine, it is hard to live free from gender based violence. Though we have a very nice culture and strong tradition, we also have customs that let our girls down coupled with the prevailing ignorance towards gender based violence. So, I fight battles with words today so my daughter and sisters, and the daughters and sisters of other mothers like me won't pass through this way again." In doing this work and interacting with the opposite sex, Meaza discovered that not all perpetuators do it deliberately, and her work is, at the very least, creating an awareness that opens their eyes to the evil of this violence.

Meaza is optimistic about the digital era and what it spells for her work in Ethiopia and around the world. She enthused that "Good is coming. The digital era is making the world a better place for writers and the impact of their writing. Take my story for example, I am contributing an article to Writers Space Africa from where I am, and through this platform I get to read and meet writers from all over Africa. I think it's time for Africa!" Hung on this enthusiasm still, she had more to say to writers, "Don't let anyone or any situation stop you from writing. Write in whatever language you want. Once you know how to write, translating won't be a problem. Feel free and confident to participate on international platforms like Writers Space Africa. Don't let anything stop you." This hardworking mother, wife, journalist, and gender activist makes light the challenges of her day as she rightly magnifies the value of every impact she makes, one word at a time. Thus, giving more meaning to those words, "Writing is what I do."

# WE SHOULD ALL BE FEMINISTS Esho Oluwakemi, Nigeria

"We Should All Be Feminists is a book written by ChimamandaNgoziAdichie, where she articulated her views on what feminism entails. She posited that feminism is not synonymous with insult on women, rather it is a label that should be embraced by all. The book is a critical analysis on feminity, how it is construed, pointing out the fact that the society as a whole must change if we are to reach equality. Her focus was on domestic aspects as well as general areas, but in this context, the focus is on gender issues in the workplace and the society.

Feminism is a range of political, ideological, and social movements that share a common goal to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, and social equity of sexes. Feminism is a wholistic phenomenon, that cuts across every sphere of life. In Africa, using Nigeria as a case study, feminism doesn't receive the warm embrace of the people. Feminism is indeed a knotty issue, and many are averse to its discussion. There are many misconceptions about feminism that have to be cleared.

Feminists are not categories of ladies that despise men, they are not a group of unhappy women whom the society have relegated to the background either. Sadly, this is the myopic view people, men and women alike have as regards feminism.

They are people who, according to the true meaning of the word seek equal opportunities for both sexes. They fight for a society where everyone has a level playing ground, and opportunities are not given on the basis of your sex. Factually, they do not seek to usurp the position of men in the society.

There are several gender issues that have plagued the society, yet it has been accepted as the norm. Masculinity has been accepted as the human default, while any other thing is seen as a deviation - the bane of a patriarchal society. Taking a look at the workplace, glass walls have been placed in many fields of work, serving as a mechanism limiting women from attaining the peak of their chosen careers. There are biases against women in the workplace ranging from sexual molestation, to unequal pay for equal work done, gender sensitive issues, among others.

Pointing the torch at knotty issues in the society, such as rape, Female Genital Mutilation, child marriage, etc, have subjected women to hell on earth. Rape, infact, is a man's offence and a woman's punishment. Women are forced into silence, bearing the shame alone rather than being allowed to seek justice against the rapist. It is quite unfortunate that women have been forced into a mould created by the society, and are expected to conform to societal norms strictly for women so as to be accepted in the society, and not to be seen as deviants. Women's aspirations are somewhat curtailed because adequate resources are not provided, and when they are, it will be easier for a donkey to pass through the eye of a needle than for a woman to have it.

It is heart wrenching to live with the fact that many women have accepted this as their story, and would rather enjoy the comfort of their subjugation than to be termed deviants. Many women have become too timid to materialise their dream because they feel a woman should not be over ambitious, so as to accommodate a man in her life. This, and many other things are what have plagued the society, and feminists rise up to fight against such ills, seeking a level playing ground for all. Feminism seeks gender equity. Gender equity is sameness amongst the sexes; taking cognisance of their individual abilities and uniqueness, and providing for them equal opportunities and equal resources for both the male and female sexes.

## WE NEED COMPETENT AND SELFLESS LEADERS

## By Kweku Sarkwa (The Romantic Writer)

One may say we need money in order to push the country forward but even in the presence of all these resources available, we still find it even more difficult and complicated to achieve such aim of development that we seek. A 2008 study found that only 32.6 percent of surveyed companies felt prepared to fill leadership positions, 3.5 percent of the surveyed companies felt extremely prepared to fill leadership positions, 9.7 percent of the surveyed companies felt unprepared to fill leadership positions, 19.4 percent of the surveyed companies felt unprepared to fill leadership positions and 34.7 percent of the surveyed companies were neither prepared nor unprepared to fill leadership positions (An Oracle white paper, June 2012). Under this survey, it was observed that there were two major problems: the problem of finding creative and capable personnel to fit those leadership positions, and the problem of creating leadership programs to educate the personnel to fit the future leadership positions to ensure effective development.

This survey gives information that explains vividly that for a country to develop, there is the need to get a strong and extremely prepared human resource to fit leadership roles since every country's development depends on its skilled labour. It goes up through the nation's youth development from childhood education to adulthood preparing the children mentally and socially to take up the mantle from their predecessors. This is important because the development of every country depends mainly on its human resources. There are lots of leadership theories, but the best leadership theory which best fits every organization or a country is the situational leadership which argues that every situation has its own style of providing

solutions. A typical example can be found in the medical field as a paracetamol becomes ineffective for curing stomach ache.

Thinking of companies, every government tries within its power to provide jobs for the people but even if we get lots of companies and industries at our disposal but refuse to manage them properly, we then return from hero to zero. Right from infancy, we acquire informal education from our various homes by respecting the elders and running errands for the old and feeble as well as our parents (not necessarily our biological parents) since charity begins at home. Also acquiring formal education as one studies throughout laid down stages in schools and institutions to obtain certificates where there are also rules and regulations that govern and shape an individual for his society, family and the nation as a whole. A former United States of America President, Abraham Lincoln said that Democracy is government of the people, by the people and for the people which explains that development comes through team work as each and everyone plays his role in the process of good nation building according to the principle of the separation of power. A true visible sign of development can be shown when there is the cultivation of positive and patriotic mentality towards one's own country that is very strong and firm in a way that can never compromised.





It's funny, how this world operates; giving a class category to everything that exists in the universe including the human race. We're blinded by class categories and so, before we make any move, we want to know what class we are dealing with: rich or poor, white or black or colour, and so on. I could take that for parts of speech in grammar, planets, drugs, food, and everything else minor you can list, but definitely not for human existence. I shouldn't have to explain my race before embarking on any endeavour. In fact, the word 'race' and the context in which it is used is one that should be spewed out of the dictionary.

Ordinarily, I would think it simply academic to have the human race classified based on the diversity of mankind (biological, genetic composition, language, tradition, culture and social practices); however, the rate at which man is desperate to distinguish himself from others is alarming. Really alarming. Now, let's get a bit academic; I need you to catch a glimpse of my thought line.

Charles Darwin drew the division line between the caucasoids, australoids, mongoloids, and negroids. The caucasoids are "physically characterized by light skin colour

ranging from white to dark wheatish, straightish to wavy hair with colour ranging from flaxen to brownish to dark ebony..." The negroids are "physically characterized by dark skin due to dense pigmentation, coarse black and wooly hair, wide noses..." The mongoloids are "characterized by yellowish or light wheatish skin, extremely straight and black hair..." The australoids are basically classified based on geographical location and regional culture than biological or genetic traits. They are believed to be sub-races of the negroids which the 'Out of Africa Theory' explains migrated from the African continent and moved along the Southeast Asian coast toward the Asian land mass. (Quotes and paraphrase from Biologywise.com.) The mongoloids are Native Americans, Japan, China, Mongolia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Nepal, among others. Caucasoids are Europeans (including some indo-europeans), Asia Minor, North Africa and Western Asia (there's more though). The australoids are Melanesia, Australia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, etc. The Negroids are easier identified than any other race: Black Africans and blacks scattered across other continents.

'People of colour' originally refers to light skinned people of mixed African and European heritage; however, it is used by the Americans to primarily refer to non-whites. Most Africans and some parts of the world term the Europeans, Australians, and white Americans as 'whites'. Other colours that are not 'black' are viewed as the people of colour.

Now this is jaw-dropping. Follow my thoughts please. Wikipedia has it that Trinidad has a record of numerous descriptions of the human race according to their skin tone: high red- part white; part black but 'clearer' than brown skin; high brownmore white than black; dougla - part Indian and part black; light skinned, or clear skinned; some black, but more white; trini white- perhaps not all white, behaves like others but skin white. And guess what? I found out some years back that one born of white and black parents is termed 'grey' in complexion. Wow! I'm about to laugh.

As as far as I'm concerned, whatever skin colour you are or 'Darwinian race' you belong to, you are entitled to everything made available to the human for comfort

and existence. All of these class categories simply aid in unequal treatment and unequal allocation of financial, social and political resources. Should we feel awkward about anyone at all, it should be based on moral values and standards. For instance, say, you irk or puke at the sight of a murderer or thief; that may be okay. Religion regardless, race regardless, skin type and colour regardless, gender regardless, ethnicity and tribe regardless, we are the same. Come to think of it, procreation is what brought about the billions of men and women of today's world. This simply tells us that we are descendants of the same family who have over time multiplied and spread about the entire universe. Ditch the Big Bang Theory; we didn't just come about. One truth we do not know and see is that working with the mentality of race and colour is one of the major reasons why the world, including the so-called developed countries and continents, is at a stand-still. There's a lot more development and advancement that the universe can enjoy should we see one another as same and work together in unity. We talk of SDG's (Sustainable Development Goals) but this, asides other factors, can be achieved with the flick of a finger if we put away racism and discrimination.

All said and done, this is my conclusion: there's only one race that exists(if the word 'race' should be used at all), and that is "THE HUMAN RACE." So, Negroid, australoid, caucasoid, mongoloid; white, colour or black; which are you?

(Some of the sources of information used in this column are drawn from Wikipedia, Biologywise.com and Quora.com. Others are personal.)

#### About the columnist:

Gabrielina Gabriel-Abhiele is a writer, book editor, and broadcast journalist; a reporter and editor with Writers Space Africa online magazine. She's a preacher of her propaganda and a believer in equality and truth. Her essay contents span various topics from child abuse, politics, to gender equality, racism, tribalism, and as many issues as can be touched. She is a general interest blogger too. In her opinion, her blog should not be mistaken for a rant but one that focuses on heart splitting issues. She can be contacted via theroaringwriter@gmail.com or gabrielina.gabriel@gmail.com





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#### RITERS SPACE W R

# **Empowering African Writers**

**FEATURES** 

ON SECOND STREET Edith Knight Kenya

THE GHOST IN OUR TOWN Neema Komba

Tanzania

YOU ARE STILL THE LAST PERSON I KISSED

Kimberly Chirodzero Zimbabwe

OLD MAN SUNSHINE

Joy James Nigeria

HEARTBREAKER

Maria Nicole Benin Republic TETRIS Biniam Getaneh

Ethiopia

FIGHT TO THE END Wanangwa Mwale Zambia

# NSAH MALA

THE WRITER AND HIS HONOURS

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## EDITORIAL NO CAMERAS PLEASE

I admire the selfless people who engage in charity work once in a while. You know, visit children homes, homes for the old, the sick and randomly drop a few coins in the begging bowl along the streets. I appreciate the good work from a kind heart. May the heavens double your blessings!

But, here is where we have a problem. Is it so hard to help and not leave the camera at home? Why do I feel the need to help only through the lens? Clicking away, capturing creative moments of my charitable nature. How I visited the homes, donated blankets during the floods, sent relief food to the fire victims, donated tents to the refugee camps etc.

I'll then splutter photos of my kind selfless me, with the unfortunate kids, whom the world has been cruel enough to cast orphans and probably ailing. Why do I feel so compelled to let the whole world know that, I attended some charity event? Forget politicians and NGOs. They need such stunts to woo supporters, voters and sponsors respectively. How else will they convince the world that they care? The camera must tag along, full battery. But do you?

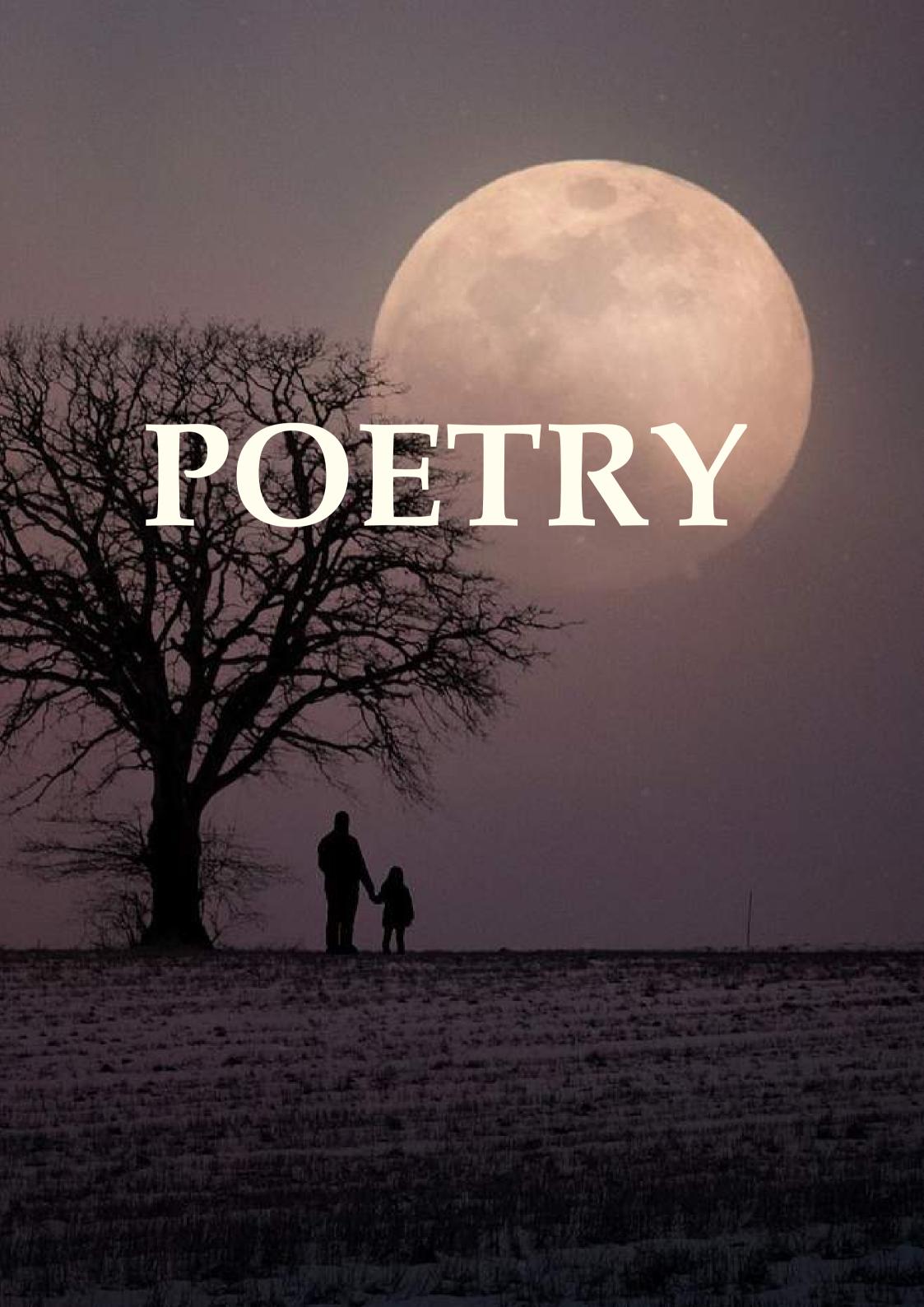
On blowing own trumpet, the good old book advices to let not thy left hand know, what thy right hand giveth.

Help the poor, visit the sick, surprise people at random without expecting anything in return. While visiting take something little with you. Sympathetic smiles and prayers alone aren't enough. Let not your intention be to collect news to feed your bloated ego and gossip sites.

This spirit of bragging, putting on display your generous self, craving and seeking attention from the public, at the expense of someone else is not nice at all. The internet does not forget. Those pictures carry the impotent danger of injuring the victim's esteem in future.

Honesty is a virtue. What did you give to the creator? How many cheques did you write Him? How many cows did you bring? How many acres did you bribe with to be where you are?

Wakini Kuria Chief Editor, WSA, Kenya





Isaac Kilibwa, Kenya

"Days are long when nights are wrong Stuck in the throng; playing strong..." e gestures, she shrugs, she sighs, One selfish world it has been -You want to trust you would rise What would you do to spite sin?" Fate stares at her unperturbed; His glazed eyes have her subdued. "Would you grieve for your stray love, Cry out for what you could not save? Would you set your eyes above, For what you would never crave?" "I want to, I want to breath, All this pollen and dirt, breath."



Blackbird,

Chained in a white cage

Surrounded by hungry eyes and itching hands

Ready to rip piece by piece

The treasures on its jeweled wings

Blackbird,

Held down by shackles in a white cage

Blazing metal coloured in prejudice and hate

Wings beg to fly away

But blackbird has resigned to fate.

Omemu Moyo Esther, Nigeria

## LULU, YET AGAIN

Down the shadowy river bank The lone crumbling stony bridge, in sight, The blonde swift pacing sundown, And the dutiful whispering waters, Which nursed and romanced The busy starving gossiping winds, hovering Unto the grinning starry heavens, Remain the eyewitnesses Of that wonder, Love at first sight. Unbelieving thence you was, as how From the affluent a ripe lad falls on you? Lone, hurt lass, and at such odd an hour When poverty has crept All over; save soul, Your wheels then, now your legs, Hapless, would make it all worse, As worse as miracle Thus you had thought. I knew not why or and how you were there, And need not now. Lulu For, if we'd crossed that far Then when depowered, hinged down, Now sturdy, I trust, we shall cross yet again, For with love, the weak Is but stronger.

Shimbo Pastory, Tanzania

### **GHOSTS**

Fear kept us alive,

I mean close,

Enough for life to notice us.

But we never really lived,

We rode horses made of clouds,

Fought death with wooden swords,

Hoping that it would spare us.

But we died in the safety of our fears,

Our hearts strangled by emotions we feared.

Now we play tag with the angel of death,

Hoping to haunt those who brave their fears.

Gabriel Owino Junior, Kenya

## Heartbreaker

Ode to a fiery heart,

A smile so bright, no one can see the fire that burns inside
Her body a work of art, her voice a raging current
Her words drive men to insanity
The look in her eyes brings them down their knees
She breezes past in freedom and glee
Long, shiny hair flowing like a river of dark ink,
Fluttering in the morning wind
She leaves a trail of broken hearts in her wake
Heart so fierce no one can take
Touch her and she'll burn you to the ground
Just look, look at her go again
Looking for a heart to break.

Maria Nicole Enwonwu Gandaho, Benin Republic

## BLACKLIGHT

Smiling faces I turn to see

Masquerades the blinds that kiss their souls to eat them away,

Slowly and daily,

Into horrified a race without a home;

Darkness comes crouching into our bones,

It grips with its cold hands our temples

That the eyes see nothing better;

Black lights shine in a times

Set as a place, a home of peace to strive for.

Little hope only, little hope!

Breathing and the sound of ticking time,

The melodies we value,

They nurse us through a pain,

A life of misery,

A cold blacklight.

Andrew Huje, Zimbabwe

#### **OLD MAN SUNSHINE**

She wakes one morning to greet old man sunshine Spotted his gray hair one side mourning His light so dim you couldn't help but notice Old man sunshine lost in thought She blinked to see but all in vain His mind made up to cease his shine She tried her tricks to change his thoughts Yet it took a while for him to say I'll shine my light with fury I'll burn She smiled and talked some sense to him You're who you are encourage yourself The whole world need your light to see The sky is near just stretch further I believe in you no matter the cloud So arise and shine your time is now.

Joy James, Nigeria

## MELON OF THE TOWN

The age of yours is very teen
But hardly imitate deeds of "sabini"
Like a dog game of thighs in street open
Without earn even ten shilling from men
Because you're terrific, you'd feel not pain
Save the pleasure to quench your gain
All you know is spreading the thighs twain
Serving fast lunch and dinner to men
Sympathy on you beloved of mine
For when it rains soon will drain
And coil you in the midst like a hungry python.

Shining from parched facial fraction
You've changed, both name and walking motion
Fame all over, best bitch of the town
Cooling all town chaps 'elections'
Sweet potato, cheap melon of town
Lost, turned garbage, turned clown.

NB: Sabini means: Seventies

Gift Samwel Ngamanja, Tanzania

## FIGHT TO THE END

Maybe my weak faith is right
Maybe I am losing this fight
Maybe I ain't as strong as I thought
Giving in to self-doubt
Between walls of the trenches
I hide from nothing but myself
I am losing the war inside me

No light
My life is a plight
I hope for a rope
To pull myself up the top
With no sight
Of what's to come ahead

I cope; I invent a light inside me
I shine, as darkness persist around me
One at a time, I create steps in the wall
As I push myself up and rise above the war

Maybe life is not about waiting for the rope
But finding your way up, as you shine from within
Giving out light and hope to the darkness
And fighting to the end

Wanangwa Mwale, Zambia

#### **TETRIS**

I spent my life trying to fit in

To fit in to the cool guys circle chilling

To fit in to the Box that society sets

To act a certain way and become one of the pretenders

To conform into the calibration of masculinity

Or the "beauty", the "sassiness" and the "humbleness" of femininity

To acquire the perks of fine modesty

To toe the line of "maturity"

Little did I know?

When the crowd I've been trying to fit into turns into nothing

The expectation I was so keen to meet keeps on vanishing

The box I thought I would fit in goes into disappearing

The more I try to fit

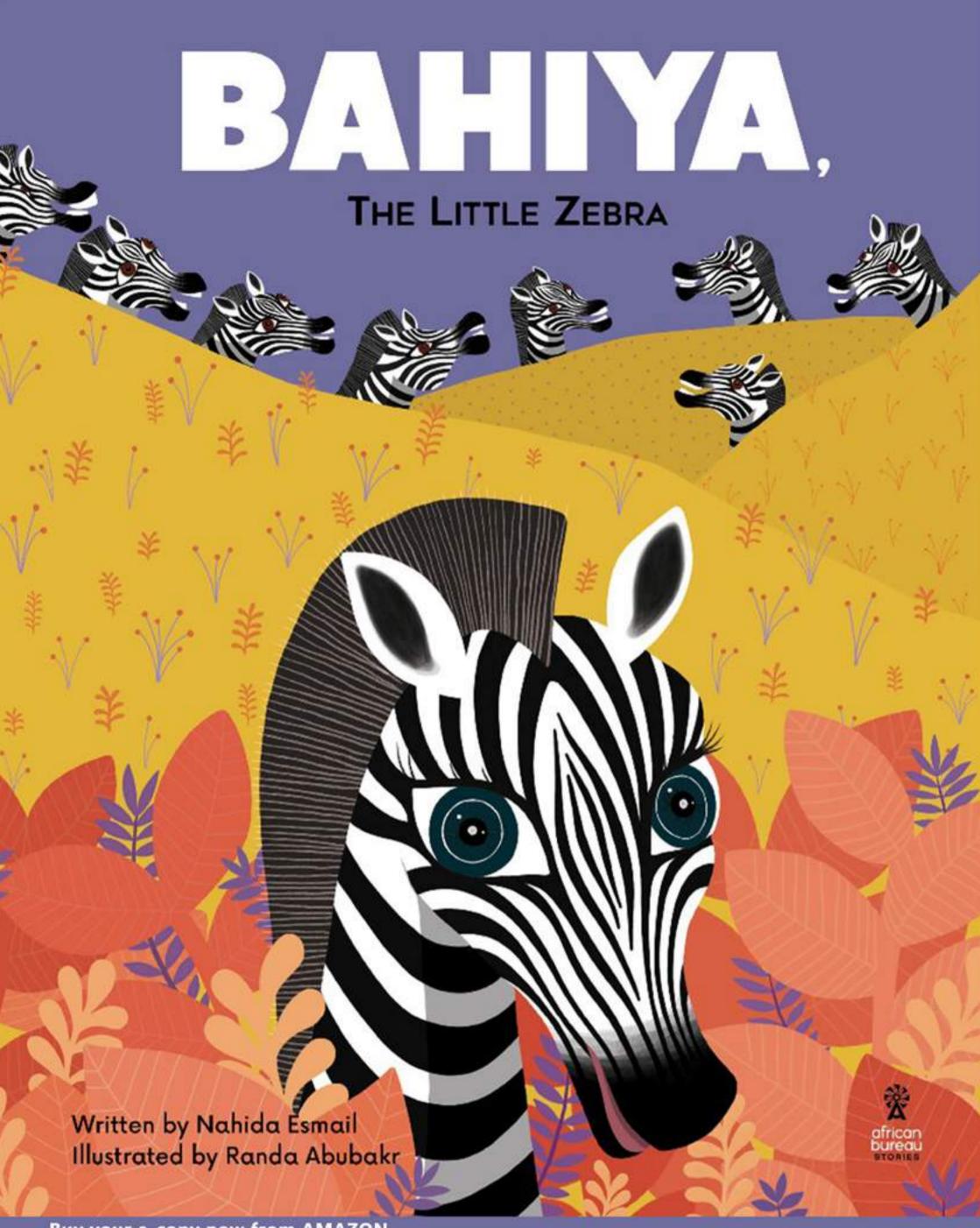
The more I lose my bits and pieces along with it

Here I am, wondering before I lose myself altogether

Is it worth it? ..... Ever?

Biniam Getaneh,

Ethiopia



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## ON SECOND STREET

#### Edith Knight, Kenya

It was a beautiful morning, one worthy of shopping; and so I took a walk down Second Street. The first shop I visited was the second heart store. I moved closer to read the labels of the hearts on display. Broken hearts on sale: Fragile, please handle with care. Angry, anxious and depressed hearts on offer: Buy one get one free; Pure hearts: Unavailable, please try next shop. The only thing I would have bought was unavailable; heartless, I left the store.

The next shop was the Second spouse store, and just like the first shop, all items were clearly labelled. Widows, widowers and divorcees on sale: Fragile, please handle with care. Lying, unfaithful and broke spouses on offer: Buy one, get two free. Rich, God fearing, faithful and good looking spouses: Unavailable, Please try God. I left the store feeling lonelier than I had been.

Since it was lunchtime, I decided to visit the second food parlour that was across the road. All foods were priced and labelled. Overcooked food on sale: Please eat with moderation. Junk food on offer: Buy one plate get one free. Healthy and green foods: Unavailable, Please visit a farm near you. I left the parlour, feeling hungrier than I had been and decided to go home.

The taxis on the second bus park were clearly labelled. Not roadworthy taxis with unseasoned drivers: Fragile, pray before boarding. Over speeding and drunken drivers with police records: Pay half price, arrival not guaranteed. Law abiding drivers with no police record – Unavailable. Please walk or fly. It was a long walk home from Second Street.

## SOLITUDE

#### Itohan Osadiaye, Nigeria

I have been struggling deep down on how to best approach my father. The thoughts of whether or not I should tell him, is a question I've been wrestling with for the past one month. The event of the past turned our relationship sour even before it had the chance to start.

After five years of marriage, my mother finally got pregnant and gave birth to a boy-me. Death was however so unkind; he took the life out of her. I grew up to be a brilliant young man and a model to my peers yet he never took notice. I had everything I ever wanted but, lacked one thing; the love of a father.

"What happened to my father that made him so cold towards me? Each time I try to get close, he keeps building a wall. What did I ever do wrong?" I had asked my father's closest friend.

"He caused her death. He never gave me a chance to enjoy our blossomed love. He took her from me; I will never love him!" My father had vowed. I got to know about everything, a month ago.

I tried to mend the broken pieces of his heart but all I ever got was a reminder of who I am; the boy that killed his mother and took away his father's love. I tried all I could but the words of a broken father were beginning to break me too. I finally found solace in the arms of Jasmine.

I summoned the courage to tell my father about my love- Jasmine. Even when I thought I found wholeness and solace in Jasmine, the love of my life, he somehow found a way to stain the picture perfect world I had found. I could either take his brokenness with me or take a stand and put an end to this. I took a stand and this time, though I walked away from his presence broken, it was different.



# The Writer and His Honours NSAH MALA

Sandra Oma Etubiebi

It felt like a meeting with royalty. My interview with this amazing writer was more rewarding for me than I would have imagined: Nsah Mala is a luminary who has put time, effort, passion, and diligence into his journey towards his emerging persona as one of Africa's finest.

His honourroll is massive with irrefutable evidence of a life lived on purpose and producing remarkable results. As you read his bio and the stimulating interview that follows, be equally inspired as I was.

#### - Sandra Oma Etubiebi

#### The Bio of Nsah Mala:

Nsah Mala is a Cameroon-born writer and poet who began writing plays in the second grade of secondary school. He wrote four plays before high school and wrote another in the university, but hasn't published any play yet. Little wonder that he was national overall best candidate in Literature in English in the 2009 Cameroonian GCE Advanced Level. He has published four poetry volumes: Chaining Freedom (2012), Bites of Insanity (2015), If You Must Fall Bush (2016) and Constimocrazy: Malafricanising Democracy (2017). His self-published books are: Mounting the Stairs of Challenge (2011, 2017) and Do You Know Mbesa? (2013). His short stories and poems have won prizes in Cameroon and France.

He has featured in numerous magazines, journals and anthologies in Cameroon, Nigeria, India, USA and Canada. He attended the Caine Prize Workshop in Rwanda 2018 and his story is forthcoming in Redemption Song, the 2018 Caine Prize Anthology. Other notable anthologies featuring his works include Wales-Cameroon Anthology 2018, Muse for World Peace Anthology 3rd edition 2018, Best 'New' African Poets 2017 Anthology and Hell's Paradise 2016. Meanwhile, his first poetry volume in French is under consideration in France. He has read his poetry in Cameroon, Senegal, France and UK. He writes in English and French, also being a trained teacher of these languages for Cameroonian secondary schools. And he is beginning to write in his native Mbesa (Itangha-Mbesa).

He was selected in the pioneer cohort of YALI Regional Leadership Centre West Africa -Dakar in 2016. He received the US Department of State E-Teacher Scholarship in 2015 which enabled his participation in an online teaching course at the University of Oregon where he finished with a 100% pass. He is also a recipient of the Erasmus Mundus Masters scholarship which has taken him across three universities in France, UK and Spain. As a literary scholar, he has published peer-reviewed papers and book chapters.

#### The Interview with Nsah Mala:

• What is the most interesting or exhilarating moment for you as a writer? Is it when you get the idea for a book? When the blank pages start filling up? When you finish? When you publish? Or when you receive recognition?

You know what? My answer to this question will surprise you. It'll elude all your suggestions or prompts. My answer is this: connection. The most exhilarating moment for me as a writer is when I discover a reader who feels connected to my work: a reader who feels healed, a reader who will most likely take action to ensure a better human society, after having read my work. The rest – especially recognitions – are simply secondary.

• Since you started writing, what has been your most challenging moment with regards to writing in general? And how did you overcome the challenge, and what did you learn from it?

Two things constitute a challenge to most, if not all, writers, and most especially writers from Africa. They're publishing and readership. I've been no exception to them. But advancement in technology is, substantially, helpful in overcoming them. For instance, my books are readily and easily accessible online and in the western world, but not in our continent and my country of birth, Cameroon. And this is sad, of course! Often, I try to do local prints, though sales sometimes can be timid. And luckily, because literary magazines and journals are freely accessible online, I never hesitate to submit to them, since my goal is to have my work circulate and get read, not primarily to make money from writing.

• What would you say to a writer who wants to be like you receive the kind of recognition and awards that you have? What steps should that person take?

This is a tricky question. I say so because writers have different writing objectives. Basically, some write to earn a living and get recognized whilst others writer to catalyze societal improvement (or simply for fun). And I belong to the latter category. Let me digress a bit here. It is true that nowadays many African writers take to social media debating and questioning literary prizes and sometimes even daring to recommend what African writers should write about or how they should do so. Inasmuch as I believe that every writer should strive to improve their writing, I cannot buy the idea of dictating content and style to others. That is condescending, to say the least. While some are writing to prove to the rest of the world that Africans can experiment

too and handle any topic of their choice, some (like me) still believe in exposing the traditional ills of our society. So I will only advise each and every writer to determine the category to which they belong and focus on reading and writing. Whichever category one falls under, one thing remains constantly true about writing: a writer must be reading and writing. Anything else will follow. Next, they should seek advice and orientation from published writers about how to get published once ready.

• Were your accolades totally free from any external influence and totally based on merit? If yes, tell us what you think it takes to produce such creative works of quality.

Only judges can say why they award writers accolades whenever they do.But, I don't think 'external influence' is ever a criterion in the process, except by 'external influence'you mean the artistic politics outside texts. And this ushers us into the avoidable terrain of subjectivity. Writing is part of art and all art is subjective. It's all a matter of taste. Yes, many people can agree at one point that cook X's meal is so good, but never everybody. What about those who are allergic to that meal? What about those whose culture forbids that meal? Remember too we've entered the post-truth era where the nakedness of subjectivity has been exposed in every sphere of human life, including the erstwhile purported objective field of science. So I believe in 'merit,' but with all the subjectivities inherent in judges. And above all, I believe in God's unbeatable power to reward His obedientchildren in every good thing they do. This is where my Christianity steps in, and unapologetically so!

Against this backdrop, I therefore recommend nothing except extensive reading and writinginterlaced with unflinching commitment. Complete dedication to our writing careers pays. And 'pay' here doesn't necessarily mean money. It means any form of satisfaction one sets out with the intention of achieving as a writer. Make friends with writers and collaborate (not compete!) with them to improve one another's work. The importance of belonging to literary circles, especially with writers who have similar visions like you, is indisputable. In summary, here goes my recipe: read and write with all your energies, and if a Christian like me, pray with all your soul and heart =SUCCESS, no matter how you define success.

• If you could go back and change anything in your career or experience, what would you change?

I would have read more than I did when I was younger, in my teens. But then, how could I get the books when I was barely struggling to acquire school textbooks? Reason why I prefer not to go back but to go forward, with God's help, and contribute

my little quota in making books available by creating local libraries in my native Mbesa and possibly beyond our national boundaries.

• What are your general thoughts about the world of writing, and specifically about the role of Africans in that world?

There is a lot going on in the writing world today, with technology giving writers unending opportunities to experiment and connect easily with readers. More and more people are grabbing their pens and papers and writing. Did I say pens and papers? Oh, sorry! I meant (also) keyboards and screens. The role of Africans is to continue to tell our stories, as many stories as our diverse cultures, as many stories as our imaginations can stretch, without minding about those who want to impose certain writing agendas and styles. Our stories have always been, and should always be, as plural as our cultural groupings and personal preferences. African voices have been reverberating on the global literary scene for a good time now. And we just need to continue to amply the voices and make them more melodious in the global choir of cultures.

• Are your writings relayed by a theme? What motivated you to write? What do you naturally write about?

I write about many themes, including, but not limited to: politics, war, culture, religion, nature, and history. Add the interpretations of readers to these and the list becomes River Nile, or River Menchum in Cameroon. I entered writing in second grade in secondary school (GSS Mbesa) through the door of 'literary commitment' – the Achebean dimension of a writer as a guide, as a teacher, as a critic. Therefore, I write to motivate and to make the world better and more habitable for humans and other species. When you write as a guide, you never have a fixed theme. Your themes will move with the tides of society. I mean, as evil moves around suppressing the masses in society so too do I move with my pen in defense of the oppressed and exploited. Take this for example: As arms dealers make more arms to main humanity so do I move with my poetic compass crying for the death of arms and the birth of peace.

• Do you have any writer regime or strict schedule we should know of? What role would you say discipline and hard work play inevolving a writer?

No, I don't have any fixed writing schedule. I write when inspiration and time coincide. Or permit. I joggle my time between many activities: teaching, studies, academic research, reading and writing, career and scholarship orientation, village development, and so forth. If in future I ever decide to embrace writing full time, I may then have a

strict schedule. But, until then, I write as the muses come, I should say. Let me take the last part of your question outside writing. As with every human endeavor, success is born from the marriage of discipline and hard work.

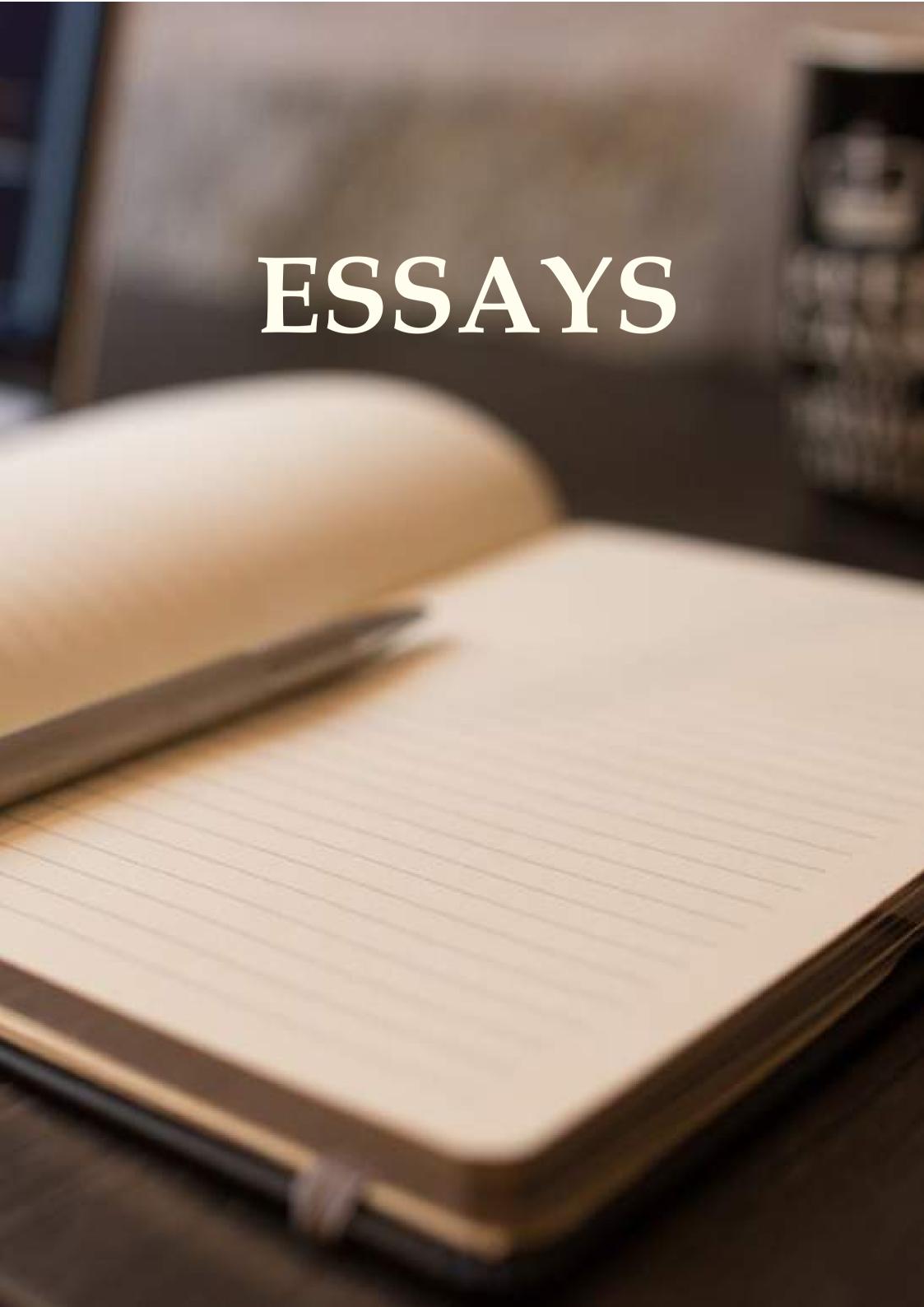
• Any final words?

Yes, at two levels.

First, if you want to be a writer, just start writing immediately. There is no best time to begin. And nobody can give feedback on ideas in your head or heart, except God. So pour forth your ideas and the rest will follow: whether feedback, publishing or earnings.

Second, do not be in competition with other writers! Collaborate and network with them in order to compete only with yourself, to improve your craft, although artistic 'best' is just a subjective label. Nobody can write your writing. Only you can do it. Even similar poems or novels end just at that: similar, never the same. Because all the billions of us on this planet are unique, so just be yourself. So, start, or keep, writing! God bless you!





# THE ISLE OF MAN TOURIST TROPHY (TT) RACE: Where Death is a Split Second Away

And now hear me, Mother What thing has seized me and I have conceived In my heart I shall die, I am resolved

~Euripides~

What would you be willing to die for? This question usually evokes passionate answers like dying for loved ones, country, religion, environment, honor and even something as abstract and intangible as an idea. Eight years ago death felt like a big deal to me, and despite accounts of romanticized and noble deaths, I believed that the grim reaper could be nothing short of a cold, dark and terrifying entity to encounter. But today, instead of being a woman on heels, I am a woman on wheels; wheels of a superbike and in me burns my lifelong dream of racing on a Kawasaki Ninja ZX-6R 636 in the world's deadliest and most extreme motorsport race: The Isle of Man Tourist Trophy Race.

The Kawasaki Ninja ZX-6R 636 Source: www.motorbeam.com



of Man!

self-governing British Crown depen- an entire fortnight. dency. Technically, it is a possession of The race track is called the Snaefell the Crown directly but an independent Mountain course, stretching 37.73 miles territory from the UK and even the Eu-through stormy weather, gullies, narropean Union. They have a population row treacherous turns and over 200 caof less than 100,000, their national lan- pricious corners. The most dangerous guage is called Manx and they use the corner has to be Ballagarey Corner that Sterling pounds or Manx as currency. has claimed many lives among them that Apart from being a tax haven, there ex- of my hero, Paul R. Dobbs also known ists a Fairy Bridge in Mann and legend as Dobsy in 2010, while also recordhas it that you must greet the fairies ing horrifying crashes like in the case when crossing because not doing so at- of Guy Martin, my other hero, which tracts bad luck. The end of the bridge took place just a day after the death of joins a tarmac road that leads to Doug- Dobsy. Martin's superbike make Honlas, the capital city.

TT race held in May or June annually. ing into a fireball.

The Isle of Man Tourist Trophy Race is that during the two-week holiday, all commonly referred to as the TT death public roads are closed. History has race because participating in it is what it that back then British motorcyclists my tribe defines as inviting an elikuli, had been sorely defeated in races on owl, to hoot on your window. But be- the continent and they wanted to estabfore I scare you off from continuing to lish a home racecourse to improve their read this piece, grab an oar, your life performance. They finally settled on jacket, and a good selfie camera and Mann because the English speed limit let's kayak to somewhere in the middle of 20 miles per hour (mph) did not apof the northern Irish Sea. As we paddle ply to the island and back home, public away, imagine a beautiful sea-kingdom roads could not be closed for such racbetween the Great Britain and Ireland es. The first race was held in 1907 and where fairies exist. Welcome to the Isle since then, it's been nothing less than a spectacle that turns the sleepy rock of Mann, as it's commonly known, is a Mann to a rollicking festival ground for

da CBR1000RR crashed at maximum The major star of Mann is however the speed into a stone wall before explod-

What's fascinating about this race is There are six race categories and their

with engines not exceeding 125cc, rating success and tragedy is blurred. Lightweight TT not exceeding 650cc, 300 kg and not exceeding 800 volts.

Since 1907 there have been 146 deaths cally, it is three times better. that have occurred during the race. This The same adrenaline rush is felt by cus and discipline."

The concept of mortality underpins the ing bike. essence of the race giving it prestige

difference is in the engine capacity. The the race to both the participants and the Ultra Lightweight TT is for machines spectating crowd. Thus the line sepa-

The Junior TT between 400cc to 750cc, Most bikers come here in search of abso-Side-Car TT between 500cc to 600cc, Se-lute freedom that only the race can give nior TT between 750cc to 1200cc 2012 or because of the absence of speed limits. later models, Super Stock TT between A high speed for instance of 180mph 600cc to 1000cc 2012 model, Supersport gives that adrenaline rush that floods TT between 600cc to 1200cc 2012 or later into your system like an intravenous models, and the Zero TT for electronic drip, causing the biker to be in psychomotorcycles weighing between 100 to logical state known as eustress or positive stress. It can be compared to sexual orgasm, but, and I say this unapologeti-

begs questions like why would anyone spectators watching from the Grandrisk his/her life for such a cause and stand area; when after they quietly wait wakanda cause is this where sacrifice and listen for an engine amid birdsongs is not in the service of a greater good? and the murmuring of a nearby stream, If you watch the YouTube videos, the suddenly a bike blasts by at concussive race is akin to madness incarnate but velocity you would think it's a missile. as Richard 'Milky' Quayle, a former TT Unfortunately, there have been several winner once said, "You cannot do this incidents where some spectators died if you are mad. This takes too much fo- from being stabbed or hit by pieces of metal flying in the air from an explod-

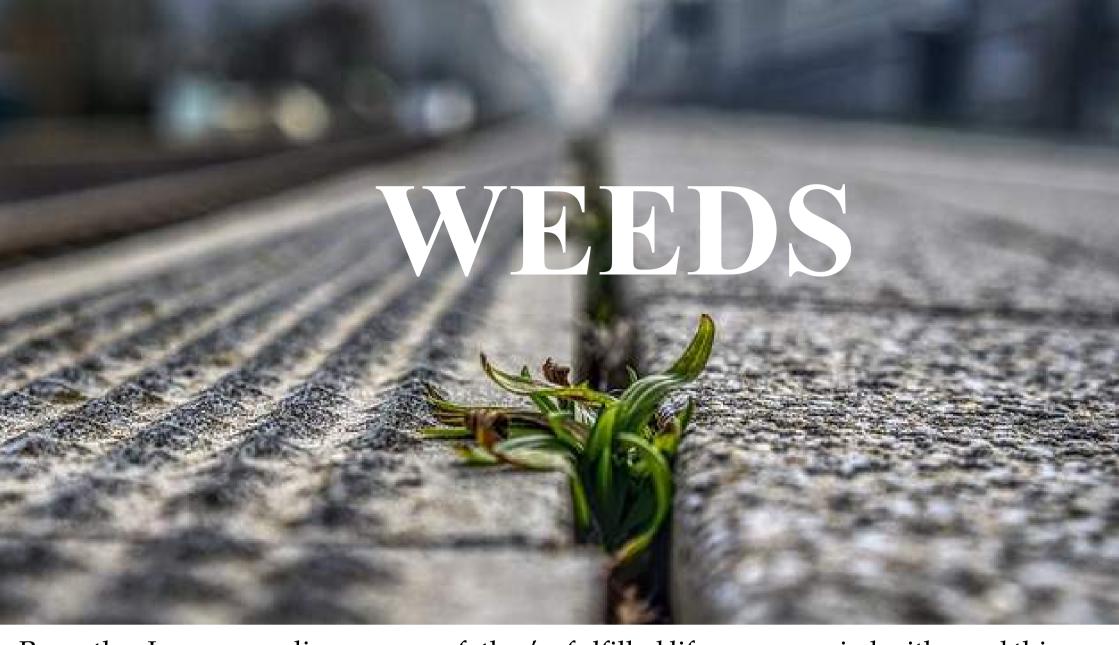
and opening it to criticism. Speed is the As a biker, you also have to trust that echelon of the race that drives the rid- your octane fuelled coffin of a machine ers to push all boundaries even if the will land safely, make that bend and Grim Reaper is staring into their eyes, not skid on the steep slope. I believe the and therein perhaps, lays the appeal of only thing that pushes a rider to survive is the thought of loved ones waiting back home for you, even though sometimes this is not enough. I cannot rationalize my love and aspiration for this race but the motivation to participate is not because of a death wish, but a yearning to experience and live through it. Personally, when I dream of participating in any of the TT races all I ever think about is how it would feel crossing the finish line. I bet it would be like that WWE moment when the glass breaks and Stone Cold Steve Austin makes an entrance.

Even though star bikers like the late Dobsy and Joey Dunlop paid with their own lives for something seemingly non-heroic as a race, they continue to shape our lives far from beyond the grave. So to answer my earlier question, yes I am willing to die at the TT race because death is not something that one should introspect about in the terms of life being stripped away, but rather challenging your personal limits even when faced with the possibility of your life ending in a cold caress.

Joyce Nawiri, Kenya



Image source: www.thecheckeredflag.co.uk



Recently, I was weeding on my father's fulfilled life accompanied with good things. want to share with you.

ly is a weed? A weed is any plant growing workplaces, our way of life, etc. a cultivated area.

farm of corn and yams. While I worked, I As was the case on my father's farm, weeds got an insight or rather a revelation- that I also find their ways into our lives. This is mostly as a result of the environment in Father did not plant weeds on his farm, but which we find ourselves. As such, there they found their way there. So, what exact- will be weeds in our lives as a result of our

in cultivated ground to the injury of a crop Over time, different persons and habits or desired vegetation, or to the disfigure- show up as weeds in our lives. They are ment of the place; an unsightly, useless, or weeds in that they cause injuries to us and injurious plant. Weeds are mostly pecu- to the good we desire to harvest, they threatliar to an environment (geography), or the en our continued survival and growth, they type of crop planted on a particular field. kill us little by little. In the same way that A weed is simply an unwanted plant in an weeds on the farm, if left for a long time unwanted place. Weeding, therefore, is the are capable of choking to death the planted act of removing unwanted vegetation from crop, the weeds in our lives are capable of snuffing life out of us. For the crops on a field to yield bountifully, regular weeding Our lives are like cultivated areas, where must be done. Similarly, for us to live our we plant different persons and things in a lives to the maximum, we have to constantbid for us to have a desirable harvest of a ly carry out 'weeding'. We have to get rid

to time. There are various types of weeds, the only way to get rid of these weeds. but I will dwell on the three weeds I encountered on my father's farm and what The final type of weed I came across, each taught me.

up into a full blown weed again.

spreading dayflower, is another weed I came across. It is a plant that is very easy We have to be wary of such weeds because to uproot but you must shake the soil even though they are 'wanted' plants, we off its root to kill it. If you don't, it starts shouldn't let them thrive in 'unwanted' growing again once rain falls on the field. places. It is only wise to leave them when Some habits and persons in our lives are one is certain they don't portend any siglike this, they seem easy to do away with nificant harm. but the moment an occurrence that facilitates their habitation occurs, they rouse Happy Weeding! their heads again. This group must be removed with care. After they are uproot- Williams Olaide Oladele, ed, the soil that ties them to us must be Nigeria

of habits and persons that are injurious to shaken off completely and then we must us and inimical to our growth from time throw them far and out of reach. That is

and the trickiest to handle was the Talinum triangulare, also known as the water Imperata cylindrica, commonly known as leaf. In between the ridges of yam, they spear grass, is a deep under ground spread-stood erect, with their fleshy leaves and ing weed that must be uprooted fully or small pink flowers. You see despite being else it will sprout up the next day. This a weed, the water leaf is a valuable plant weed has a networked root which must that can be eaten as a vegetable, made as a be completely unearthed to destroy it. sauce and in some cases used medicinal-Some of the habits and even people in our ly. This goes to show that there are people lives are like this weed. They are buried so or certain habits that are important and deep and therefore difficult to eradicate. yet still weeds in our lives. In this case, Removing them requires a painstakingly like I was that day, you are faced with a diligent effort because if we leave even a dilemma; whether to remove them or to tiny piece in the soil, they will grow back let them continue spreading. Well, I must tell you that I uprooted some but left others to grow; a population I was certain Commelina diffusa, commonly known as would not negate the growth of the yams.



Last Sunday, my mother informed me of her uncle's church and that I had made my way to greet him. Later, passing. I thought of the last time I saw him; a Sunday as we had brunch at the nuns' restaurant, he had urged morning in May 2015. I tried to recall if there had been me to study hard, to go away to America, get a maslight in his eyes or life in his smile. Nothing, I could ter's degree, and see the world. He had also promised remember nothing.

chest whenever I think of death, and so the news of nothing in the world but tall buildings. and life and never join the crowd.

was surprised that I had spotted him in the crowded had changed for him.

to come to my graduation, so that he too could see the There is a raw and numbing weight that presses on my world. As I sipped on my tea, I had told him there was

Babu's death made the heaviness spread throughout The dusty May wind blew past as we walked from the my body. He had been a simple, soft-spoken and re- restaurant in Jimboni to Mbinga Street with his son in strained man. Worried of being a bother, he would visit tow. His face radiated when he talked about how bright our house with a loaf of bread and a kilo of sugar so his son was. You could tell he loved his family. Babu we wouldn't have to feed him. He would sip his tea un- was a teacher. He taught business subjects at Mbinga obtrusively, without the clink of china; we would mar- day secondary school. He was also the books store vel at how sophisticated he was. He was considerate- keeper. There was a tone of disappointment when he would never send us to fetch him water or beer like talked about his job. "Teaching is a thankless job," he other guests, he would always clean up after himself. had said. After many years of teaching with no promo-At parties, he would shrink in the loud noise of music tion to the next salary level, the little salary not even coming in some months, he had taken his case to the District Education Office, and every year they had told On the Sunday I last saw him, he wore his signature him to wait for the next budget period. He had seen stulook – a classic black blazer and khaki cadet pants. He dents come and go, leaders come and go, yet nothing

with him. I had listened to the dry sadness in his voice member his laugh not that I ever saw his tears. and forgotten it soon after we parted.

the pinewood coffin decorated with purple ribbons on goodbye to Babu? their shoulders. They place the coffin on the altar as the flowers.

The priest swings the thuribles around the coffin until talk about emotions, or being soft, especially in our the whole church smells of burning frankincense. Thin men. We are supposed to be those that face everything white smoke from the incense circles around Babu's quietly and head on, even if it kills us. And kill him, it portrait, placed on top of the casket- he is smiling in did. the photo. The priest opens his arms to lead the congre- They had found Babu's lifeless body hanging on a tree gation in prayer. "Brothers and sisters, as we prepare at the game park after he had been missing for two to send our beloved to his eternal home, let us call to weeks. He had slipped away in the same quietness he mind our sins." The church falls silent except for the lived through life. Perhaps there, away from us, far from oscillating fans overhead and occasional sniffs from this boisterous life, he had found his solace. He had family members exhausted from crying. Guilt hangs in fallen asleep among the trees, his feet swaying above the air. Babu was their sin. He is mine too.

The truth is, he had died years ago, and no one had no- Rest in Peace Babu. ticed. He had walked on the dusty streets of our town, a ghost, and invisible to us all. How do you mourn this Neema Komba kind of death? Do you cry for him, or do you cry for yourself? It's hard to grieve without guilt – for we were guilty of missing the signs of darkness in his sunshine,

That was the first and the last day I truly conversed guilty of missing the details of his life. I can't even re-

Sometimes I wonder how it might have been if our greetings were not just mere formalities – If I had meant I wasn't able to attend Babu's funeral but I have imag- it when I asked him how he was. And if he had sought ined it many times. In my imagination, hundreds of help, would we have given it to him? I wonder if things people gather at the neighbourhood church to pay their would have been different if I had called him before I last respects. The priest, dressed in a purple robe, lead left, if I had told him I was going to America like he the procession. Four altar boys in white robes and wanted me to, and that he could finally come to visit purple belts follow behind, bearing candles. His son, when I graduated. What If I had told him that besides barely comprehending, drags his feet behind them, car-tall buildings, there was so much hope and beauty in rying a white cross that is later placed on his father's the world? What If I had seen the pain he harboured grave. Pallbearers march slowly behind him, balancing behind his smile? What if I had got to say a proper

choir sings Parapanda italia, the trumpet shall sound. Babu had tried to kill himself before; Years ago, when His wife, red-eyed and weak, places a cheap wreath I was younger. I never asked why. But everyone said made of white and purple ribbons on it. There are no it was because he had a soft heart – one that couldn't handle the harshness of life. Our society is not one to

> the grass to the soothing whisper of the wind, and his god cooing him, hush now, It doesn't hurt anymore.

Tanzania

# Talking Love By

SAKA DBOSZ JUNIOR

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## BLUNTNESS IS BRUTAL Life is simple. Humans complicate it.



umn, I'm pouring out my heart. Life tations are the same. It's called PERis simple. It is supposed to be, at least. CEPTION. But guess what? Humans- I'm talking Imagine these situations: about YOU- take away the ease of it, making it look like an inevitable bond- Why can't a Prince declare his love for age.

It's understandable that the makeup for a bi-racial lady without her 'comical, physiological, geographical and ty one European newspaper tweeted. otherwise- determines his or her reac- Ridiculous! tions. So, no matter how objective we

As I pen down the words of this col- subjective because no two interpre-

a non-royal individual without her being called a commoner, or better still, of every human-physical, psycholog-ing under fire'? From Slaves to Royal-

try to be about any concept, phenom- Why can't women be who they are enon or whatever, we end up being without being criticised by the male realise that one, at least, has a thing most has no say. Some cultures de-'that's true beauty unlike many other ing any decision. women'. Unbelievable. More seriously is the case of a woman being un- They call it a free world, yet, religionderpaid compared to her male coun- ists get the biggest of criticisms. While terpart in the same position, playing it's not okay to be an extremist, it's tosame role with her. And someone in tally okay to choose what you want to my random talk session attributed it believe in. I'm Christian; I've chosen to the Leave of Absence taken during the path of Christ. Anyone else is free pregnancy and for child care. Come to choose. So, why the fuss against reon. Should you punish nature?

Why are children given little impor-

folks? Every time I sit among men, I In many parts of Africa, the child alagainst womanhood. That's the world mand that a child remains standing we live in. Meghan Markle wears an 'I while the elders sit, without the lad woke up like this' makeup to her wed-being punished. Many homes do not ding ceremony and the male folks go care consulting their kids before mak-

> ligion and religionists. If you want to be a free-thinker, that's okay too.

tance in several parts of the world? Plants are not left out. Why can't I eat Why are they the last to be heard in what pleases me without being told every circumstance? Even the Sus- the side effects of the food? Almost tainable Development Goals (SDGs) everything edible has a side effect critiques pointed out that children as painted by nutritionists. Research were not adequately represented. The posited a few years ago that the po-SDG's were criticised for not explic- tassium substance Africans (Nigeitly stating the rights of the child but rians in particular) used for ages as embedding them in the generalisa- soup thickener, akanwu, was sudtion of human rights, and making the denly discovered to be among those children appear as objects of charity responsible for cancer and kidney rather than holders of human rights failure (Nutrifactsblog.com). Banana, (Child Rights International Network). too, should not be eaten at night. And

many more findings. One study said eat an egg a day and another said more than one egg a week blocks the arteries. I tire!

My point is 'we don't have to be bizarre or extreme in our perceptions and opinions.' Everybody deserves a chance, be it a mistake. The cliché, goes "variety is the spice of life" so why not enjoy these varieties? It is paramount that we operate with the mentality that choices and preferences are different. Conditioning and judging everything according to your mindset alone is what brings about conflicts and controversies. Relieve yourself of subjectivity to a large extent (somehow, we all remain subjective even in our openmindedness but it can be controlled), broaden your perception even when it doesn't appeal to you, be open to more knowledge in order to enhance your relationship with living and non-living elements as well as abstract. Don't think of yourself highly than the other and you'll find out that the world is way simpler than you think. No complications really.

Here's an anonymous quote before I wrap up. It's somewhat related to this: No one in this world is pure and perfect. If you avoid people for their mistakes, you would be alone in this world. Judge less and love more.

#### **About the columnist:**

Gabrielina Gabriel-Abhiele is a writer, editor, and broadcast journalist; a columnist with Writers Space Africa online magazine. She's a preacher of her propaganda and a believer in equality and truth. Her essay contents span various topics from child abuse, politics, to gender equality, racism, tribalism, and as many issues as can be touched. She is a general interest blogger too. In her opinion, her blog should not be mistaken for a rant but one that focuses on heart splitting issues. She can be reached via the email addresses: theroaringwriter@gmail.com or gabrielina. gabriel@gmail.com

# Literary News

#### Nyashadzashe Chikumbu

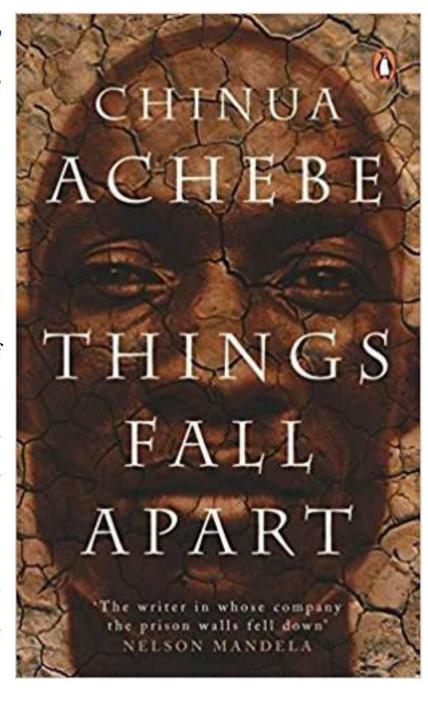
# THINGS FALL APART' NAMED ONE OF TWELVE NOVELS, CONSIDERED THE GREATEST BOOKS EVER WRITTEN.

The book was named on the list complied by Encyclopaedia Britannica, and Achebe's master piece is named amidst the greatest literary works. Things fall apart is Albert Chinualumoga Achebe's first novel. The story chronicles the pre-colonial life in Nigeria and the arrival of the Europeans during the 19th century.

The story interrogates the class of cultures, traditional values and belief systems.

The novel is the first of its kind to show a sudden break from the British novelists' style of writing. As it draws its pictorial images and its rich idiom from the African culture and tradition.

Even though it has been five years since Chinua passed away, his master piece continues to give African literature a new face. Things fall apart being the greatest and remains the most quoted book in African and world literature. With quotes like 'whenever you see a toad jumping in broad day light then know, that something is after its life.'



### EXUAL SCANDALS LEAD TO YET ANOTHER YEAR WITH NO NOBEL PRIZE FOR LITERATURE.

Following a series of sexual scandals and misconduct, which has seen to the resignation of many of the chairs of the Swedish academy board responsible for selecting Nobel literature winners. The Swedish academy early his month announced that 'no Nobel prize for literature will be awarded this year.' This was confirmed through a tweet they posted 'the Nobel prize for literature has been postponed, the Nobel foundation supports the Swedish academy's decision.'

The intention was to award the 2018 prize next year along with the 2019 prize. The foundation said in a statement – according to a report by the Associated Press 'the decision was made at a weekly meeting in Stockholm a day earlier, on the grounds that the academy is in no shape to pick a winner after a string of sex abuse and allegations of financial scandals'

A decision which has left the literary world shocked to bits, especially the world of African literature which has only one Nobel laureate to account for. France leading with 16, the United States and the United Kingdom coming at second with 11 each. African writers can only hope for the best.

# SHORT STORIES





## Eki: The Prince's Bride

#### Patience Saduwa, Nigeria

(Igodi Community, circa 1809)

they had gone to fetch water for their moth- in front and Johwo in the middle. ers. Placed on their heads were clay pots of The girls chatted and laughed gaily as they

rying Emojevwe, one of the sons of Etagh-Along the river road the three young girls ene, the rich merchant whom she was in love walked in single file to their village Igodi. with. She walked with slow steps so as not to They were returning from the river, where spill the water, trailing behind Eki, who was

different sizes, with Edafe at the rear of the walked, their chatter startling the birds, squirsmall group having the smallest pot. Edafe rels and other small animals in the dense foliwas as vain as a peacock about her looks, she age that bordered the path. They had passed a hated carrying heavy objects on her elegant major junction and the path that led to Okueneck which she considered one of her best tchi, a neighbouring village. And were headfeatures. She believed that objects on the ing towards a bend on the path when a group head would 'deform' her neck and diminish of men suddenly appeared on the path. The her beauty, thus reducing her chances of mar-girls were so engrossed in their chatter that they did not see the men in time. The men "Where's your village?" walked straight into Eki, who was in front "Why do you ask?" Edafe retorted, a wary ground and gathered round her.

breaking her fall. She gazed up at him, her through their noses. curious eyes noting the clean lines of his face "So we can escort you home because of your and his clear eyes that seemed to look deep injury," the man explained. into her soul. She blinked and straightened up, "No need for that... I'm alright," Eki said. He putting her weight more on the uninjured left did not look convinced. leg. "I'm fine," she said shortly. "Why don't "The broken pot. It needs replacing." He leader of the group. "Watch your mouth! How at the man. dare you..." said one of the men who took a "What's this?" she asked curiously. menacing step towards Eki. Their leader held "Payment for the pot," said their leader. Eki up his hand. "It's ok." Then he turned to Eki turned towards him. protect her against any attack from the men. finish, Edafe snatched the pouch of cowries

and she fell by the pathway with a cry. Her look in her eyes. She could tell the men were friends quickly placed their water pots on the not from Igodi, neither did they look as if they were from any of the neighbouring villages. "Ah Eki! Are you ok? Can you get up?" they They looked like strangers from a faraway asked with concern. The men, four in num- place so one had to be careful. Who knew, ber, stood watching the girls at first. Then they could even be slave hunters! Neither one of them, who wore a strip of gold-co- Edafe nor any of her friends had seen one loured woven clothe round his neck and a before but there were stories in the village string of coral beads on his right wrist, drew about people being captured from their farms, close. "Are you alright?" he asked in an anx- in the bush and even homes in communities ious tone, bending down. Eki tried getting up near the coast and hinterland and taken away but a sharp pain shot up her leg making her by sea in big okor (ships) by strange lookstagger. His arm shot out to support her back, ing white people, who spoke in a funny way

you men look where you're going? Barging made a sign to one of his men who brought around like wild pigs in the forest!" she said out a small pouch from the raffia bag hangscornfully, glaring up at the man who had ing on his shoulder. He stretched his hand tohelped her to her feet. He seemed to be the wards Eki who glanced at the pouch, then up

who was now flanked by her friends as if to "It's not necessary. I..." Before she could

from the man. "Thank you! We'll get another At the capital The Uyere ceremony or paying by thick bushes, trees and shrubs.

can heal well. No more gallivanting all over the palace. the place. Is that clear?" he said sternly as "How long has it been now, Esiso? You he rubbed her leg with the concoction. "Yes, should come to the capital more often! You Father." Once again she wondered why she know I always enjoy your company," Ovie had to accompany him to the capital, since Agbogidi II, the King of Otumara Kingdom that was usually something done by the sons said as Esiso stepped forward to pay homage of the family.

pot on the next market day," she said, ignor- homage to the King was the annual gathering ing the glowering look from Eki. "You know of all the chiefs and village heads in Otumara what your mother will do to you if you re- Kingdom. It was held just before the big 'ore' turn home with a broken pot. The money will or festival that took place after the harvest. It be useful," she whispered into Eki's ear. The was a busy time in the capital, Okor with the men made to leave. "I wish you a safe walk influx of the chiefs from near and far-flung home. Good bye!" said the leader. His eyes places in the kingdom. Esiso, Eki and Brume lingered for a moment on Eki, then with a one of his many sons and their large entouslight wave of the hand, he turned away. The rage took up residence in the home of a relamen walked quickly away, soon disappearing tive of his, Ukrakpor who lived in the capital. round a bend on the narrow path enveloped The following morning, before Esiso left for the palace to attend the meeting of the chiefs, Back home, Eki's father, angry that she had he inspected Eki's appearance. The months left the house against his orders, treated the of pampering and special diet had paid off. injury that evening with some herbs and hot Her brown skin glowed with health and youth ointment as he did not trust Equono or any of and her clear luminous eyes sparkled like the his other wives to treat it properly. Esiso did sea on a sunny day. He had given her a new not want any blemish on his lovely daugh- set of coral waist beads which now hung enter's smooth skin. "I'm sorry, Father. I was ticingly on her round hips around which was bored staying at home, that's why I went to tied a brightly coloured wrapper. He nodded the river with my friends." "We are leaving with satisfaction. She was ready. "Let's go," for the capital after the next edewor (mar- he said, leading the way as the group, carryket day). You must rest at home so the leg ing different packages, made its slow way to

to him in the large Audience Hall.

greetings and the presentation of gifts and stained teeth. tributes to the King, Esiso stayed a while to "I do not see the Crown Prince in the Hall." chat with the King. They were old friends I hope he is doing well," said Esiso, trywho had known each other long before ing to steer the conversation away from his the king had ascended the throne, when he daughter who had returned to her former was the crown Prince. As they spoke, the position. The King, whose eyes had been King's glance fell on Eki who stood quiet- fixed on Eki as she walked away, turned to ly behind her father with the others in their her father. group.

forward my dear," he beckoned on her. Eki neighbouring community. He returned eargenuflected, then stood before the mon- ly this morning. He will be present during arch, her head bowed demurely, her eyes tomorrow's ceremony," he said. women to look directly at the king's face. want to present to him." daughter, Eki."

was a look of desire and lust.

"Your Highness. Please forgive me. The "You should. She's at the right age. Just harvest and other concerns of mine kept me ripe enough for plucking," the king said, too busy this period," said Esiso. After the with a smile that revealed his tobacco-

"He has been away to Ijere village to me-"And who's this beautiful damsel? Come diate in the land dispute between it and the

not meeting his as it was forbidden for "That will be nice. I have a special gift I

Esiso did the introductions. "This is my The 'Uyere' ended and the King together with the visiting Chiefs, and the King's "Hmm. Lovely," said the monarch, his eyes ministers, settled down to hold a council inspecting her from head to toe like one meeting. It was held at this time of the year would look at a very interesting object. "Is to deliberate on matters pertaining to the she betrothed yet?" he asked Esiso. Kingdom's affairs and general wellbeing. "No, your majesty. I'm working on it, Eki and her older brother Brume, a strapthough," Esiso, said, uncomfortable at the ping youth of nineteen left the audience hall direction the conversation was going. He to wait for their father in the large courtdid not like the look in the old monarch's yard in the palace. Brume, who had just eyes as he stared fixedly at his daughter. It spied a friend of his from their village said, "Eki, wait for me here. Don't go wandering about or Father will be cross with you!" And he walked away. Sometime later, bored with waiting, Eki decided to take a walk around the palace grounds. Near a large mango tree, its branches heavy with fruit were some statues and sculptures of different figures and sizes. She stood in front of one of them, a bronze statue of a young girl carrying a clay pot on her head, her slim elegant waist bedecked with large coral beads. It was so life-like, Eki felt water would splash from the pot onto the beautiful girl's shoulders any minute.

"Looks familiar, doesn't it?" said a deep voice. Her expressive eyes widened in surprise when she saw him. It was the man she had encountered on the river road over a week before when her water pot had broken.

"You!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing here?" Behind him stood three young men that looked like palace guards. He smiled and drew closer.

"I should be asking you what you're doing here in my..." He paused. "Nice meeting you again." He glanced down at her leg. "So, how's your leg? Better I hope?" She nodded, swinging her right foot a little.

"Yes, that's good." He paused briefly. "Anyway, do you like the statue? You were so engrossed in it," the man said.

Eki, her gaze fixed on the statue, said: "It is so real. It looks as if she would start walking any minute."

"You're right. That's the work of Igbinosa, the master bronze caster of Bini Kingdom. There are more of his works inside the Palace. Would you like to see them?" he asked. "Is it allowed? I mean, there are some exclusive areas in this palace outsiders cannot enter..."

"You can go anywhere here as long as you're with me," he assured her.

She looked at him, a bit sceptical, then at the encouraging smile from him Eki shrugged and followed him. They left the large courtyard and walked through a second gate on both sides of which were guards. These bowed to the man respectfully as they passed through. Eki looked at him curiously. "Do you work in the palace? Are you a bodyguard?" she asked. He gave her an enigmatic smile. "Something like that." (Excerpts from an unpublished manuscript)

# YOUARE STILL THE LAST PERSON I KISSED

Kimberly Chirodzero, Zimbabwe



In the three years since Taku and I have been apart, I've been to every one of our old haunts in a bid to exorcise the ghost of our love. Every haunt besides the one I now stand in. Ambrosia restaurant hasn't changed in three years and this makes me nervous. This is where we had our first date and our first kiss. One year and six months ago I almost made the biggest mistake of my life; marrying Roland. It wasn't entirely Roland's fault, seeing as I knew right from the start of that relationship that something was wrong. I think if I am recalling correctly Roland himself tried to warn me, but I'm a stubborn girl. I believed too highly in the magic of my love. I did learn a lot from that hell bound disaster of a relationship though and I began the journey of self-healing. Breaking up with Roland brought me back to life in a way only a previously oppressed

person could appreciate.

Now I stand in the restaurant Taku and I loved and force myself to walk, chin up to the table we frequented. Luckily, it's unoccupied so I slip into a chair and let out a breath I didn't know I had been holding. Part of my healing has been dealing with the things in my past I'd rather avoid and even though I started this journey because of my destructive relationship with Roland, it has led me back to Taku. Everything leads me back to Taku. A plump wait-ress comes over to my table. "Hello, would you like to order now?" she smiles pleasantly. I stare at the menu that I didn't even open and wonder what to say. "Give us a minute," a voice says from behind the waitress. I would know that voice anywhere. The waitress smiles once more and takes off; leaving me face to face with the ghost that haunts my dreams.

Taku pulls up a chair as if this encounter is perfectly normal. "What are you doing here?" I blurt out my first words to him in three years. I look him over expecting some tell-tale signs of the years but he just looks more handsome if anything.

"I could ask you the same thing," he says with an easy smile but I can tell from his eyes that he is just as shocked as I am. My heart is pounding as if it's been transformed by some magic trick into a herd of stamping cattle. This man does things to me no one should be able to do to another human being. I'm slightly shocked that this is all it took for him to shatter me. I feel as insubstantial as stardust, as though I could be blown away in a single gust of emotion.

"It was bound to happen, Jules. Ambrosia was always our place," Taku continues to speak in that calm, velvety tone.

"I thought you were in Algeria getting your masters and PhD," I say trying to keep the bitterness out of my voice.

"I graduated in October. I just came for the Christmas holiday," he says, watching me carefully.

He would mention Christmas wouldn't he, the bastard. December was as much our month as Ambrosia was our "place". We started dating in December, and for the time we were together that month carried a special kind of magic for us. We spent Christmas together and it was always spectacular. My favourite Christmases were the ones I spent with him and he knew

it. I can see in his warm brown eyes he is waiting for me to react. I feel like I'm falling into him all over again. Abruptly, I stand up and sling my bag over my shoulder. "I should go," I say. Taku stands too and grabs my hand. "Jules, I've been coming here the whole week hoping we'd meet like this. Please sit down," his hand caresses mine and I'm sure my skin is blistering from the fire his fingers ignite there. I sit because I hate making a scene in front of people. Or so I tell myself.

Taku orders us food and we are both silent until the waitress serving us leaves. "Let's just start slow, shall we? We were friends once," His voice is low, coaxing. I narrow my eyes at him. Friends? We were best friends. Being apart the first year physically hurt. I snort and Taku laughs. Everything in me lights up in spite of myself. I had forgotten Taku's laughter. It's a rhapsodic music specifically designed for me and he is a virtuoso. Once upon a time I used to make up jokes just to hear him laugh. I used to kiss the sides of his neck... I mentally grab hold of my wayward thoughts and shove them under the table.

"I guess there is no harm in being friends," I say in mock defeat. I'm rewarded with a smile that melts my uncertainty.

"I've missed you every single day," he says simply.

"Isn't there someone in your life now?" Now I want to hide under the table. I didn't mean to make that my very first question. Taku looks down at his food but doesn't eat.

"Jules, you're still the last person I kissed." I choke on my cranberry juice.

"What?" I croak.

"I haven't dated in three years. It just always felt like I'd be betraying you," he holds up his hand to cut me off. "I know we broke up and you moved on. I just...well, for me it has just always been you." I want to disappear. Instead I begin to eat in earnest, as if this food is my salvation.

"Jules," Taku starts tentatively. "I know you are with someone now. I'm not trying to start anything but I do mean it when I say I miss my best friend." I almost choke again.

"With someone?" I manage to whisper.

"That Roland guy," he doesn't look at me when he spits the name out. "I heard you guys

are engaged." I sigh loudly because I really don't want to talk about Roland anymore but this is Taku, my once best friend and everything else.

"I broke up with Roland one year and six months ago." Taku's face lights up before I even finish speaking. He is beaming and he's not even trying to hide it. I should be angry. I should leave but when Taku smiles at me my every coherent thought gets lost before it reaches execution. We finish our food in silence.

"Go out with me tomorrow night," Taku says as we step out from Ambrosia's double doors. I open my mouth for some excuse but he cuts me off. "I know you are a great believer in healing and healthy relationships. My last relationship was three years ago, yours a year and six months so we've both healed. Say yes, Julietta." He is coaxing me with that velvety, spun honey voice of his. He takes my hands and looks me in the eye. The tether between our souls is still there, I can feel it rejoicing at spending a few hours with him.

"It's been three years, Taku. What if we no longer fit?" I voice my fears. Without warning he steps into my space and I am suddenly in his arms. His hand is at the nape of my neck and then Taku is kissing me. I've been kissed by Taku before and each time I always thought one day the crazy rush of magic he incites in my veins would surely fade. It hasn't. At first I am so shaken I just hold on for dear life but when I finally yield, we explode. I instantly understand why Taku waited three years for me. I understand why Roland and I never stood a chance. What Taku and I have encompasses every level; soul, spirit and body. When Taku releases me, I blink at him stupidly. One kiss from this man and I am sure whose rib I am. My problem three years ago was I had too much pride and I was afraid of the pain that comes when your love is so raw. I hated belonging to someone on a soul level. I felt caged. I was wrong. Having a soul mate is such a beautiful and freeing thing. There is no need for pretence between us. "I love you," I say. Taku doesn't miss a beat. "Took you all of three years to figure that out," Taku snorts but he's smiling at me, "I never stopped loving you." Roland almost killed me with physical and verbal abuse but no matter his antics to control me, remould me, we never fit. I had always been meant for this man whose laughter soothes my soul and whose kiss brings clarity to my universe. I might be a stubborn girl but I learn my lessons. Love doesn't cage us, it frees us.





We are accepting submissions for the JULY edition of WSA.

Published every month, WSA is an international literary magazine,
which features rich diversity of writings from African writers to a global audience.

Please consider the following:
Articles/Essays – 1,200 Words
Drama – 1,000 Words
Flash Fiction – 300 words
Poetry – 1 poem, maximum of 24 lines
Short Stories – 1,500 words

Please note the following:

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You can write on any theme.

Due to the number of entries we receive only selected authors will be published in our magazine and online.

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We shall equally edit selected entries.

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IN THE FAR

CORNER OF

#### TERS SPACE R



HELL, HEAVEN, HOME

Nkosiyazi Kan Kanjiri

Zimbabwe

THE WORLD CRY

Acquiline Rubanza

Tanzania

FATHER

Wanangwa Mwale

Zambia

MY DESIGNER

**JACKET** 

Tshepo Maruatona

Botswana

CRY OF THE DEAD

Agwu Ijeoma

Augustina

Nigeria

PEACE

Gabriel Junior

Kenya

WE LOST

OUR VOICES

TO THE WIND

Awanto Margaret

Cameroon

THE BLACK RACE

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MY CLOSET Houda Messoudi Morocco

HOUDA MESSOUDI The Wind in a Moroccan Box

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## Seatured Writers

Shimbo Pastory - Tanzania Ntube Nnane - Cameroon Archibong, Walter Bassey - Nigeria Tshepo Maruatona - Botswana Agwu Ijeoma Augustina - Nigeria Neimatub Abdul Samadu - Ghana Fethi Sassi - Tunisia Nkosiyazi Kan Kanjiri - Zimbabwe Gabriel Junior - Kenya Acquiline Chrispine Rubanza - Tanzania

Wanangwa Mwale - Zambia

Nancy Lazaro - Tanzania

Faith Merich - Kenya

Mukonya Mukonya - Kenya

Awanto Margaret - Cameroon

Gibonce - Tanzania

Alhassan Faisal - Ghana

Galba Godwin - Ghana

Itohan Osadiaye - Nigeria

Benard Aloo - Kenya

Kweku Sarkwa - Ghana

Gabrielina Gabriel-Abhiele - Nigeria

Yunusa Salim Ibrahim - Nigeria

Houda Messoudi - Morocco

Kimberly Chirodzero - Zimbabwe

Yipah Reuben - Nigeria

# EDITORIAL

#### YOU ARE YOUR BIGGEST CHEERLEADER DER



You can be anything if only you believe - R. Kelly.

That big mountain in your life, eat it with a spoon. Little by little you will get there. No shortcuts. The only way is through.

Life hurls challenges in your path. For what is life without some excitement? Of course, you will win some and lose some. On the wins, pat yourself on the back. On the latter, failure is no fun but you will have gained experience and a thick skin. You will be better prepared for another swing.

R. Kelly insists on believing in yourself. Former United States president Barack Obama had the slogan YES, WE CAN during his campaign and yes, they did win the election. He even went ahead to score another term in office.

Two words that can change the world for you and me: I CAN'T or I CAN.

Make your choice! Make it count!

Wakini Kuria Chief Editor, WSA, Kenya



#### **Pun Untrue**

Downcast I was
Laden, cumbered,
Lowered, eaten,
Bad'd turned worse,
Life's, staggered; wanéd
Wounded, beaten
Vigor, counts less
All'd died, but breath
That I have it all

Heart, then broken, wearied, Faith, hope stolen, morbid, All ferried, as pollen, buried, Far, and far em stamen, How solid such life's deed.

A friend is nought, anymore,
In need, now, he'd fault, no score,
Of love, not'a jot, unsure where to,
Far-off my cot, his smiles did tour,
That them count this poor!
Unloved, I'd thought, deserted
Even more; Now, churned with disconcert
Of the lore, Oh! "... friend indeed"
Roar dear, feely, rhyming; All spot on.
But in this, I pray, Is not, but pun,

Shimbo Pastory,

**Tanzania** 

Untrue, now, ever more!

#### The Lion's Feast

The lion king has thrown a feast!

Come all! Relax your fist!

This is the night. This is the dark night!

The night void of silence; silence in dried pains.

The night of clinching deals.

The night when pens are brandished like swords,

To chop our destinies in ounce drops.

This is the night of clinking glasses,

A fun catching night

Where laughter is snore to ants inside iron walls,

Ants with forlorn looks.

The lion king has done it again.

His feast has pulled dogs, panthers, tortoises

To drink and eat on the same table,

His feast has made them sing and

dance their own folk songs,

I can see them drunk;

They're like mad men staring blankly at

glasses filled to the brim with Ciroc,

They clutched on to one another skipping like antelopes,

The clunk of their bodies crashing into each other

is music to the lion's ears.

The lion king perched on his marble seat, nodding his head like a lizard.

His eyes dissect the hall for a prey,

The prey who shall have the honour to lay on his table for dinner.

This is the lion's feast.

t's a faucet. Be careful not to fall!

Ntube Nnane

Cameroon

#### **Africa:**

#### Our Spirit, our Sound and our Colour

From dusk until dawn
Our hearts are knit as one
As one candle lit by the sun
We glow in the Spirit of Love

With one vocal cord
We speak just one word
Together: as a two-fold cord
Yet, in uniquely diverse Tongues

Black skin we wear

Dark eyes, dark nose and ear

True beauty resides here

For in black all colours dwell

Archibong, Walter Bassey,

Nigeria



#### My designer Jacket

Woke up naked

Botswana

I went to town Town in a strait jacket Came back Back, dressed in a designer jacket Little did I know the world would cause a racket Racket about young boys and girls Who dressed me for a small fee Yet I fed them nothing Not even a dogs loving So yes, woke up naked I went to town Town in a strait jacket Came back Yet a designer jacket I lacked But at least I returned with my soul Fully dressed and intact Tshepo Maruatona,

#### CRY OF THE DEAD

Everything alive could smell its dying But nothing dead can tell it's dead Nothing is everything when **Everything becomes nothing** 

I lay asymptomatically in my casketed room With my eyes closed and nothing to worry about To think of what to have my life done with But you keep distracting me with your noisy cry

You kidnapped peace Even in the compartment I now own To enhance growth for seeds sown

My name keeps calling In the real land I left longing

Be calm it's quite safe here Everyone is mirthful and keen To see prayer request in rain

I am not dead but ruminating Exited but still existing Part of me left in continuity With my breath ceased for a while

All I ask is freedom of sleep And Calling with license I'm darkness in light Let the dead rest... Agwu Ijeoma Augustina, Nigeria

#### TRUE EMOTIONS

I felt old

Even though I know am old Enough to be forgotten by none but you. I'm the oldest treasure you own right off. The curse of aging is inevitable to the grey. It freckles is tender to the fallen petals. And as the skin folds with expertise And tooth disconnect from its source. Even when the heart and mind misbehaved None but you left through the windows of time.

Neimatub Abdul Samadu,

Ghana

#### A SKY FOR A STRANGE BIRD

Nothing on your face reveals the turmoil hour The night asks you ...

When can we set up our suitcases?

And embrace a tree that has said to its beloved

"Let's burn a shameless kiss"

But the wind is courting the moon joking the dice,

With a child leaves the school early

The afterglow is drawing with its brush, a lip

Has shoed a water drop ...

She was still painting a little prayer of a time dust And she is courting a peep on a vein mole For the rose to sleep with noise in her eyes, and the afterglow is continuing in crying.

Fethi Sassi.



#### HELL, HEAVEN, HOME

In our home, there is a map to hell. I followed the fury in father's eyes Until I gathered hell resides where Father's palm meets mother's cheek.

When hell breaks loose,
Mother becomes different shades of heaven.
Her face cracks into a thousand splendid stars,
Her voice splits into the colours of the rainbow.

She sheds no tears, she was told
The sun is majestic in the storm.
She was taught the moon shines in the dark,
where,

Upon its gaze, children gather around a bonfire To share beautiful stories.

Nkosiyazi Kan Kanjiri, Zimbabwe



#### **PEACE**

If peace be a place to be found,

Take me there; bury me on its ground.

Let my body be suffocated by its season-less bliss,
And my soul,

Live among its un-withering greens.

If peace be a place that exists,

Tell me where, I cannot wait to believe.

Gabriel Junior, Kenya

#### THE WORLD CRY

Keep your mouth shut,
And ears open,
For the world is astray,
Ergo, what is done, is now silly.
The world is trembling.

Easier said than done,
"human dignity can not be purchased"
Vice versa, is the action done?
Why this?

Patients at risk,
Doctors on interests,
Commercial deposit,
Life has become,
Why errant?
We ought to learn,
To treat and to trick,

Unspoken word never does harm,
What's done to escape?
Solving is a solution,
Every person may not be corrupt,
but every person is corruptible,
Let's make a try,
To escape the cry.

Acquiline Chrispine Rubanza, Tanzania.



#### **FATHER**

Rejected
Dejected
Puny...wretched was my soul
Sitted at the door step
I waited for you
To come back home
Fourteen years of age
I needed you the most

One month...
Did birth two years
Time flew
But did not heal
I hoped you returned sooner
Because the further you stayed away
The more painful it had become

I've learnt to vanquish my fear To stand tall and firm To believe and to smile

It's been eleven years
Time has failed to conceal
For I still sit by the door step
Hoping to see you

Wanangwa Mwale, Zambia

#### **DEAR DAUGHTER**

I have never loved myself enough
To laugh through the rough times
I have seen different colors,
fading in the beauty of the flowers
I have woken up to different nightmares,
only to calm down through the power of Prayer.
I know of those days when I needed someone
beside me to prove me right
And write down the path I should take because I
could not fight,
for my sight was stolen and I only saw
my shadow through someone else's light

Daughter, always remember, you are not me
Your choices should always lead you to being free
Do not keep falling in the trap of the past
Live the present and remember
every season will come to last
Even when you have too many questions
with no answers
Look up and believe He is still painting your
world with more colors
Learn to love as you evolve
Set your eyes above the things youcannot solve

Daughter, carry only the weight you can bear, as you walk towards your fate and beyond that square. You are the rhythm

Of the song inside of you; A standalone system that longs to belong

Despite what it has been through.

You have the power to change the world

Put a smile on someone

and bless people with your words

You can achieve whatever you believe, what your mind conceive,

You will receive Just like your name,

Janelle; God got you, go ahead, Excel!

Nancy Lazaro, Tanzania.

#### **HOSTILE**

Sometimes it pained...
So much that they couldn't take it,
At one point, they complained
But not one hearkened to their cries.

The city so ruined to ash
The people pale with rash
Soldiers trying to dash around
And save a life as they can.

The ones who fought hard...
And shed blood to save their home.
The abode of their folks
Their refuge, their home.

Sometimes, their spirits sank, And the little ray of hope faded Into the dark, shattered... And their deep despair visible.

They rise and seek grouse...
For their voices was their city's plea,
To restore it and rebuild it anew
But it did just raise tension and unease.
Faith Merich
Kenya

#### **Karma is Coming**

You talked about pain And betrayal Fake people and hate Did you say hate? Do you know figure eight Remains eight even When turned to sit on its head? You think you know pain? Have you met fake people who betray? Have you met you? You don't know loyalty, for sure Even if it perched on your face Karma is just passing She'll come back, for you Just wait You haven't seen anything yet. Mukonya Mukonya,

Kenya

#### We Lost our Voices to the Wind

We lost our voices in a graveyard
We buried them in your grave
Once a full moon,
We are now a crescent because we lost you
We lost our voices when you lay sick
Your body-feeble
Your bones-brittle
Your breath-a flicker of flame
Tossed about in a hurricane battling to keep its light

We lost our voices when you couldn't recognize
Your cousins, even your favourite niece
We lost our voices when you convulsed
So much the nurses couldn't hold you down
We lost our voices in the wails and dirges that filled
The compound the day we came home with the news
We lost our voices after weeks of hoping
You'd wake-up but you seemed content in your sleep

So here we are, voiceless, hopeless
Left only with pictures of you
Hoping to find our voices some day
Hoping the wind didn't carry them too far
Awanto Margaret
Cameroon



#### Writer's Note

I wanted to write the writ
That even the writer could not scribe,
That when read before the reader
They could get cold from words breeze,
Which like a night walker
They confuse even the darkness
Upon which they tread to reach brightness.

The writer's calibre
Engulfed in his own emotions,
The fear that people could read
Not only the conscious
But the propeller of the heart
That makes nights submit to days.

The writer's belief
That life is occasional happenings,
A camouflage of bad with merits,
Matters not what you do
Rather who does it,
and only the name can make a name big.

They say action speaks higher
But time reveals intentions,
As patience is the heart to perseverance
So, only a meditating eye can write
The soberness of life.

Gibonce, Tanzania

#### THE BLACK RACE

We have been paled and crooked for decades
We have been abandoned and forgotten to decay
Virtual slavery mastered
By our forever masters in this age
Tears of pain and struggle
Continue to drown the soul of Africa
While we watch unconcerned
As they dig and loot from our abyss of wealth
Where is the civilization they brought?
Was it a worthy substitute for our lot?

**Arise O! Dark Continent!** 

Your triumph has been suppressed for long
The race indeed commenced outside your block
But for how long would you stay alien to the
clock?

Time ticks away your victory into oblivion

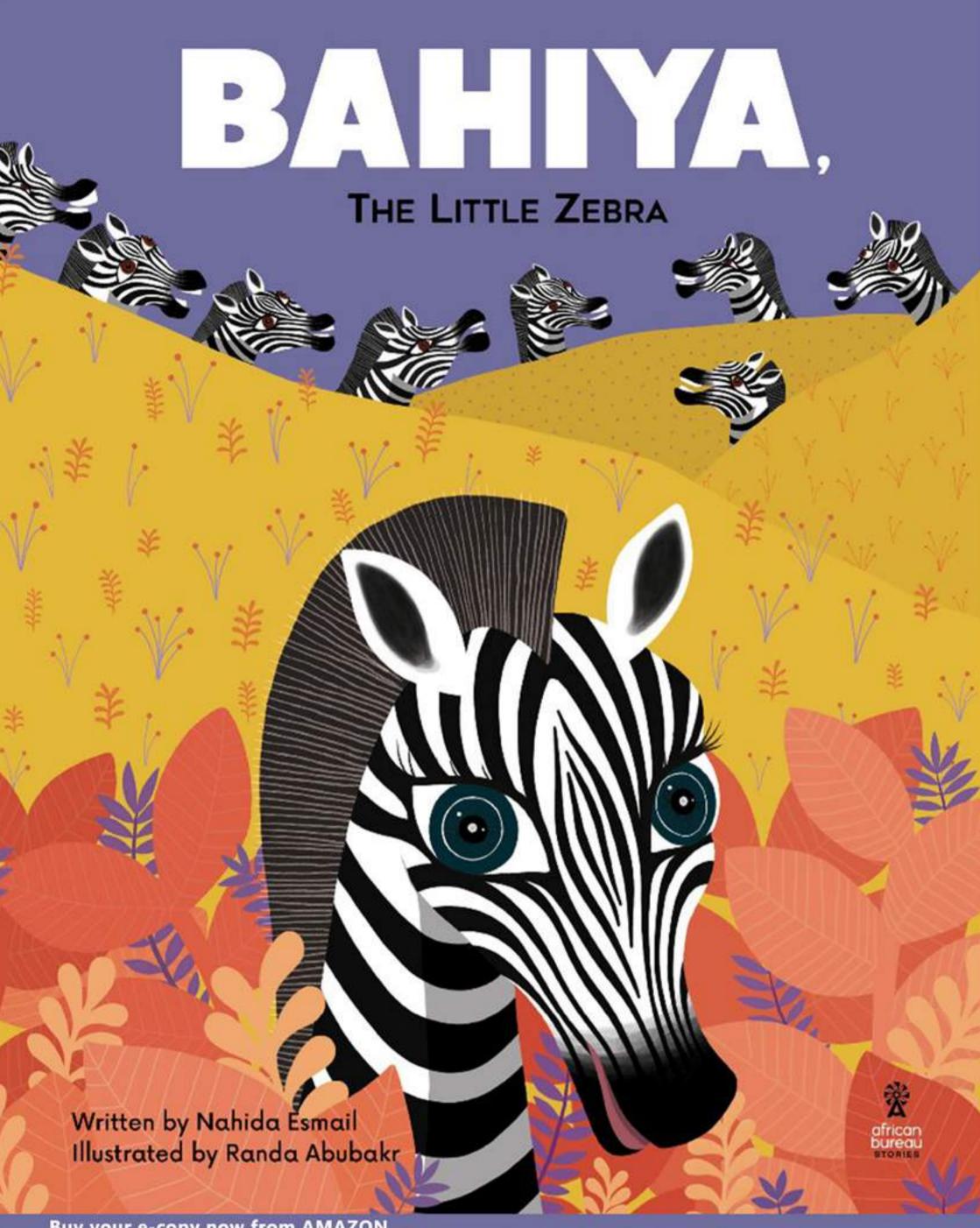
The moment is now to reject their constant bully

After all, you have not been crippled to stand on
your own!

Africa has finally made it to the race A disappointment that enlightens their faces

Alhassan Faisal, Ghana





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### **BEEHIVE**

### Galba Godwin, Ghana



There's a still voice within me. It is pushing my soul, thoughts and heart not to conform to society yet there's also silence all around me. Yesterday, when the sun slept, it was Yakubu's cry that rose the moon. He had been beaten dry by the human bees of our land. Fatima accused him of attempted rape. This was an outrageous accusation because even the sand knows Yakubu is a chicken. But my society is a beehive and we are the bees; we sting anyone sprayed with a nice perfume. Yakubu was squeezed of all tears and blood. He had just lost his father not long ago but, bees know no mercy.

Last week, while the cock made its first daily announcement, it was a gunshot that drove us all from bed. The source of the gunshot was unknown but bees as we are, we traced it. There, Fofo's body was one with the land, demarcated with a pool of his own blood. He has been known for thievery and this time, Abu's goat bought his death.

Where can the voice within me, pushing my soul, thoughts and heart not to conform to society reach when all ears and hearts around me are closed? This society has been a beehive from scratch, finding and stinging others. My father was born into this, he slept one cold night and failed to see the sun in the morning. My mother was born into this too, it was a snake that drove her to her tomb, in her own farm one fine afternoon. So who am I to stand against this? Even the kings-in-suit on the national seat know about this so, who am I to kick against it? So long as, I keep surviving and getting my bread! But if I ever get stung, maybe, there'd be a voice oneday to say what has been in my heart for long in this beehive.



# ANOTHER CHANCE

### Itohan Osadiaye, Nigeria

The painful experience of the past left me love wrecked. It's been five years and Valentine's Day each year, always re-ignited the painful event of the past. After five years, something within tells me this valentines is going to be different.

The first month of the year kicked off on a very good note and on the fifth day of the month, an external project manager was sent to my office. His name was Dare. He was sent to work on a new project with me, and the project was to last for a month. I was prepared and excited about the project but never imagined what laid in wait for me.

The project went on smoothly because Dare was more than helpful. Asides the project, Dare was thoughtful and kind-hearted. His sweet nature began to ignite something in me. After the successful completion of the project, Dare left but we always kept in touch.

Finally, it was yet another valentine day. And on that day, Dare asked me out on a date. The painful experience of the past came crawling back. This time, I didn't feel pain and anger. I had serenity so I decided accepting to go out on the date with Dare.

And as I stood in front of the mirror, dressed for the date, I could see another chance... Another chance at love.



## HOUDA MESSOUDI'S INTERVIEW

by
Sandra Oma Etubiebi

Houda Messoudi is a sight for sore eyes with clear porcelain skin, a searching stare, and smile so engaging; you will scarcely ever be bored with this amiable writer from Casablanca, Morocco in North Africa. It was my pleasure to interview her.

She immediately introduced herself as she gradually recovered from the shock of knowing she was to grace the cover of the July 2018 edition of the WSA magazine:

"I'm Houda from Morocco and I work as market researcher for a multinational company. I love my job since it gives me the opportunity to meet and deal with many people in several categories at once. There is rarely a boring day."

Interesting! The beautiful woman before me suddenly loomed larger as her perceived value climbed several notches higher. I wondered what impact her career as a market researcher would have on her writing in terms of finding and developing stories. Is there a direct connection or benefit?

"Yes. As a market researcher, I need to look at many data and select the best figures that serve the client. This skill helps me to detect what's best in terms of relevance for my stories and articles. Also, on the job, I need to look at data from different perspectives to explore the data efficiently and write reports to tell a story my clients can assimilate. This directly connects to my ability to look at scenes from different points of view, develop a sense of critic, and apply a lot more introspective work on my writing. Yes, my job has helped me especially in blogging. My articles are informative and I use my honed skills to identify the best angle to adopt, how to structure my article so that it can be articulate, smooth and light for the readers to read from start to finish."

When Houda speaks, her warmth and energy envelopes the atmosphere and teleports you into 'friendship mode' quickly forgetting that you have only just begun the conversation. What a way to get comfortable! I asked Houda to tell me about the writer in her:

"Ah, my writing started before I turned twelve. I would write poems and articles for my school's newspaper. And, I can remember my first accomplishment when an issue came out with my name captioned under my small poem. That was huge. At seventeen, I wrote a set of all-French short stories, which featured creative ideas that my tutors commended. After that, 'life' took over! But with the stress of adult life, writing came again, very naturally, as my salvation. Depending on my mood or inspiration, I would often write in English or French till my mind became calm."

Her words paint a picture of the excavation of a long lost artifact whose discovery was bound to save the world. I was sinking into her real time adventure and found my questions running ahead of me as I prevailed on her to tell me what excites the writer in her:

"I am inspired by the Asian culture, mainly Korea and Japan. This made me research a lot about them until I discovered a French website asking for writing without experience. I emailed them, sent a sample of my work, and that singular action opened up a new world to me. I wrote more articles and developed more ideas for content in the Asian context. My passion for all things Asia led me to set up a temporary website 4 years ago, www.windinabox.wordpress.com, which is soon to reach its 100th article post. The name of my blog symbolizes my creative ideas as the wind while my brain is the box that houses the wind. My blog was the first of its kind in Morocco and gave me countless opportunities to meet, interview and research people, places and events. I am presently working on the full-fledged website version www.windinabox.com."

I took a quick visit to Houda's site and was impressed to see the consistency and quality of her thoughts as expressed on her website. What exactly are her goals with blogging? And, how does she get the time to constantly and consistently churn out entries for her blog?

"Wind in a box gave me the opportunity to write freely, and lets people read, comment, and interact with me in ways that would not have been possible. It has opened doors to many collaborations. Honestly, I see it as a part of me, my source of pride and something I will leave behind for others to enjoy. Incidentally, I began my blogging as a member of a French bloggers' team. So, naturally, I first started writing articles in French alone until I noticed that many people did not understand the language. This was further compounded with my coverage on the Asian culture (mainly k-pop), which attracted people from many countries. I, therefore, had to write in both English and French to reach my audience. I am focused on making my site the reference in Morocco when it comes to the community interested in the Asian culture. Most of my stories are influenced from my life but I tweak the events to make it appealing and universal. I write at the spur of moments when inspiration hits. Although, I do try to be more disciplined with writing -making time for it and allowing myself to write without inspiration -more often than not, I just let the words flow. And my blog and the many articles saved on my computer are the results of letting my words flow. Also, I have learnt to sustain inspiration by attending workshops and taking short writing courses. I attend a lot of writer workshops, even though I feel they are not nearly enough in Morocco. Two workshops strike me particularly; the first was by a renowned Moroccan author and poet. The second workshop was with a published French writer who taught rich techniques to build a story. I have carried all these skills into the novel I am currently working on."

Houda's eyes lit up when she mentioned her novel. It was easy to tell that her love for this novel attempts to match the love of a mother for a child. I was definitely going to pry further as her passion made me the more curious. What is this novel that lights up her searching eyes? Will she give us a peek?

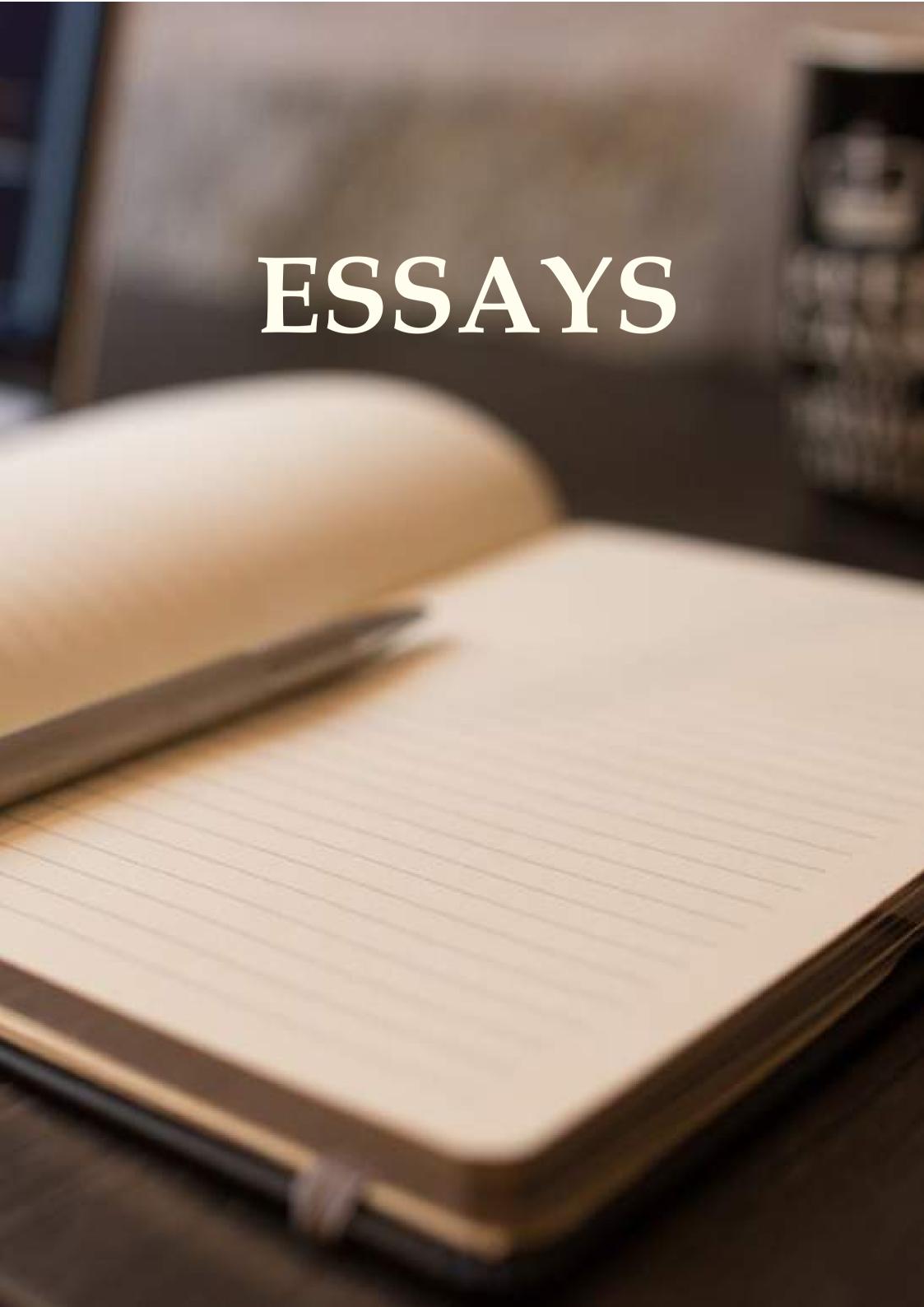
"I started working on my novel about a year ago. It is in French. I have completed several chapters and aim to finish soon. It is a project dear to my heart. This is a story that inspired me more than 10 years ago. I wrote it as a short story, at first, with an open end –then, forgot about it for many years. I have decided to commit to developing it into a full novel. Although I will not tell you much about it, it is a fiction set in Morocco, involving some superpowers and a lot of mystery. Well, let's wait and see how it unravels. This will be my first novel."

The more we talked, I deeply pondered the backdrops of her experiences and the environments of her exposures. What must Morocco be like for Houda and the many writers in that country?

"Morocco is a country far north in Africa, strategic in her closeness to both Africa and Europe. This exposure represents the richness of the culture here, with influences from Africa, Europe, Arab, Berber, and many more. It is really a melting pot, giving lots of room for creativity and diversity. It also gives the opportunity to read several writers across many styles given that we speak many languages; Arabic, French and English being the basis, some even speak Spanish. Personally, I think nothing equals reading authors in their own languages, without going through the translations. This way, I have the impression that I am reading directly into the writer's mind, without filters and without intermediation. The language advantage is a strength for Moroccan writers: having the possibility to read many languages, in many styles, many literary movements. Right now, the writing scene here is boiling. We have the International Book Fair, held annually in Morocco, which has become the rendezvous that no one should miss. This fair gives importance to Arab writers, either from Morocco, other countries, and also Africans. Thus, enlarging the sphere for writers'exposure with the public via book presentations, lectures, conferences, signings, and everything else around reading and writing. Unfortunately, the reading rate is still low. But, the good news is that there are numerous initiatives to make people read, which give opportunities to writers to write, create and shine."

Time could have flown first class for all I cared; Houda Messoudi was a delight to be with. Her down to earth lovable personality underscored her pronounced love for nature, deserts, and sipping coffee by the sea. Yes, I should visit Morocco one day:to play catch up with Houda is all the excuse I need.





# Are You a Professional Boyfriend or Girlfriend?

### - Benard Aloo, Kenya

In the face of revolution, modernization and everything anti-old-fashioned, we are still stuck with the traditional societal expectation of being in a romantic relationship. This has inculcated in us the fear of being and ending up alone. This fear is called Anuptaphobia. An Anuptaphobic person is always in a relationship, hardly ever single. 'Professional boyfriends and girlfriends', is what I choose to call them.

According to a study conducted by the University of Toronto, Department of Psychology (Spielmann et al, 2013), Anuptaphobia affects more women than men. This is attributed to the famous biological clock. The thought of being alone has most women literally shuddering.

Anuptaphobic people have one goal; never walk alone –believe me, this has nothing to do with Liverpool FC. They jump (for lack of a better term) from one relationship to another and their objective is not necessarily to fall in love but to avoid being single. Consequently, they are said to be fairly non-discriminatory in their quest for relationship partners.

There are mainly two reasons why someone would want to be single; One, they just got out of a relationship and are taking time off dating for what many consider as self-reflection. The other reason is simply choice. Some people just choose to be single. They are content with being alone and loving themselves. They are under no pressure to venture into a romantic journey. These are my favourite, despite the societal label for them as selfish and self-absorbed people. They do not bow down to societal expectations and are very confident in their choices. They are completely in charge of their



love life and control what happens, when it happens, and with whom it happens.

Now, for Anuptaphobics, their waiting period from one relationship to another may be as short as an hour. They always have someone on standby, and will even go back to an ex in an instant if it takes a day or two before they find someone new after a break-up. This may come out as a harsh judgment, but Anuptaphobia is a condition that stretches beyond the individual's comprehension. Many would never admit they fear being alone and almost all will be defensive if they were called out as Anuptaphobics.

The roots of this phobia range widely from the fear of Loneliness to family and peer pressure, trying to be societal complete by having a partner and even the thought of dying alone. The study by the University of Toronto also established that anxiety about loneliness appears to play a crucial role in the development of behaviours of unhealthy relationships. As Stephanie Spielmann mentioned in her journal, 'Anuptaphobic characters are always in a race, thus settling for less out of fear of being single' (Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 2013)

I have since set my own hypothesis from the study- I am utterly convinced that the majority of people who cheat in relationships may be Anuptaphobic. But theirs is a special kind of Anuptaphobia. Their fear of being alone or single has manifested itself into a form of insecurity that questions the stability of any relationship they get into. Ordinarily, Anuptaphobic people tend to be keepers once they get partners, as this gives them a sense of security and completeness. They are the happiest in such relationships, but make no mistake; a slight sign of instability will send them into panic mode, making them start looking for 'backup plans' or 'standby' partners.

They are also the best online stalkers. They stalk their exes on social media platforms and even current partners of their exes are not spared from scrutiny. As a result, they never want their exes to imagine them being unhappy and as such think everything their exes post on social media is about them. They also heavily use social media for the purpose of meeting and getting new romantic partners in their lives.

When I first mentioned this phobia to a group of young boys and girls in my church a few years ago, one of them wanted to know how to deal with Anuptaphobia and overcome it. I'm not an expert and so I offered a safe solution. I told them that like any other fear, the best way was to face it. Practice being single and take time to know yourself. Well, am not sure if that helped, but I have come to realize there is more one can do other than attempting to be single. The main undoing of Anuptaphobia people is the fear of being judged by society as outcasts, they feel the society is always pointing a finger at them.

Anuptaphobics may try the following to avoid being full-time professional girlfriends or boy-friends.

Realize you offer something valuable to the relationship: Relationships are a give and take kind of situations. Each partner brings with them unique attributes. The partnership must never be a favour to one person. Once an Anuptaphobic realizes that they too bring something valuable to the table and are an equal partner in the relationship, they will feel a sense of security which is an effective way of handling any form of fear.

Understand that no relationship is perfect: We all have a tendency to compare our relationship with our friends. What most people do not understand is the fact that there is the public display of a relationship and then there are struggles underneath. Relationships are unique and none is perfect. A slight difference of opinion should never lead to exploration and weighing of options. It only helps the relationship grow if handled well.

Focus on your strengths: Men and women have those weakness buttons that may set them on a warpath if pressed. It could be anything; from stretch marks in the case of a lady to being broke in the case of a man. Accepting someone for what they are and what they are not, means looking past the weakness buttons. Avoid pressing them even in heated arguments; the unspoken rule is if you don't press mine, I won't press yours. Focus on each other's strengths and what makes you great for each other.

Take time for yourself: Brings me back to my initial idea of facing your fears. Take time to be with yourself, and feel secure enough in being alone. Don't criticize or demean yourself. Just feel good about you and what you are. If you don't, nobody else will.



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'The black man is capable of managing his own affairs' was one of the statements that Dr Kwame Nkrumah, the first and former president of Ghana made in his independence speech. He was born on 21st of September 1909 at Nkroful in the Western Region. His parents were Kofi Ngonloma of the Asona clan and Elizabeth Nyanibah of the Anona clan. He attended elementary school at Half Assini where his father worked as a goldsmith. He obtained Teacher's certificate from the Prince of Wale's college at Achimota 1930. He later attended Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, USA in 1935 and obtained a BA in 1939. He also obtained a BA in theology from the same institution in 1942.

He went on further to acquire Msc in Education, MA in philosophy and completed course-work/preliminary examination for a PhD degree at the University of Pennsylvania, USA. He combined his studies with part-time lectureship in Negro History, where he helped to found the African Studies Association and African Students Association of America and Canada. He was voted most outstanding Professor of the year by the Lincolnian.

The point I'm trying to create here is that Dr Kwame Nkrumah came from a small family with a small beginning, but he had a vision to move to higher places, and so he pursued his education seriously. It mattered not to him where he came from or where he was, all that mattered in his life was how he saw himself and where he knew he wanted to go, not how

others saw him or where they wanted him to go. This thought kept him going and moving to occupy higher positions that made him recognizable even in the Western World.

Another black role model is Kofi Atta Annan who became the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations. He was born on 8th April 1938 in Kumasi. His parents were Victoria and Henry Reginald Annan. His father used to work as an export manager for the lever Brothers cocoa company. Kofi Atta Annan attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He later attended Mfantsipim School from 1954 to 1957. Kofi witnessed the struggle for independence of his country in the very year he completed secondary school, and so he grew up believing that everything was possible. His career with the UN began in 1962 when he joined as an administrative and budget officer with the World Health Organization. His first five-year term as the UN Secretary-General began on 1st of January 1997 when he replaced outgoing Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt which he worked tediously in ensuring gender equality and peace among the United Nations. Because of his good works, his tenure of office was renewed on the 1st of January 2002.

An addition to the list of capable black men is a man with a vision and a dream for all Africa. Apostle Dr Ing. KwadwoSafo is the man in the picture. He was born on the 26th of August 1948 in Asante Bekwai in the Ashanti Region. He is the first African to manufacture engines, vehicles, heavy duty machines, electric drums, television sets, air conditioners and a whole lot of technological artefacts. He is the first man in the world who manufactured Bass guitars with seven strings and only man on earth capable of producing metals from seashells and palm husk making metals renewable.

He believes all men were created equal but with different purposes and different capabilities and therefore have the ability to change their destiny. He believes that the way to success is identifying talents, improving it and applying them to cause positive change in the society.

The challenge then to Africans is to be able to identify these capabilities in order to develop and put them to use, to ensure positive development of the country, the continent and the whole wide world. So this is a huge challenge to the youths of Africa to take the mantle from our great leaders, innovators, inventors and scholars who have done nothing but raise the image of Africa everywhere they found themselves without any fear but with bravery and pride.



I thought it was a joke until I experienced it. Depression is a silent killer; the kind of disease that you never even recognise as a disease. Well, yes I was depressed to the point of suicide attempt. Thank goodness, family and a few friends came to my rescue and showed me that indeed, I am truly loved. But then, after recovery, I thought about the many souls out there who suffer depression and virtually no one has come to their rescue. I found myself googling depression to get all the information I could about it, including photos that serve as illustration. I nearly fell into another round of depression while doing this but instead, I decided to write about it so we all could see the need to reach out to someone out there and save a soul.

Let's explore a bit of what depression is all about. College of Medicine, University of Ibadan says, "Depression is a mental disorder characterized by a persistently depressed mood or loss of interest in activities, causing impairment in daily life." Depression can happen to anyone at any age but most times, it happens to people over the age of 12. Oh yes, 12. Teenagers experience it too, so let's not overlook it. WHO revealed that Nigerians are the most depressed in Africa- a slump from being rated one of the happiest people on earth. Nigeria has a total of 7,079,815 sufferers of depression, closely followed by Ethiopia which is 4,480,113 sufferers.

There are moments in every individual's life when it feels like nothing is working or going as planned. Sometimes, it's the feeling of confusion pertaining to one's dreams and ambitions-

when you start to wonder if what you're doing or where you are is what you've always wanted or part of the plan. The latter is usually called 'quarter-life crisis' and leads to a serious state of depression; this often happens to young adults in their 20's. Sometimes, depression results from the loss of a loved one, poverty or financial lack, low self-esteem-wanting the world to see you as you are but all they do is judge you by their standards, the feeling of not being understood, emotional/physical/sexual abuse from friends or loved ones, and many more. The most common causes in Africa are poverty, unemployment, alcohol and drug use, and illnesses.

I'm the type that encourages myself no matter how hard things get but then, I was struck by it. Then, I realized that even the strongest of men and women suffer depression in secret. And I was marveled at how we Africans overlook depression. We perceive it as an abstract idea, like it doesn't really exist. In fact, the religious extremists would tell you that it is demonic and thus, the individual needs to undergo adeliverance session with a clergy. Well, I wasn't possessed. I was heavy at heart due to certain experiences in my life. It was like things weren't working for me anymore and my account was bearing a red flag with bills left, right and centre. I sought help but I was asked to give my body in exchange for what I wanted. My career was experiencing a stand still- no clients- plus constant illnesses. Then, I kept staring at the tablets on my table and a voice told me "Take it all and experience peace in the world after." I nearly did but I didn't. And today, I have vowed to stand with all who are depressed to help them come out of it.

This should shock you. 800,000 suicide deaths yearly are caused by depression. It is now the second leading cause of deaths among 15-29 years olds, according to WHO. You might be oblivious of what's happening but try contacting somebody and let them know they are loved even if you can't solve their problems. More so, let's flag off a campaign aimed at helping the depressed among us and reducing suicide deaths.

### **About the columnist:**

Gabrielina Gabriel-Abhiele is a writer, editor, and broadcast journalist; a columnist with Writers Space Africa online magazine. She's a preacher of her propaganda and a believer in equality and truth. Her essay contents span various topics from child abuse, politics, to gender equality, racism, tribalism, and as many issues as can be touched. She is also a blogger on girl-child matters. She can be reached via the email addresses: theroaringwriter@gmail.com or gabrielina.gabriel@gmail.com

# Literary News with

### Nyashadzashe Chikumbu

#### TSITSI DANGAREMBGA MAKES A COMEBACK

Tsitsi Dangarembga the Zimbabwean novelist and film maker, has finally written her third novel to make up a trilogy.

This Mournable Body is the third in the Tsitsi Dangarembga trilogy that started off with NervousConditions and was followed on by The Book of Not. The new novel is published by Graywolf Publishers.

In 1988, a novel Nervous Conditions written by Zimbabwean author Tsitsi Dangarembga focusing on the story of a Shona family in post-colonial Rhodesia during the 1960s was published. That book was considered by some to be one of the defining novels to come out of the continent in the 20th century. The book was followed by The Book of Not by the same writer in 2006.

The end of the trilogy is finally here as Tsitsi Dangarembga shared the cover for her new publication This Mournable Body on Social Media. The book published by Graywolf is described thus in the blurb.

In This Mournable Body, Tsitsi Dangarembga returns to the protagonist of her acclaimed first novel, Nervous Conditions, to examine how the hope and potential of a young girl and a fledgling nation can sour over time and become a bitter and floundering struggle for survival. As a last resort, Tambudzai takes an ecotourism job that forces her to return to her parents' impoverished homestead. It is this homecoming, in Dangarembga's tense and psychologically charged novel, that culminates in an act of betrayal, revealing just how toxic the combination of colonialism and capitalism can be.



#### KUKOGHO IRUESIRI SAMSOM WINS THE DUSTY MANUSCRIPT CONTEST 2018

Kukogho Iruesiri Samson, a Nigerian Journalist, poet and CEO of WORDS, RHYTHMS AND RHYMES, walked away with one million naira cash and a publishing contract with the acclaimed FARAFINA BOOKS.

According to the winner, he wrote the first draft of the spell bound crime fiction, DEVIL'S PAWN nine years back. According to the judges' verdict on the DEVIL'S PAWN: 'the winning entry was a unanimous choice ... The story is the best example of the possibilities inherent in the genre fiction switching from crime to adventure, thriller to horror. Told in a fast paced narrative style that keeps you glued to the pages, our winning entry is a gift that keeps on giving.'

The Dusty Manuscript initiative, a brand new literary prize set up to promote Nigerian writers; to tell and sell their own stories. To winning entries will get published under the Farafina communication breeze imprint.

The competition features a two day book writing and markets boot-camp for the top 25 long listed book authors.

### Tanzania Book Festival and Creativity Exhibition 2018



On the 17th of may , Tanzanian writers and readers, were graced by a much needed and long awaited for event; 'A BOOK FESTIVAL, AND CREATIVITY EXHIBITION.' An event not only scarce in Tanzania but the rest of Africa at large. It was hosted in the American corner\_a section of the National library in Dar es Salam.

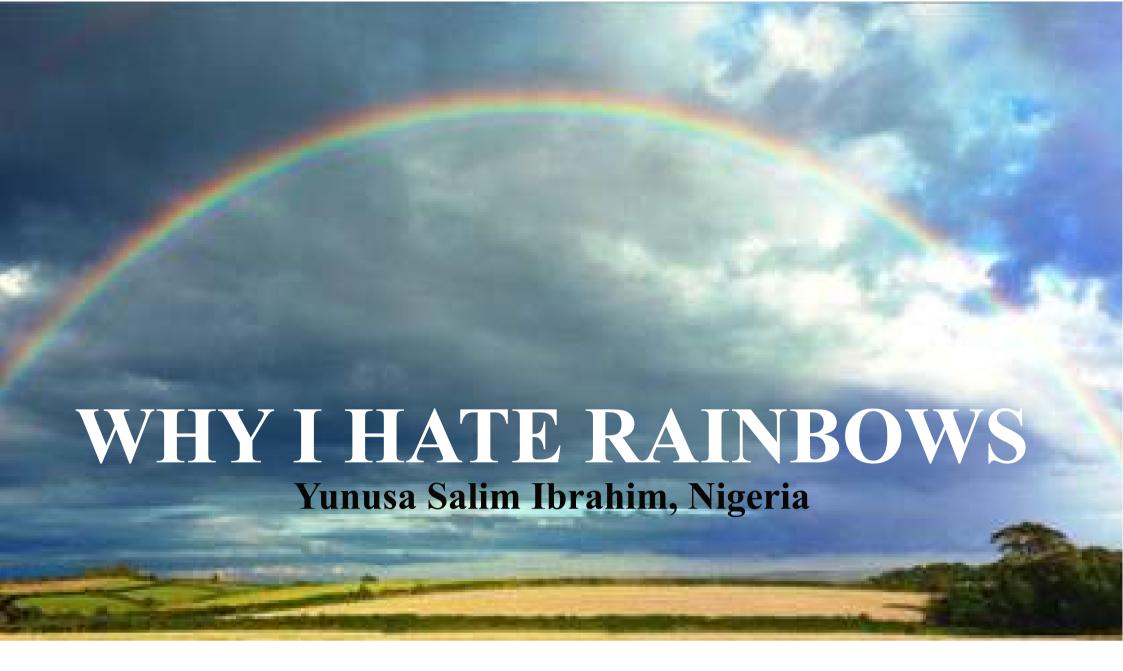
Mr. Richard Mabala widely known as 'Mabala the Farmer' an award winning Tanzanian writer saw through the flowery exhibition as the guest speaker. Amongst other issues he strongly

pressed on the importance of reading books, encouraging different organizations to help foster and nurse a healthy reading culture. To the new and upcoming writers he headed them to put their readers first saying, 'Writers have an opportunity to change society.' Stressing the important of content development he said 'writing is an art that sells itself, when done well.'



The much needed event was the brain child of Mr. Chenche an optimistic writer with young writers at heart. He helped give Tanzanians a day to remember for years, as publishers, book sellers, printers, readers and writers got a golden opportunity to interact, share and have a good time.





A storm was brewing Far East above and I could feel it pulsating and stirring in my veins. My excitement was brewing along with it, growing and bubbling every passing second. I couldn't tell or show others about the storm for the fear of being labelled crazy, not that it mattered anyway because I had been called worse than that. They called me crazy, odd, weird and strange. It never really got under my skin, although the unflattering manner and situation some usually tossed those labels around made me nervous if someone from home knew.

By "someone from home", I meant my mother, because I was being bullied by the very people who constitute part of my family. Of course, coming from a large extended family, who would have thought that my own uncles and cousins would be the bullies making my life a living hell? My mom didn't know and I made sure she never found out. She had enough worries of her own, the strained lines prematurely etched on her face made it glaringly obvious.

She was always worried about me; she didn't know how to help me but she knew that I needed help. It was either having to take me to the hospital for proper diagnosis, which would confirm her worst nightmare that something was wrong with me, and she was not ready to accept that. Or letting me be, firmly hoping and praying that I would snap out of it. Either way, it was a no win situation for both of us. She would always worry and I would never be normal. The closest she came to knowing my condition was when an enthusiastic health worker during a polio vaccination exercise told her that I might be autistic. My mother refused to believe the health worker. The clouds grew darker, and a distant rumbling could be heard. I was extremely excited. It was a sign that could be the first rain of the year about to come down and the onset of the rainy season. A few days back, the clouds had gathered but the only thing borne out of them was the rainbow and a dust storm. I was both annoyed and sad when I saw the rainbow poking out of the magnificent rain clouds. The rainbow is my arc enemy and it had robbed me of a downpour of rain my most beloved natural phenomenon. The children on the other hand were

gazing upward excitedly, pointing at the rainbow and singing songs filled with glee. "It is beautiful," they said. I wailed and mournfully looked at them. All that they did was fill my soul with despair and hopelessness. There it was, shining brightly, mocking me with its colours like a smug smile across the dark clouds in the sky.

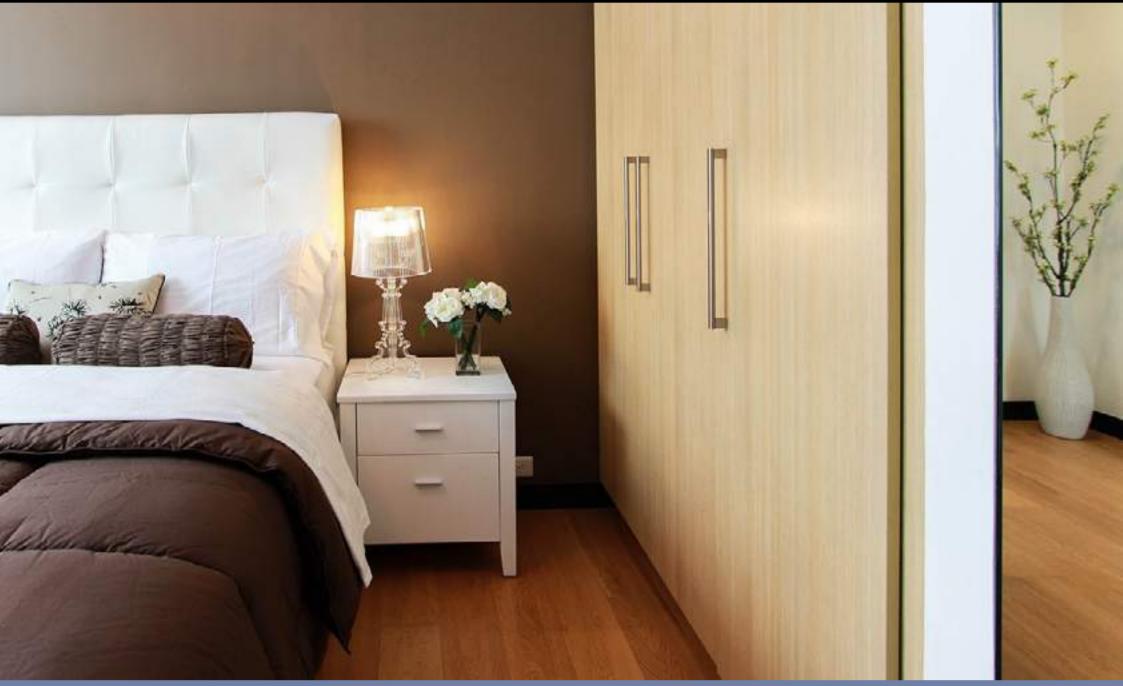
How could something so bright and colourful bring upon me so much gloom and sadness? How could I love rainbows when they drained the heavenly drops of happiness that soothed my soul and calmed my heart? The rains send down torrents of unconditional joy and peace. They flood and nourish my body and my inner being with indescribable and unexplainable emotions, somewhat a mixture of serenity, safety and peace. I am an unrepentant devotee totally entranced by the alluring rains. How could I ever pick the rainbow, a fleeting phenomenon over the rains?

How could I ever love the rainbow when it deprived me of that sweet earthly scent the soil emits when it rains? Or that gentle cool breeze that caresses my body and soul? My heart becomes lighter and cleaner, like the gleaming corrugated red roofs atop mud houses in the ancient city of Zaria after a downpour. The environment becomes more appealing; with nature displaying the best sights and scenery, in total harmony and symmetry with the skies. The trees are a little bit greener, the grasses scent sweeter and everything else becomes clearer. How could I give up such a breathe-taking feeling for a mere rainbow?

Wasn't it the rain that provided succour and saved me when I was robbed of my innocence and purity under the Sub-Saharan sun? Uncle Bala would never have let me go if there was a rainbow that day. The rain made him get off me and send me home. The rain was there while I was walking home, drenching my tears and drowning my screams. The rain was there to cleanse my body from the odious stench of that monster. I remember getting home and being scolded for being drenched to the skin. I cried all night and my mom thought it was the slap she gave me when I walked in. I never spoke of it again. Not even to my mom. The rain was there for me that day, not the rainbow.

The rains send me into a deep reverie, into a safe space where I tell myself that I will be alright; that being different is good, that it makes me unique, that the invisible scars were medals of bravery and strength. The rains tell me that there is hope. That with each drop, my wilted heart will blossom again, just like life sprouts out of the soil. That after the dark clouds comes out the sun accompanied with a mesmerizing aura.

A gust of wind swept me back to the present where the heavily pregnant clouds were threatening to go into labour. I smiled like an experienced mid-wife in the maternity ward as I shook away the thoughts of any impending rainbow. "Not today," I silently prayed. The sky was pitch black, with angry clouds rolling and dancing while the thundering skies sang hoarsely. Gashes of lightening slashed across, lashing at the far corners of the earth. There was a loud rumbling and seconds later, I could feel a cool breeze on my neck. A single droplet of rain landed on my face and a huge grin spread across my face.



# In the Far Corner of My Closet

#### Houda Messoudi, Morocco

Mum is nagging me again. "Put your room in order!" She's checked in, for the 10th time in an hour to see how fast I am coping.

"Yeah, you really are eager for me to get out of here." I said, half joking, half sad. I'm moving out in two days time and yet to pack anything. It's just so overwhelming and there are much stuff to sort out, decide what to keep, what to leave and what to donate. And some pieces have many memories that I just stop for some minutes to remember & then make my decision.

My mum volunteered to help, but I refused because her helping me would just mean constant nagging: "Why did you keep this? Why do you still hold onto this junk? Why didn't you throw away these? What are these?" No, I'll pass that, thanks!

But it takes a lot of time and I am so tired! Just thinking about what is coming next freaks me out. I am moving out because I'll will be living with my husband, in another city. This change is exciting and scary at the same time. We have been planning this for months. On paper, this seemed easy but the execution is another story. Completely.

Done with the drawers, the papers, jewellery boxes, books and decorations, I decide to tackle the biggest task: clothes. I am kind of a messy girl, so my closet is already a big mess that needs to be sorted out. That will just take the rest of the day. I take a deep breath and decide to finally get serious with this task.

I had put a large carpet in the middle of the room, and I put the clothes on it, batch by batch. By the fourth trip, I am almost done emptying the closet. My last trip held the last set of clothes and a small shoe box that was way in the back, totally hidden from view. I have no idea what it holds so I sit down, in the middle of all the clothes and opens it.

I wish I hadn't'! Itholds all my memories with him... My first love. I didn't dare look so much at the pictures; I just shredded and threw them away. I don't want anything to remind me of him. The small little box that was in the corner frightened me the most. Not sure what I would find in it but I knew it would be painful to see. I put it aside and started sorting the clothes, mechanically, without thinking. I was just folding them and piling them up in categories: pants, skirts, dresses, shirts...

The box next to me, I have the impression that it is screaming at me, demanding for my attention. As if it was saying: "Stall all you want, but I am here and you WILL open me." Crazy right?

I finally open the dreaded box and time stops. My breath becomes heavy and tears pour down my face, without control. This small box holds our wedding rings. The rings that we didn't get to wear. The rings we bought together, promising each other to be faithful till the end of time, and make each other happy.

What lies! And I was so stupid, for believing it and not seeing the truth sooner. Two weeks after purchasing those rings and one week before our wedding, I discovered everything! I discovered all the lies he has been feeding me and all the affairs he was having. Just by mere coincidence.

Memories of that day came rushing back, at once. I went to our new apartment, the one we had furnished together, only to find him there with her! In OUR new apartment, the one where we were supposed to live happily ever after. In that moment, everything was shattered. My life almost ended and the little innocent stupid girl inside of me died. He killed my happiness and all my hopes.

When I saw that scene, all the small details that I discarded came back and made clear sense: the late strange phone calls, the text messages that he deleted, the dates that he skipped, pretexting other meetings and other things that I don't remember now.

And it was hard getting over him...Days of crying, days of staying isolated. Tonnes of messages from relatives and friends trying to console me, genuinely or just to ease their spirits. Thankfully, my parents helped me get over that situation and recover my life.

Years later, I couldn't trust anyone and I hated all men. Ultimately, my current fiancé showed up. He is a true miracle. He is the man that he would never be. He took me out from this misery and restored my faith in humanity.

I didn't want to remember all that. I didn't even know when I threw this shoe box inside my closet. Finding it was a big shock. My mum came to check my advancement again, found me in the middle of the clothes, holding the rings and crying. She understood, holds me tight and takes the rings from my hand. Later on she calls my fiancé and he talks to me. He is the only one that can sooth me.

And I totally thank him for that. He showed me how much I've changed and that old memories don't matter anymore.

Truly, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger!

## MIRACLES AT MIDNIGHT



Walter was lost. He had been driving around the same roads for about half an hour and now it was pouring rain. His whole life these days had been centred on an overwhelming air of despair. Walter slammed his hand against the steering wheel, when he realized he was almost out of gas. He would never make it to the nearest gas station; if he could even find it. There was no one on the road to ask for directions or help. He had almost resigned to sleeping in his car and praying no hooligans attacked him when he saw it. He shook his head slightly and peered into the darkness. Yes, there was definitely a huge looming structure ahead with flickering lights. Lights meant people and people meant help.

He was a city boy through and through and the thought of spending a night in the wild plains of Gokomere was completely unwelcome. His headlights picked a narrow driveway and he followed it to the house. As he got out of the car, he realized it was not a house at all but a towering cathedral. What was such a building doing out here in the middle of nowhere? It puzzled him but he could not resist the pull of the lights, warmth and human companionship. He ran out of the rain and knocked gingerly on the huge double doors. Almost immediately, the doors swung open as if he had been expected. "Come in son," said a figure just inside the threshold.

Walter hesitated. All he could see was the outline of a man holding a candle. The candle cast horrific shadows on the man's face revealing only the slightest details; an eye here, a tooth there. Walter mentally shook himself, he was not a coward. Once inside, he realised the man was noth-

ing more than an elderly man dressed in a humble fading suit and his face was as far from horrific as possible. In fact the man looked like everyone's favourite grandpa. "Thank you sir. My car is out of gas and I think I am lost." Walter explained as the man led him into a room with a set of sofas and a roaring fire. Walter almost sighed out loud at the warmth. "Yes you are lost son. You have been for a while now, haven't you?" the old man's voice was kind but Walter felt himself bristle all the same.

The old man sat down and indicated for Walter to do the same. The old man began pouring tea and Walter was startled to notice the table of food in-between them. Had it been there before? "The lost rarely notice that they are lost," the old man said in his pleasant voice. Walter frowned at him, unease tugging at his senses. "If I could just get directions to the gas station..." he said, trying to wave away the cup being handed to him. His stomach growled in anticipation, embarrassing him. He sighed and took the cup. "You won't find what you are looking for in the dark. Safer to wait for the light," the old man advised. "It's not that late..." he glanced at his watch and cut himself off. It was impossible. The watch said midnight but Walter was sure that thirty minutes ago it had said nine-thirty. He rubbed his eyes and looked again. It was now a minute past midnight. "Eat," the old man indicated the plate of baked bread, ham and eggs in front of Walter.

She always made him ham and eggs with her baked bread. He frowned and dismissed all thoughts of her. Once he began eating he could not stop until every morsel of food was gone. He looked up at the old man when he was done to find him smiling indulgently. "Thank you for your hospitality," Walter mumbled, a little embarrassed. When the old man said nothing, Walter shifted uncomfortably and looked around the room. It was well furnished and although there were no electric lights, the oil lamps cast enough light into the room. "What church is this?" he asked nervously. "Do churches make you uncomfortable, Walter?"

Walter started and almost leapt to his feet. Had he told the old man his name? "No they don't. I just don't see the point," he answered truthfully. "So you don't believe they are like a hospital for the sick?" the old man asked, turning his hands to the fire. Pain, unadulterated, devastating lashed across Walter's whole body. He felt it like a physical thing. He gripped the edge of the table and closed his eyes. "Walter?" the old man's voice broke into his pain. "If you are talking about miracles and healing shenanigans, I don't believe in such stuff," he replied as he battled back the darkness.

Walter opened his eyes and stared at the other man with pure hostility. "You are a pastor of some sort, aren't you?" he asked. "Of some sort," the old man agreed. "You don't like pastors either?" Walter began pacing and moved to peer out the window only to find the rain had become a torrent. "No," he said over his shoulder. "God himself then?" the old man asked from the sofa. Walter focused on the pounding rain to centre himself. She had taught him that; using rain to calm down. "There is no point to any of it," he replied. The old man had moved to join him at the window without Walter noticing. "I think the whole of creation would disagree

with you," the old man told him.

"What's the point when good people die young in such pain?" he demanded. "Death is a part of life too," was the answer. "But Kudzi was so young," Walter's pain had turned to sorrow in seconds. "She lived her full life. She married you and she was happy." The old man put a comforting hand on Walter's shoulder. Had he said Kudzi had been his wife? The old man must have seen the ring that Walter had never removed. "Why would God curse her to die at twenty-six and from cancer no less?" he implored the old man. "What if the twenty-six years she had were the gift and death was inevitable as it is for all mortal things?"

Kudzi had been sick for two of the four years they had been married. His sorrow lived in the walls of his body and the passages of his mind, a living and breathing darkness that haunted his every thought. Kudzi would have begged him to start living again but Kudzi had been the pure one between them. She had kept her faith until the very end. He had hated that. He hated God for still having her love when he, her husband was losing her forever. "I would rather have the gift of her alive," Walter said at last. "You speak as though her death nullified the life she lived, the lives she touched, the love she gave," the old man said. "Why do you not grieve her? Celebrate her? She changed lives. Lead souls to salvation. Does all that disappear because she died young?" the old man asked solemnly.

Had Walter mentioned how he'd met Kudzi while volunteering at a youth camp she preached at? The charity she started with her friends to sponsor a couple of kids through school? "It's natural, Walter. You are angry. You want to punish God for it, that's why you won't set foot in a church," the old man looked around and chuckled, "Until today that is. Your wife's name was Kudzaishe." Walter nodded his affirmation although he knew it was not a question. "Her name means praise God and that's exactly what she did until she died. I would think if she left you anything it would be a legacy of love. Even death cannot nullify love." The old man stated gently. Walter sat back down and looked into the fire. "If I accept that her death was part of God's plan then I betray her," he confessed.

"Then consider yourself blessed to have stood so close to such a bright light, however short you think it was. Don't throw out all the light because a smudge of darkness touched it," the old man said from the window. "I am afraid," Walter whispered. The old man came to sit down too. "What are you afraid of?" he asked gently. "I am afraid that if I let go of the anger and the pain then that means I'm letting go of her," his eyes had filled with tears. "Kudzi was love, faith and hope. Once that kind of love touches you, you can never lose it ever again." the old man said. Then Walter was crying. Weeping as he had not done at her funeral or in the year that followed. He did not even mind the old man's gentle gaze on him because strangely the tears were soothing his soul.



# Hormones at it Again

Yipah Reuben, Nigeria

The first sign that something had gone terribly wrong was what she was wearing. Mary was wearing an old oversized t-shirt and grey leggings at 5am knocking on my door like a crazy person. You have to understand, this is Mary Andrew we are talking about. When we were in primary six, she refused to go to church on Christmas day because her shoe did not match her hat. That's how much she loves fashion. During our University days, she never attended morning lectures, they disturbed her sleep she would say. There was even a time she hid her mother's favourite shoes because they embarrassed her. She is not a vain person, she is just really passionate about looking her best at all times. So seeing her at my place looking so dishevelled at such an early hour told me something had gone horribly wrong.

"Hey what's wrong?" I asked her, hugging her at the door.

"Richard..." She just burst into tears and continued babbling nonsense. She was full on sobbing. I was confused now, Richard is her husband. I saw him just yesterday at their second anniversary. Then something clicked. Oh my God! He must be cheating on her. Ha! I knew it, no man was that perfect!

"It's going to be okay, stop crying. Let me get you some orange juice, huh?" She just nodded

and continued bawling her eyes out. The last time I saw my best friend cry like this was when her parents threatened to send her to boarding school after she fought with her cousins. I was going to kill this man. Their whole relationship and marriage sounds like a page from a romance novel. They met when he came to drop off a gift for his friend's girlfriend with her. He refused to leave until she agreed to go out on a date with him the next day. From that time on, it was smooth sailing up to their wedding eight months later. Once I was in the kitchen, I picked up my phone from where it was charging and dialled Richard, he picked up on the first ring.

"Hello, good morning Esty, please..."

"Ehnehn, Mr. Man hold it. You lying cheating shitty bastard. I knew it was too good to be true. So what is your excuse? Did you get bored and decided to get a bit more action? What is it with men and being unfaithful? If you knew you couldn't stick with her, why bother getting married in the first place?" And should I have stopped there? Yes. Did I stop there? No.

"I am ashamed to say I know you. Because of you this beautiful young lady is sited on my couch crying her eyes out. I hope you're happy. And to think I thought you were one of the rare good men on this earth."

"Is she okay?" he had the nerve to ask.

"What do you care? And don't even bother coming over. I will call the police. Don't even try me. You know my father is the commissioner of police, you would be locked up and not allowed out on bail and if the police are taking long to show up, I would have fun kicking you in the nuts while bashing in your kneecaps with a smile on my face you asshole." I ended the call before I got more frustrated.

I walked back into the parlour with a cup of fresh orange juice to find my friend giggling at Tom and Jerry. I was a bit confused. "I see you're feeling much better," I said, raising my eyebrows.

"Yeah, I'm so sorry I just came over like this."

"So what happened?" I asked.

"Well, yesterday after you all left, Richard showed me our anniversary gift. He bought us a new house that came completely with an already completed and furnished baby room, he's just so excited. I woke up this morning and remembered the house and how thoughtful he has been. I mean, Esty he's so perfect and I don't think I deserve him."

I couldn't speak, I just sat there looking at my best friend of twenty five years. I couldn't even begin to describe the expression on my face. I was going to kill her before the nine months were up. "Why did he have to go and get her pregnant? Now I have to call the man and apologize for cursing him out after all his only crime was being a good husband."





**WSA,** an international literary magazine published monthly by the African Writers Development Trust, is accepting submission for the August edition. For this edition we are including jokes, artworks, personal quotations and crossword puzzles.

Please consider the following:
Articles/Essays – 1,200 Words
Flash Fiction – 300 words
Poetry – 1 poem, maximum of 24 lines
Short Stories – 1,500 words
Jokes – 1 joke per writer
Artworks – maximum 3 artworks in high resolution
Personalised quotation – 1 quotation and must
be the original work of the author
Crossword puzzle – 1 puzzle

Please note the following: Deadline is July 13, 2018

You can write on any theme.

Due to the number of entries we receive only selected authors will be published in our magazine and online.

Your work must be edited and uploaded in MS Word format only.

We shall equally edit selected entries.

Please submit in one genre only.

Author retains copyright.

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### Featured Writers

Kolabomi Adeko, Nigeria
Gibonce Kabalika, Tanzania
Nnane Ntube, Cameroon.
One Baliki, Botswana
Nasikiwa Susie, Tanzania
Shimbo Pastory, Tanzania
Rongarashe Masuku, Zimbabwe
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Eva Mwangi, Kenya

Houda Messoudi, Morocco

Kimberly Chirodzero, Zimbabwe

Semakula Emmanuel, Uganda

# EDITORIAL

### UNITED WE STAND. DIVIDED WE FALL

The sounds of beating drums, the smoke in the sky and the messengers running in the streets of the internet, all communicating the same message across Africa and beyond in lands far away.

"Africa is meeting at Abuja."

One day a man had a dream. He dreamt of bringing Africa together. Where, through the pen and by the pen we became one big family. That man is Anthony Onugba, the WSA founder.

WSA has not only given the African writer the platform to share their work but has added to the growth of the writer by holding virtual writing classes, workshops, mentorships and awards.

And now the time has come for WSA under the umbrella of AWDT (African Writers Development Trust) to hold its first maiden ever physical conference on the 30th Nov to 2nd Dec 2018, in Abuja. For more on this, turn to our special feature by Edith Knight or refer to posters.

Unity is strength. We are living the dream!

Wakini Kuria Chief Editor, WSA, Kenya



# Re-imagining African Literature

by Edith Knight, Kenya

African literature receives a boost as African Writers Development Trust plans the first of its kind, in contemporary times, an African Writers Conference. This will hold this year, 2018, in Abuja, Nigeria from the 30th of November to the 2nd of December.

The theme for the conference is: Re-imagining African Literature: New Voices, New Narratives in the fight for the girl child. Now, you may want to read the theme again and carefully this time. This is not just a meeting where African Writers will gather and talk about the need to redefine the traditional gender roles that the African girl child has played and should play in literature, no. This is a unique, one of a kind conference that will explore and analyze what hasn't been written and what needs to be written and why new voices should write them.

Yes, you read that right- new voices. It's an amazing opportunity for emerging writers and even established ones to come and discuss the new narratives that will speak against the practices that continue to negate the growth of the girl child like sexual discrimination, forced marriages, wife inheritance, domestic violence, and even the contemporary ills like the glass ceiling at the work place, predefined career options, amongst many others. It's about the need to develop female characters whose roles go beyond cooking, reproducing and care giving.

In doing this, we will dignify the place of the woman, not only in African Literature but also in the society. So this conference is for all writers-new, old, emerging, established, black, white, male, female-all writers.

I should also point out that this conference is not meant to demean or undermine the impor-

tant role of the man/boy in the African narrative. Rather, it aims to find a point of convergence that will provide greater meaning to the interactions, and the ever changing complementary roles of both the male and female in the African society.

The discussions in the conference will go beyond writing about women's economic independence, their relationship with their husbands and children, their traditional beliefs and their status in the community as a whole; it will delve into the unchartered waters- It's mind-blowing to even try to imagine the different narratives, approaches and themes that the writers will want to pursue as concerning the girl child. The writing needs and important aspects of developing these narratives will also be discussed. This is a three day meeting that will redefine and determine the future of the girl child narrative in the literary terrain on the African continent- this conference is where the future will be written.

And there's fun too-Yes, we like to work and play too. There will be networking opportunities amidst refreshments, stories, games, sharing of personal journeys and lots of laughter. And since one of the objectives of AWDT is the sharing of creative ideas, thoughts and concepts, we believe that the networks formed at the conference will develop into long-term collaborations.

So see you there and let's redefine the girl child narrative. You can reserve a seat by visiting www.writerstrust.org/awc





### A Widow's God is Dead

Trying times?
Have you tried crying?
Have you cried trying?
Trying not to cry.

Do you sleep weeping?
Do you sleep?
Do you sweep weeping?
Are you sleep-sweeping?

Is he a thief?
Didn't he steal your grief?
Or did God steal He who stole your heart?

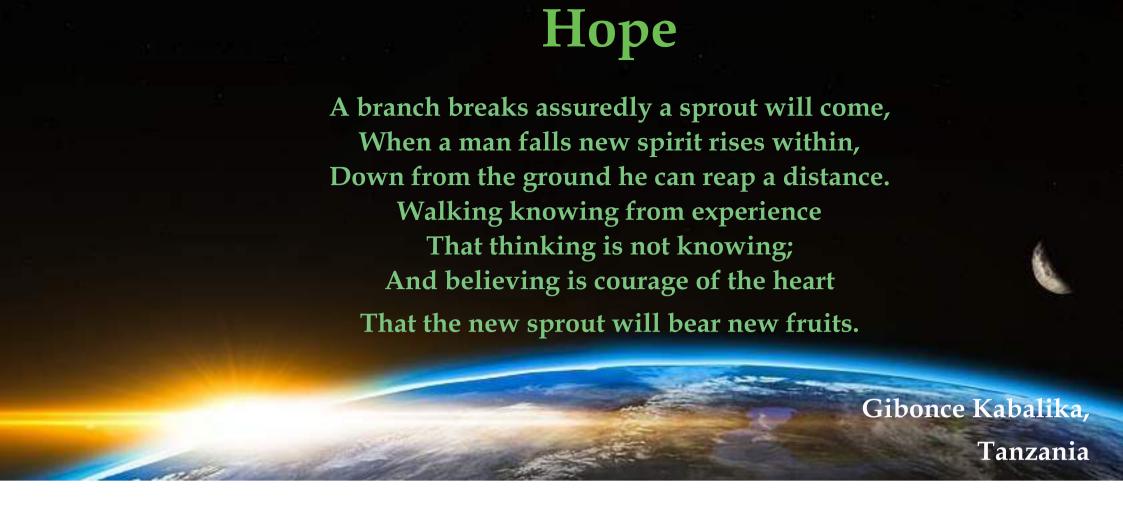
Do you still wear the wedding band
Of a dead husband?
Do you steal remember your wedding band?
And the dance steps of a dead husband?

Trying times?
Have you cried trying?
Trying to say He's not a thief?
Didn't God steal He who stole your grief?

Did God try you? Crying times.

Kolabomi Adeko, Nigeria





### **SPARK TO FIRE**

Songs sung in remnant notes Cacophonic voices raining stones On complaints that harnessed pleasure in lecherous gunshots Complaints left lying low under fascist boots If I were a woman, I would've let their toes Penetrate the core of my roots with snootiness, Infuse not in my mind scribbled fragments of hope! My songs, snowballs to the flame that mirrors your face Did you think I'll embrace your gaolers? Sing your songs again!

Nnane Ntube, Cameroon.



### **A Smashed Rose**

My eyes were drawn to her-a perfect blend of shades of brown Draped with a floral sheet her skin looked smooth to the touch A deep red covered her plump lips that looked somewhat swollen At her feet was a smashed rose, its petals looking foreign on white floors

Her hands remained glued to her womb as her slumber deepened. She stilled on the white floor as if thrust into an inescapable stream of thoughts It had begun with lustful smiles; later his smile had worn a different scent But she thought that her belly would make loud her unheard yet loud weeps

He'd been a good man but his smile had slowly transformed into rage A gentle touch into scratches and bruises Petals fell to the floor that bore witness to a familiar choreography-kicks and slaps Her every petal willed a cry but she swallowed the pain

She wouldn't crumble like a rusk at its eater's first bite. "Women are meant to be strong" she remembered lesson one And her voice was once again reduced to silent whispers within She remained the whisperer, whispering inaudible chunks beneath her breath

As her brain flicked through her pages of turmoil his eyes pricked her soul Her bloody hands tightened round her womb and she counted her breaths as she finally gave in She had failed to fulfill her duty, she had failed her unborn creation

And her eyes blinked no more, she had left them hanging on the ceiling Maybe she was projecting into the offals of heaven The smashed rose had wilted and she remained as silent as a grave

One Baliki, **Botswana** 



### FREE, BUT NOT

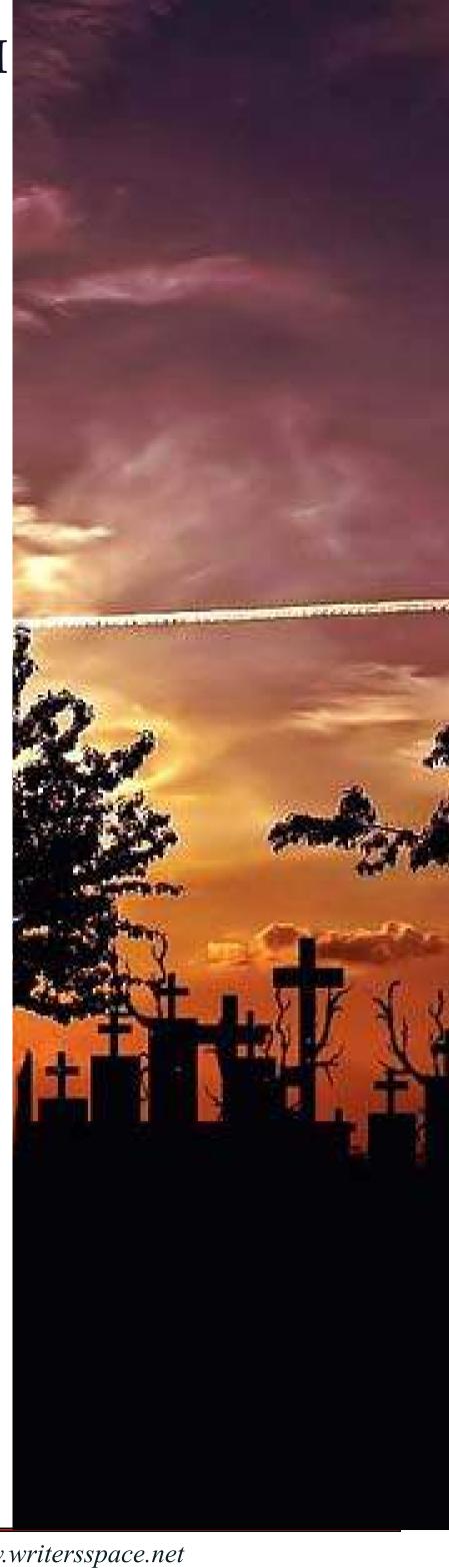
I see
Nothing any far
Mine world is breached
Loss, debts, deaths, blame, wretch-head
The past haunting, the hidden scaring
But, defeat thereof, is here, near, now
Light glows; the fog finds cover, and time
Counts its own, once more when dusk'd
Sleep and turn again all over!
Life's back when none'd seem
I see all ahead
But prickly unseen
My get-away
Is.

Shimbo Pastory, Tanzania

### THE COLOUR OF DEATH

I see people gathered at a funeral all wearing black, and I wonder why. Is the colour black, the colour of gloom? Is the colour black the symbol of dirge? I guess it is the colour of death and misery the colour of no life and hopelessness. They taught me that education is the light to illuminate our lives with. Learning institutions became symbols of wisdom, the master key to life, our hope and messiah to our misery. What puzzles me most is the gross irony for education is not the light but the blight! Our governments are run by academics our companies are chaired by graduates everything is in the hands of the educated but our societies are tormented by poverty maladies are the norm of the day, people sleep on empty stomachs, morality is a vice. I wonder why all this gross let down by education but the answer is not covert, the learned are adorned in black gowns the gowns of corruption, gowns of malice gowns of self-centredness, of exploitation. The cities are in constant lamentation our people are cuddled with misery. Our nation is a grave, the rest of us are the corpse. Our educated elite – the singers of our misery dirge sing vibrantly in their black graduation gowns presiding over the funeral of the ruled layman.

Rongarashe Masuku Zimbabwe



### DEATH IS SILENCE

Feeble, very frail, sore, very sore.
Gasping for dear last breath.
Panting, truly breathless.
Lifeless, cold, motionless.
A warm heart has stopped beating.
He is dead. He is gone!

Death, are you angel?
Coming but to rob and deprive?
Reaping both soul and life!
Death, what are you?
Whole non-presence of me?

Death is not absence nor passivity. To die is to do! act! worship!
Death, man's final act;
of submission, of surrender.

Not angel nor power nor force is death.

Neither departure nor exodus!

Death is man's silence and stillness;

Before God's immense mystery.

Death, everlasting silence before the divine.

Adrian Matebesi Zambia

# INTRODUCING...

"I have zero tolerance for unproductivity.

I love the sweat of work, the adrenaline of producing content, the joy in developing concepts, the thrill in forming work teams, and the sweet monetary profits that follow a job well done."

-Sandra Oma Etubiebi



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# F上日5日 F任16日

The net of illusion can be cast only once. The voice of the writer brushes, so to say, against his flash of invention.

-Irving Howe



### THE BIRTHDAY GIFT



Swinging her left arm, Hope struck her mother on the right cheek forcing her to her knees. Silence filled the living room as Hope bursts into tears.

Finding some balance to her feet, the mother walked towards her broken daughter, "I am so sorry" she extended her arms to embrace her. "I didn't know that it could lead to this."

"Don't touch me!" she exclaimed. "I get a day off from work to come and spend some time with you on my birthday and what do I get? You and this..... Cuddling each other?"

"Mother I'm not just hurt, I am disappointed that you degrade yourself in such a manner." She added.

"I am sorry my child" she said as she quickly buttoned her purple blouse.

"Happy birthday Hope!" a deep male voice from behind greeted. Dropping to the ground, Hope continued to weep.

"See, I always win" the voice continued "I always get what I want and you know why, because I am a man and you are not."

"It was nice knowing you ladies," he majestically dressed up, waved and walked out the house, jumped into his car and drove off.

"I'm sorry my child." The mother continued to beg for forgiveness. "I didn't know he was here to hurt you, he came acting all hurt and he said it's all because of what you said to him. We then started kis...."

"Stop it! I don't want to hear your story. Of all the people, it had to be James, my ex-boyfriend" she said as she grabbed her hand bag and headed for the door.

"Don't tell me you leaving already," the mother followed behind.

"Yes mother, I have some work to do to reach their level, men's level. He hasn't won, not to-day."

Wanangwa Mwale, Zambia





# A F R I C A NI<sup>2</sup> WRITERSI<sup>1</sup> CONFERENCEI<sup>8</sup>

—**■** THEME **■**—

"Reimagining African Literature: New Voices, New Narratives in the Fight for the Girl Child"

—■ DATE ■—

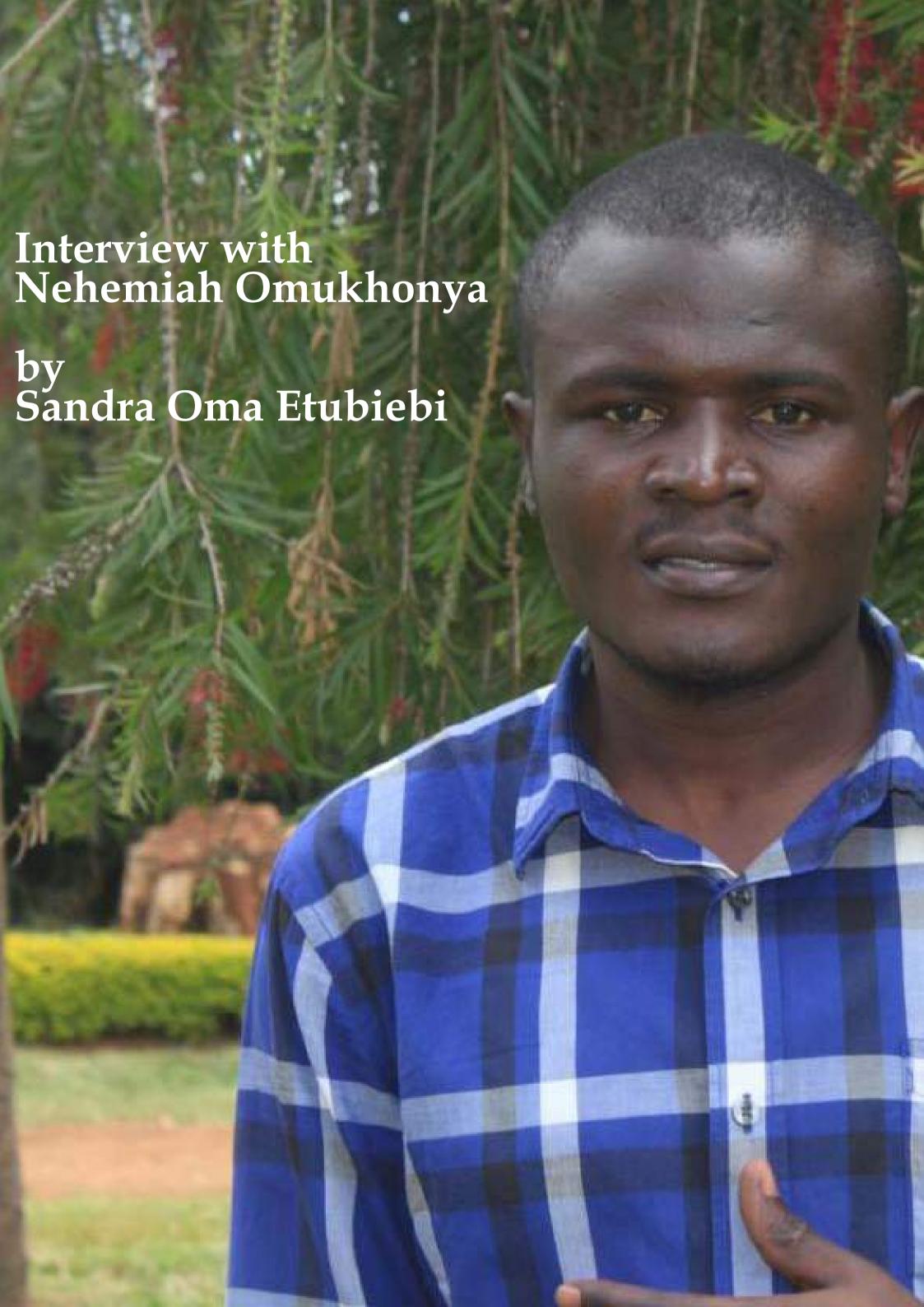
30th November - 2nd December, 2018

—■ VENUE ■——

Abuja, Nigeria

REGISTER AT http://www.writerstrust.org/awc TO RESERVE A SEAT





It started once upon the crime sin when a young man from Kenya decided, for the first time, to put pen to paper. Let me introduce him to you:

"My name is Nehemiah Omukhonya, a young writer from Vihiga County, Kenya. I find myself using my pseudonym Mukonya Mukonya more often though. I wrote the original version of The Crime Sin in 2009 in my final year in high school. I kept the poem until the year 2015 when I stumbled on Kitche Magak's poem The Last Monologue. I loved the style, and tweaked The Crime Sin to fit that style.

I discovered my love for poetry during my days in high school. There was this poem "Lapobo" (I can't quite remember the author), that I found during my early days in high school. It really caught my attention. I memorized and would always recite. I then started looking for more poems, and actually thought of writing my own. I would always go trying to identify the mood, tone and theme of every poem I came across.

Back in high school, some friends would call me Nesh the Philosopher (Nesh for Nehemiah) because I always had an explanation whenever I found myself in trouble. After I showed The Crime Sin to them, they were like "now, this is Nesh the Philosopher we know." It really propelled me to think of writing more."

This young man, Mukonya Mukonya (I nicknamed him MM for short), succeeded in producing a poem rich in analogy creating a one sided conversation, which painted rich pictures that told a humorous yet pitiful tale. You are invited to examine the crime sin verse by verse as we simultaneously get to know this young writer from Vihiga -Kenya:

(God, Kitche Magak spoke to you as Man to God
I plead to do the same
in this heartfelt prayer

And please God, let me finish, too, before you say a word
for, this could be the only time
I find courage to speak with you!)
You see God, my wife's younger sister
My sister-in-law
Came visiting some months ago
And after a fortnight she went back upcountry.
I then heard she was pregnant
She has now delivered
Delivered a perfect replica...
Of me!

MM: "The Crime Sin was my first ever poem. Writing The Crime Sin came after an

event occurred in my neighbourhood. Someone was said to have fled home because he had impregnated a teenage sister-in-law. I thought of writing a story about it, but a poem is what flowed easily. I showed it to my English teacher and he really liked it. He told me to keep it so that someday I'd improve on it and hit a publisher for publication. After I edited in 2015, I sent it to him again and he liked the new development. I showed it to some of my friends and they all liked it. It got posted on a blog.

I mainly write poems. I am yet to publish but I am working on my collection of poems, which bears the same title as my very first poem The Crime Sin. I have not written so much of other genres of literature. I only have one very short piece of children's literature, and one flash fiction and one short story. All these I wrote after my encounter with the free mentorship at WSA, this year 2018 to be precise."

God, you very well know my house out there in the urbans
It's not even a house; just a room
The very room we use as the bedroom, sitting room, dining room, kitchen
And at times...
The bathroom!

I'm sure God you know life out there in the urban slum.

You see God, when this girl came visiting
During those August holidays
You let a lot of things happen
And God, admit it, you have to take your share of the blame
I know my excuses might sound lame
But God you know
Even when a thief is caught red-handed
Will always try to prove their innocence.

MM: "Although I wrote the first poem in 2009, I wrote my second in 2014. I had lost motivation, and only went back to write after watching several spoken word poetry videos. This explains my soft spot for Spoken word, and why most of my poems have analogies.

I don't want to lose myself trying to write something that impresses a specific set of individual. I have always dreamt of just being me. What I want is to produce writings that have an impact - not to get lost in the need to get to certain heights such that I forget the main reason I started writing. I want to have writings that will have a way to restore faith in humanity. However small the impact might be, I want to make an impact."

Now God, when this girl came visiting
My wife came with the news
That she, my wife, would go to South Africa

For a seminar

That her boss organized a one-month seminar

And she was among the 'lucky ones'

And with only one month into marriage

I was to sleep on that bed alone

With my wife's teenage sister, my beautiful sister-in-law

Sleeping somewhere in the same room

On her own bedding

Just a meter or two from where I would sleep.

And God you know I'm only human.

How was I to keep away from temptation without your help, God?

MM: "I, also, hold a day job. I am part of the team at Cloud Factory Kenya, a job that gives me opportunities to learn lots of new things while transcribing video and audio recordings. Sometimes, the things I learn on my day job spur ideas in my mind, which end up in my writings."

I had never thought of cheating on my wife But one evening, God This little teen, my sister-in-law Came looking for trouble She came from the bathroom And her towel fell off, right in front of me Yes, God The towel fell off, accidentally on purpose. She hurriedly picked it up to cover back her body But what I had seen, turned me on. I took the challenge, God And after a few minutes of persuasion We were on the bed - by mutual consent And within the moans and groans The tissue of pride she had held on for 16 years Was all gone! And there after we would share the same bed For the next few days.

MM: "Writing and reading in Africa is really developing. We have organizations like Africa Writers Development Trust (AWDT) and WSA who aim at telling the African story, and nurture upcoming writers. There are lots of competitions being organized for writers to participate in, acting as morale boosters for writers to write.

Also, other settings like The AMKA Literature Forum which takes place at the Goethe Institute Nairobi every last Saturday of every month (this is a place where writers come to share and critique each other's work). The writings of these Africans are also read here in Africa. So as I write, I am sure of a ready audience. This gives me more reason to write."

Now God, before I forget
My wife also gave birth a few weeks ago
And I have an issue with that baby.
The baby has Chinese eyes
God, and that hair, really?
Even in my wildest of imagination
I won't think of that short Chinese man my wife has for a boss
Having shot hot life into my wife.
Is this the reason my wife won't talk of her sister's baby?

MM: "A few years ago, there were cases of child rape in the Mukuru slums of Nairobi. I wrote a poem about it and shared with someone. He totally didn't like the theme. He questioned why my mind would create such a story. See, there are judgments by society about the things writers write. Someone once said "you are what you write" a notion that's totally wrong. This makes people write about things they feel society won't misjudge them about.

I'd say "let writers write, without any restrictions." Write on whatever topic. Confront every issue. Of course, the literary standards in Africa are rising higher and higher. Yet, it is unfortunate some stories are still considered taboos here in Africa. Someone can't discuss certain issues with their mothers or publicly talk about certain issues. This has limited the extent to which a person can stretch their creativity. I would prefer that writers are free-thinkers such that they don't limit their imagination to 'culturally accepted norms.'"

Now God, put yourself in my shoes
Your wife gives birth to a Chinese baby
The entire neighbourhood laughs at you
A minor has your baby
And you run away from home in fear of the law.
Poverty stares at you straight in the face like a hungry child.
I know they'll find me some day
So God before I go rot in jail
Just take me away.

There you have it! You have read it for yourselves. So, whether it's a crime scene or the crime sin, it's got Mukonya Mokonya written all over it!

# ESSAYS

Words can be like X-rays if you use them properly -- they'll go through anything. You read and you're pierced."

- Aldous Huxley New World

The purpose of a writer is to keep civilization from destroying itself.

- Albert Camus



Roses are red, violets are blue, and Frangipanis rule the world. Ever heard of that? Yes? No? Well, it doesn't go like that, but that's how it ought to. I love flowers and not only during Valentine's Day, I love them in sickness and in health, in good and bad times, I cherish and hold them, and only death will do us part. I love how pretty they are and how delicately they are woven, I love their smell and I love how they never fail to fill me with bubbles of pleasure from within whenever I come across them. I love how they grow all over the place in various shapes and sizes; wearing their colourful coats of honour and choosing to remain cheerful just to brighten up my days.

Frangipanis, as you may have guessed, are my favourite flowers. They are not as overrated as the rose flower, even though they deserve all the glory and praise in the flower kingdom. They are delicate and pure looking, have beautiful waxy petals and sweet rich fragrance. They bloom with sheer beauty, making them look sensational on the trees. The centre of the Frangipani flower always has a different colour from the rest of the flower. The most common being the white, which has a yellow centre. Other colours include red and orange.

Commonly known as Plumeria, they first appeared in the mid 19th century in the southern forests of Mexico and were named after a 16th century Italian nobleman called Marquis Frangipani, a creator of perfumes that were used to scent gloves. Once people discovered the scent of the Plumeria, it reminded them of Marquis Perfumes and hence the flower was called Frangipani. You see just like humans, the Frangipanis have DNA that allows their origin and heritage to be traceable. The flowers yield no nectar, and simply trick their pollinators- the sphinx moths, to pollinate them. They do this by emitting a very strong

fragrance at night, hence seducing the months, which is very cunning of them.

Frangipanis have various meanings and uses amongst the different societies and cultural beliefs in the world. Some people believe it signifies love and fertility, others believe it represents a good status in society, to others, it symbolizes a lasting bond between a married couple, others see it as a sign of immortality, others say it is a refuge for the dead- a communication with the other world. And others use it as a healing wrap for bruises. Other People also consider it unlucky as they believe ghosts and other spirits live in its bushes.

I believe that humans are quite similar to the frangipani; we come in different shapes and sizes, just as the Frangipani comes in different colours. We also serve different purposes; in our parents home we are children, in our houses, we are parents or maybe just adults, to some we are friends, to others colleagues, students, mentors, and just like others believe Frangipanis have spirits and ghosts living in them, we also have our fair share of ghosts in our lives. Frangipanis are very tough flowers; they are able to survive neglect, heat and drought. In fact, they only burn in extreme heat of over 500 degrees. Just like Frangipanis, we too have struggles, rainy days, thunderstorms, hurricanes, earthquakes and a whole lot of other tragedies. And in the same way the Frangipani overcomes all and still fills the garden with a wonderful perfume, we also soldier on in this journey of life.

Despite their differences in colour and their struggles, they still bloom and turn towards the sun as soon as it comes up. And I believe when the rays of the sun shines on them, they smile taking in all the light they can, till they can take no more. They grow widely, boisterously and beautifully, despising the fact that we can pluck them off anytime and they will die.

I love the Frangipanis because of what they are on the outside, and what they are on the inside. I love the Frangipanis because I want to be like them; Tough on the inside but with a delicate look that gives me a symbol of grace, wealth and perfection. I want to be able to overcome all the storms in my life and still be able to turn my face towards the sun, basking, shining, cheerful in my pursuits, being useful and leaving all the shadows behind.

I want to be a Frangipani, because being delicate and beautiful, doesn't mean I am weak or incapable

by Ernestina Azah, Ghana



The ability to make new things or come up with original ideas is what creativity is all about. And despite the fact that creativity is within all of us, most people only use less than 15% of their brain capacity. And unfortunately for us, whether we use our creativity or not; it will only live within us while we live and die with us when our time comes.

The "why" and "how" questions are the keys for unlocking our creative potentials. These questions trigger our subconscious and superconscious minds which enable us to fill-in the gap between the "imaginations" and the "realities". But most of the times, we choose to ask the "what" question which keeps us within our comfort zone.

Example: people like Einstein, Newton, Ghandi, Mandela, Gates, Zuckerberg and many others have used their persistence, tenacity and resources to ask "why" and "how" questions which has had a tremendous effect in turning their "imaginations" into "realities". And their convictions to pursue, and ponder over those questions has transformed the world in more ways than we could have ever imagined possible.

In comparison, we in turn focus our energies, concentrate our minds and spend our valuable time in answering the "what" questions; by relaying on existing theories in our school curricula, answering the answered questions, exploring and heightening the images of those before us. We bury our minds and talents beneath the pages of our books; which makes us experts in subconscious plagiarism. Very sad, we are unknowingly celebrating others victory!

Similarly in our communities, instead of looking to the future and living a creative life, we often choose to live a life of reading the history of successful people. We choose mediocrity instead of creativity, we choose to remain in our comfort zones; not knowing how many creative ideas, talents, dreams, gifts or abilities our comfort zone is robbing us.

To sum it all, whether our creativity is missing or stolen by ourselves or our systems, it's high time for we looked for it. If we are to stay competitive in this creative world of ours, we need to be creative.

by Ibrahim Haruna MaiJamaa, Nigeria

# Two Steps towards Becoming a Better Writer

Do you want to become a bestselling author or a celebrated poet? Or do you want to get better at reaching people with your writing? Either way, to achieve your writing goals, you simply must get better at the art of writing. The reason, for which you write, after all, is to be heard – to share your message with a particular audience. This writeup will provide you with just two basic steps to become a better writer; insights that if acted upon accordingly can make your writing better.

You might have heard some people say that writing is a talent and you must have the talent to be a great writer. But Scott Fitzgerald, one of the finest American writers of the 20th century has this to say on the issue of talent: "You have talent – which is the equivalent of a soldier having the right physical qualifications for entering West Point."

Fitzgerald's words in essence are a reminder that talent in itself is meaningless. Even if you feel you have the talent, or you actually do, there's still substantial work to be done.

Writing, as much as it's an art, is also a skill. Having the knack for stringing words together is not a guarantee that you will be a great writer. On the flipside, even if you feel you don't have the talent, writing – like any other skill – can be learnt and mastered.

#### Read

This is the first step

The importance of reading to a writer cannot be overemphasized. Reading is equivalent to going through the thought process of another writer. If you desire to get better as a writer, read extensively. Read in your genre and outside of it as well. Read anything you can lay your hands on. When you want to read, I advise that you take the advice of Francine Prose in her book Reading Like a Writer; where she suggests that you read slowly so that you can pay attention as to how the writer has carefully arrived at whatever it is you are reading. The writing process is a painstaking one and a good writer will tell you how hard it can be sometimes to arrive at something as minute a singular word choice.

When you read other writers, either those you wish to emulate or those that are simply established and successful, you learn a lot of things. You learn how they write, their different styles, pacing, voice, structure, and so many other things, and you can always emulate them. Before writing courses became popular, old writers learnt by imitating their predecessors and modern writers still continue to do so. It's nothing to feel ashamed of.

The other part of reading is to read on how to become a better writer. Many successful writers have now written books outlining their writing process. There are also tons of articles and essays you can read on how to get better as a writer. Although you might not exactly do as these materials suggest, you are sure to gain something from each one of them. You can't possibly exhaust all the writing resources out there these days but read as much as you can, nonetheless. It's equally important to read books on the basics of writing as well. This includes books on such things as punctuation, grammar, lexis, structure and even style. Learning the basics will go a long way in helping you lay a good foundation for your writing endeavour.

#### Write

"Write as often as possible, not with the idea at once of getting into print, but as if you were learning an instrument." – J. B. Priestley.

The truth is, to get better at anything takes practice, as cliché as it is, practice does make perfect. In actual fact, practice makes everything. The only way to become a better writer is to actually write. You can take a thousand courses on becoming a better writer but you still need to actually write with consistency to get better. The ultimate way to become better is to write and to continue to improve as you do so. Whatever genre you write – poetry or prose, fiction or nonfiction – if you don't write, you can't get better. It's as simple as that.

So, as you read and garner more knowledge and insights, you have to apply what you have learnt by actually writing. There is no way around it. Like Priestley said, forget that you want to get published for a moment and actually get into the process of writing first. Most writers advise that you have set aside time every day to write. They suggest that you should make it a morning ritual as this is the time that seems most perfect. Well, it might be in the evening or late at night for you, it doesn't matter, just make sure you write consistently.

Consistency breeds confidence and the more you write, the more you get better at it. It's just like learning an instrument-You get better by the day when you practise regularly. There are many writing resources and tools online these days that can help you keep a routine as a writer. Note that what you write at a particular point doesn't always have to make perfect sense. Just write, let the words flow. You can always make sense of it later. A renowned author once said that you can't edit a blank page. So, go ahead and write.

Bestselling author, Stephen King said: "it's the amateur writer that waits for inspiration, the rest of us just go to work". Picasso did put it this way: "Inspiration does exist, but it must find us working" he went on further to say "Action is the foundational key to all success" All the knowledge in the world without any action is naught. Stop giving yourself excuses and get to work already

One thing you must know, however, is that writing – like any other worthy endeavour – takes a great deal of effort and commitment. You can't become a great writer overnight! But with continuous reading and writing, you will get there.

Williams Olaide Oladele Nigeria



Life is full of life, but not many enter into the fullness of life's life. Ask the homeless on the streets; the ones who have just the sky as roof, the warmth of their bodies for cold nights and the chills of loneliness for hot days. Ask those who have a roof over their heads, but burning coals in the privacy of their shoes. Ask the wealthy that have all that money can buy, but lack those which money can't buy. Ask the wealth less who have what money can't buy, but lack the things that money can buy. It's as if life is saying, "You can't have your cake and eat it too", what really is this life then?

Allow me to briefly talk about the earth; it is said that about seventy-one percent of the earth's surface is covered in water. Taking into consideration the percentage that other features of the earth eat up; mountains, forests, buildings etcetera, I wonder how little the space man occupies is; the space where the nostrils of our activities breathe breaths of this thing called 'life'. If the sea is so vast, and life's depths so puzzlingly mysterious, maybe juxtaposing these two entities can clear the air of some things; maybe life's depths can be compared with the sea's volume.

Life is a sea, in which we all swim, though at different depths. Some float on the surface; they are the ones who derive pleasure from observing the way the winds toss the waves about. They ride the waves like a carousel; contented with what they see. They know all the whirl-pool spots of the sea and go there to enjoy the swirling. They know only about the things on the surface, and the life in the depths remains shrouded from them. They know what happens to a fish when it is taken away from water, but they do not know that the waves may not always be their friend, and that beneath it lurks strength that can throw them off or teleport them far away from the shores of the sea.

Then, there are those who dwell in the depths. Those who decide to exist in the fullness of the sea life; "We will follow the rules and we're sure to survive in these depths" they say. Circumstances can then decide to favour them or throw them in adversity. There are the daredevils;

the ones who shine the torches of their eyes into nooks and crannies beneath the sea, purposefully or to just put out their fire of curiosity. Then there are a few who really want to discover who they really are, find their place under the waters, and go on journeys of caution and courage, storms and shipwrecks, to find their true selves.

A few years ago, I watched an animated movie titled 'Shark Tale'. It gave me a good peek of life inside the sea as compared with real life. Oscar was a fish, just another fish that wanted to matter. In his wanderings to find himself, he had a close shave with death; one that turned out to be a surreal closeness to the actualisation of his dream of 'becoming somebody'. A fish met a friendly shark, a shark without predator instincts. He decided to take advantage of that and falsely launched himself into spotlight. He faked it till he could fake it no more. The real Oscar only emerged after he became true to himself. Behind the curtains of being 'just another fish', a fish with a large heart was hidden. He had the perfect personality and charisma to change things. His real self, which he had little regard for, exuded way more than he what he dismissed as ordinariness. The power in that ordinariness only came out after he had wasted time living a lie.

Life can never make sense if we fail to extract meaning from its seeming meaninglessness. Imagine if Oscar, the jellyfish mistook its small stature for vulnerability and never knew its predatory capabilities. Imagine if sharks were the ones to scamper for safety if they spotted other species of fish. Anyone who wants to find purpose from life knows in themselves what they must do. But then, not everyone gets what they want. Not everyone comes out from life's refining fire as gold. Beneath the sea of our living, we have generalised our purpose into flapping fins to swim, and preserving our gills to breathe. We have lost ourselves in the race to survive. Survival has chased us into places where not only our bodies hide, but our purposes also do not find expression.

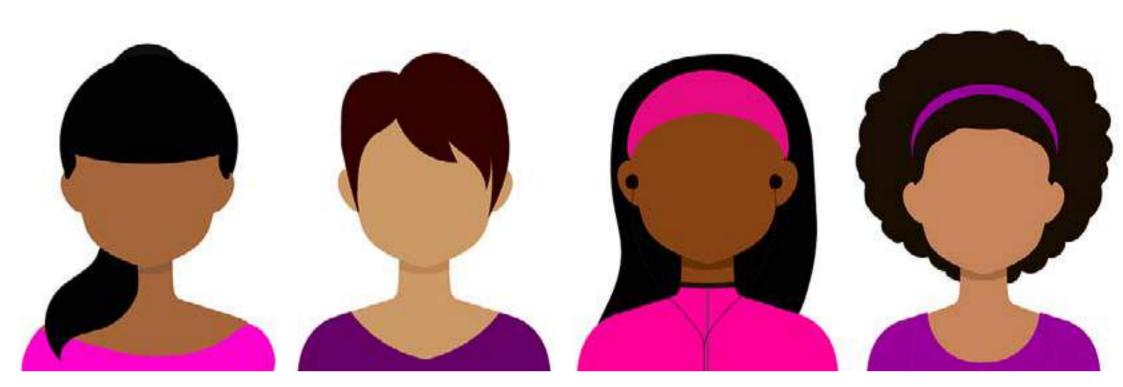
What really is this life then? It is the atmosphere where the Creator has put us to cultivate the fields of our unique purposes. It is the war we are meant to win. It is the interlocking pieces of a jigsaw puzzle we are meant to reconstruct. It is the mountain we're meant to surmount. It is the mystery we're meant to unravel. It is the variety of bombs in us waiting to explode.

Our purpose is to discover our purpose and chase it to the ends of the earth. In this, we can never go wrong. And all our ups and downs and various kinds of swimming strokes in life's sea would propel us further to the triumph of accomplishment. We can only shop in life's mall while pushing our trolleys of purpose. So, just as purposes are being fulfilled in thick forests and beneath the sea, even in cycles of both viciousness and clemency, a purposeful life is the key to the gates of the answers we seek. The meaning of life—in ups or downs, highs or lows, viciousness or clemency, good or bad—lies in finding purpose.

Ayotunde Oyeniran Nigeria

## BLUNTNESS IS BRUTAL

### NOTHING WRONG WITH FEMINISM



Why do people, especially men, dread the word feminism and those who represent it? I find it hilarious that even some women shy away from it and when asked "What do you think about feminism?" totally dissociate themselves from it. Sincerely speaking, Feminism is nothing to be scared of. It's just a word that represents an honest, clean and sincere intention.

I'm certain that very many do not know the dictionary meaning of 'feminism' and 'feminist'. Perhaps, they've only heard about it from the mouths of those who castigate it. Hearsay is not the best form of knowledge. So, I'll help with some details on feminism and why it's necessary. By the way, world renowned writer, Chimamanda Adichie, isn't the founder of feminism as some people claim-She's only a preacher of the propaganda.

### Now, what's feminism? Who is a feminist?

Feminism is all about women rights advocacy and gender equality. The goal is "...to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of sexes" (Wikipedia). Hence, a feminist only propagates this agenda through creative measures. She or he is an advocate of the rights listed above as well as equality. It's as simple as that. Okay, breathe in and take a second read through this paragraph. You'll marvel at the simplicity. It's the same as fighting for the rights of a man or anyone who has been unfairly discriminated and disregarded.

Personally, I believe that gender inequality stems from two perspectives: the religious perspective where there is the claim that women are under men because the man is the leader

of the home. It's true that a man is the leader of the home but if at all a woman is under any man, that's her husband only. Even at that, it doesn't rid the woman of her rights just because she's married to him. Leadership is about servanthood not dictatorship or abuse. The second perspective only addresses physical power; men are tougher physically than women, but in terms of intellect and psychology, they are equal.

Now, by equality, we mean same rights, privileges, and opportunities. No one is robbing the men of theirs. There's nothing wrong in all of us seeing each other from the same lens. Let me give you reasons why this propaganda or movement is necessary: women are given less employment opportunities; they are barely allowed political participation; they are usually married off early- and even the so-called educated families tend to pressurize their girls to marry once they are through with or while in the University; women are made to feel important only when they are married.

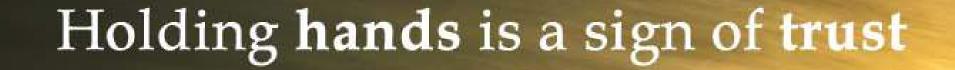
Many homes still don't send their girls to school, or deprive them of completing their education up to University level; women are made to believe that they are sex objects, cooks, baby making machines and launderers; women are constantly abused in the work place and every other environment, the church inclusive; many societies are yet to agree on severe penalties for men who are abusive to the female gender. I could go on but you can find out the rest yourself.

No doubt that some feminists are overbearing, but we should note that there are extremists in everything we do-religious, cultural and even social-so why should the criticism be different with feminists? There's no need jittering or fidgeting; it's a positive propaganda-or movement as some would call it- that speaks positive volumes in the lives of our daughters and women in the present and nearest future. Yes, 'our daughters' because it begins from childhood. I'm sure you would love to see your girl grow up strong and feel no less to anybody. The advancement that the world has so dreamed of would be easier achieved through women empowerment: equalizing her with the man and educating her. That's the best anyone can do for a woman. Let's change our perceptions about feminism. Let's embrace it- both man and woman- and make the world a better place.

Please disregard women who speak hate against men under the guise of feminism. They are not feminists; they are extremists.

### **About the Columnist:**

Gabrielina Gabriel-Abhiele is a writer, editor, and broadcast journalist; a columnist with Writers Space Africa online magazine. She's a preacher of her propaganda and a believer in equality and truth. Her essay contents span various topics from child abuse, politics, to gender equality, racism, tribalism, and as many issues as can be touched. She is also a blogger on girl-child matters. She can be reached via the email addresses: theroaringwriter@gmail.com or gabrielina.gabriel@gmail.com

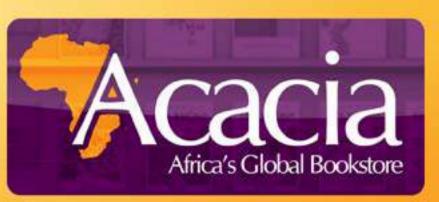


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I smiled when I saw him walk towards me. What a glorious day! I thought to myself. It had been months since we last saw each other and only God knew how much I missed him. The sexual starvation was driving me insane. Anytime he called me all I would imagine was his hands all over my body. My love was finally here and now I could let my inhibitions free. The temptation had been difficult but by God's grace, I o vercame it. As he strode toward me with his suitcase, my heart beat so fast I thought it was going to break out of my chest.

I ran to him an d jumped on his well-built body, my legs crossing his waist. He held me firmly and gently kissed me on the lips. Truth be told he was as happy to see me as I was to see him. His "little boy" could not hide his excitement as he pressed against me. If only I was so daring I would have ripped off his trousers right on the spot and quenched my thirst. We walked slowly towards the car as our minds imagined how glorious it would be to make love to each other after not being able to do so for so long.

It was around 2:00 am and the airport parking lot was empty. After we put his luggage in the car, the feelings of ecstasy could no longer be contained. My husband grabbed me by the waist and planted a soft kiss on my lips. He looked into my eyes and said, "Baby, I know we shouldn't do this here but I don't think I can wait until we get home before I can make love to you." He tore off my blouse and all I could hear were buttons falling on the ground. He quickly ripped my bra in half and the next thing I felt were his strong hands caressing my breasts. At this point, I was almost out of breath. He lifted up my skirt and carefully wo rked his way up the X spot. He removed my panties gently and then went in for a surprise kiss. His eyes lit up like those of a birthday boy who just got a bike as his present. He worked his magical tongue down my neck to my hard nipples then the "forbidden fruit." He made me so wet I could barely support myself against the car door. In fact, I accidentally honked the car at some point.

I offered to go down on him but he turned me down. All he wanted was to have my body and pleasure himself. He pulled me to him and I found comfort in his lap. I looked into his beautiful black eyes and unbuckled his belt then opened his trouser. My eyes fell on his hard on that was pleading to break free from his underwear. I begged him to go inside me but he kept teasing me and telling me to wait. At an unexpected turn of events, I felt "Geoffrey" like he called his big black rod push inside me. Let's just say the thrill I felt as he went in and out of my sugary walls was magical. His skin on my skin and the soft lingering kisses on my body just threw me into a frenzy. I had totally forgotten that we were in a public place. I moaned softly over his lips. He grasped me harder so that he could push deeper inside me.

I could see him enjoy his work as he would pull back and look into my horny eyes and bubbly face. Needless to say, the time came for "Geoffrey" to rise to the occasion and he did. My husband held my neck and moments later I felt an explosion of possibly "our future babies." He continued caressing my body as he kissed me and man oh man I let o ut a loud moan and that was the epitome of my climax. I lay on his broad shoulders for a while before we spotted security guards walking towards our car. We hastily scrambled for our clothes to cover our naked bodies.

We had only partially covered our bodies when the police tapped on the window of our vehicle and asked if everything was okay. We awkwardly replied "YES." We had only lowered the window a little bit to prevent the cops from seeing our half-naked bodies. The biggest challenge with their Q & A was that my husband's hand was gently placed on my thigh and my loins were beginning to fire up again. I could barely compose myself and give reasonable answers and he was enjoying every moment of it. He loved seeing me horny especially when in a position I could barely express how I felt.

The two policemen were looking at us suspiciously. They asked if we had heard a woman screaming weirdly and we responded with a very confident "NO". At this point, I felt my husband's hand playing with "Sasha" like I called my girly parts and man, oh man I was almost losing it. I barely had any control left and the policemen didn't seem to be ending the non-essential questions. I seemed to be out of breath when one of the policemen asked if I was okay. My husband quickly interjected with a quick "YES" so as to wrap up the conversation quickly. He said I was just tired from the long flight.

Finally, the policemen left and I could enjoy the moment. Otieno, my husband, leaned in gently for a kiss then looked deeply into my eyes and said, "I cannot have enough of you, please can I have you one more time before we head home? I want to eat you like the last dessert I'll ever have." I was trembling with excitement because his hands were gently fondling my breasts as he spoke to me. This man knew how to turn on the fire and how to put it out. My thoughts were running wild and like the gentleman he was, he pushed the lever that held my car seat downwards and moved closer to me. His eyes were lustful and still loving at the same time. Finally, "Geoffrey" and "Sasha" met and the feeling of contentment could not even be described. I'm not sure if I was moaning loudly or quietly but what I'm sure of is that making love to Otieno gave me a reason to live. Despite the constricted space, my husband rocked my world then pulled out right before I could o\*\*\*\*m. I was so turned on and he wouldn't let me finish the long race unless I begged him to go inside me. Eventually, I caved and he ......



Ghita loves traveling, she loves that small rush of adrenaline when she gets out of the plane, setting foot for the first time in a different country and knowing that all the possibilities are open, she loves the fact that the airport ultimately means new experiences. Today is a different day though; one she never imagined would ever come. Today, Ghita goes to the airport dreading it. She goes there even though she won't board any plane. Today, it's a spying mission; spying on Yassine, her boyfriend; well soon to be ex-boyfriend. He is traveling abroad, having no idea when to come back, leaving her alone, leaving her here while he goes and builds a new life elsewhere, far from her.

She stands between the busy crowds, there are smiling people, tired people, those in a hurry to catch their flights, those completely mesmerized by the magnitude of the place. She understands the excitement on their faces, she was one of them just a while ago, but today she is just an observer. She stares past them, trying to locate Yassine. She feels a small pinch in her heart when she thinks that maybe she missed him, maybe it is too late and that maybe he is already in the boarding hall. She looks at her watch and thinks that this is impossible. She hurries again through the lines and tries to spot him. Ghita doesn't want to attract much attention because she wants to see him without being spotted.

She decides to sit for a coffee; in one strategic place that allows her sight to cover all queues for the airline he is flying with, especially flights to Australia. She sips her coffee slowly and watches the unending wave of people coming and leaving. Finally, she spots him. He is with his parents. Apparently, his mum has been crying so he is hugging her strongly, as if saying "I am here, I will be fine." He smiles at her, that comforting smile that he used on Ghita on many occasions each time she faced hardships.

For twenty minutes, she keeps staring at him. Even from the distance separating them, she tries to look hard at his face. This is probably the last time that she will ever see him, so she wants to remember every detail, every small trait of his face. A lot of that time, he is smiling and comforting, he doesn't look annoyed when a young couple crosses the line and stands before him; he even lets an old man take a turn before him as well. This is the man she knows! The considerate man for the elderly and the forgiving one towards the impatient youth.

For a short while, her mind roams through old memories, when they were happy and when they could never imagine that anything would separate them. She also remembers the day he announced to her that he was accepted for a job overseas. She didn't even know that he had applied and there he was, in that damned coffee shop, telling her that he was accepted and that he completed all administrative work so that the can leave the following month. She was happy for him, excited and so proud of this achievement. She remembered how, when the moment of joy and celebration was passed, he started avoiding eye contact and gazing out the window. She knew then that he hadn't toled to determine the truth, that some part was left hidden and that he was afraid of her reaction or just delaying some unavoidable confrontation. She knew him well enough not to ask. Asking him wouldn't get her anywhere. Yassine was someone that loved to do things at his own pace. And that stupid man decided that the best moment was last week, over dinner; the last dinner they would ever have together as a couple.

He explained that he didn't have any chance of getting that job without sponsorship, so he had to improvise quickly. The friends that were already in Australia confirmed that the best way was to have immigration papers, and then look for a job. But he couldn't wait that long for the normal course of things... he decided to get married to an Australian girl in order to get the papers more quickly. At that moment, Ghita zoned out and didn't listen to anything he said afterward. Bribes of words came to her and she guessed he talked about how he managed to meet that other girl online, how much it cost him to negotiate that deal with her and all the struggles to convince his parents. As the reality sunk in, that it was not her boyfriend sitting across from her, but a married man instead, she stopped crying and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Since when?" She asked. He lowered his eyes, not wanting that confrontation but she didn't flinch. Her eyes were locked on his face, daring him to lie to her, obliging him to tell only the truth.

"Five months." Heavier tears started running down her face but she had one more question to ask.

Did you meet her, for real?"

He hesitated, then looked outside the window as if he was gathering his thoughts. His eyes were filled with tears but he struggled not to let them flow.

"Yes, remember when I had to go to Tangiers to see my grandparents? I was in Marrakech instead."

That's all the answer she needed to know. She just nodded, looked into his eyes more profoundly this time, her eyes communicating all the pain she was going through and all the emotions of betrayal, bitterness, sadness and rage that embraced her. She didn't make a scene, she just picked her bag and left. He didn't make any movement to retain her. He didn't dare to do so, not after what he had done. Besides, no words could possibly change the facts, real tangible facts that he had betrayed her and lied to her for at least five months.

Now she is at the airport, watching him leave, maybe forever. She is mumbling farewell words, even though she knows that he doesn't deserve any of them, not after what he had done to her. She feels that there was no closure for their story, so this "invisible" goodbye can make up for it. Ghita didn't yell at his face, didn't scream out of pain, didn't hit him as hard as she could, didn't call him names, didn't even yell at the friends who probably knew and kept the show running ... She just cried and cried, until she had no more tears. Watching him leave was the ultimate p roof that he is out of her life for good.

He finally checks in his luggage and hugs his parents for the last time before crossing the steps to where he would be alone and start that new chapter of his life. She can't see his face clearly but she is sure he is sad but trying to keep a good composure for the sake of his parents.

At some point, he is facing her and for a second she thinks that he has seen her. His eyes are clearly directed to her but she is sitting so far away to be distinguished and recognized. In any case, that moment lasts—for only a second before his eyes shift back, this time to his father. With a last hug, he walks towards the doors.

She stays at the coffee shop for twenty more minutes after he leaves. Knowing that they are in the same space, even if they can't meet, even if he doesn't even know that she is present, is somehow comforting; because that is how life will be for them onwards: complete strangers.

She wipes her face, these are tears she hadn't realized were pouring. She adjusts her hair and tries to put a smile on her face. She leaves the airport, swearing that it will be the only time an airport is a sad place. This chapter of her life will now be closed. Next time she comes here, she will be looking for adventure.



Sahara Mtembe had cast a spell on her boss. To be fair, Sahara did not believe in magic or the witchcraft that her family peddled in the French Quarter, but there was no other explanation for Jeremy's sudden interest in her. Two weeks ago Sahara finally gave in to her cousin Ada's cajoling to cast at least one spell. For the sake of peace, Sahara chose to cast a love spell because she figured that was the least harmful one out of her mother's book of shadows.

"Accept your heritage," her mother was always saying. Sahara would roll her eyes because accepting her heritage would mean becoming some fraud of a voodoo priestess like her mother and cousin. She had come to this country as a teenager escaping the tyranny of her African motherland but she still struggled with affection for the mother who had left her as an infant to go practice witchcraft with her cousins in America.

That fateful night two weeks ago, Ada had gathered a moonstone, salt water, dried schisandra chinensis, rose petals and cinnamon then Sahara had dutifully written Jeremy's name on a scrap of paper, set it on fire and added the ashes to the concoction. "This is ridiculous Ada. If there was a spell to make people fall in love wouldn't everyone be using it?" Sahara had asked even as she accepted the piece of paper with the chant written in beautiful calligraphy.

"It only works if someone with magic in their lineage performs it. Someone like you," with that Ada had looked at her expectantly.

"Okay then, let's bewitch Jeremy Moore," Sahara had agreed with a sigh. Refusing would have made her seem afraid and so Sahara had repeated the chant in a flat voice.

Sahara was convinced it was all fun and games but the following day at work, Jeremy kept

shadowing her as she waited on her tables. At first, she had thought her manager was checking up on her because someone had lodged a complaint against her but at the end of the day Jeremy flat out asked her out. Sahara had rushed home and been sick for hours. He had been persistently asking her out since then and following her around the restaurant with puppy dog eyes. She found it terribly ironic that the one man she wanted would finally realize she existed because of something she didn't even believe in. Sahara's aversion to magic was always because her mother had left her as a child and knowing magic wasn't even real had helped her justify her anger. Now her world was upside down and she had no idea what to do. She couldn't even ask Ada for help because her cousin would only see it as a chance to say I told you so.

Sahara had finally agreed to a date with Jeremy but her nerves were all over the place and she was quite sure she was thirty minutes late. Making her way up the stairs of the quaint café, she smoothed her dress and her long braids which she had let down for a change. Although she knew the date was wrong, Sahara had dressed up because her feelings for Jeremy were real and hopefully when his enchantment passed he would look at her kindly. Jeremy was waiting for her at a table on the patio. He looked especially handsome today and when he looked up, saw her and smiled, Sahara felt her heart quicken then leap into her throat. Jeremy stood as she approached him and rounded the table to pull out her chair. He was always the perfect gentleman with her hence her long standing crush on him. The man was also criminally handsome so Sahara's poor heart had never stood a chance.

"You look beautiful, Sahara," his rich baritone sent warm shivers along her spine. She winced, feeling immensely guilty. Surely, whatever he thought about her was an illusion induced by magic she had thought powerless.

"Thank you," she whispered, trying to infuse as much innocence as she could into her voice. Now she truly was a fraud. Her guilt was tying up her vocal chords and she could only sit there admiring the man across from her and silently cursing Ada. She should never have given in to her cousin's taunting. She had only performed the spell to prove to Ada once and for all that she didn't have magical powers no matter what her mother said.

She admired Jeremy's profile as he placed their order to the waiter. He was well built with broad shoulders that tapered to a lean body. His golden hair put Sahara in mind of an African summer sunset. Somehow she felt like the one who had been bewitched. After ordering lunch, Jeremy settled in and began telling her funny stories. She was grateful he was taking point of the date because she was afraid if she started talking she would confess that he was under a spell and that he didn't even really like her. She knew that she should just tell him she wasn't interested and cut whatever this was before it grew roots and decided to have a life of its own, but this was Jeremy. The man she had fallen for from the very first moment she met him.

Sahara knew from his sideways glances that he could tell she was uncomfortable. They had

worked together for two years now and not once had Jeremy shown any interest towards her beyond that of a colleague. It was such a shame that he was only reciprocating her feelings because she had cast a spell on him. How would she ever know if his feelings were real? She suddenly felt like she was being punished for all the years she had laughed in the face of magic. Apparently, her mother was right and she was some fabled voodoo priestess. Sahara sighed sadly at the thought.

"Am I boring you?" Jeremy asked her. Sahara looked across the table into his shockingly clear water blue eyes. She wanted to dive into those eyes and never surface again. Except for the little fact that when Jeremy found out what she had done, he would probably drown her. She took a deep breath.

"Why did you suddenly ask me out that day Jeremy? I mean, we've been working together for years and you never even looked at me twice," she blurted out all at once. Jeremy's eyebrows shot up in surprise.

"Sahara, I've always seen you. From the very first day we met. I've tried so many times to talk to you but you always seemed preoccupied," he told her. "I finally decided to ask you out three weeks ago."

"You mean two weeks ago," she corrected him.

"No, it was three weeks ago. I came to work all prepared but then you were out the whole week so I had to wait. I had waited for two years so I figured one more week shouldn't hurt." Sahara stared at Jeremy nonplussed. Three weeks ago she had had to help out at her mother's store because Ada had been away at some spiritual retreat. She felt a weight disappear from her shoulders and she gave Jeremy her first genuine smile. She wanted to laugh out loud: Jeremy's feelings for her were real not an enchantment after all.

"So you didn't suddenly get the urge to ask me out two weeks ago?" she verified.

"More like two years ago," Jeremy said with a laugh.

"How about we start this date all over again?" she asked, smiling sweetly and putting her hand in his on the table.

She could tell from the surprised look in his eyes that he was curious about what had changed her mood but she knew Jeremy wasn't about to look a gift horse in the mouth. She wasn't about to tell him that she had briefly believed she was a voodoo priestess with the magical power to make men love her.

"I would like nothing better," Jeremy assured her with a devastating smile. "I like you a lot Sahara. I've always felt like you were a little out of my league, to be honest. To be here with you like this is beyond my wildest dreams," Jeremy confessed. Sahara was pretty sure there was no spell on earth that could make a man look at a woman the way Jeremy was looking at her. He caressed her hand and Sahara knew that the electricity that raced between their interlocked hands was a little more than magic.



Frustrated passengers asked the taxi conductors to open so that they could foot the rest of the distance. Boda boda riders who made up traffic rules as they rode out of frustration instructed their clients to jump off their motorcycles and join those trekking. The reliability of cars in a traffic jam was tested, some stopped working while drivers who suspected their engines would not be trusted parked on the roadside. The roadside grass was trampled over by a mixture of cars, boda boda riders and humans cursing with each step. Kids pitched camp at the top of mini sand heaps on the side of the road, each occupying space so extensive another line of cars would pass, but no one thought it wise to move them.

Olowo watched with disappointment, dust rising and falling on his shoes. He started to regret bringing office shoes to a construction site. He had spent the last three years parked behind a desk. He was a small lean man dressed in a safety jacket, but this traffic jam was crawling up his skin inch by inch. He had spent the bulk of the mid-morning watching vehicles queue up one after another. He walked towards one of the workers in a hard helmet, scribbled on it was the name Ojok in blue ink.

"Ojok," he called to the man who was surprised that a new worker knew his name, but before he would answer Olowo instructed.

"Line up all the workers and tell them to follow me." Ojok went back and shouted at his friends who followed along in excitement. Within minutes they formed a small circle around Olowo. He stood in the middle with authority, declaring that they must root out

the traffic jam. He pointed at each of the workers, telling them where to stand. One after another they took up their posts with a goal of stopping any car jumping the queue, insolent drivers would be turned back. "Patience pays," he said to himself as the taxis were forced back.

Watching all the workers in hard helmets abandon their posts and line along the road like they are waiting for a VIP was Orono the supervisor. He was lying on his big tummy under a makeshift tent pitched on the side of the road. He watched with curiosity then abruptly stood up in disgust and headed for the line of hard helmets. One after another he bypassed each of them and observed their eyes look at the ground out of respect.

"What is this spectacle?" Orono asked the workers.

"Traffic control," they mumbled.

"Lining the road is traffic control?"

"We have to do something," Olowo said, his eyes staring at the dusty ground.

Orono was not impressed and spat on the floor then watched his spit melt under the midday heat.

"How long have you been in this business?" he asked Olowo, unbuckling his belt then belting up again.

"One day!" Olowo replied.

"One day and you are concerned about the traffic jam caused by our work? We are breaking up the road for these fools." His eyes met a frustrated conductor who was resting his head on the window frame of the taxi behind him. Olowo was about to say something but he was cut off by Orono's hand.

"Road construction is an art," he declared. "One is born with some distinct marks. Do you know how long I have been in this business?"

"I do not know."

"38 years and each year has left a distinct mark on me." Orono adjusted his short-sleeved shirt to reveal a scar thick as a millipede. He then pulled up his old tattered jeans and showed a deep cut, now healed. "This was when I worked on Tirinyi road. When I say I am in charge, I know what I am talking about. Forget the cars, if they make noise we shall ask the communication department at the head office to pin up more signs reading, "we are sorry for our work inconveniencing your little lives." Orono then walked away and ordered everyone back to their posts.

Publicly embarrassed, Olowo's colleagues also started to view him with caution, staying far from him as he strolled in the opposite direction to the traffic. Olowo walked oblivious to what was happening but overheard taxi touts and conductors screaming insults his way. He did not want to push his luck with Orono, or he would end up back behind that dreaded desk while the likes of Orono ran wild out here in the field. Orono would not fire him, but you do not survive 38 years constructing roads without knowing people

upstairs who can remove leeches off your back.

He walked in the direction of the makeshift food lady at the end of the road. They were the heavy lifters of the construction industry, providing much-needed food. He approached and before he could say anything she unfurled the covers sending the rich aroma of matooke up his nose. Looking at the sauce, he saw thick golden soup dripping from the end of the pan.

"Beef with all food," he said.

As the food lady picked through the plates, he noticed her fingers caress the bowl before placing it back, then she picked up a plate with a considerable edge around it. He watched her place rice at the centre followed by matooke, carefully staying clear of the sides.

"Why are you not evenly spreading the food?" he asked.

"The meat goes on the edges," she said, using a spoon to sort through the meat.

"The edges!!" Olowo muttered to himself and looked at the traffic, all the cars squeezed in the middle.

"Should I bring your food over there?" Olowo did not answer, instead, he ran in the direction of the excavators at the temporary stockpile down the road.

He got into one and drove in the direction of the debris, as he approached he saw his colleagues cover their mouths in horror. Olowo had gone down this road too far, he was damned either way. The drivers out of instinct stopped and watched him flatten the mounds leaving behind a flat ground.

The police officer overwhelmed at the intersection watched the excavator approach and he stopped the traffic, which made the grid longer. Shirtless men in tracks from Congo jumped out cursing, wondering what the excavator was doing.

Orono in his temporary tent was woken up by the screams of Ojok calling to him. As Orono's hands briskly searched for his hard helmet on the dusty ground, he strained his eyes to focus, noticing the cars were moving very fast.

Ojok, who was out of breath announced, "he has done it."

"Who?" Orono asked.

"That new boy."

Orono ignored Ojok because right where he sat he felt the ground shook furiously under him. The impact caused by a three-ton excavator that stopped a few inches from them.

"What do you think?" Ojok asked Orono.

Orono did not answer. Instead, he looked at the traffic. Two lines ran side by side with no stops or delays and the wild honking was no more. He turned to Olowo, who was patched on the tractor and declared.

"You have those distinct marks I talked about."





#### CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Much of African history has been told in obscurity.

Its culture and tradition has either been unknown, known and misinterpreted or known but grossly ignored.

Writers Space Africa (WSA) an international literary magazine, published by the African Writers Development Trust, is calling for submissions for its 21st edition under the theme "Retelling the African story".

We're looking for words that break the fabric of myths, stereotypes, and gross misrepresentations to tell the colourful tales of the beauty that makes the African continent.

We're accepting literary works in the following categories:

Articles/Essays – 1,200 Words
Flash Fiction – 300 words
Poetry – 1 poem, maximum of 24 lines
Short Stories – 1,500 words
Jokes – 1 joke per writer
Artworks – maximum 3 artworks in high resolution
Personalised quotation – 1 quotation and must be the original work of the author

Please note the following:

You're only entitled to submit for one category.

The Deadline for submission is August 12, 2018.

Due to the number of entries we receive, only selected authors will be published in the issue and online.

Author retains copyright.

Your work must be thoroughly edited before being uploaded. We will in turn edit selected entries to suit the publication.

The magazine will be released on the 1st of September, 2018 on our website

To submit, please visit www.writersspace.net/submissions to upload your work through our submission portal.

We ONLY accept MS word documents.

Artworks can be sent in either JPEG or PNG formats.

Entries can also be mailed to wsa@writersspace.net as an attachment.

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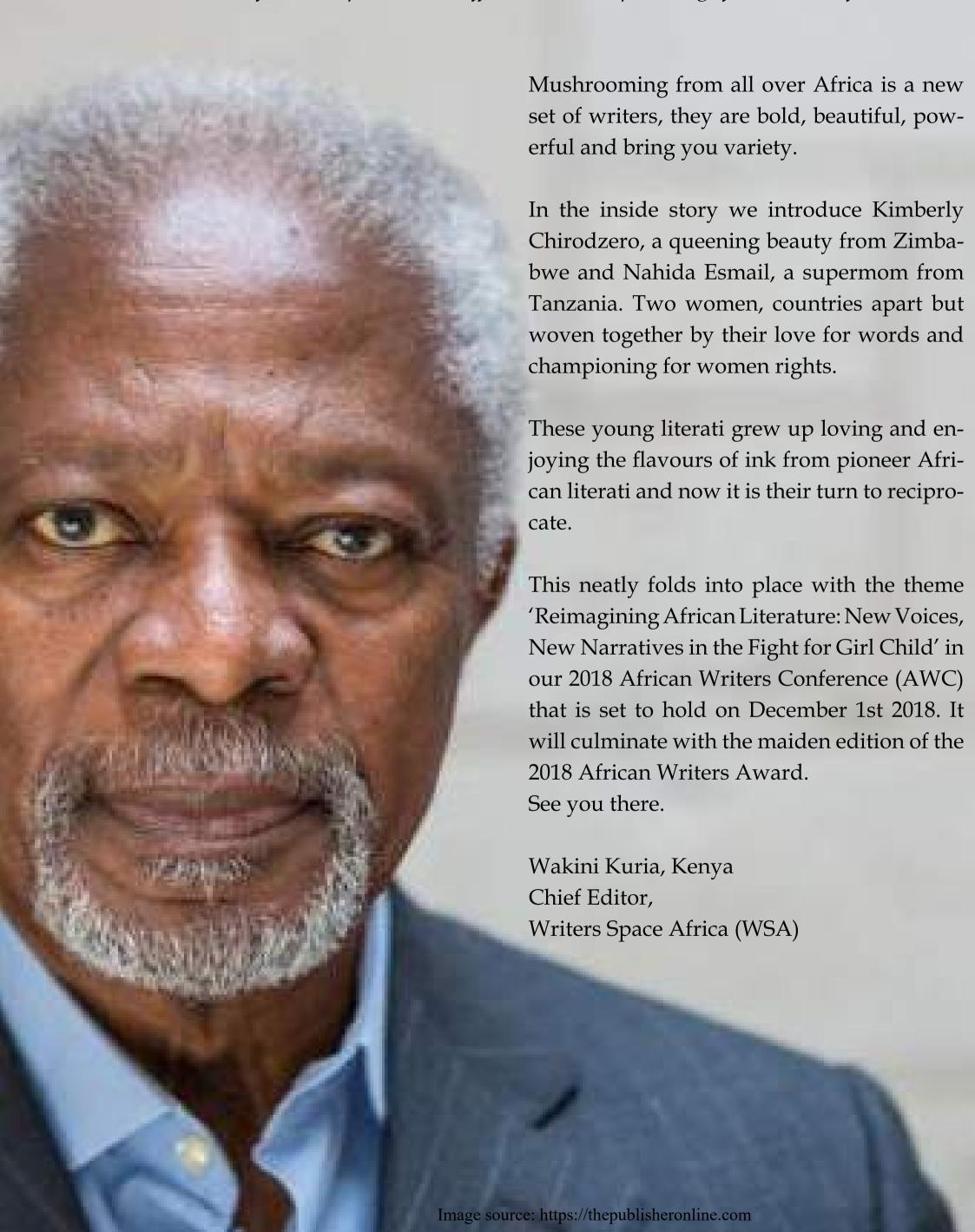
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# EDITORIAL

There is no tool for development more effective than empowering of women - Kofi Annan





Artwork by Azubuike Obinna Edmond Ekuma, also known as "Malik Obynna". He is an Artist (Painter), an Author (Poet, Inspirational and Research writer), a Public (motivational) Speaker, and a Blogger. he has written about twenty-five books — published and unpublished: amongst these literary works are genres in both fiction and nonfiction — poetry anthologies, inspirationals, prose, research



## UNITY IN THE AFRICAN LITERARY SPACE

by Edith Knight, Kenya

"If you want to walk fast, walk alone, if you want to walk far, walk together"
- African Proverb

We are living in an exciting literary time as Africa! The future has never seemed brighter. In the past few years, there's been a surge of books by African writers winning prestigious literary prizes, and gaining massive display in bookshops worldwide. And no, we are not talking about the works of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o or Wole Soyinka, we are celebrating young contemporary African writers who are telling the new African narrative in an unashamedly African voice whilst addressing present day issues.

This new wave of bold writers is experimenting with all sorts of genres; from African horror, romance, children books, you name them. With themes ranging from philosophy, feminism, war, terrorism, to sexuality, urbanization, dignity and so on. We are now writing about the things that matter to us or should I say, we have stopped writing what the West wants and have started writing for us.

All this have been made possible bythe emergence of new Publishers, who are willing and eager to promote African writings. The digital space; Online magazines, publications and even blogs have also done a huge chunk in the promotion of African writing, just as festivals, prizes and awards that have been tailored to specifically support the continents writing have also contributed significantly.

However,In the face of all this positivity, there's never been a more challenging time in the literary space than this one. The success of the modern day writer from Africa is still dependant on whether the Western literary critics have endorsed them or not. That's when a bookshop will decide whether to stock their books or not, that's when a blogger will decide whether to promote them or not. The case of a prophet not being honoured in their hometown has never been truer.

Writing in the African continent also has its specific set of challenges that has only been magnified in the recent years. African literature competes in a media space that is being held hostage by reality shows and the music industry. The publishing industry still gives preference to educational books, pirates and piracy has now become the problem child that refuses to move out of home, book distribution is still poor owing to the scarcity of bookshops in some areas, and because of the unfavorable tax laws, the cost of producing books have become so high that books are even considered a luxury for a huge chunk of the population. This has also fueled the availability of pirated copies of books with street vendors.

#### So what is the way forward, what is the solution?

As Binyavanga Wainaina, a renowned Kenyan writer says "What will build industries is having thousands and thousands of romance books, of kids' fantasy books, of transporting our children away, getting them hooked on these things...like Nollywood." He says it's about convincing Africans, especially the continent's younger generation that African literature can represent a familiar way of life – just like Nollywood or the African pop music industry.

We cannot leave the war to just Chimamanda Adichie, Mukomawa Ngugi or Aminatta Forna, all of us in the literary space have to unite to cause a revolution in the way African literature is being produced and consumed. We have to support one another. African writers need to unite to establish a fully functional literary market.

If we can have a writer's community to edit and critique each other's work, if we can get our books to be read throughout our over one billion population spread over fifty countries, then we will stop caring about validation from the Western world. We will be the sole determinants of what we need to write about, and how we want to write about it. If we will churn out massive quality books that cut across all genres, and support each other in promotion and appreciation of our own books, then the African publishers and readers will have no option but to reckon with us. African literature will become a way of life, just like our music is.

If we have a network that cuts across Africa, then our books will be distributed in all book-

shops' on every street corner. If we speak with one voice, then governments will support the industry and form friendly publishing laws that will make books affordable.

#### Enter the African Writers Development Trust

African Writers Development Trust (AWDT) has been established to support-by nurturing, developing, publishing and promoting- the works of writers, not just at a regional level, but throughout the continent. With an advisory board that comes from North, South, East, West and Central of Africa, AWDT is talking the unity of African literarists to a whole new level.

The AWDT's objective is to bring together all writers across Africa in order to empower them. They are doing this through providing access to literary and creative resources, holding lectures, workshops and trainings, enhancing networking, mentoring and capacity building of African writers through residencies, publishing grants, and promotion both in and outside of the continent.

This is the future of the unity of the African Literary Space- AWDT is the revolution. It is going to cause a paradigm shift in the way African writing is viewed globally. AWDT is the solution to African Writers.



CALLING AFRICAN WRITERS

# 2018 AFRICAN WRITERS AWARD

CATEGORIES:
FLASH FICTION
CHILDREN'S LITERATURE
POETRY
SHORT STORY



## NAHIDA ESMAIL

KEYNOTE SPEAKER,

African Writers Conference

Once upon a time, a young mother roamed the streets of Dar es Salaam in search of books for her daughter, but was disappointed by the lack of storybooks written by and for Tanzanians. And being the super mom that she was, she decided to go home and write a book for her daughter. The end

Except that was not the end for Nahida Esmail, but the beginning of a writing journey.

Nahida Esmail is an award winning author of four young adult novels and ten children's picture books, three of which have been translated into Swahili and one translated into Maa, the language of the Maasai. She has also written two textbooks for the secondary schools and two textbooks for the primary schools. Her four young adult novels, Living in the Shade, Lesslie the City Maasai, Detectives of Shangani, and Living in the Shade: Aiming for the Summit have all received CODE's Burt Award for African Literature. In 2015, she was honored with the Tanzania Women's Achievement Award in the education category.

Her latest book 'Aiming for the Summit' is the second book in the Living in the Shade



series, and was a finalist for the 2017 Burt Award for African Young Adult Literature: All-Stars competition; a book whose inspiration came while she was researching on people with albinism.

#### Personal Take

Nahida Esmail was born and raised in Dar es Salam, Tanzania, where she currently lives.

She has a Masters in Child Development with Early Childhood Education from the Institute of Education, University of London and a BSc in Psychology from Goldsmiths College, University of London

Her goal is to write a book in every genre and to provide good books for young people with the hope that young Tanzanians will become strong readers and great leaders.

She considers herself to be a full-time mother of two girls and a part time writer.

She enjoys reading, cycling, mountain climbing, photography, and travelling.

She has lived in the UK, Egypt and South Africa and continues to explore the world with her children.

**African Beauty** 

In their quest for beauty, Some have traded beauty for ashes. Some have slimed their true splendour In the gloss of the world's view of lulu.

Many have subjected themselves To surgical knives, adjusted and twisted This in order to look like that, Just to feel fit for the faux of worldly beauty.

Innocent melanin became victim Of Chemical Romance as they bathed in it day after day Until all layers of their peculiar charm was cruelly inundated.

In the quest for beauty, Some have taken their hands and feet To the enemy's stocks and fetters. And begged to be enslaved again. "All we are is vain, all you are, we seek to attain"

In the quest for beauty, Hallowed, sacred vessels, reserved for Special occasions, have been displayed on Shelves, unholy. Gory sight! Virtue's slain.

Amazing African lady, you are beautiful. Their scale is inaccurate; you are the perfect plumb line.

Walter Bassey Archibong Nigeria





## Sorcery at the King's girl

I have cast a spell

On the King's daughter-his pride and pearl

The nefarious callipygian demigoddess-the men's favorite girl

The girl at whose feet spartan warriors fell

To worship in swirls

Queer as clockwork orange,

Driven by loon-behind-the steer

Or to beg that she burns them not in hell

Or that she thuds love back at them-even in a jeer

#### I am her shrine

The bitterest schnapps-yet sweet on her tongue that spurts on her grace

I am the red pebble that fetters the beads around her waist-

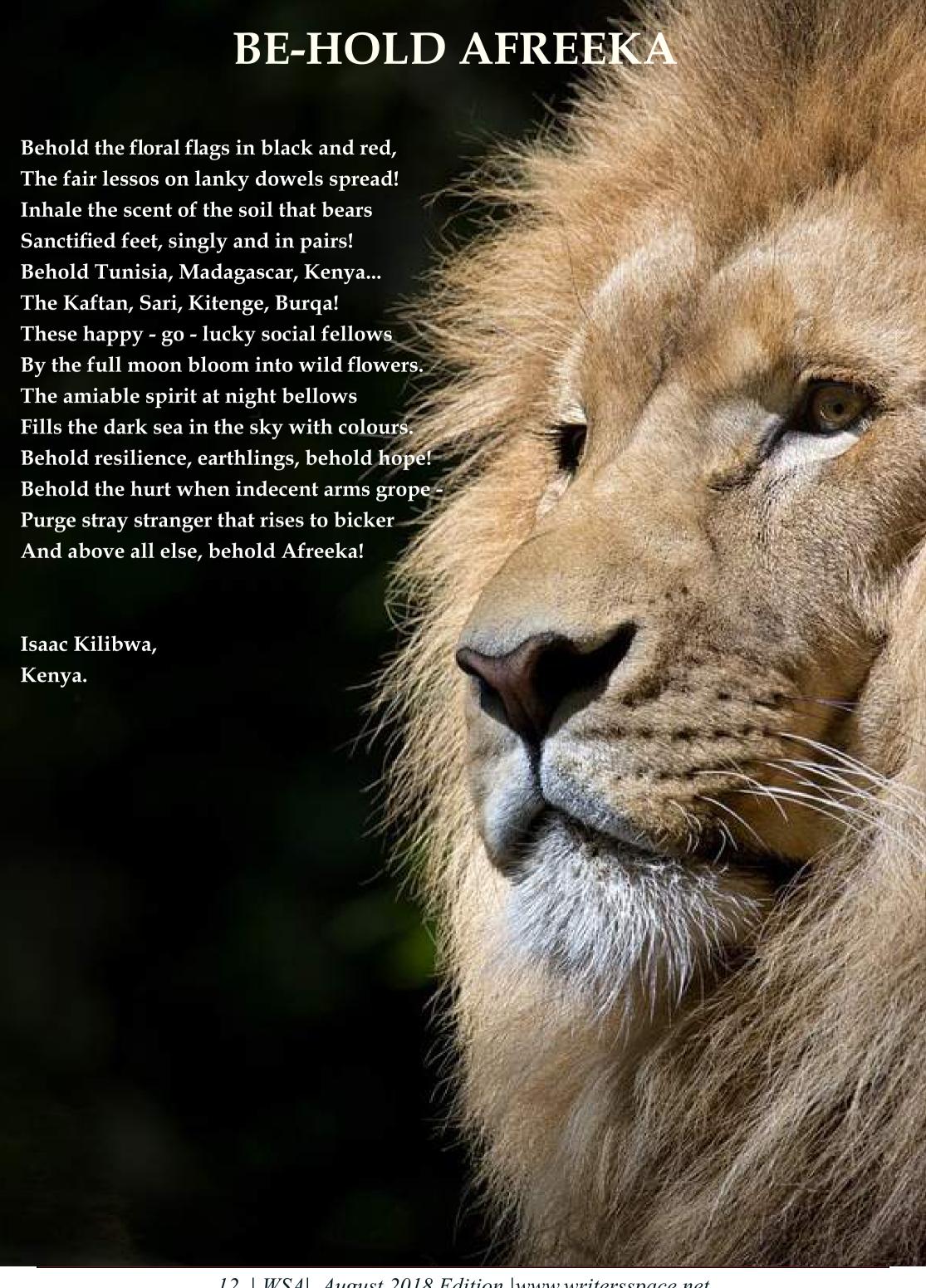
I am the most favoured servant that refuses to serve her grace-

That she serves even when I swerve. With me her dominion is ever reserved

I climbed her father's throne with my last mortal life and yelled, I said-

This goddess you worship, I am her verve

### Sakor Inusah Musah Ghana



## Every other day somewhere in Africa

In anticipation of the sunrise, the roaster crows Our early morning reminder of yet another adventurous day We wake up to gather fire wood; the girls fetch water down the stream As our elders cultivate the fields We all know where to be, what to do and at what time We gather round to eat from one plate together, cause in unity we believe In the noon time we hunt for our daily meat and we fish And sometimes join fish as we dive into the river Smoke in our eyes, wisdom in our ears Hanging on to our elder's words, we sit around the fire Retired for the days as night falls Jubilating when moon appears giving us a little more light We play the drums making rhythm for the girls dance to Counting the stars as we hide and seek A shooting star flies across the dark skies, 'witch' we scream and hide The girls heads for their hat, so do the elders We remain outside besides the fire, and talk about girls from the next villages for a while Putting off the fire we retire to our hat too It was just another normal and beautiful day at home somewhere in Africa Wanangwa Mwale, Zambia



## **Our Home**

I remembered the days of green views
The moon was the guardian of the nights
The oceans and seas were deep and blue
All of these we enjoyed before our plights

I recalled the days we rest under tree
In its shadow that breathe peace
Blessing us with its offspring for free
Before our home was turned to pieces

I remembered the days I was the king My roar echoes and sends around fear And with others I do not mingle Before I was sent out of my lair

Little by little I'm forgetting the image
How my home radiate to sun's ray
The birds' melodious chirps when merged
To my roar and cowards stumping away

Today, a new member was brought in In her eyes lives despair and grief It explained how our homes turned inn Alas, we've lost hope and sign of relief

I longed for when I'll be free from this cage
The day I'll fight back for my home
I'll be a lot careful like a sage
And invade their home

Khalid Lukman Nigeria



An African child, is everyone's child

An African mother has given birth for the earth She endures the agony of labor with love Because she has proved her femininity Holding the gift in her hands She speaks to it in mother and child language I am no longer your mother! I no will longer nurture you! They will!

Be ready to learn from everything and everyone You are now a child of a people, who know no stranger Accept them, the way they have accepted you Peace, love, and unity, flows in their African blood You are now among a people who are religious A people who teach what they live They eat religion! They speak religion!

Again! I tell you child of the of the African earth You are no longer my child You are an African child, a child for others.

Bwalya kasonde, Zambia

They live religion!

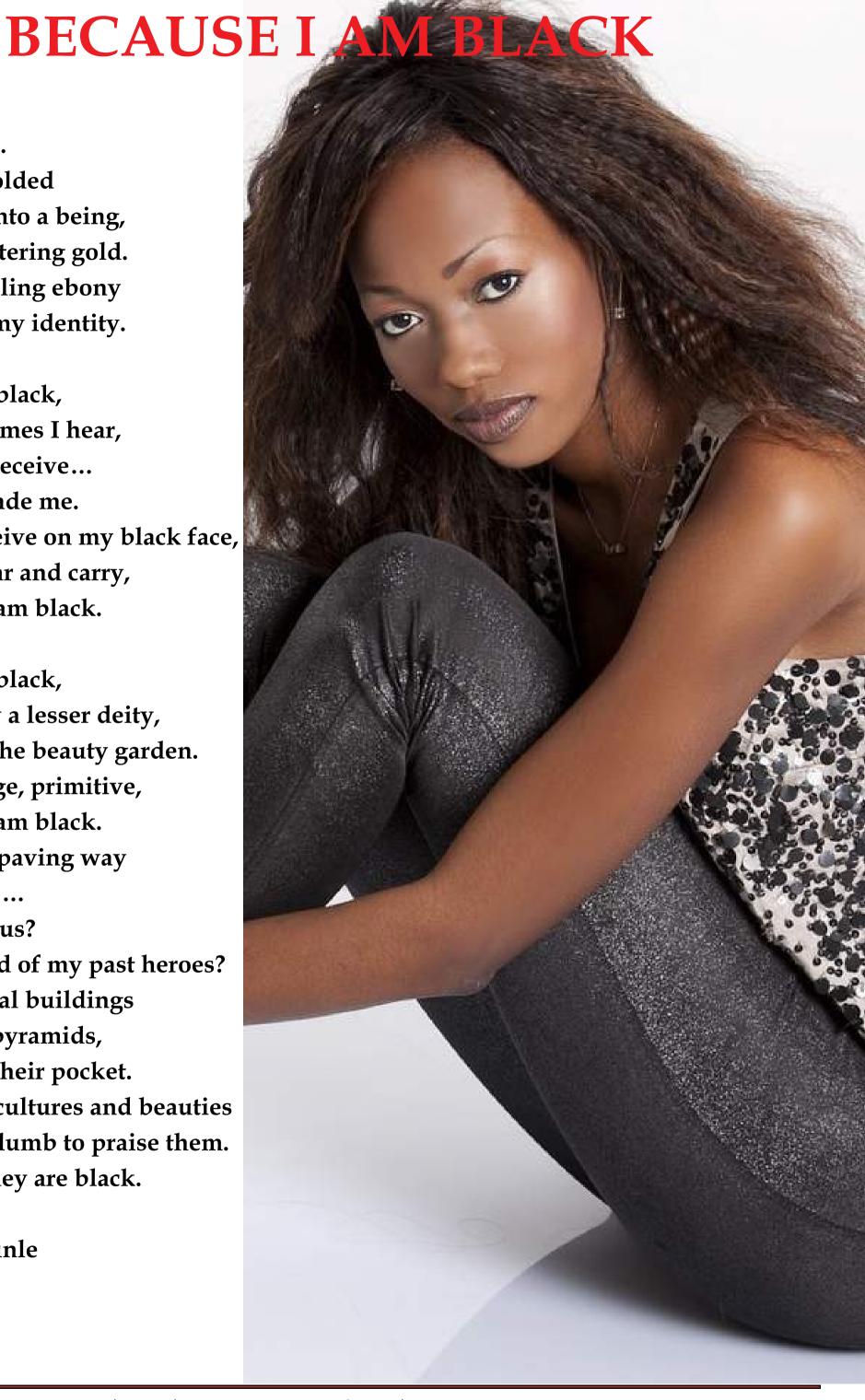


Oh! Black soil. You that is molded And formed into a being, Just like a glittering gold. See that sparkling ebony That mirrors my identity.

Because I am black, The puppy names I hear, The insults I receive... They downgrade me. Punches I receive on my black face, The pain I bear and carry, All because I am black.

Because I am black, I'm created by a lesser deity, I'm not from the beauty garden. I be ape, savage, primitive, All because I am black. The thinking paving way into my mind ... Are they jealous? Are they afraid of my past heroes? The intellectual buildings of Egyptians pyramids, They hide in their pocket. The amazing cultures and beauties They are but dumb to praise them. All because they are black.

Aremu Ayokunle Nigeria.



## OUR BODIES ARE ASHES

The graves have lost their appetites
Yet we force food in their mouths
Consistency has refined the voices of mourners
With dishes that ring in our ears
Our national anthem.

Rachel is weeping over her daughters

Fell by the hands of men

Hands that once pronounced tenderness.

Daughters, these are not the scars that orate our being But our choices.

'Take the rope and run away'
'No. I shall hang myself with it'

We exhume our hearts from our chests

Drenched in blood, we feed it to our children.

'Take your bloody hearts with you'
'No. I shall not let my little ones starve'

Now their bellies are full
And our chests are empty
And our scars have licked us like fire,
Consuming what is left.
And our ashes will make the ground fertile again.

Lydia Durunguma Nigeria



## ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL JOURNAL

The official quarterly publication of the Ethiopian Medical Association



Ethiopia's oldest medical journal, *The Ethiopian Medical Journal (EMJ)* is the official organ of the Ethiopian Medical Association (EMA). The journal first appeared under the title of both Amharic "የኢትዮጵያ ሕክምና ጋዜጣ" and English "Ethiopian Medical Journal" on July 1962. Since then, the quarterly journal played an important role to record the progress of scientific medicine, and to assist in rendering the practice of medicine in all its branches and in the academic of medicine in Ethiopia and Africa at large.

## ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL JOURNAL

OCTOBER 2016 VOLUME 54 NUMBER 4

EDITORIAL

TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE, NOT TUBERCULOSIS

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

LATENT TUBERCULOSIS AMONG ADULT ETHIOPIAN PATIENTS AT CHEST CLINIC, TIKURANBESSA SPECIALIZED HOSPITAL, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA.

BURDEN OF TUBERCULOSIS AMONG STUDENTS IN TWO ETHIOPIAN UNIVERSITIES.

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PREVALENCE OF RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MID-EASTERN ETHIOPIA.

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CASE SERIES

THREE SIBLINGS WITH ANDROGEN INSENSITIVITY SYNDROME

CASE REPORT

RECURRENT MYXOMA ARISING FROM MULTIPLE CARDIAC CHAMBERS WITH SYSTEMIC EMBOLIZATION.

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## **EXCLUSIVE**

On Heels and High Words in Harare: Queen Kim speaks of her worded early beginnings.



Once upon a true tale in the small town of Chegutu, Zimbabwe, there was a queen born into fairytales, bible stories and African folklore. She heard words everywhere she turned. Words were read to her by brother, mother, and grandmother, till all she knew and felt were the mix match of alphabets like the drumming of rain on rooftops: this queen was born to read and write.

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the queen who from her humble birth in Chegutu has risen to the high stakes of Harare with a fascinating fetish for high heels as she rules her domain with stories; those words that rocked her cradle. Her name is Kimberly Chirodzero aka

Queen Kim.



#### The Queen speaks of her worded early beginnings:

I was born in a small town in Zimbabwe called Chegutu. Chegutu is a town that does a lot of farming. It was formerly known as Hartley after the hunter and explorer, Henry Hartley. The town blossomed in the 90s when gold was discovered and mines were established. I grew up in a house full of avid readers and storytellers and as the last born, everyone read to me. My mother read me fairytales, my brother bible stories and my granny told me fascinating African folklore. Our house was always littered with books and some of my earliest memories are of my mother and sister reading.

Growing up in a house of books meant I got to read and write very early. I was the youngest kid in my first grade because I begged my mom and the headmaster to let me start school early. I just couldn't wait to discover all the new words out there. When I was nine years old, my mother passed away, and my family began to move around a lot. Losing a mother definitely changes you. My love for writing intensified as I began to use it to create new worlds. Writing remained a constant for me.

#### The Queen speaks of her work for humanity:

I live in Harare where I studied Sociology and Gender Development Studies (SGD) at Women's University in Africa. The Women's University was founded by women whose goal is to reduce gender disparity and promote equality in tertiary education. Graduating in 2016, SGD has helped me understand people and behaviour better. There was time I was in a terrible relationship. The process of trying to survive and leave the relationship led me to women empowerment groups where I discovered my strength. I became the woman who was able to turn the negatives into positives – the woman who rose out of the trenches. I truly became a Queen. I had dominated my fears and unfavourable situations.

Now, I occasionally counsel women in issues of relationships and self-empowerment. I have been counseling a lot of women, via several group workshops last year, teaching on purpose and relationships. Also, when I am not writing, I work with National Junior Councils Association (NJCA), an organisation that specializes in children's rights and youth participation in local governance. And, I volunteer as a Public Relations Officer at Reaching Out Charity Organisation (ROCO). As a PRO, I deal with public communications, planning and writing campaigns and attending events. I am a good communicator, creative and passionate about people. Working with these organizations has made me a better person, fully aware of the sociopolitical state of Zimbabwe. These are satisfying activities for me because I work with some truly inspiring people, and I am a lover of those who help develop their communities.

### The Queen speaks of her writing and stories:

I started writing at an early age. Growing up, I wrote mainly for myself, my family and classmates. I hadn't been published until I met Writers Space Africa (WSA). My first short story to

be published was in the November 2017 edition of the WSA magazine. I had no idea there was an African community and platform for African writers, and having my story accepted and published changed everything. I found the courage to work on my first soon to be published book, Love, God and Relationships. This is a book close to my heart because I want to inspire people to have healthy relationships and not settle for anything less.

I believe the greatest gifts are those of love and knowledge. In the book, I share on love, godly dating, purpose, relationships and faith. I started this book project because I realized there are a lot of pressures on women to get married, which make many end up settling. I want to touch on the foundations and principles that make for a healthy relationship with oneself, God and others. Besides the book, I write romantic short stories, and stories to uplift and empower women. My goal is to inspire women to walk boldly in their God-given purpose and pursue their dreams.

The Queen speaks of reading, travelling, and high heels:

I am an avid reader. I think I love reading almost as much as I love writing. My favourite genre at the moment is sci-fi fantasy and horror, though I read across a wide variety of genres. Reading is a natural part of life for me. I just finished As Sure as the Dawn by Francine Rivers. I prefer to read hardcopy because nothing compares to the feel of a book in my hand, and the scent of real paper just melts my heart. I enjoy hearing stories that introduce me to new cultures. Thus, I enjoy travelling, encountering new cultures, meeting new people and hearing their stories. I have traveled all over Zimbabwe and to South Africa. I'm looking forward to traveling to other parts of Africa and other continents as well.

I have a curious mind and I'm forever exploring mythology and folklore from all over the world. I enjoy photography, good food and anything that brings out my creative side. My dream holiday destination would be Paris in spring because deep down, I am a romantic. One of my romantic obsessions would be high heels. I have an incurable addiction to high heels, which I collect religiously. I love heels because they are such a feminine creation and I revel in being a woman.



I collect them as often as I can when I meet with a pair that calls out to me. I have thirty pairs at the moment and I am not about to stop.

\*\*\*

As there must be an end to every story, you would have to follow the queen in her ongoing inspiring walk, work, and writings as she saunters on the streets of women empowerment in Harare on high heels of changing shapes, shade, and shine.

By Sandra Oma Etubiebi Nigeria





26 | WSA| August 2018 Edition | www.writersspace.net



## MANGO IS MORE THAN A FRUIT: THE LEGEND OF MANGO

If, before last night, I were to tell you that I have always been proud of my surname, Mango, I would be lying. In fact, whenever I introduce myself I emphasize on my maiden name Nawiri then whisper Mango hoping that no one catches it. But they always do, and then I never get a break from their teasing.

"Mango Juice," my primary German teacher once called me, causing me to dash out of class in fury as the rest of the class broke into fits of laughter. Then that evening, I had to endure public humiliation from Mama as she caned me in front of our nosy neighbors for feeling ashamed of my surname. And as if that wasn't enough, I woke up the following morning to the neighbors' kids having made a mocking song out of my name. Years later, when I joined high school, I thought I'd be able to outgrow it, but that was wishful thinking. Despite being a multi tribe school, my name still stood out, like a strand of wheat in the vastness of the prairies.

But last night, I finally learnt that Mango is more than just a fruit.

Mango is an Abaluhyia name. The Abaluhyia are a tribe from Western Kenya famously

known for loving Ugali, chicken and tea. Mango was a legend from Bukusu land. He was the first Abaluhyia man in Bukusu land to be circumcised. Some people say he was from the Bameme clan while others claim he was an Omukhurarwa. His father, Kambisi wa Wetungu was an Omumeme and his Mama, Nabwile, was an Omunyala. My father is an Omunyala and my third born sister's maiden name is Nabwire.

For many years, Yabebe, a monstrous snake, terrorized the Bukusu people by devouring their livestock and offsprings, among them, Mango's siblings Yabebe was their greatest enemy and almost impossible to conquer because it was a flying snake that bit people directly on their heads. But that's not what was special about Yabebe. Yabebe lived deep in his cave, Muyala, and whenever he left his cave he did not return using the same route. He also entered his cave backwards beginning with his tail and then its head. This way it was hard for his enemies to kill him. One crepuscular, in the year 1800, Yabebe killed Masika, on the eve of her dowry introduction. She was Kambisi's most beautiful, youngest and favorite daughter. Mango's father, deciding not to stomach losing his children anymore, wielded his embalu sword, went on a hunt for Yabebe, and came back with its head on his sword.

The Bukusu's elders decided to award Kambisi by circumcising him, but he was old so Mango bravely offered to be circumcised on behalf of his papa. (Mango was a first born child just like me). He sat on a three legged stool which had milk poured on. Then the traditional herbalist, Wele Musiku from the clan of Omuleyi Omuchesongwa Omulusanya sliced him using a knife known as Lukembe which had also been sprinkled by the same milk poured on the stool. When his mother learnt of his bravery, she broke into a song called Sioyayo, a song that has been passed down generations and is still sang today during circumcision rites carried out annually in the month of August.

Sioyaye song in Lubukusu (Bukusu language) version

(Soloist-Response)

Ewe ewe ewe musindewe- hoo o Ewe ewe ewe khwarakho- hoo o

E siboyo- ho o

Sye bakhale- hoo oo

Omusinde oteremaka acha ebunyolo- haa ho

Acha ebunyolo- haa ho

Ewe ewe ewe sye bakhale- hoo o

You see before then, the Bukusus did not have any traditional songs. Mango's mother was a huntress of the mountains and in the course of her hunts; she came across Namunyu the melodious hyena. Namunyu was a widow who lived in a cave on the mountains. Her husband died protecting their children from Yabebe and this pushed her to teach her babies the Sioyayo song so that they could identify her voice when she returned home in the evenings. This way the children were able to distinguish her from any other enemies.

After his circumcision, Mango declared that all Bukusu boys must be circumcised in order to become men who could marry and own land. When Bukusus warriors finally conquered all the other Abaluhyia clans in late 1800 the ritual was adopted and two years later, Mango spread the culture to Uganda when he married a woman from the Bamasaba clan, a clan that habits a place called Emitoto.

To this day, circumcision in Western Kenya takes place in Bukusu land at St. Mary's Girls High School Amukuru (formerly Yabebe's cave). On the day of circumcision, the initiates leave home early for the river where they're cleansed but don't return home using the same route. Then one by one they enter the circumcision chamber backwards. Busaa made from fermented maize flour is sprinkled on the ground, on a three legged stool and on the Lukembe knife before an initiate is circumcised. The handle of the Lukembe knife must be made from the special root of Kamukimira tree. Unlike other roots, this particular root is special because it extends deeper and far away from the tree. Due to the rarity if the special root, a surgeon buries his knife deep in the ground until the next circumcision ceremony. Other sacrifices offered is a white cock called Ewanga, and in its absence, the Enaholo (red feathered) or Embangabanga (black feathered) cocks are used.

There are also rules pertaining to the initiator. He must be a man, come from a line of initiators, have been circumcised, be married and his first born must be a male child. He must also not be bald headed. During the circumcision period, he must remain chaste. An initiator's regime comes to an end when either he dies, dishonors the rule of chastity or circumcises a dead person. The last circumstance happens when a boy of circumcision age dies before he's circumcised. It is a taboo for such person to be buried uncircumcised. Then twins are circumcised between 4.00 a.m. to 5.00 a.m. immediately after the cleansing at the river but in the case of heterogeneous twins, a banana leaf is tied around the girl's waist and a mock circumcision done on her before actual circumcision is done on the boy.

It is a taboo for a child born out of wedlock and a child born in a family with both parents to share the same knife. It's also a taboo for father and a son to share the same knife but if the surgeon has only one knife, then one side shall be used on the father and the other on the son. After circumcision, the initiates are taken to a hut far deep in the forest to heal and on their return their families welcome them with praise songs and ululations.

Hence next time should the bank teller who has been persistently asking for my number tease if my surname Mango is spelt like the fruit, I shall have a different answer for him. Proudly I shall lift my chin and tell him, "Like Mango, the first Abaluhyia man to be circumcised."

Joyce Nawiri Mango, Kenya

## THE MEANING OF AFRICA



Ki dir, is how the Seychelles Creole will greet you.

I am searching for one Africa, heir of the vision of Queen Nziga Mbande. I hear you now hold the horizons that she saw as she fought against the beasts that scrambled and pierced our virgin lands. I hear that her greatest treasure was her people, hidden in plain sight of racists as they mined for gold, diamonds and whatever name they concocted for our minerals. The tongue she is named after, is it Vai or Ethiopic? This Africa is a new one, they tell me. She teems vibrantly beyond the borders, carelessly used to wrench her children from each other. This Africa reaches her hand out for friends, to forgive and forge ahead.

Idhi nade? An East African Luo would ask you how the going is.

Would you preen your ears for the knowledge that flowed from Timbuktu? Would you rejuvenate the fountain of literacy like the medu neter hieroglyphics of Egypt, the proto-Saharan of Nubia, the Dogon rock art, the Tamazight tifinagh or the pictorial Nsibidi? These gems might be lost to many of my kinsmen but to the future we aim; our heritage of literacy is the arrowhead adventure and a curator of our past in the future.

Na nga def, as they say in Gambia.

Could I borrow your sight to envision the Pan-African banquet of Nyerere, Nkrumah, Machel, Mandela, Mboya, Sankara and Gaddaffi? That the blood of the pioneers before them may gush through the AU, SADC, EAC, ECOWAS, CENSAD, COMESA or IGAD? May it gush more exuberantly and perpetually than the Nile or Volta, clean the rivers of blood desired by some evil regents. Let her children inherit the vision built on their kinship.

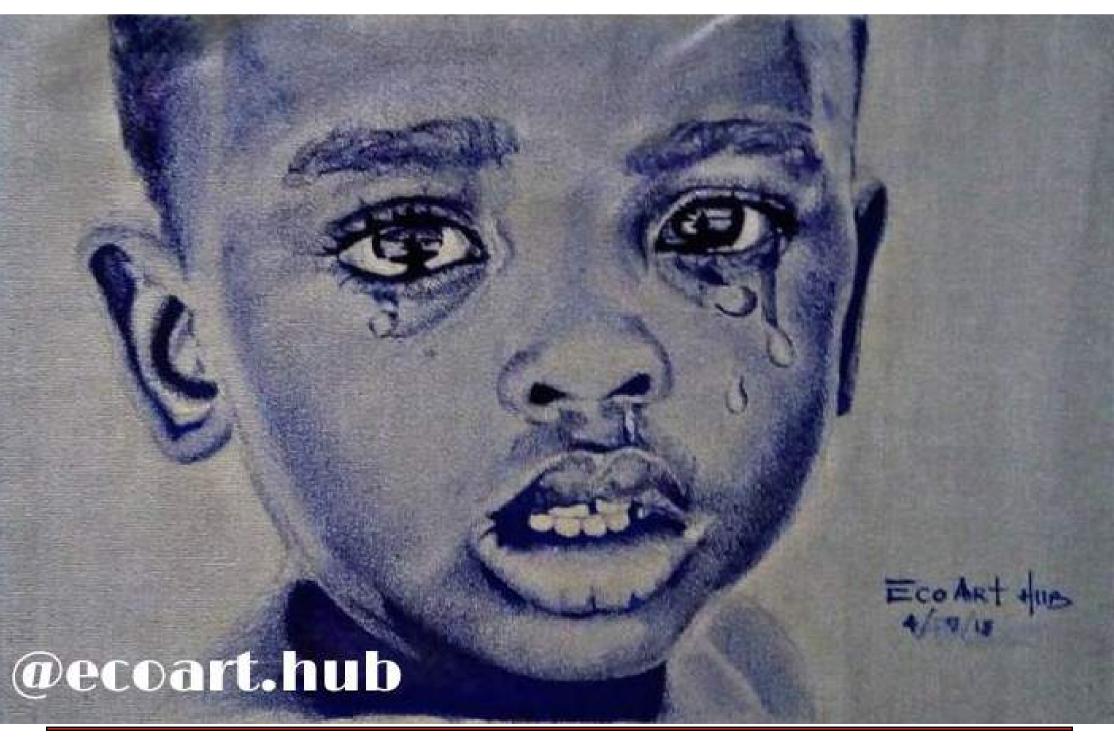
Lumela? U kae? I pass the greetings of Sesotho.

Touch the exquisite grain of the rich mural that is woven by our culture. Culture is too daft a word to encompass your dance. Culture is too shallow a term to comprehend the rhythm of your anthems and too bare to cover the breadth of our existence. Dance to the tune of the nyatiti, balafon, makhoyane, daghumma and tbal.

Wet your palates for the best from Africa's kitchen and grazing fields. Her children have ben toiling in the fields and are eager to entice your taste buds. Shall we state with Feijoada (pork and bean stew) from Sao Tome? Or perhaps sweet Makroudh and Baklava from Tunisia? Please sit for Djibouti's Injera, Harira or Niter Kibbeh. Snack on the Gajak and Mazavaroo.

Waft the sweat of success, because that is all Africa is about. We may fail but we will make our way through the jungle of life. The scents and stenches are part of our journey so we should not fear. Our noses can never fall off track as we know what we want. Dream and it shall be. Africa is ripe for the winning.

Edith Adhiambo Osiro Kenya





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Acacia Bookstore is calling published African authors to sell their eBooks on the Acacia Bookstore

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Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is a country located in the Horn of Africa. It shares borders with Eritrea to the north and northeast, Djibouti and Somalia to the east, Sudan and South Sudan to the west, and Kenya to the south. With over 102 million inhabitants, Ethiopia is the most populous landlocked country in the world and the second-most populous nation on the African continent. It occupies a total area of 1,100,000 square kilometers (420,000 sq mi), and its capital and largest city is Addis Ababa. Today, we will discover untold stories of Ethiopia.

Most of the world imagines that Africa gives the least of freedom towards its females. Africa is known for underage marriage and gender based violence among other things. This might be somewhat true, but Africa is not the worst continent for girls.

In Ethiopia and Eritrea there is celebration for girls only. Girls wear colorful clothes, sing and dance without fear, and it goes on for days. This celebration is called Ashenda But there are also some other names for the celebration, in Agaw language they called it Shadey and its also called



Solel around Raya Kobbo, in Adigrat town it is called Mariya, however in Aksum town it is called Ayniwari.



This festival is celebrated in August. Ashenda marks the end of a two-week-long fast known as Filseta when adherents of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church gather to honour the Virgin Mary. The name Ashenda or Shadey is derived from the "tall green grass", estimated at around 80–90 cm minimum height which grows around July and August and that the girls wear around their waists during the holiday

The celebration takes place between August 15 and September 11 every year. Some cities celebrate it for 3 days while the others celebrate it for weeks. In some places like Raya, Enderta, and Tembienit is celebrated typically from August 16 to September 11. In Wag Hemra zone and Raya Kobo, it is celebrated from August 16 to 18 where as in Adigrat town it is celebrated from August 15 to 17. In Aksum town it is deferent; it is celebrated from August 23 to 25.

There are myths about where this celebration originated from. One is the story of king Yoftahe. In the ancient times there was a king called Yoftahe. This king promised his Godthat if he won the war he would sacrifice the first thing he see when he got home, hoping he wouldmeet his sheep first. He won the war but when he got home he didn't find his sheep first, rather his only daughter ran towards him. He felt so sad. He sat down and told her about the promise he made to God. His daughter told him that he couldn't break his promise. She said "give me some time to play and cry with my friends and then you can fulfill your promise."

And so, young girls use this time to play and enjoy their girl time before entering woman-

hood. All the young girls gather around singing and beating drums, while the boys keep an eye on them from a distance, to make sure they are safe from any wild animalsorharassments. It is also said this celebration is to remember the ascension of Virgin Mary (mother of Jesus).

On the eve of the celebration, young girls get busy buying or cleaning their jewelries, breading their hairs with different styleand collecting Ashenda's from the field. Ashenda girl don't wear common clothes on this much-awaited event since it's their special day. They wear specialcolorful dress with unique hair styles and jewels on theirnecks as well as ornaments on hands, ears and feet.





Everybody looks quite beautiful. There is even a saying "don't ask for a hand in marriage from a girl you found playing Ashenda". For the girls use different traditional make ups and jewelries and one can't discern her natural looks. No one can ask an Ashenda participant girl to do something, not even her family. It is freedom time for them. They sing and play all day long. They chant songs and show their grooving styles with eye catching costumes.

For the past three years there have been some petitions to inscribe the Ashenda ceremony as an intangible heritage at the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural organization, UNESCO in order to get more recognition, protection and treatment at international level. I hope we will succeed!

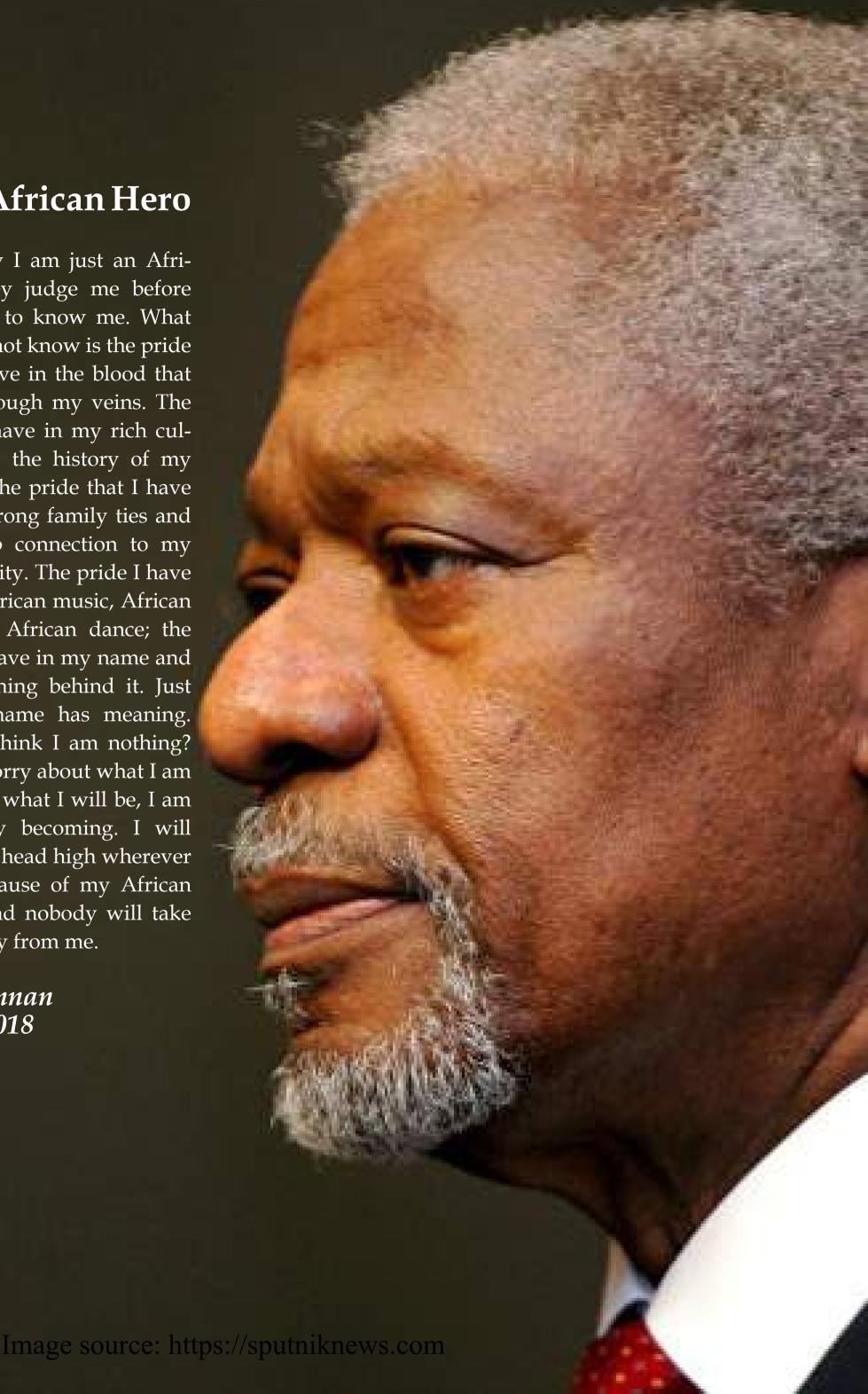
by

Meaza Aklilu Hadera, Ethiopia

#### The African Hero

They say I am just an African. They judge me before they get to know me. What they do not know is the pride that I have in the blood that runs through my veins. The pride I have in my rich culture and the history of my people; the pride that I have in my strong family ties and the deep connection to my community. The pride I have in the African music, African art, and African dance; the pride I have in my name and the meaning behind it. Just as my name has meaning. So you think I am nothing? Don't worry about what I am now; for what I will be, I am gradually becoming. I will raise my head high wherever I go because of my African pride, and nobody will take that away from me.

Kofi Annan 1938-2018



### EPISODES FROM MISERABLE NIGHTS

Lanre Apata, Nigeria



I know my malady. I can see its manifestation but I cannot interpret it. It explains why I'm broken, suppose you understand the brokenness that makes me forget the correct spelling of a name I once treasured. Sometimes it's a name. Sometimes it is a mere word. There are mornings I leave bed thinking of it as a name and there are cold painful nights that write it as a wrongly spelt word on my azure ceiling, drifting from short sleep to sober meditations dressed in regrets and incoherent soliloquies aimed at querying myself for my inability to manage pain. Now, the sun chars my skin and heart. Even the moon scars me. On the countless days my spirit curls in a corner turning its back against the world, water hurts my throat like a trapped bone from a piece of meat, leaving me with intense discomfort.

ANABBEL. Is it ANNABEL? I asked myself.

When I typed her name in the search bar of my Facebook, I was trying to get more than a user. I was recollecting memories, peeling scabs off my wound. Just like those mornings and nights when I think of it as a name or a mere word, the wound sometimes splays itself as a scar, and sometimes a gangrene that won't leave.

I crutched myself to my window, pushed it for the sun's entry. The glint from the sun revealed the mess I inhabit. The lifeless portraits, chairs positioned to form a curve in my living room and the magazines on the dusty glass table defined my life. I push the plate of unfinished stewed rice to the other end of the dusty table. I once enjoyed stewed rice with a good quantity of pepper for my chapped lips but food is now an irritant since I came to the realisation that it is not to be enjoyed, but to survive the next day of agony.

Hurt is my biggest scare. I manage it like an infant snatched from its mother's breast. I'm yet to recover from my friend's father's fall from a palm tree many years ago. I watched as his body con-

torted his limbs, still joined to his body, separated and wriggled till his soul walked out in pain. The blood that rolled from his head down his lifeless body remains fresh in my head – unclotted. At 18, four years after the tragic fall of the richest palm wine tapper in our town, I watched another painful episode in my home on a cold night in January. I covered myself with a cheap Ankara print wrapper made before the cold intensified weeks to Christmas. Legs curled, beating my pillow to shake off dust from the shabbily plastered walls of my room, I heard loud voices from my father's room. His new wife is around. My mother is being sent to the backyard.

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The failed Orkar coup of 1990 left me with grief again. It left me in a bad place as I scrambled to pick fragments of my life from a land of thorns. It reminded me of my failures, or the system that fails me when the sun is illuminating the world except my space or leaves me without shelter when raincloud gathers. The images of horror from the day my friend lost his father to that fall and the shock that ended my mother's happiness as my father announced the coming of a new wife on that cold night in January became my template for defining pain.

"You clearly don't know when to move on with life. Your brother's death is evidence. It's four months since his departure and you're here to tell me you're postponing a wedding that has a date," Annabel voiced with resignation and continued, "I wasn't there when your friend's father died but I can narrate the ugly story because of your repeated narrations."

"You despise your father because he took a second wife. Your zero interest in the society you live in stuns me. You don't care about the debate on our return to democracy. You wake up every morning telling anyone that cares to listen about how damned the country is" she growled.

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January, 1991, a couple of months to our wedding, she visited me. We had fixed another date for our wedding after my mother's intervention and her withdrawal. Being the light she is, I forgot the darkness thrust on me. The power company at that period epitomized the society I lived in. Years later, when the reading of beautiful lines of poetry became an escape from self, I understood the compounding nature of the agony of long miserable nights.

"I have two boys – twins," she said after hours of nervousness cloaked with silence. I travelled here to tell you. It can't wait till we get married."

The words caused turbulence in my head. My midriff contracted as I struggled for breath like someone trapped in a cabin of fumes. "I've known you for four years, I've loved you for three."

I heard whispers from voices within me:

Don't welcome it.

Those boys are unwanted guests in your life.

They can't see you as their father.

I showed her the door and said goodbye with a nod.

I became queasy. A dollop of pain dropped on my heart. I wondered if she hid this because of the love for me. Is it my fragility or her attempt to be careful with matters of hurt?

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My failed marriage was not planned. I met my erstwhile wife after Annabel walked out that dark January night. But talking about someone that constantly brought me pain and reminded me of my weakness is pain. I remember when Annabel left I needed a distraction. She offered herself. Her attitude pushed me away but the events of my yesterday, the sex and the fun pulled me back. Always unencumbered, she was ready for rough sex a week after going under the scalpel for appendicitis. "Don't act like you had an organ transplant. This surgery is not a serious one," she said with little concern as I rebuffed her moves. Those words, refreshed by other insensitive moments, stayed with me with their effect. They formed the calm I needed for her moments of madness.

The day my son died opened other wounds in my life. I looked at my scars from the past. I reflected on the dark night I opened my door, my life as I later realised, for Annabel to leave. I also drew mental pictures of the twins she talked about. Do they look like her? Did she return to their father? Like Annabel, do they clean tears off their cheeks with the back of their palms when they laugh? I had returned from a conference in Kano three days before his demise, looking forward to a long period of rest with him. I returned to a scrawny boy struggling to breathe. He exhaled like a tired, old man pushed by currents of uncertainty from his hospital bed circled by relatives to the mystical world of spirits and ancestors preparing for his arrival.

"Just breathing difficulties. I've administered cough syrup and ventolin tabs," she furiously replied when I accused her of shameful negligence.

His last minutes are ones I need to blot out. They tore to fragments all I had tried to put together after years of fall after fall. I watched as his body swelled. I watched as the nurse cleaned water that emitted from the pores of his skin every hour. I watched as doctors and nurses whispered. The clear sky that evening was swept away by the darkness that spread itself as a roof over my existence. They covered him and wheeled him out of the Intensive Care Unit. Nobody bothered to explain the action to me.

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I crutched myself back to my living room on my return from my trip to the past. The discomfort with my crutches is a major reason I try to forget how my right leg snapped around the knee and the fracture that almost condemned the leg when I walked out of my home with violent anger on a sad night a couple of months ago. The night's darkness covered sewages just as my tanned skin covers the pain and regrets of a lifetime. Moving on from a failed marriage, I remember how we used to tell ourselves of the emptiness our lives would bear if we leave each other. I typed her surname after Annabel, searched, scrolled through similar names. Seated beside a bespectacled man, flanked by two teenage boys, the emptiness we joked about stared at me.

No wife. No son. No daughter. No understanding of fulfilment. I'm like the men and women who become numbers as a result of our collective failures, our broken promises, the inevitable and the pain in the love we share. I may be washed away like a name etched in the sand, waiting for rain.



## The Men from the East

### Edith Knight, Kenya

Somewhere between sunrise and sunset, in a chiefdom that lay on the east side of South, a great chief got himself a concubine, as is the nature of great chiefs.

"From which village do you come from, and whose daughter are you?" That was how the girl was seduced.

"I'm from the Langeni clan, sir. My parents are dead, I live with my uncle"

By evening, the relationship had been consummated, but the amahlayaendlela went too far, and as is unfortunately expected from these affairs, the concubine became with child. This relationship didn't last, and the new mother moved back with her bastard, or rather Shaka, as he was named, to her village, to a people who despised both mother and son.

Somewhere between dawn and dusk, in a province that lay on the east side of North, another child was born- not a bastard, for his parents were properly married. But that relationship too didn't last, and the mother moved back with her son, or rather, Kassa, as she had named him, to her village, to a people who didn't care much for them.

Somewhere between morning and evening, in a village that lay on the east side of the West, another child was born. Her parents, even though properly married were properly poor, and so the mother moved back with her daughter, or rather Ahebi, as she had named him, to her village, to a people who loved them.

When her father consulted the diviner over his poverty, it was revealed to him that he had com-

mitted a grave crime and that's why the great goddess, ohe, was punishing his family.

"The only way out of this is igommaogo, yes, you must offer your daughter Ahebi as a living sacrifice to the goddess," The diviner said.

But the young girl, already a rebel, refused the 'honour' and ran away to the north of the east side of the West.

As with many bastard children in chiefdoms that lay on the east side of South, the boy Shaka was greatly ridiculed by his age mates and 'persecuted' by the adults. And so as he grew up, became curiously reckless, but in a brave way. This made him to be recruited as a warrior, where he flirted shamelessly with death.

Well, the other boy on the east side of North, being that his mother was still a staunch Christian, found himself in a convent, where he studied the bible back to back, and later European history, then Shakespeare. When he got tired of reading about white people, he studied the techniques of his own people's warfare and their fighting methods.

Left to herself- after running away from home, with no skills or education, the girl on the east side of West became a prostitute in order to survive. She became very good at this work, so much so that she was invited to different towns to 'work' and hence travelled widely, gained access to the Attah-igala, met the white men who had big power, and in the process learned to speak many languages.

When the great chief of the chiefdom that lay on the east side of South died, his legitimate son took over. But Shaka, now being a warrior with a following, ousted him, took control and became chief; a fierce, ruthless, brutal chief- for he locked a seer in a house then placed hyenas inside to devour her, and when morning came, he burnt the house down. He sliced a pregnant woman open just to see how the baby sat inside. He killed all short men and anyone who opposed him- no one ever called him a bastard again.

He conquered all the neighbouring chiefdoms, built up strong military forces and forbade them from marrying, he too didn't marry, though he kept a harem full of women, and those found pregnant by him were put to death. His mother died suddenly from illness, and how he loved his mother, for he immediately decreed;

"There shall be a one year mourning period. No crops will be planted. No woman should become pregnant, or else she and the husband will be put to death" That was not all "Any cow or goat or sheep that gives birth will also be put to death, so that the young one knows how it feels to lose a mother. And anyone who shows little grief during this period will be killed. Is that clear?" It was clear, for no one would dare oppose the great chief.

a shifta- an outlaw, organized his own army and captured provinces. In the process he married the beautiful empress Tewabech. After conquering the entire east of the North, he changed his name to Tewodros, for he believed he was the messiah of his people.

When he had been crowned emperor, his beloved wife died, and how he had loved his wife. Her death made him erratic, violent and brutal. So much so, that when his best friend was also killed shortly after, he decreed;

"Kill all the 500 prisoners so as to avenge for the blood of my friend" and later had seven thousand more killed. He heavily taxed his people, demanded that the same starving people feed his army of fifty thousand men, decreed monogamy for all men, and fought the church mightily, for he believed he was the only elect from God.

As the young Ahebi, continued to 'work' throughout the east of the West, she led the white men through the inner routes of the land so that her people were conquered. She was rewarded by being made headman and later chief of her village, but that did not appease her, for she wanted to be the king of all the land. She campaigned greatly, and conquered. The young woman was coronated as King of the land and the men could do nothing about it, for she had the backing of the white men.

After getting to be king, marrying many wives- for she became their female husband, her mother died and then she became erratic and brutal. Imposed forced labour, took bribes openly, took away men's wives forcefully and demanded to receive full manhood. She brought out a masked spirit, but this was an abomination, for the masquerade was only meant to be performed by biological men.

The death of the mother of the great chief from the East of the South, made him tremble with fear at the thought of anything that threatened his mortality. And so he invited the strange white men to his kingdom.

"You have to give me the ointment; the ointment of youth so that I can remain young."

"But of course great Shaka, the ointment you will get, but in exchange give us a part of your land and sign this document as proof."

"I will give you anything, as long as I don't see these grey hairs on my head, or grow old and die." So he signed, and the white men went away laughing at the foolishness of the Chief. Because of his erratic behaviour, the soldiers of the emperor of the east of the North deserted him. The people stopped supporting him too. So he wrote a letter to the white men and asked for their support, but they refused to help him, and the kingdom began to fall. So he took all

the white men in his kingdom and imprisoned them.

And so as the sun set on the east of the South, the half-brothers of the great chief, struck him dead and dumped him into an empty grain pit, then covered it with stones. But before they ascended to his throne, they found out that the Kingdom now belonged to the white men and the great chief Shaka of the Zulu fell, and his kingdom with him.

And as the sun set on the east of the North, the white men sent their forces to free the white people imprisoned by the emperor and as all his soldiers had deserted him, he put a gun to his head, and took his life and the white men took over his kingdom. So the great emperor Tewodros the second fell, and his kingdom, with him.

And as the sun set on the east of the west, the white men, no longer needing King Ahebi supported the male elders against her and undermined her power. And knowing that she would not be buried properly at death, she conducted her own living funeral ceremony with so much pomp and colour that it didn't matter when she later died and was buried quietly. But the male elders, who thought they would rule, found out that the white men now reigned over their land. So the great eze Ahebi Ugbabe of Enugu-Ezike fell, and her kingdom with her.



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## Dark Messiah

#### Philani Amadéus Nyoni, Zimbabwe



Raindrops descended in brisk staccato like a hail of arrows from a vast column of archers. The streets were flooded to biblical proportions, yet no holy man pious and true had been forewarned, bade to build an ark and pair up beasts.

It had torn and tossed pylons like twigs, snatching them off the feeble ground like an elephant trunk uprooting mere saplings and hurled them at the mish-mash of trees, cars, animals, humans and every other thing that misshaped in the way of the waters, furious enough to turn the most rage-swollen Zambezi on its tail and send it back-flowing to its source.

A boy lay in bed, feverish, his tear-drenched mother mopping his brow which seemed to pour like the ruptured heavens. Next to her sat his siblings, silent as death beneath the pall. Food had been exhausted and the house, formerly a shelter was a death-trap. Outside, the water flowed just beneath window-level; inside, the assault-weary roof began to give in and let through murderous pours. The bed had been moved many times, elevating it when mopping the floor proved a futile battle for the hunger-beaten against the apocalyptic celestial terror. They sat with their ankles in the rising pool, taking pains to keep him warm and dry.

His mother cried for his life about to be taken so soon and maliciously, and more from confu-

sion of an apparent betrayal. This was not the fulfilment of the promise made to her at his birth.

Thirteen rains before, a youth barely moulded into readiness for womanhood lay feverish, writhing like an exorcism. Sweating profusely, like the boy she was bridging into the world would during the great calamity. The seed of the wind like Helen of Troy, Jehoshua ben Yosef, and Guatemala Buddha. Immaculately conceived of a virgin, this fact proved by unbelieving old women whose specialty was such inspection and midwifery. This truth terrified them and they would not deliver the baby. Her parents believed neither the proof nor their daughter, so they threw her into the wilderness to return only with the bastard's sire. The girl, knowing she had known no man crawled into the darkness and consigned her fate to the stars.

The owners of the sky are cruel, she thought, watching the ripples form around her ankles from the water streaming from the roof. How did they bring a life into the world under such extraordinary circumstance only to take it so maliciously?

While she wept and shivered more from sorrow than cold, she cast sight across the darkness to the form of her son. One glance revealed the difference. Formerly he had been sweating, gasping for air with a gaping mouth and heaving his chest high with the effort, but his mouth had stilled as had his chest. The sweat had seized streaming, the pain was gone and he stopped quivering like a reed on the river edge. Death had come at last. One after the other the living in the room raised a crescendo of wailing. They had long anticipated death but the confirmation was vicious, what they did not know at the time was that before the water took their lives, they would contemplate eating him.

Thirteen summers before this time of reason manifesting as thoughts of splitting ward-robes for firewood and devouring corpses, the bereaved woman was found by an old man beneath a mangwe's height, crouching, with her head buried in her knees and palms hugging opposite upper-arms, shivering to the not-so-distant laugh of hyenas and coughs of leopards. The old medicine-man had not said a word to her, just towed her by the arm to his home. Only his wife spoke to her, she cared for the girl like her own. Often she felt uncomforted by the luxuries allowed her by the old woman, a body inhabited by raw energy and kindness, as industrious as the sun. The girl tried to help with a broom here and watergourd there, but she was not allowed to do much, she needed rest and the child she would bear could not be put to risk.

She often wondered what life would be fruited from her curious circumstance, the one whose birth the old woman anticipated like some await the fabled return of their Christ. She found out on the day you were born, I shall speak of these things with you, but first, let us talk of what you saw when you died.

You wandered into a barren land as dry as the one that spit you into it was wet. The sun was raw and bright but you did not feel it nor did it hurt your eyes. Your feet, light as light, seemed to step not directly on the dust. You wondered how or why; it was your spirit, what the Bantu call your ena, your true being not your physical form that walked. As suddenly as you had appeared, darkness crept around and engulfed you, in the next twinkle

you sat by a borne fire whose tongues seemed to lick the sooty fabric of heaven. Beside you sat an old man who introduced himself as The Lost Immortal.

You studied him pensively while he scowled into what your people call a jackal's fire like a harbinger whose gaze is trained on the horizon, watching hellhounds only he can see pacing forth to extinguish a life. When he spoke again he said, "I am Lumukanda, born of perishing form like you, transmuted to deathlessness in the kiss of the goddess Nanavanhu-Ma." You startled, unbelieving the humourless mouth speaking to you though at the fire. It did not feel like a dream, all too real but you could not fathom the nature of it for you were not yet aware of your own death.

Without facing you even once, he told of the time many eons folded over, when the Phoenicians settled in the navel of Africa and raised great empires under the reigns of Karesu and Makira-Kadesi. Yes, they were strange tales, stranger still how he had been transfigured from the dust-bound being to the realm of eternal blinkers to lead slaves off the yoke in Spartacus fashion. You did not have to speak your disbelief or the confusion that beset your young spirit, he read it plain for child, immortals can read thoughts and hearts as clear as hieroglyphs. So he said he would show you and he did.

You soared like the eagle's feather against the sky, across vast lands of foreign frontiers and times like the unfettered imagination, fattening your eye with scenes of empires raised and razed. From these heights, your spirit-form unburdened by the cumbersomeness of human flesh peered on the Eastern horizon of time itself where I, the Great Spirit, Ageless of a Thousand Names laboured, smithing the very sun from smokeless fire. The Muslims believe it is from this smokeless fire that I created the jiin, what they call evil beings of unseen realms that assume many forms in the land of men. Some call them demons and aye, I created them as dark as noon is bright, they serve my will, good and evil both do. It is the necessity of opposites, day was born with night, I created all things so and called them perfect. The pendulum must swing both directions, in equal proportion. Extremes must exist in pairs is the first law of creation. You must know these things to fulfil your purpose.

While you saw the formation of all that is from my very being and the creation of life as I delegated through the tri-nippled goddess Amarava and the spouse I gave her, the grotesque Odu, Tree of Life, your flesh was the object of discussion in the mortal realm. Your siblings suddenly overpowered by the demon they could no longer reign contemplated relieving your bones of your flesh. Contemplated? No, the elder spoke out.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Mother, may we eat him?" he said after a long silence punctuated with sniffs and whimpers.

<sup>&</sup>quot;You cannot eat your brother, we are not cannibals." She replied curt and brisk.

<sup>&</sup>quot;No," he spoke quietly, not to his feet but to her eyes unlike his regular manner. "But we are hungry and we shall soon die like him if we do not eat."

<sup>&</sup>quot;We would rather die than be reduced to that." She said dismissively. On an ordinary

day with the sun in his place and the mulberry bush's roots firmly in the ground, she would have threatened him with a switch or gone right on and crisscrossed his skin with it. But on an ordinary day they would not be discussing eating a corpse.

She wondered what had brought the child to such horrid thoughts, what she did not know was that the shock of watching you die had brought a naked realization to the young mind. The two children had known of death when it had swallowed their father, a good man whose abundant love did not differentiate you from them. But they always thought death was for 'old people'. With you gone their young minds were catapulted beyond their years in cognition and that swift flight without a knowledgeable guide had brought them distorted truth. Surely they could also just vanish to memory, and the beast clawing at their inner-bellies could eventually leave them dead but not so soon, hunger is a cruel killer whose deathblow comes after much begging and a-begging. The child had come to one conclusion: eat or die, rather eat the dead than die of hunger. But a child could not think these thoughts alone, I who made all things uneven and called them perfect hid the words in his heart for I am temptation and salvation. Why would I? So that the faith of the one you call mother may be tested. Truth is fortified in testing. That is why no matter how much she chided and scolded his mind could not be steered off that course.

They argued long and loud, while busy at loggerheads they did not see the younger one, almost knee-deep wading away. They only saw her return with that zinc dish your mother used when she cut the throats of chicken. She brought a knife as well, to carve your meat off. When your mother saw this she sank in spirit below the fabled hell, took the utensils both, laid the dish on her lap and the knife to her trachea. "Eat me instead my children." You were far from all these things. I know you would have let them eat you had you a say in the matter though your mother would not. She believed in the old prophesy of the medicine-man who kept her alive while you lived in her belly. When you were born he held you high above the searing flame glistening her sweat-polished brow and spoke for the first time since she lived with him, blessing you in tongues of the Wakabi, tongues older than Lumukanda himself, not spoken since man was but a speck on the vast face of the blue ball. He was the first to call you by name, the name pronounced by the wise owls across eons' night. As they prophesied, the son of Nozala the Pure would to answer to the name Luzwi. You saw these things in the voyage of your spirit.

Before you witnessed the scene of your birth oh Luzwi, you had to see the most horrible scenes, the plight of your fellow men in the hands of foreign masters. They came across the big pond on ships and took men and women like you, bound them in savagery undeserved even by beasts. They were bred like livestock and worked like bleeding machines as expandable as an autumn leaf.

You saw them come again and live among you with their flags planted in your soil. In the streets beneath the firmament of the very city you call home where the black vagrant makes bed walked these foreigners, elbowing the natives off their podiums of civilization. This city you call home, Bulawayo, divided like the patches of earth your sister played scotch on. In the East lived the masters, the servants in the West. Only a decade before you inhaled air the black man needed a pass to cross the divide.

It infuriated you, realising how you could have been one of those men living on the other side, the Western side, facing the sun's whips in his gallant rise, blinded by his descent to a wifeless bed beneath the halo of factory smog. She would be somewhere in the Reserves where the settlers forced the natives from fertile lands. Missing her would only make the sock happier while she stumbled maybe in Gwaai through vicious terrain of sandy ground with no pity for bare feet. If you missed her more than the sock could compensate you would get a letter to allow her visit. The letter was necessary for an old time-twisted knave; the Commissioner owayekhokhoba would regularly inspect the rooms to exorcise any female disrupting the design of black men barracked like monks in that place named Makokoba after the gnarled bat.

You had to see these things in more vivid detail than the other time-swallowed scenes for this is from where you hail. And see you did. How you wept seeing your king's pride razed and in pure disdainful mockery the victor erected his 'State House' in its stead in that place now known as Sorcetown. Rage tormented your soul when you watched the black kids of Mzilikazi, the squalor named after a great warrior-king, raiding bins in North End for the saliva of the settlers. The latter would eventually wrap their leftovers in foil before placing them in refuse bins. The black kids called this practice ukudikila.

At this point you were swollen with infernal wrath, blue flame of pure and livid hatred for the white man leapt in you; yet kindling this flame was not the purpose of the excursion.

To calm your spirit, you were shown merrier scenes of coexistence in those times of turmoil. That milky lad you saw gulping opaque beer with his sooty brethren was later to carry the flag of Zimbabwe on his back in England, the mother of the tyrants. His name is Bruce Grobbler. Those dust stockinged lads that kicked a plastic ball about with their black peers are Jack and his brother Mark Watson. You saw black and white kids playing war games on that land where Lobengula's cattle kraal once stood, slinging mud from switches.

One black boy whose mind is preoccupied with the national condition wraps a pebble in his mud, slings it and knocks a white boy pink. The enraged victim picks up his bicycle, peddles off to return with his pellet-gun. Twang! Snaps it in half, reloads, twang! You laughed and I smiled, finally you understood what a man of your shade, born across oceans, a descendant of the stolen ones once dreamt. His name was Martin Luther King Junior, and he dreamt of men being judged by the content of their characters not the colour of their skin. You had learnt that the true shade of a man lies in his heart.

It was imperative that you understand or you would blunder like your leaders who braved the hail of warheads that you may enjoy rain; serenading and seducing death-spangled nights with Kalashnikov baritone and the soprano of tingling cartridge-shells, with bayonets cut down the foreign Caesar and birthed a new nation. They fought for justice, preached reconciliation yet when their soles echoed in the halls of the oppres-

sor their souls were possessed by the horrors they had exorcised. The Gabriels, the angels turned demons. I wept so, I weep still.

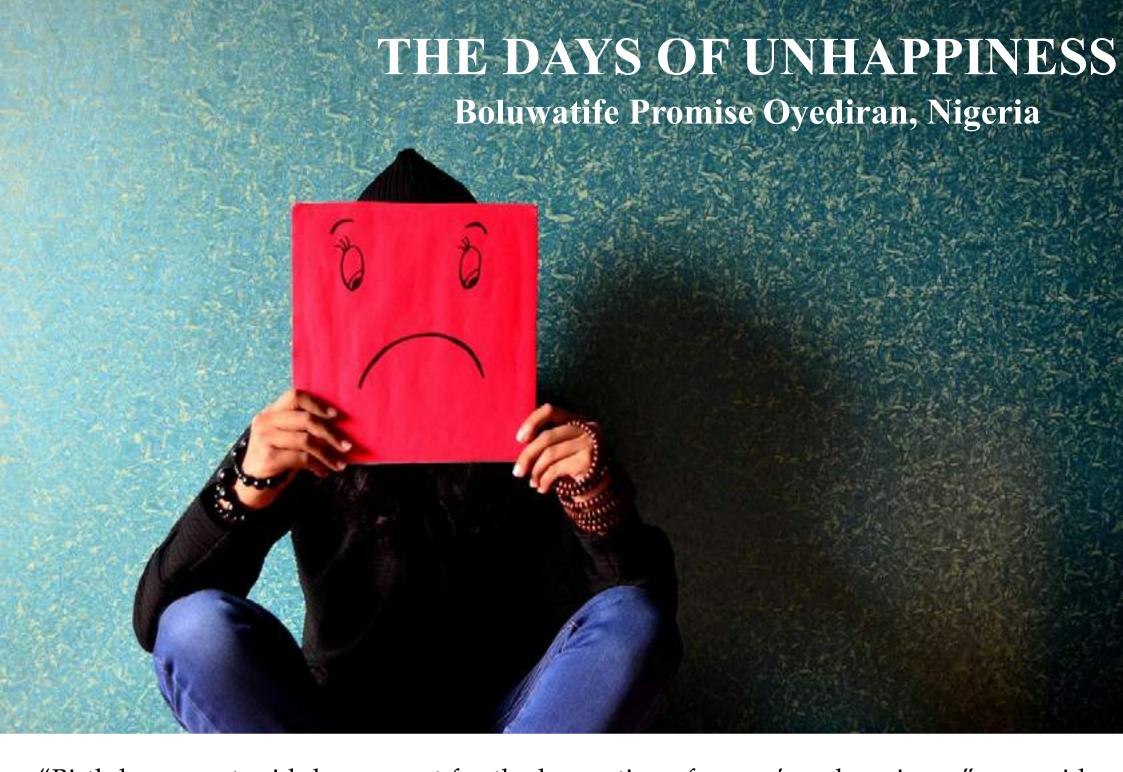
Your mother had the blade to her neck ready to draw her blood that your siblings may drink nourishment from it than have them scar your body. Why would she make this sacrifice seemingly meaningless? Was it not more sensible to eat what was already dead? She believed young one. That ancient man who held up your woeful form with its umbilical cord still dangling, yet unwashed of blood and fluids of birth was Lumukanda, The Lost Immortal. He told the prophecy to your young mother still feeble from labour. Luzwi, your name has been whispered by many prophets, madmen, izanuse and keepers of knowledge of this continent across eons. They spoke of The One To Come, who would liberate mankind from a great calamity. I chose you before your mother was formed in the womb, before the beast that now stirs anarchy like a bull digging his hoof into the ground was. I the Eternal One, who created himself and everything in the ever-expanding universe from myself. All is a part of me, your very soul too.

Do you know what it looks like? It is an orb the size of your head, a perfect sphere, transparent, inhabited by two worms that glow like fire-flies. One is blue, the other red. Ever moving, twining, untying, dancing, writhing. The red is pure evil, the other unadulterated good. A female's soul has wings like an ant lion's, yours and every other male's is wingless. I am good and evil, you I have appointed to bring pleasure to my heart by restoring equilibrium to an aberrated world.

After you had seen your birth and the proclamation of your mission your education was complete. You left the ancient wanderer warming his equally ancient scrotum by the eternal fire. Your mortal form shook and coughed, blinked, your mother sighed, let down the blade and embraced you. At once the great storm abated, the sun shimmered through and the water shined like sheet silver. You were back among the living, with no recollection of your spirit journey.

You have grown now, your beard is heavy and your eye is weary of the world of men more foul and maggot-ridden than at the time of the cyclone. The age of your remembrance is ripe. As you read these things on the wall of this cave written in a language of symbols you understand not how you comprehend, your sun is yawning in its cradle. Rise forth, fulfil your purpose, I God command it, Dark Messiah.

<sup>-</sup>This story was greatly inspired by Credo Mutwa's Indaba My Children, a collection of African folklore and mythology. I found it imperative to take some of the characters form the African narrative and build a story around it.



"Birthdays are stupid days meant for the harvesting of a year's unhappiness," you said to me the day before your birthday, as we snailed home, choking on mouthfuls of boiled corn. I did not understand you but I registered it in mind to celebrate you the following day. I really had it in mind—a plug lodged in my soul—as we talked, argued, agreed, and parted. I skipped all the way left, got home, consumed Kafka's Metamorphosis while my rice burned on the hot plate. I spent some hours studying Kafkaesque, until the heavy thoughts of you and the morrow rolled off my mind like a stone sent off a high mountain. Indeed I had you in mind. But because I woke up worrying that my Mom might not send me cash and I would not repair my tab on time, I met you the following morning, blank. We sat together in English class, in the belly of Afritheatre, you jeering the lecturers as they revised impressively, I staring at my text, trying to make sense of all those inter-transitive and adjunct rants. We left for FAJ Hall afterwards, talked to the engineer about our broken phones, withdrew cash at Ecobank in the wake of a long, drizzling day.

You did not like that your day began without the sun. You said gloom was harsh, although what I'd had in mind was the wet blanket spread in the sky. Back at Uscar-d'Engineer's corner, I remembered the date. It's August 7! swelled in my throat but I did not say it. I don't know what's responsible for my not saying it, for my forgetting it's your day.

Funny enough, on your day, you longed for Janet as a miner would long for a fresh breath. "Jane-et?" I asked, as we sliced through the crowd on the concrete grounds of Afritheatre. "Janet, yaga! The lady in a cream top with holes in the shoulders!" I pointed at her in class. "Ohhh, I see." I remembered: your new girl, dark-skinned, smooth-faced, thick-lipped (the kind you marvel at as purely African), jet black hair washed wet to the back as I had seen on your Whatsapp status when you put up her photo and asked, "What comes to your mind?"

Nothing came to my mind, sorry to say. We can't crush on the same things. But em, we might. As we did on Chimamanda, your own obsession overgrowing mine in a couple of days. You even imagined her giving birth to you. You were as star struck as you were when you scanned the classrooms for Janet on the day—your day—in which the sun refused to rise. The old yellow ball must have been in a tired sleep, forgetting to dress quickly for the sake of waiting celebrants.

It had always been Olamide I wanted us to talk about when we talked about girls. Yes she had scattered teeth, I agreed, not minding the dismal flinch that I was broken-toothed too. My wanting her to be in the centre of our conversation was an obligation, not of piety for her—because of course we share a similar case in dental misstructure. I just wanted to know why she could be shit to you, the girl who soaked you deep into your first ruins with ladies—first kiss, first night out, and firsttime sex, which you called boring. You tried Janet because you felt you would feel something you wanted to feel.

I wanted to tell you that while you hugged Olamide in Philosophy class after reminding her it was your day and she had said Happy Birthday Toh to you weakly. She noticed me. Twice her eyes held mine. You know I don't like ladies staring, don't you?

We discussed our birthdays. I cried on mine because time kept sieving through my fingers and I hadn't done something worthy with my life, not even found true love yet. You sobered on yours because no one from home remembered your birthdate, including all the girls you had dated, who once had always told you how much they loved and could die for you.

You sobered throughout; later drifting between being sober and sad and gay, in that order. You rarely said Yaga!We sat in a passageway in FAJ, in each other's arms, telling each other stories, waiting for the discharge of our sick phones. A guy walked past and said, "you no feel hold yourselves like that in this place o; some students dey around, na

gay demdey find beat o."

We laughed and held each other tighter, thighs rubbing. Were we gay?

For the first time, I talked extensively about my father. I told you divorce is a thing of the heart. It starts when a couple joined to be one refuse to be one in decisions from a moment onwards. "My parents still wear matching clothes," I said to you, "but to me they've never been really married." I forgot to add that they didn't fight, they just did not match in perceptions. Could two people walk together if they could not agree?

You told me you're from a polygamous home: four wives, sixteen kids, you the first to attend university. You minced words, your emotions pouring out your mood like Marah, a river of sad waters. You got up, bored by my stories and yours, and said, "I want to take a walk in the rain."

I watched you rise and walk slowly into the rain, your fingers holding the cuffs of your shirt, your joggers sagged around your ankles. You walked through the lawn, a lush green, on a path carved by pedestrians. Then you stopped and turned to the sky, face lit with wonder, as a saint's would at the appearing of the Saviour.

The drizzle kept coming in slants, hitting your face like bullets, making you squint. They mixed with your tears; rivers snaked down your cheeks to soak your shirt. You came back, met me staring at the sky, pointed.

There was a rainbow in the sky, large and colourful, ends dipped behind the outline of jacaranda trees in the distance. A thread of many colours.

"Yes it is. Can you see the shadow?"

"Shadow!" I looked closely. Indeed. There were two arcs, two rainbows. "I've never seen anything like this all my life," I said.

"It's my birthday. Nature has made it special," you said.

You turned back, tapped me. My eyes followed your fingers to the sky. Behind grey clouds swollen with rain the sun rose in all its majesty, brighter by the minute, sparkling rays pronging the skies. Rainbows on one side, the rising sun on another.

"The sun is up, finally," you said.

"Your day is unusual man," I replied.

We ate buns and drank Fanta all day until our stomachs ached. While darkness de-

scended we got our things and left. As planned, we were to have discussions on English and Literature overnight. We slipped into the basement of the Faculty of Social Sciences and had a recap of everything you had taught me.

When we went out to piss, stars spread above us—twinkling diamonds in the sky—you further affirmed that Olamide was wrong for you, so wrong. We waited to talk about her in the darkness.

I finished pissing and asked, "Have you ever seen her reading a novel?"

"No!"You replied.

"How many of your poems has she read?"

"A few, less than five. Her brain is porous, daft."

"I know."

"I can date a beautiful girl with hips like hers. But one with an empty head is an exception. I can't walk with a coconut head. She's gat to be smart man, not just a lecturer's daughter."

"It's love that matters most." You laughed, stared at the sky and asked, "Can you see the brightest star? Why is it not white?"

"It's a satellite man. But must every star be white? There's beauty in diversity."

"Mmmmh, beauty in diversity." You smiled deep, your eyes on the sparkling dot in the dark sky, stood fixed for minutes, muttering beauty in diversity, until my legs began to ache.

On our way back to the classroom we came upon two figures kissing on the stairs, in the dark, their pressed bodies arched against the banister like a waving palm tree.

"This is what you used to do to girls."

"Shit," you hissed.

At the landing, you stopped suddenly, sniffed the air, discerning. "That's Janet!" you said.

"What?"

You bundled back down the stairs and without waiting pulled the bodies apart. I followed slowly, watching your head stare at both figures almost at the same time. You caved in, knelt between them, head in hands.

"Noooo!"

In the faint glare of the night, I could recognise both figures. One was Janet, the other was Olamide.

I sat down and held you in my arms, your tears soaking into my shirt. In the classroom, someone was reading Metamorphosis aloud.



## AMARYA'S KULI KULI

By Angela Umoru (AngieInspired), Nigeria

The dusty street of Bathurst Lane nestled in the heart of Kaduna is the only home I have ever known. Forget the flamboyant cities that I later breezed through as my job required of me. They were more like poorly baked pastries glazed over with eggs-glossy on the outside and complete crap when you bite into it.

My street was more of a family than a neighbourhood. It mattered little that I belonged to one of the few Christian families in the area. Up the street on the left, the polytechnic lecturer lived behind the green gates with his numerous children and a wife no oneever saw. Opposite him was Iyagana's family. Iyagana was tall and lanky, delicate the way girls that would grow up to be called 'lady' and not 'madam' were. Whenever she smiled, her perfect dentition peeked through her pink lips.

The light-skinned mischievous twins lived not too far up the street and closer to my home. It was always difficult to tell who was Hussainaor Hassana, yet these mirthful twins would grow up to be a medical doctor and professor of biochemistry respectively.

Down the street was the brood of young guys living together. They could have been five or maybe six. I don't recall now but they were quite a friendly bunch. I didn't take too kindly to them when they first arrived. You see, my good friend Usman and

his family had lived there before these strange guys arrived. So,naturally it was my duty not to like them. However, Shehu, the shortest of them all soon won me over with his wholehearted smiles. He used to call me his wife and though my motherkept a hawk-eye watch over them, she allowed me to spend a few minutes with them in the evenings when the children came out to play football and hop excitedly over lines drawn on the ground.

Our house was on the end of the street, next to my best friendTerso's house. Terso was four years older than me but it barely mattered as I matched him in wit and unfortunately height. Despite his mean streak, I loved spending time with him. I would watch him chain his dog to a post and slap it around. I was repulsed but that puppy always went back to him. Perhaps that is where my interesting choices in men began but that is a story for another day.

Living on Bathurst Lane was like an explosion of flavours, from the too-sweet taste of Sallah to the all too familiar bliss of Amarya'skuli-kuli. Amarya was the younger wife of the old Nupe man at the mouth of the street.

Considering the fact that we all called her 'Amarya', one would expect a young, supple woman but Amarya was at least 50 years old at the time, short and dark-skinned. Her flabby arms always quivered as she deftly moulded the groundnut into flattened shapes. Her face held beady eyes, a small nose and tribal marks on the sides of her mouth, much like whiskers but then her smile was what made her face memorable. It broke out like the beginnings of a flower in bloom and spread across her face, slowly chasing away all signs of the hard life she lived. The smile would then bunch up in crow's feet, leaving a twinkle in her eyes. Whenever she saw me, she would stumble through English to impress me. The attempts always drew disapproving glances from the older wife who, in my childlike mind's eye, was the spitting image of Cinderella's step-mother.

I reckoned that the older wife had given Amarya a hard time as a young wife but others who had known the family before I was born swore that the older wife or UwarGida, as we called her, was a nice woman cursed with a hard face. As if to fan the embers of my imagination, in all the years that I knew Amarya, I never saw her outside her home. I convinced myself that she had been forbidden from ever leaving the house so I would try, without success, to code to her in broken Hausa that I could help her escape. How I would achieve that feat, I didn't know.

The family hardly ever mixed with the rest of us but we trooped daily to buy the crunchy and peppery groundnut cakes. We were like a brainwashed mass that never dared go anywhere else to get kuli-kuli. Hers was so good that when my older siblings in boarding school wrote home, there was always a 'PS: We need Amarya'skuli-kuli'. It was what bound us together, more than anything else on that street. Not even the communal frustration of trudging to Video Club's well to fetch water whenever Water Board deemed us unworthy of having pipe-borne water (the family was so called

because they rented out home videos for the paltry sum of 10 naira) could compare. One Monday afternoon, I was on my way home after buying Amarya'skuli-kuliso my sisters and I could soak some garri when I heard a distant noise. I tuned it out because I was trying to remember what exactly I had been asked to buy. For some reason the N 20 kuli-kuli and N 10 sugar in my hands didn't seem right. I halted, completely confused and lips already quivering. Only the previous day, I had been scolded harshly for buying the wrong thing.

I tried to stay calm and remember but the noise just wouldn't let me concentrate. Someone brushed hurriedly past me, screaming something, I looked up but the person had disappeared around a bend. I was about to run back home and apologize for my mistake when the noise sounded closer. I turned around to find people running towards me. My mother's voice rang in my head that I should run but the fear etched on their faces kept my feet firmly planted on the ground. Save for this running bunch, the street was deserted. Their voices rang out like a crowd in a stadium, only that they were not cheering. I am not sure how long I stood there till someone grabbed me by the scruff of my neck violently. In shock, the contents of my hands fell to the ground.

I craned and found myself peering into my eldest sister's face. Her face was grim as she wordlessly ran with me back home. It was on the news that Kaduna was not safe and my father had called on the landline from the office to ensure everyone was at home. He said he would get my mother from her shop on his way home.

The atmosphere around the house was tense and each time we heard the sound of a car, we all sat up, ready to dash to the gate. The only other excitement for the rest of the day, however, was my parents' return. We heard of the carnage, saw it in the newspapers and on TV as it continued for days before the army was deployed. It was dubbed the Sharia riot but we never saw the violence first hand in our neighbourhood. Instead, everywhere grew extremely quiet. Even the video game sounds we used to hear in Shehu's house seized. We held prayers in church for "our brothers and sisters who had fallen". Our Reverend always said that they were resting in the bosom of the Lord and that vengeance was for the Lord. Whenever we walked back home from church, Mummy would hold on tightly to my hand, almost cutting off the blood supply but I never complained. If a Muslim neighbour walked past us, they would only grunt pleasantries. Questions about the family were not asked anymore. It suddenly seemed rude to enquire about an ailing child's health or a husband's job.

From that time on, the mass exodus began in full swing. Many Christian families moved to Southern Kaduna where they felt safer. We didn't move till 2008 when we built our house but in the interim eight years, we kept out of one another's way and the taste of Amarya'skuli-kuli was forgotten.





#### CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Much of African history has been told in obscurity. Its culture and tradition has either been unknown, known and misinterpreted or known but grossly ignored. Writers Space Africa (WSA) an international literary magazine, published by the African Writers Development Trust, is calling for submissions for its 22nd edition under the theme "Retelling the African story".

We're looking for words that break the fabric of myths, stereotypes, and gross misrepresentations to tell the colourful tales of the beauty that makes the African continent.

We're accepting literary works in the following categories:

Articles/Essays – 1,200 Words maximum Flash Fiction – 300 words maximum Poetry – 1 poem, maximum of 24 lines Short Stories – 2,500 words maximum

Jokes – 1 joke per writer

Artworks - maximum 3 artworks in high resolution

Personalised quotation - 1 quotation and must be the original work of the author

Please note the following:

You're only entitled to submit for one category.

The Deadline for submission is September 12, 2018.

Due to the number of entries we receive, only selected authors will be published in the issue and online.

Author retains copyright.

Your work must be thoroughly edited before being uploaded. We will in turn edit selected entries to suit the publication.

The magazine will be released on the 1st of October, 2018 on our website

To submit, please visit www.writersspace.net/submissions to upload your work through our submission portal.

We ONLY accept MS word documents.

Artworks can be sent in either JPEG or PNG formats.

Entries can also be mailed to wsa@writersspace.net as an attachment.

### WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

October 2018 Edition Issue 22

**Empowering African Writers** 

#### NATIVE SON

Ayotunde Oyeniran Nigeria

#### AFRICA

Gift Samwel Ngamanja Tanzania

#### ANCIENT LOVE

Valentine Tusai Zimbabwe

#### AFTER SUNSET

Benny Wanjohi Kenya

#### MOTHER AFRICA

Wanangwa Mwale Zambia

#### AFRICA'S MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Kweku Sarkwa Ghana

# Alexander Nderitu

Shakespeare Reborn in Kenya

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### Featured Writers

Anthony Onugba, Nigeria
Ayotunde Oyeniran, Nigeria
Wanangwa Mwale, Zambia
Shimbo Pastory William, Tanzania
Valentine Tusai, Zimbabwe
Mohau Mohlope, Nigeria
Benny Wanjohi, Kenya
Gift Samwel Ngamanja, Tanzania.
Kweku Sarkwa, Ghana
Kelvin Shachile, Kenya
Kimberly Chirodzero, Zimbabwe
Gabrielina Gabriel-Abhiele, Nigeria



# EDITORIAL

You Have No Idea What Your Legacy Will Be

"Every life you've touched is your legacy." - Maya Angelou

Writing makes writers immortal. In the history of writing, Shakespeare left a permanent mark.

His works have inspired many across the globe and his great legacy, second to none, lives on.

On the cover interview, we introduce a man who shares a birthday with William Shakespeare. Coincidentally, on the same day, April 23rd, we celebrate UNESCO's 'World Book and Copyright Day'.

Alex Nderitu, a Kenyan-born, has built a legacy as an IT guru, novelist, poet, playwright and critic.

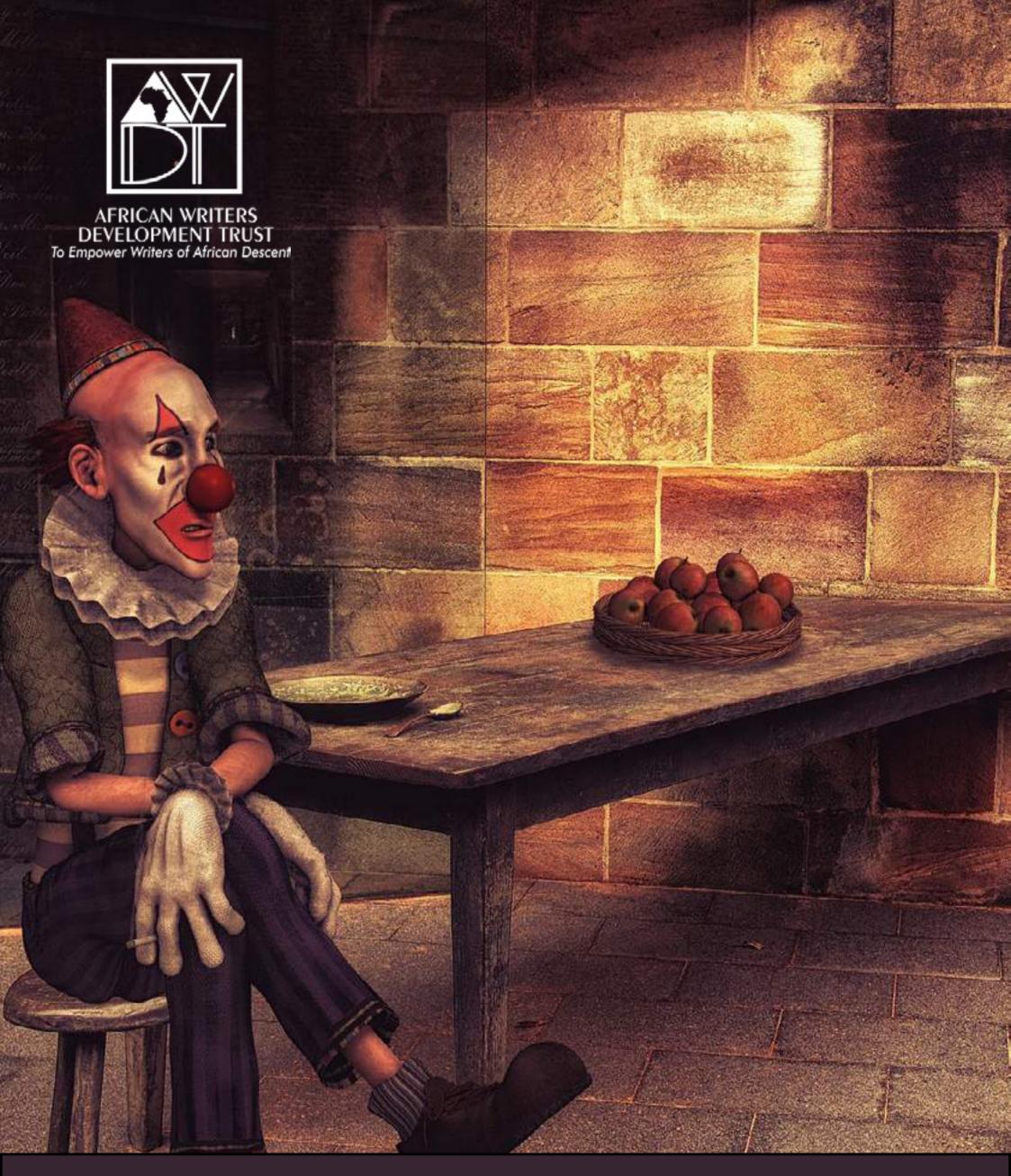
On the 1st of December, 2018 is the first ever conference by African Writers Conference (AWC) in Abuja.

On the same day, same venue, is the maiden edition of the 2018 African Writers Award.

Catch you there as we build legacies!

Wakini Kuria, Kenya Chief Editor, Writers Space Africa (WSA)





You can't treat the people who love you the most, like trash.
You can't give all your time to people who just want to use you.
When the sun sets, you will find that your soul is drained and no one wants to be around you. - By Kavulu Emily



### Faith Mutheu

Guest Speaker,
African Writers Conference

Winner of the 2017 Xtreem Awards for Most Influential Young Person in Kenya, Faith Mutheu is on a roller coaster that only goes up. In addition to being the Founder and CEO of Fuzusmart- a foundation that mentors and has impacted many young people in Kenya, she is also the author of Beyond Obstacles- Developing the champion in you!, a book that she wrote at the age of seventeen and published at the age of nineteen. (If you thought all seventeen year olds just sleep and watch TV, think again.) Faith is also a current scholar at Google Udacity, having received the 2018 Google Africa Scholarship.

Furthermore, Faith is a mentor who gives talks in high schools, young people groups and even children homes. She teaches young people on using the written word to express themselves, entrepreneurship and education. As a girls advocate, she is also the current University of Nairobi campus representative for Women Student's Welfare Association (WOSWA) the highest student's body for women students in Kenya.

## Personal Take

Faith was born and raised in the Makueni, which is in the Lower Eastern part of Kenya. She is the first born in her family-this is where she started practicing her leadership skills. She is currently a Boom Student-majoring in Finance, at the University of Nairobi.

She is passionate about the girl child and believes an empowered girl is an empowerment to the whole nation. 'A positive girl changes a negative society' is her mantra. Her pen and paper are the medium she uses to express the issues that burns her in her quest to positively change, not only Kenya but Africa at large. The lack of mentorship programs especially when she was in primary and High school is what challenged her to start the mentorship foundation and write the motivational book.

She loves networking and tries to ensure that her list of friends grow every single day.



# FLASH FICTION

... intensity... one sweeping blow of perception.- Irving Howe



## Zambezi

They were at the bank of the Zambezi River. She stood, arms folded and face turned away. He was on two knees, apologising, promising never to cheat again. In the past, she had believed him but not this time. She needed proof of his newly proclaimed love and fidelity. She asked him to swim across the river as proof of his love. Delighted but thoughtless, he sprang to his feet, ran to the bank of the river and jumped right in. That was the last time he was ever seen again.

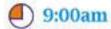
Anthony Onugba Nigeria



#### Theme:

Reimagining African Literature: New Voices, New Narratives in the Fight for the Girl Child







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NAHIDA ESMAIL

Tanzania



SANDRA OMA ETUBIEBI Nigeria



FAITH MUTHEU Kenya

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\$8 (#3,000) - for those who pay online prior to the conference. It includes meal, souvenirs, etc.

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# POETRY

With an eye made quiet by the power of harmony, and the deep power of joy, we see into the life of things.

- William Wordsworth

## NATIVE SON

I'm a native son of the soil.

The soil that went through toil

To stand on its own two feet

Battling shades of cold and heat;

To breakthrough, minds are pinned.

That we advance against the wind.

I'm a native son of the soil.

The soil where potentials broil

In a kiln away from reach,

Emitting morsels of heat that leech

Both bad virtues and good vices,

Fine-tuning ethical crises.

I'm a native son of the land.
The land that's diverse like sand,
Bonding in our merged variety,
Fighting threats to diversified unity.
Odds won't scare or get us down
Nor break us, making us frown.

I'm a native son of the land Blessed in a way that is grand. We're still being wrought by The Potter's hand.

> Ayotunde Oyeniran Nigeria

### **MOTHER AFRICA**

She bleeds
From the knives pierced in her fresh
She is now anemic, but still fighting to survive
For her own

She weeps
In anguish
As she watches her own
lose their own to the unknown of the land
And leaving her barren

She is forsaken
By her own, they abandoned her ways
Broken
By who used to hers,
now detached from their mother

She drained and tied
But still holding on, hoping she could see
a few more generations to come
And maybe the current ones
would go back to who they were
The true sons and daughters of land.

Wanangwa Mwale, Zambia



# The African Man

There goes the Maasai
Hoping up the sun
Down the land, and up again
The warrior of man, African
Taut and hard done

His classy lubega is borne
To shelter the gallant breast
And clothe the life loins
That cold, dirt, rain, shame
Betroths nought

His virgin dagger, darlingWarrior of man African;
- As is to a hen a nestling,
Parting not wherever she may go
That peace ever there be

His chaste trim spawn's unspinstered,
But for herd historical,
And man not one, save
One who'd smother a lion!
This I did, man African
Hoping up, down, and again to the sun!

Shimbo Pastory William Tanzania





# **Ancient Love**

I was a hunter and she was a gatherer She dug roots and gathered fruits We survived on flat grassy savannah And on the sides of steep mountains I set traps and hunted big game She was healthy, I was the same I protected her with my bow and arrow Always happy, she knew no sorrow On cold nights we were warm in the cave Her firmness and strong grasp. She made me feel like a man. She belonged in the equestrian Her movements were wild no question She fed me berries and roots for my strength I was the leader and the father of the whole tribe I had nightmares of civilization Some white men coming to destroy my nation Force-marching out of our caves To go and work in their fields as slaves I couldn't imagine any of the above Happening to the tribe I love I'd fight for my tribe and be brave Nothing could separate me from my ancient love

Valentine Tusai, Zimbabwe.

# Spirit

Before and thereafter, what lives is the spirit. It is not by me, but by the spirit. It carries my being gracefully through consecrated customs. My spirit burps, When it burps the truth unveils. It accentuates ancestral lineage. In return I honour my deployment to administer affairs of both worlds. The spirit initiation resonates as gallons shrill sea shores. And it permanganates forces designated aggregately against omens From caves, riverbanks and isolated inlands. Ask anything, it echoes my forefathers' words It is the brisk foreseer. They foretell as a diviner. The Spirit embarked with chants and burning of essence, Bones that are blown and spoken to with no modernised accolades. It carries cracked feet reigning spiritual realms of thunderous vanity. The marks are broaden with healing casted Herbs that embedded inside kraals from years lived. Thus, the beads on my knuckles are ploughed in the wild chest of seasons. When Lwandle is not yet born but responded to the calling, Whilst his fallacious brother grazes alongside Shepherds in the fields. The Spirit is not a worn off face of antiquity That youthfully blazes in the glowing reddish fire presented by riverside shadows. One's revelation is free of spirit to appease. Mohau Mohlope Nigeria

# After Sunset

Somewhere in the middle of a tea plantation
The sun turns red in the green horizon
Bidding goodbye to the busy day
Children dart around as they play
Mothers bring in their full baskets
Men come in latest, in groups of three
Tired they sit under the Mugumo tree

A mother reprimands her children
For not closing the door of the goats' pen
A young man whispers to a young lady
Telling her that his new house is ready
The men under the tree talk in low voices
About their cruel employer and his vices
Smoke billows rise from the eleventh hut
A good sign that food is ready at last

Men crawl, each to his thatched hut
To eat the cassava meal before night rest
As they give counsel to their eldest sons
Because heritage is passed on to firstborns,
In the bush a leopard watches the village
Planning when its attack it will stage
But the warriors saw its footprints
Sharpened their spears and flints
To stop it at its own tracks and save the herd

Benny Wanjohi, Kenya



# **Africa**

It is the story of the bird labeled black As is their lucifer the king of dark Shipped to alien to decorate the stock Like a donkey day and night to work Looted its priceless resources in the dock And entirely its spirit of technology block Extremely tired left on the stroke This bird is Africa.

Rich in culture, history, hospitality But all they preach on her is poverty Blessed in beauty to the body figures **Enough to make the morning sun bow** Pyramids on her own built This mighty bird is Africa.

Fooling the world calling bird barbaric While everything bird does sound fantastic Talk will ever be, just as Africa will ever rock.

Gift Samwel Ngamanja, Tanzania.





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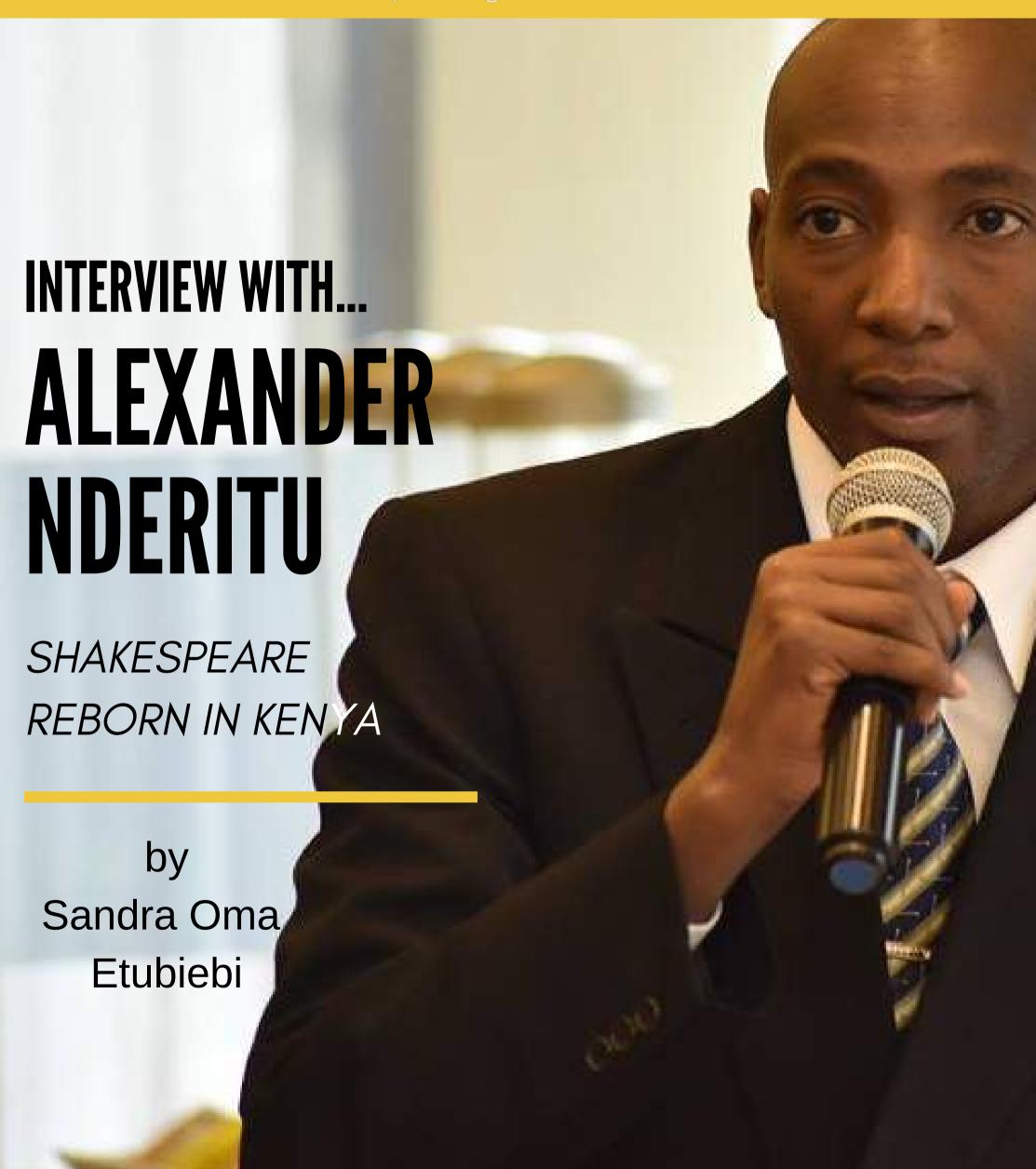
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What do you say to a colossus? How do you handle royalty? These and many more were the thoughts on my mind as I prepared to interview one of Africa's best: He is Africa's first digital Novelist with bragging rights to Africa's most-downloaded novel When the Whirlwind Passes. Interestingly tagged 'everyone's literary agent," this Novelist, Poet, Playwright, Editor, and Critic enjoys a global notoriety bought on by his love for storytelling and sheer force of focus. His life reads like a New York Times Bestselling Book series, from his iconic birthdate April 23rd –which is also William Shakespeare's birthday, UNESCO's World Book Day and Copyright Day – to his epic DNA Art vernacular poem piece, Mathabu ma Carey Francis' positioned to spark off a new premium DNA Art interest in the African literary space. He is much more than a handful. He is the first and the best. He is... **Alexander Nderitu**.

### Q: When and how did you discover your love for words, stories, and writing?

When I was below ten years of age, we lived near a Kenya National Library Service branch in Nyeri town. My siblings and I used to go there a lot and spend time in the children's section. What a wonderland it was! I discovered not just story books but colourful, well-illustrated books about dinosaurs, machines, space and so on – stuff that wasn't in our school books. I loved compelling stories. I had a wild imagination, which helps when you're reading stories and envisioning them in your brain. I was an avid reader in primary school as were most of my fellow pupils. It wasn't until I went to secondary school in a more rural area that I discovered that not everyone reads books and some don't even have access to libraries!

Around this time, I started to devour thrillers – mostly Cold War stuff – with abandon. My dad had novels by the likes of Frederick Forsyth in the house. I also liked Ian Fleming, Robert Ludlum and Adam Hall. From Form 1, my English essays used to be read out

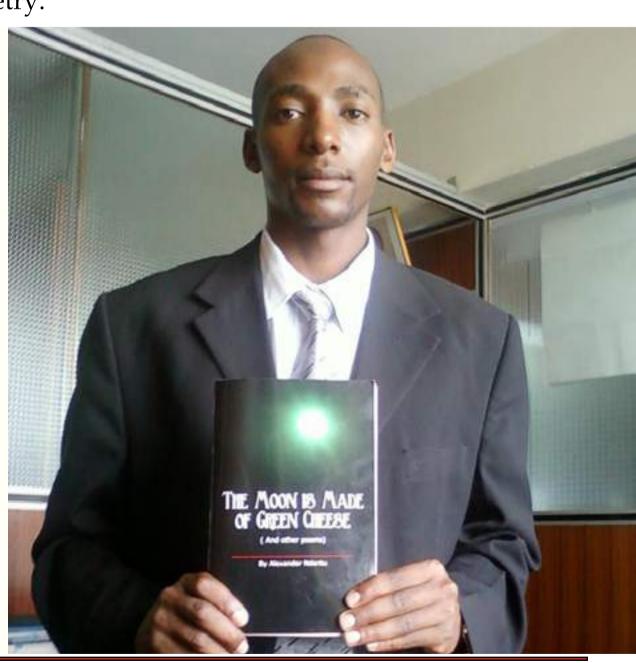
to my classmates. My Form 2 English teacher, a Mrs Ndung'u, used to read my essays to her Form 4 class! Once, after reading out an expository essay I had written, she told my classmates, 'I wish you could all write the way Alexander does!' and right then, I knew I was destined to be a writer. I was 16 years old.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Ndung'u passed away before my first novel, When the Whirlwind Passes, hit cyberspace in 2001, but it was dedicated to her memory. Incidentally, it was the first novel by an African to be written exclusively for Internet publication.

# Q: Everywhere, you are introduced as a novelist, poet, and playwright; tell us about your writings. What inspires your writing projects? How many of your works are out there?

I am a storyteller. Even my dreams have heroes, villains and a twist in the tail. That's not a joke. If I could download and publish my nightly dreams, I'd be on the New York Times Bestseller List by now, alongside James Patterson whose marketing acumen I admire a lot. When I write, I am just trying to communicate my ideas, stories and philosophies. I go from one genre to another like a person walking from one room to another in a big house. The poems are mostly 'narrative poems' and the fact that I was born on William Shakespeare's birthday fascinates and inspires me. I have a poem called 'The Dead Poet's Society' in which the persona is magically whisked to the underworld where he meets Shakespeare, St. Coleridge, Emily Dickinson, E.A. Poe and other historical poets and they help him improve his struggling poetry.

I have thus far authored 2 novels, 1 short story collection, 1 poetry collection and 6 stage plays. My work has also appeared in various magazines, journals and anthologies, including IFLAC Peace Anthology (2016), which is widely read in the Middle East, and Ars Artium, which is an Indian-based peer-reviewed international journal. My poem 'Someone in Africa Loves You' was published on BBC Commonwealth Postcards in 2014 and has been translated into Kiswahili, Arabic and Chinese. Another poem, 'Silver Limousine', about wealth inequality, was published by the Mex-



ican-based Ofi Press. I am also a literary/theatre critic and have written many articles for various publications and 4 scholarly research documents. One of them, 'Changing Kenya's Literary Landscape Part 2: Past, Present & Future', has been read in about 100 countries. My writings are quite diverse and are inspired by different things. When the Whirlwind Passes was inspired by a single newspaper story about the gangland-style murder of an Italian fashion baron and the subsequent trial of his glamorous ex-wife. My short story 'Harvest of Blood' was inspired by the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Inspiration can also come from the inside, especially when I am crafting poems. At such times, I am usually looking inward, kind of like thinking aloud.

# Q: Many good writers never get to their works out there in the limelight; tell us, how did your work spread? What was your journey to fame like?

Scottish writer Hugh C. Rae once said that it's easier to change sex than to get published! For many people in the Third World, that's probably true. A caller to a radio show called Kameme FM Book Club once said that he had been trying to get published for the last 20 years! In my case, I got lucky in that by the time I started writing manuscripts, the Internet had been invented and I was studying IT in college. I had also pestered my mom into subscribing to some foreign writing magazines, one of which was called The Writer.



From these magazines I learnt about the new 'e-book' technologies that were emerging in the West. In 1998, an e-novel titled Angels of Russia, had been nominated for a Booker Prize, which was a first for a virtual book. I began to wonder why we didn't have e-novels

in Africa where it's even harder to get published than in the West, and then it struck me – I'll just be the first one! Also, in the early 2000's, I joined an American website called AuthorsDen.com. It was such a great platform for authors and poets! Even then, it had a tiered membership system with paying members getting more visibility and features but the free basic membership allowed for multiple posts and feedback. This was before Wattpad, Goodreads, Facebook, Amazon Kindle, Worldreader and so on. It was such a rush to post a poem or article and then come back the next day and find a raft of comments and reviews from writers and readers from around the globe. Through

AuthorsDen.com, my short story 'Life as a Flower', which had previously been longlisted for a Douglas Coupland Short Story Award, made its way to an assessment exam in a US college. I continued using The Net to promote and distribute my work and pretty soon, I became very easy do discover online. I get a lot of emails and DM's from around the world.

### Q: Who and what were your literary influences growing up?

I have had so many influences. Again, because I write in different genres. I have a series of short spy stories that take place against the background of an African Cold War. The series began with my e-book Kiss, Commander, Promise. The inspiration for that was that I grew up reading Cold War thrillers – CIA vs KGB kind of stuff – and I always wanted to write such stories.

However, the Iron Curtain folded in 1989 after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and I was left without a Cold War to write about. So I created my own fictional one that only takes place in Africa and I love to write about it, to imagine new challenges for the central characters. Earlier on, I mentioned frequenting a library as a child. I can remember struggling with the word 'aeronautics' in National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Today, one of my best poems is about NASA. It's titled, 'Houston, Forget That Other Thing.' Had I been exposed to something else in the library, like Communism or motorsports or a certain religion, that's probably what I would have been writing about or pursuing as a career. The mind has no firewall.

# Q: Is there a singular factor you can highlight that contributed (or still contributes) to your global success as a writer?

Probably tenacity. If you stick to one thing, you master it and people perceive you as an expert in that field. If you keep hopping from one area of specialization to another, you'll never win awards or recognition in any of them 'cause you don't hang around long enough to make an impact or inspire others.

### Q: How do you think you are influencing others today; directly and indirectly?

I am well aware of my influence on the art scene at home and on African literature in general. That's why I received a 'Top 40 Under 40' award last year. E-novels were unheard of in my country until I wrote When the Whirlwind Passes. When I wrote my first non-fiction 'paper' on Kenyan literature, 'Changing Kenya's Literary Landscape (2012 – Onwards)', other creative writers started releasing non-fiction documents. The thing to note about that first 'paper' – it's actually about 200 pages long – is that it was written with a thriller writer's mentality. I didn't want even my non-fiction to be boring.



I am an official of Kenyan PEN and I created a Facebook group through which I post local and international opportunities and news to the over 1,000 scribes. Through this group, many writers have been able to attend workshops and enter competitions. Last year, one member won a prize and a trip to Italy. Before that, a female YA fiction writer got a paid trip to South Africa and was published by Worldreader. She now refers to me as 'everyone's literary agent.' The group also helps create a 'community feel': people post their works, comment, interact and get updated on where the events are. I am trying to create a 'community feel' within the theatre community but this is a lot harder than one would expect. There is a lot of competition and suspicion. Theatre isn't doing well and the people involved in it are divided into little groups like islands in a stream. Even popular shows are lucky to be half full. Kenyans prefer watching DVDs or TV or NetFlix or YouTube or playing video games. A Managing Director of Phoenix Players, Kenya's biggest repertory theatre, once said that he wanted Phoenix to be Kenya's Broadway. Today, Phoenix itself is out of business. Incidentally, I am the Kenyan Editor of TheTheatreTimes.com, which is a global theatre news portal. As a critic, I have consistently complained about urban theatre's domination by foreign stage plays like Joseph and The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat and Jesus Christ Superstar. I didn't even watch the recent run of Sarafina or publish any critique. Sarafina was a Broadway musical in the eighties and a movie in the nineties. In the early 2000s it was staged in Kenya by Sterling Entertainment. I don't want to see it again. I want to watch fresh African productions, preferably some in indigenous languages.

Q: Do you, have you, or will you teach writing/storytelling to those who'd love to follow in your stops?

in your steps?

I have given talks at universities, literary events and writers' groups, and been involved in various mentorship programmes – like the Daystar Creatives Academy - and literary initiatives like ANASOMA. The ANASOMA project was a writing-and-training initiative by Worldreader and AMKA which is a forum for upcoming scribes and critics. The five eventual winners won accolades and USD \$1,000 each. New writers were discovered.



# Q: Tell us about "Mathabu ma Carey Francis" ...the poem and the spectacular DNA Art, which has your poem etched into a backdrop of your actual DNA sequence. That's epic!

I first heard of DNA art while watching a motivational video clip by a co-founder of DNA 11, a leading company in that field. The process is painless but rather expensive. You swab the inside of your cheek with some cotton wool and then send the sample, along instructions about the size and colour you want the canvas to be, and then you wait for the 'portrait' to be shipped to you. No-one can ever replicate the resultant artwork – it's as unique as your fingerprint. I decided that I would one day get one. Around the same time, I had been planning to write some poetry in my mother tongue. It bothered me that in all my years of writing, I had never written in an African language. I decided to combine the two concepts - DNA art and vernacular literature - and come up with something truly unique and newsworthy. I wrote the poem, titled 'Mathabu Ma Carey Francis' ('The Mathematics of Carey Francis') in my native Gikũyũ language. Gikũyũ is not a national language but it has millions of speakers. It's like Yoruba or Hausa or Igbo in Nigeria. Ngũgi wa Thiong'o, President Uhuru Kenyatta, Australian Senator Lucy Gichühi and late Nobel prize winner Wangari Maathai all come from the Agikũyũ community. The oil-on-canvas artwork consisting of my first-ever vernacular poem painted onto a background of my actual DNA sequence will be auctioned at a later date. The minimum bidding price is USD \$10,000. In 2001, I introduced e-novels to Kenya and this year, I have done the same with DNA art.

# Q: If you were ever invited to give a one minute speech (about 130 words) to prepare to-day's writers for tomorrow's readers, what would you say?

Writing is not for everyone. Just like not everyone can run like Usain Bolt or play tennis like Serena Williams. It's looks easy from the outside, but it's not. However, if you are determined to be a writer, if you feel that you life will not be complete without it, then this is actually the best time in history to write. Embrace technology. It's so easy to research, work

on a word processor, contact publishers and agents and publish online. Read widely. Any writer who doesn't read is faking the funk. Attend literary events such as festivals, book fairs, readings, salons, book clubs, and lectures. Interact. Network with others in order to get information. Join groups like PEN International and ANA in Nigeria. The mysterious solitary scribe is a dying breed. And finally, write. Just start no matter how bad the writing looks at first. It will get better as you go along.

### Q: What do you think about WSA, so far? Any advice?

I downloaded a couple of past WSA issues. I particularly liked the September one. There were quite a number of new voices from Africa featured there, which is great. Hopefully, WSA will become a launch pad for new talent. One thing you can consider is placing it on a Print-On-Demand system like Lulu.com. That way, anyone in the world can order a print copy and it won't cost you a thing. Each issue should also have an ISSN number. They are magazine-and-journal equivalents of ISBN numbers. Utilize social media in your promotion. You can even tease upcoming issues e.g. 'In next month's issue – A Step-by-Step Guide on How to Get A Literary Agent' or 'Next month – Our Biggest Interview Yet!'. Also, notify readers (who are most likely aspiring writers) of trends and opportunities e.g. writing contests, call-outs for academic papers and so on.



WSA is honoured to have our own Shakespeare share his life and wisdom with WSA members, readers, and teeming followers from around the world. Mr. Alexander Nderitu carries with simplicity a legacy so endearing, challenging and inspiring –he made handling royalty a breeze, and words flowed freely with this larger-than-life Colossus. - Sandra Oma Etubiebi



# ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL JOURNAL

The official quarterly publication of the Ethiopian Medical Association



Ethiopia's oldest medical journal, *The Ethiopian Medical Journal (EMJ)* is the official organ of the Ethiopian Medical Association (EMA). The journal first appeared under the title of both Amharic "P太子P太子 为为罗尔 尹比小" and English "Ethiopian Medical Journal" on July 1962. Since then, the quarterly journal played an important role to record the progress of scientific medicine, and to assist in rendering the practice of medicine in all its branches and in the academic of medicine in Ethiopia and Africa at large.

# ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL JOURNAL

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EDITORIAL

TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE, NOT TUBERCULOSIS

ORIGINAL ARTICLES

LATENT TUBERCULOSIS AMONG ADULT ETHIOPIAN PATIENTS AT CHEST CLINIC, TIKURANBESSA SPECIALIZED HOSPITAL, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA.

BURDEN OF TUBERCULOSIS AMONG STUDENTS IN TWO ETHIOPIAN UNIVERSITIES.

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CASE SERIES

THREE SIBLINGS WITH ANDROGEN INSENSITIVITY SYNDROME

ASE REPORT

RECURRENT MYXOMA ARISING FROM MULTIPLE CARDIAC CHAMBERS WITH SYSTEMIC EMBOLIZATION.

ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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# LUBACHA SCOOPS UP THE 2018 BURT AWARD FOR YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE



On September 27, 2018, Lubacha Deus Abdul won the Tanzanian Burt Young Adults African Prize. The winning title *If She were Alive* is his second novel.

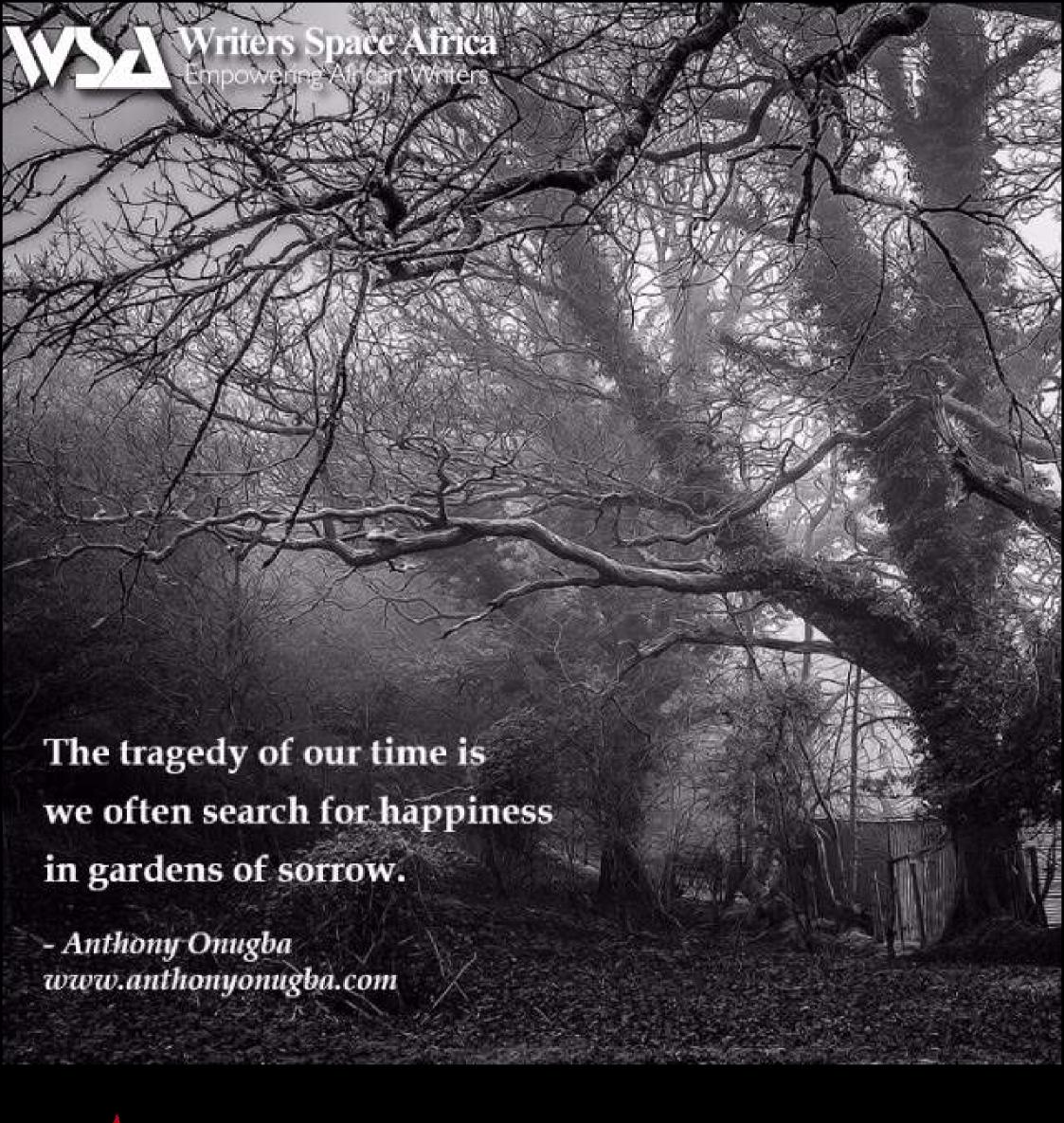
The award marks a height in the career of this young Tanzanian writer who expressing his overflowing joy said, "Winning the Burt Award is one of the major achievements in my career. I am humbled and motivated to write more books for young

adults."

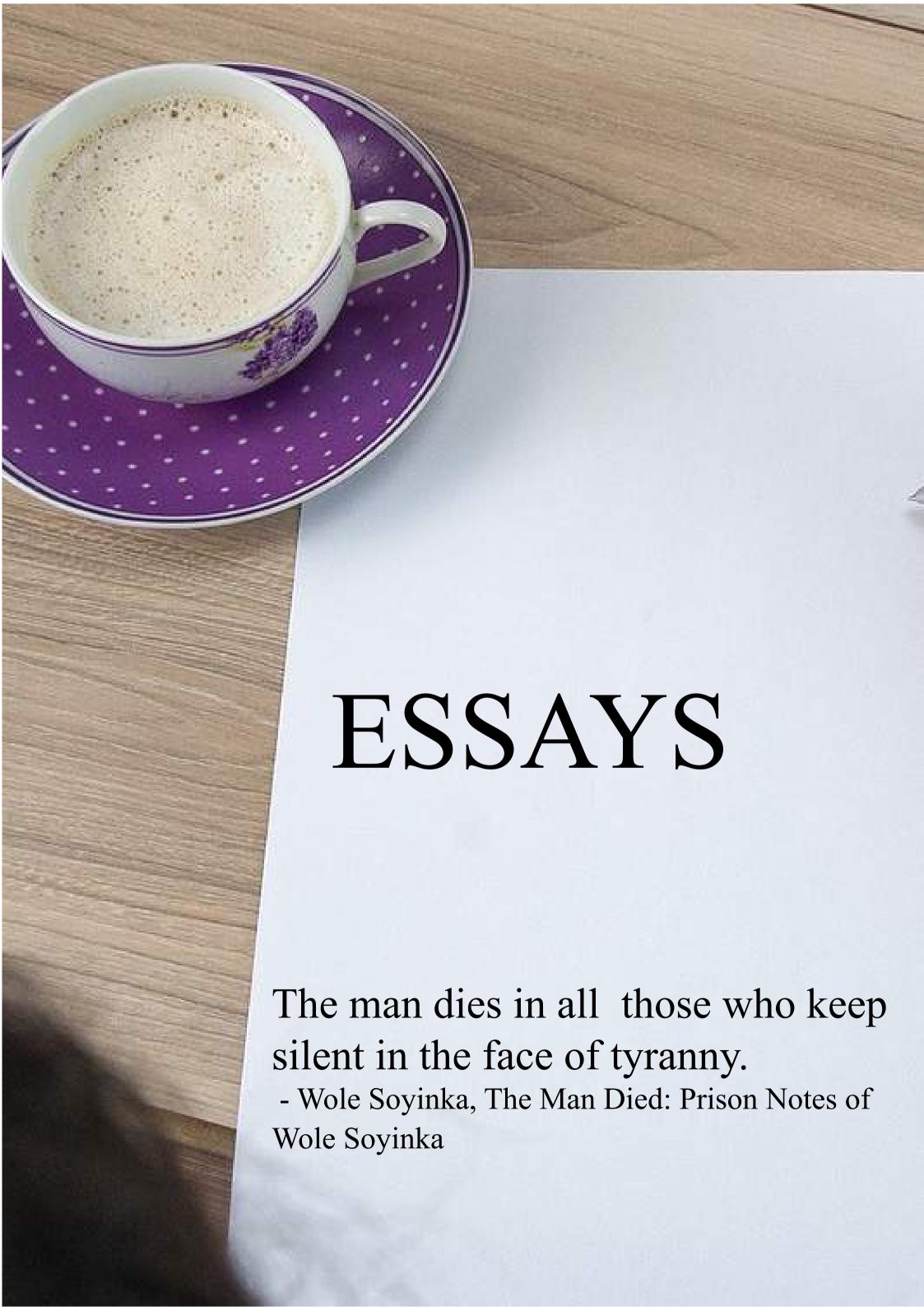
Speaking further on his motivation via his membership with Writers Space

Africa (WSA), Lubacha said "I am honored to be part of the winning team. WSA has been a fantastic writer's community for me as I keep learning and developing my skills through its programs and numerous workshops. Writers Space Africa has been an amazing spotlight for my career development.' Two other members from WSA, Nahida Esmail and Elias Mutani, were finalists at this years award. They are also previous winners of the award. BURT AWARDS is a literary prize recognizing excellence in Young adult literature.











# AFRICA'S MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

The manufacturing Industry in Africa has been struggling in darkness for so long without it coming out to see the light of day. There have been so many instances of scientists and creative thinkers from out of Africa who rose to the occasion and solved some of our problems in our own land because we thought we were not capable of doing anything profitable on our own. And So I have been asking myself 'are we really independent and out of slavery? Even if we are politically independent, are we mentally, socially and economically independent?' Because our taste for foreign goods is always on the increase, we have blindfolded our eyes to our locally made products. We assume that since they are locally made, they lack quality, beauty, completeness and luxury. But if we do not cherish what we have, who will?

Easy access to quality infrastructure is vital for the development of the manufacturing sector. Transport infrastructure is the most important tool in manufacturing since it creates a smooth and easy access of the manufactured goods to customers increasing the level of

patronizing of the goods. Also access to reliable and sufficient supply of water and electricity is the key to the production process to go on perfectly. However, these areas are where Africa finds challenges in providing. According to the "Quality Transport Infrastructure" index, only 10 African countries are ranked among the top half globally (i.e.: they are in the top 74). But in the "Quality of Electricity Supply" index, only 5 African countries are above the global Median. South Africa has good transport infrastructure but lacks electricity. Namibia, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritius, and Seychelles are now ranked to be part of the Global Competitiveness Index in Africa in terms of quality electricity supply and quality transport infrastructure in the top 90 African countries ranking.

The second most important tool for production is the employees. Therefore the skills and competence of the local workforce should be carefully considered in the manufacturing sector's development. Gambia, Seychelles, Mauritius, Kenya, and Rwanda are countries that have the best education systems on the continent, according to the Global Competitiveness Index (QCI). These countries are among the best placed countries providing companies with skilled and productive workers. Kenya's manufacturing sector contributed an estimated 10.6% to GDP in 2013. The country is one of the top exporters of manufactured goods in the SSA region. Kenya's manufacturing sector is stronger because she has a relatively skilled labor force and is also open to innovation. Kenya is ranked 53rd in the innovation and sophisticated factors pillar of the 2013-2014 GCI of the WEF.

Ethiopian ministry of industry and trade is currently involved in numerous projects to increase manufacturing revenue through foreign trade, promoting investment, supplying inputs, improving custom services as well as the global market relationships. To encourage the growth of the sector, the government is offering tax breaks and competitive interest rates on businesses. Nigeria is faced with electricity crisis in the manufacturing sector. In 2010, the government raised the age limit on imports of used vehicles from 10 to 15 years, and gradually decreasing tariffs on fully assembled imports. The government is now concerned with the development of the domestic industry and therefore has passed a policy called the Automobile Industrial Policy Development which was approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC) in 2013.

Morocco is also developing interest in manufacturing industries, such as aeronautics, automobile manufacturing and electronics. The government is also supporting the growth of the automotive sector by offering fiscal incentives and tax exemptions in free zones. Ac-

cording to Economist Intelligence Unit, Morocco assembled 156,000 vehicles in 2013, which made Morocco the second largest supplier of vehicles in Africa after South Africa. According to the Foreign Investment Promotion Agency (FIPA), there were 312 foreign mechanical and metallurgical companies and 263 electronics companies operating in Tunisia at the end of 2012.

Ghana has a good and investor-friendly climate. In the midst of high inflation rate as well as interest rates, sharp depreciation of the cedi (currency) and power shortages, technology is still finding its way through the struggles and problem facing the country. Kantanka Group of companies has risen to the occasion of fitting into the loophole of providing some solutions to the problems in terms of medicine, construction, quarry and technology. Because of the good work of Kantanka Group of companies, Kantanka Automobile won the African Prestigious Award for best car brand in Africa in 2018.

These technological innovations have set Ghana to the process of being part of the countries in Africa that are capable of producing technological goods.

BY Kweku Sarkwa, The Romantic Writer Ghana





December 2007 to early 2008 was a sad historic period to individuals in Kenya. Not all may have lost loved ones or properties, but almost all witnessed the change that prevailed when the skies turned red in a country where those of my age group had never experienced such instability. People died. Others to date have never been traced. Food supplies were scarce. Kerosene was nowhere near home and for almost two months I remember everything being hurried at home so that nightfall would find us done. The nights meant night-darkness and no trace of any light. My own father, during that whole period, went to a place unknown just because he had been mistaken to have supported a certain party during the elections.

It must have been difficult for him, for when he came back home with a bundle of newspapers after his mysterious disappearance, he threw them on the table and sighed. "That man has saved us," he said. I have never got the chance to ask him who the man was, but his next statement has been forcing me each day to get a piece of paper and a pen to write. "Who amongst you can tell a story well?" he asked, having been that kind of a little boy who always made people sit down and listen to the lies I had, everybody turned towards me and there and then, I was commissioned to tell the many stories of my father's encounters and stories of those long gone, and of things I had not been present to see happen.

"People may forget, generations to come may never know that once the country was on fire." Papa said. "Unless we think at the same time rethink in using stories of such history and cultures long forgotten to preserve the name of our clan, tribe, country and our continent at large." Was all he said that evening, and as series of after dinner narrations began, his old graying face silently pleaded with me to never forget what had happened. He bestowed on me the responsibility to tell stories, from the myths, folktales and now contemporary and historic stories.

Now, when all my siblings turned to look at me that night when my father needed a storyteller, it

was not because I had a storyline enough to narrate or even write, but they wanted me to use the skills of storytelling I had to offer- a platform, to tell the new stories dad had brought home that night. Through stories I have known of the Biafra in Nigeria, I have known of what happened in Cuba and of so much that Africans went through during the struggle for independence. Through contemporary literature I know of the Igbo, Yoruba and other African communities with diverse cultural cosmologies and the perspectives connected to them. But still I have a feeling that there is still much in Africa that needs to be discussed and given way to see the light of day.

Yes, the world knows that we were colonized, the world knows the struggle that Africans went through from the introduction of religion and colonialism, but does it know the pain, what the intertribal conflict between the Kabras and the nandi over the escarpments in Kuvasali-Kakamega county-brought? Does it know that the pain the individuals had after losing loved ones in the series of terror attacks in Kenya? The media might have done its best to tell of it, but the issue here is to go into the in depths of fiction and memoir narrations, testimonies the media might have never got and those the cameras might have never caught. The culture those pioneers might have never told of, the tribes the world might have never heard of, they for sure deserve representation.

Every time I deliver a talk, lecture or speech, I always share experiences of my life, my family, tribe and the world at large. No one came home to interview my father about his encounters in exile, but because of telling the stories I have, it is known that even after being said the country was on fire, a hopeless child sat in the embrace of his mother waiting for his father to come back home. It is known that a man who had been buried after meeting his death on the streets of Nairobi had walked home after three months only to say he was not the one they buried.

Chinelo Orkparanta the author of Under the Udala Tree uses the story of Biafra to tell the existence of group of LGBT women who survived brutality over their sexual orientation. Chimamanda Adichie in Americana uses a story of love to tell the story about race, hair and immigration. In Chinua Achebe's book, There was Once a Country; a personal history of the Biafra, he notes that no one would tell his story of Nigeria, the story of Africa the same way he could do it, the story of life coming from within him and carefully interweaves the words from sharing his own life story to the experiences of the Biafra.

In retelling our stories I hope it will open the world where we can collectively get and understand the deeper meaning of what is told about us. Use the existing ones to tell the others. They might have been already told and said, but what does retelling mean? It is the call that the existence of what is known can be used to accommodate that which still is held in the silence of the people. We should tell many stories, for through them we gain knowledge, we gain Wisdom, we gain heights unto which our own definition is set and that is what Achebe, Soyinka, Chimamanda, Ekwenzi and many others did for Nigeria, that is what Nelson Mandela did for south Africa, that is what Ngugi, Oludhe and Grace Ogot did for Kenya and that is what we can do for our Africa.

Kelvin Shacile, Kenya

# Happy World Arthritis Day!! 12th October 2018.



ONE YEAR OF ENGAGING ARTHRITIS
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Acacia Bookstore is calling published African authors to sell their eBooks on the Acacia Bookstore

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# DAUGHTER OF AFRICA



Kundai dove into the under bush behind Grandma's house. Her sixteenth birthday was ruined anyway so she cared less that her skin was getting scratched by the roots of various wildflowers. Her teacher at the academy in England had given the class an assignment to complete over the vacation. She was supposed to find historical female role models that she aspired to and write an essay on them to present before the class next semester. Her father had promised her a trip around Europe, visiting museums and important sites so she could gather information for her assignment. She was also counting it as a present for her all important sixteenth birthday, instead they had come to this backwater little village in Africa.

Although she had been born in Africa, her family had moved to England when she was a baby. Grandma kept trying to teach her "African stuff" which only made Kundai more sullen. How could she find a role model amongst slaves and ignorant people? Why couldn't anyone understand that she was from a generation that appreciated and fully embraced the Western culture? Her phone didn't even get service in this remote place so she couldn't even placate her delicate palette with senseless YouTube videos or chat with her friends. Instead she had to sit and listen to Grandma rumbling on about an age long past and tales long forgotten.

Burying her head in her hands, Kundai took a long sigh. "Why are you crying?" a highly amused disembodied voice asked. Kundai looked around but saw nothing beyond the

thicket of the bush and the giant oak tree blocking her view. She shrugged, deciding she must be losing her mind since she had been deprived of civilization. "You are very sullen for such a pretty girl," the sing-song voice came again. Kundai jolted to her feet, following the sound to the giant oak tree. "I am not pretty, not yet anyway. When I'm eighteen Dad will finally let me wear coloured contacts and put in weaves in my hair, then I'll be pretty." She didn't know why she was replying to a person she couldn't see but it felt nice to talk about her frustrations. She tugged at her kinky and unruly curls in annoyance.

After rounding the oak tree twice, Kundai decided she had indeed lost her mind. She kicked the tree in frustration. "I hate this place and I hate this stupid tree," she seethed. "Why do you repay my hospitality with cruelty?" the voice was no longer amused. Kundai started to back away but her converse shoes were caught up in a tangle of roots and she couldn't get free. She closed her eyes. "Not real. Too many movies," she mumbled to herself like a mantra. "You disregard your history for fiction, do you?" the voice sounded well and truly pissed now. "Just a voice in a tree," she mumbled, trying to work the knots at her feet loose.

A figure stepped from behind the oak tree. He was tall and stick thin with skin like polished mahogany and eyes as black as the midnight sky. He was dressed in none descript garb that looked suspiciously like tree bark. There was something of the earth about him, something deeply primal that it made every survival instinct in Kundai scream at her to run. He was a being of magic, long forgotten ruins and something entirely playful but easy to anger. "Tell you what, daughter of Africa. If you can call me by my true name I shall let you go," the figure said, drumming webbed fingers together.

Kundai thought she would pass out or wake up from the nightmare but nothing happened. She tried screaming for Grandma but nothing happened either. "I don't know you. Are you even real!" she pleaded. "I'll give you a clue. But if you fail I shall take you into the oak to teach you who you are, deal?" The amusement was back in that wild sing song voice. Kundai nodded, looking around her for anything to dig herself out. "I am an African god," the figure said, sounding immensely pleased. "How helpful," Kundai scoffed, rolling her eyes. "There is no such thing." The two obsidian orbs the figure had for eyes flashed at her. "Is that your final answer?" he asked, prowling towards her. "I don't know who you are," Kundai was ashamed to find she was crying.

"Obviously, you don't even know who you are," he flicked a wrist and her feet came free. The girl turned to run but instead found her feet leading her straight to the oak tree. She had no control over her own body. She screamed as the tree yawned and an opening started to swallow her whole. When Kundai finally stopped screaming and opened her eyes, she found herself standing on a hill, below her in the valley was a clearing. In the clearing

there was a tribal gathering. The men and women before her wore animal skins and had tribal markings on their bodies. Kundai turned and ran blindly until she noticed that no one seemed able to see her. She stopped running and hiccupped, fear running rampantly through her system. "Please, I'm scared," she begged, squeezing her eyes shut.

Kundai felt something shift, as if the being had been holding his anger above her and now it had dispersed. She opened her eyes to a dark scene. A fire danced in the centre of a great village. A small gathering sat around the fire whispering merrily together. A stone carved chair that Kundai could only call a throne was at the head of the gathering. A woman sat on it. She was exactly like Kundai, black, kinky hair, high cheekbones, full lips but that was where the similarities ended. This woman was beautiful, so comfortable in her own skin that she practically glowed. The crowd around adored her and it was obvious she was their monarch.

With eyes full of wonder, Kundai watched as the scene before her changed. She saw women just like her as they built glorious kingdoms, led great armies, made life changing policies, were great mothers and matriarchs. She saw warriors who protected these women and held them in high regard. She saw cultures preserved and passed down even when these empires were invaded. She saw fierce kings and warlords who fought for their people. Remaining unseen she passed through various tribes. One had an army of only female warriors. Before she knew it, Kundai was ensnared. "Too fast," she cried out as the images spun leaving her head reeling. The images stopped flashing and the clearing stood empty.

The being at the oak tree had tricked her, she finally realized. This was no punishment. It was some elaborate way to bring her in touch with her heritage. Normally, Kundai would baulk at such open manipulation but it was too late now. She was hooked on the magic and the sheer brilliance of a people she had only viewed as slaves and uneducated. In wonder, she touched her curly and gravity defiant hair with a sense of pride for the first time in her life. It was staggering the amount of knowledge she did not know about her people. "We built our own empires," she whispered in wonder. "I come from women who built empires and led armies!" Suddenly the being was besides her, smiling indulgently the way a father might smile at a naïve child.

"Let me tell you a tale of a girl like you who became a great queen. She's a favorite of mine," the being who called himself a god extended his arms and the clearing shifted before him. Tendrils of power rose like smoke from his webbed fingers. As he spoke it was as if his words conjured a landscape of events and people. A woman appeared before Kundai leading men into battle. She was barely coiled power. As Kundai watched the woman expanded her empire and fortified its borders. "She is expanding and fortifying

the walls," the being stated the obvious, watching her closely as if waiting for something. Kundai frowned at him until it hit her. "She is an architect!" she exclaimed with shock and excitement. The being threw his head back and laughed. "Amina of Zazzau was not just a warrior princess, she was a great architect. A woman ahead of her time, wouldn't you say?"

"Come," the god said swinging his hands in a half arch. "Let me show you the glory of kings. She's my favorite." Kundai carefully stepped closer to the being. Pyramids rose before Kundai's eyes. "Oh, is this Egypt?" she cried excitedly. The being cast her a look that silenced her. "See the woman walking along the Nile," as he spoke the scene became closer and clearer. The woman he spoke of was magic and beauty given flesh. "That's the last pharaoh of Egypt. High priestess, sorceress and daughter of Isis," he continued. Kundai watched as the girl who became pharaoh at eighteen fought famine, established Egypt, reigned and mothered children. She was a naval commander at the helm of the fleet of Egypt, an author of medical journals and she spoke multiple languages. Kundai watched through her loves and her pain until the pharaoh went to her watery tomb.

While Kundai's head was still reeling, the being swept his arms before them once more and the scene began to change. Before them a woman faced off the horde of Roman soldiers. She watched as the roman army was pulled away and the woman led her warriors to protect her kingdom. She was a strong warrior with cunning and precision in her strategies. "Who is she?" Kundai whispered reverently. The being beamed proudly. "Candace was always my favorite. The Empress of Ethiopia was a force to be reckoned with," pride rang in every syllable he uttered. "Empress? But she led the army..." Kundai started to say. None of these women were what they seemed to be at first. "She was also a general," the being cut her off.

"Surprised, are you? I must show you another then. She led the last known war but really the women you hail from have never stopped fighting," the being said, the laughter gone from his voice. There in the clearing appeared a woman, a queen from her bearing. Her king was captured by men in a uniform even Kundai recognized as that of the British colonists. It made her incredibly sad that she could recognize the colonists but had failed to recognize her own ancestors. She watched as the queen, who could have broken down and hid herself away, rose and rallied men to stand against the British. Her own chiefs were ready to accept defeat and she stepped up and offered them some of her faith and strength. She kept her enemies at bay, risking her life to buy her people time and freedom. When she fell and the British captured her and cast her out of her own land, Kundai wept.

"Tell me her name," she begged the being. "Yaa Asentewa of Ashanti. Now you see why she is my favorite," he said, attempting a smile that fell short. "Why don't we learn about

this in school? Why do they make it seem like we were living in hovels before we were colonized?" the girl demanded, a sudden rage rising inside of her. "You can't rely on other people to tell you your own story child. It never goes well. Someone is bound to forget to tell you that you come from royalty," he said, spreading his webbed fingers and shrugging. "Why didn't you do anything? You have power. I mean, we are practically time travelling." Now her voice held a tone of accusation. "Every power has its place. I am a storyteller. I followed my people across oceans. I helped those who stayed," the being told her solemnly.

"What good are stories to someone who has lost everything?" Kundai cried, only half aware that shouting at a being of such power was a bad idea. The god smiled indulgently at her again, the way Grandma did when Kundai missed the point of something. "Storytelling is a powerful magic child. When one has lost everything, a story has the power to bring them hope. There is nothing as powerful as hope. Give a man in chains hope and he is no longer a slave," he told her slowly. When Kundai said nothing but simply nodded, the being laughed in delight. "Come now, let me take you home before nightfall otherwise your grandmother might bring an axe to the oak tree," he said in a highly amused voice.

"You know Grandma?" Kundai asked, taken aback. "Oh, yes. She's a favorite of mine your grandmother," the being told her, a glint in his eyes. "You say that about all the girls," Kundai laughed. She was either crazy or she was making jokes with an African god. When the being extended his webbed hand, the girl did not hesitate. With her hand clasped tightly he swung around and suddenly they were stepping out of the oak tree. "Go and make your own stories child but don't do it out of fear or a need to blend in." She nodded quietly and watched as he seemed to blend back into the oak. "You are made of earth, fire and the spirit of women who led armies and kept mysteries," his disembodied voice rang over her. Blood and fire had paid for the mahogany skin she called home and Kundai made up her mind that she would honor it from that day forth.

Kundai walked back into the house and headed straight for the kitchen following the scent of African dishes. Grandma was standing at the kitchen island dishing out delicacies into bowls. "Grandma, if you don't mind, I'd like to hear those stories now," Kundai said in a timid voice. The old woman looked up, her smile reaching to her eyes. "I see you've met Anansi," Grandma said.

by Kimberly Chirodzero, Zimbabwe



# RUNAWAY CHILD BRIDE

Alhaji Yusuf walked into the living room with fury. Everyone was seated on the cane chairs, some clasping their faces in their palms and some with lips separated from one another in an o-shape. His eyes trailed the exit by the left of the poorly built bungalow. He knew she had fled and he also knew where to find her.

"Allah ka Taimake Maryam. God help Mariam," he said with clenched teeth, inhaling and exhaling violently.

Feet trembling, heart pounding, hands fidgeting, jaws jittering, Maryam zig-zagged down laterite road on barefoot. Her feet stamped as she made swift moves towards the mosque; her breath, one could almost hear. She was ready to escape the tragedy about to befall her.

"I'll find her and talk sense into her mai gi da," Hajiya Kudirat pleaded as she swooped to lay hold of the hem of Alhaji Yusuf's jalabia. He preferred to get rid of Maryam rather than bear the disgrace that she had brought upon him. With a machete in his hand, he stared at Hajiya Sekinat, his senior wife who cast her gaze to the roughly cemented ground, and then,

dashed out in search of the fifteen year old teenager.

Maryam was panting. She had reached the mosque twenty minutes earlier but the fear within kept her panting like she was still at race track speed. She squeezed the small white sheet of paper as she lowered herself to the ground and bowed her head to pray. Her eyes were closed but her lips didn't move until a minute went by.

"Allahu akbar." She could say no more than that. She lifted herself off the ground and straightened the paper in her palm. Hajiya Sekinat had scribbled the name of an NGO that catered for the girl-child and handed it to her. The handwriting was poorly structured, so she strained her eyes to read it.

Help Our Girls Malik Foundation

14, Mararaba avenue, off Polo Club, Dadinkowa, Maiduguri.

She didn't know how long it would take but she was determined to go there. As she approached the exit of the mosque, she peeped through the door frame to look left and right. When she caught no glimpse of any familiar face, she adjusted the veil around her head to shield her eyes and mouth. With her head facing downward, she hurried out.

Maryam was way too educated to allow her dreams to die in the bedroom chambers of an imam. "I have eight sons whose education I have to cater for. The rest of you five girls, I will marry off," Alhaji Yusuf once declared. He said that women did not need so much education as their duties were basically to satisfy their husbands. So, he married Aisha off the first daughter first. She was the most beautiful of all the girls. The women of the house had teased her that she was lucky to be getting married to a rich farmer. Only Hajiya Sekinat, Aisha's mother, pleaded with their husband to give her a chance to finish her secondary education but he didn't heed. Lucky. Lucky. Lucky. That was the word that reigned in the house until the marriage rites took place. It was some sort of consolidation to make her feel like she was not missing out on anything. He'll send you to school. That was what they told her. Five years met Aisha with four children and a heavy stomach. At twenty-two, she now looked like a woman in her thirties. Her beauty gone just like her dreams.

Fatima the second daughter wanted to be a teacher like Aisha. She pleaded with Alhaji Yusuf that she would marry Shekau if allowed to finish secondary school. She was not the brilliant type but she loved the idea of going to school; it was her right too. Hajiya Sekinat pleaded again on behalf of the sixteen year old but Alhaji Yusuf hit the left side of her cheek with a stick which left a scar on her face and pulled a tooth. Fatima was married off to the suya man. Everyone saw the look on her face the day she was given out. It told of a young girl whose hopes of being better than her mother and a voice to reckon with in the academic world dashed. Shekau never made positive comments about Fatima except that she looked

like one who would be as delicious as fura da nono on the night of their wedding.

For Maryam, Alhaji Yusuf was not worthy to be called a father. He often strutted his lean tall and dark self about as if he was passing a message to the women in the house of his superiority as a man. Bilikisu his third daughter was raped to death by her husband when she refused to perform her marital duties for days, insisting she was only a teenager. She bled until she died.

And so, when Hajiya Kudirat, the second wife and mother of Maryam, informed Maryam that the imam to whom she was the alkawarin kamu, had come for her hand in marriage, she sought the counsel of Hajiya Sekinat who had promised to rescue her from the trauma of child marriage. The imam attended her christening and seeing her beauty as an infant, told Alhaji Yusuf that she was going to be his fifth wife when she clocked fifteen. He paid her dowry early enough. Hajiya Sekinat, half-schooled, wanted to see all the girls educated but she couldn't stop what was happening to them. Her decision to rescue Maryam was born out of personal experience. She was forced into marriage at age thirteen and ended her education at age fourteen due to child birth, despite her love for books. She saw herself in Maryam's eyes; Maryam was the scholar among the five girls who hoped to be a lawyer and human rights activist in future. So, when she heard about the NGO for the girl child, she took down the address and saved it for the day Maryam would need it.

Maryam did not make any fuss when Hajiya Kudirat broke the news of marriage to her. "Say no word until the day of the marriage rites," Hajiya Sekinat had warned her, "I'll tell you where to go when the day comes. Then, you'll run as fast as you can." Thus, Maryam's attitude was unsuspecting in contrast with her sisters' reactions. And

when the day came, she ran as fast as she could away from the presence of her would-be husband and in-laws, bringing shame to her father but securing her future. At HELP OUR GIRLS MALIK FOUNDATION, her education would be sure and her dreams of fighting for the rights of women would be achieved.

By Gabrielina Gabriel-Abhiele, Nigeria





### CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Writers Space Africa (WSA), an international literary magazine, published by the African Writers Development Trust, is calling for submissions for its 23rd edition under the theme "Tears of the African Child". For this edition, we are including a section for children. We encourage the submission of poetry, short stories, etc from children below 18 years of age. There is no word restriction.

In addition, we're accepting literary works from writers above 18 years in the following categories:

Articles/Essays – 1,200 Words maximum

Flash Fiction - 300 words maximum

Poetry – 1 poem, maximum of 24 lines

Short Stories - 2,500 words maximum

Jokes – 1 joke per writer

Artworks - maximum 3 artworks in high resolution

Personalised quotation – 1 quotation and must be the original work of the author

Please note the following:

You're only entitled to submit for one category.

The Deadline for submission is October 12, 2018.

Due to the number of entries we receive, only selected authors will be published in the issue and online.

The author retains copyright.

Your work must be thoroughly edited before being uploaded.

We will in turn edit selected entries to suit the publication.

The magazine will be released on the 1st of November, 2018 on our website To submit, please visit www.writersspace.net to upload your work through our submission portal.

We ONLY accept MS word documents.

Artworks can be sent in either JPEG or PNG formats.

Entries can also be mailed to wsa@writersspace.net as an attachment.

November 2018 Edition Issue 23

Empowering African Writers

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Zambia

BENNY WANJOHI

Kenya

RIDWAN ADELAJA

Somaliland

OLOFINNIKA OMOBOLAJI

Nigeria

SINASO MXAKAZA

South Africa

OMADANG YOWASI

Uganda

NNANE NTUBE Cameroon

REFILOE THATO

Motswana

MUHAMMED TAMBEDOU (HAMLET KID)

The Gambia

NAMARA LWANSA

Tanzania

MEAZA AKLILU HADERA

Ethiopia

and many more...

Sandra Unlimited

The Billionaire Writer

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# Featured Writers

Muyambo Mwenda, Zambia Refiloe Thato, Motswana Brian Ngoma, Zambia Mylord Zulu,Zambia Benny Wanjohi - Kenya

Deliliy vvalijoili - Keliya Fabianisa Makala - Maka

Tshiamiso Makole – Motswana

Muhammed Tambedou. (Hamlet kid), The Gambia.

Ridwan Adelaja, Somaliland

Nnane Ntube, Cameroon

Petronella Nyirenda, Zambia

Cynthia Katlego Matale, Motswana

Omadang Yowasi, Uganda

Sinaso Mxakaza, South Africa

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Namara Lwansa, Tanzania

Lisa Ndobho, Tanzania

Kelvin J. Shachile, Kenya

Robert Banda Jere, Zambia

Mbianyor Bill- Erich Nkongho Agboryah, Cameroon

Nonhlanhla Radebe, South Africa

Abu Blessing Nne, Nigeria

Meaza Aklilu Hadera, Ethiopia

Muthoni Nyaga, Kenya

# EDITORIAL

# There are two ways of spreading light; to be the candle or the mirror that reflects. - Edith Wharton

Hurray, hurray! The time we've all been waiting for is finally here. The conference!

The D-day that is on the 1st of December, we all shall be basking in the gift of life, under the glorious skies of Africa, proudly wearing the theme "Re-imagining African literature: New voices, New narratives in the fight for the girl child.

Now as per my culture, we give 3 ululations for the girl child. So here goes, Ariririi, aririii, aririii! Whoa, that surely felt good.

In the spirit of celebrating the girl child, the inside story rejoices our girl Sandra, the billionaire writer! This beautiful soul interviews for this magazine, is an advisory board member of the African Writers Development Trust (AWDT) our publisher and is one of the guest speakers at the conference. This time around, she is the one to be interviewed, to give us insights into her passion for writing but also her thoughts about the conference and the theme.

The month of November continues our introductions to the conference and the guest speakers, but it also presents new celebrations:

- Our first ever physical conference.
- We introduced a special children's section for our young readers, by our young writers.
- This issue carries the most entries from many a corner of our motherland than ever before.

And then to add icing on the cake, to make this issue even more special, our editorial team is spreading roots across Africa. We proudly welcome into our fold, three new members: Nnane Ntube (Cameroon), Alhassan Faisal (Ghana) and Nahida Esmail (Tanzania). Welcome on board guys.

Speaking of cakes, happy happy birthday Sandra. Please, promise that we'll cut the cake at the conference. (winks)

Wakini Kuria, Kenya, Chief Editor, WSA







### Sandra Oma Etubiebi

Guest Speaker, 2018 African Writers Conference

Sandra Oma Etubiebi is the Billionaire Writer! And not only that- her writings that are much sought after, have not impeded her successful decade long career in Project Management as a support lead, for NGOs and Organizations with CSR initiatives. She has also spearheaded several social and health programs in Nigeria like the Child Learning Assisted (CLASS) Program, National Sickle Cell Walk for Life (NSCWL) program, the Maternal Education for Child Survival program, Street clean-ups for Nigeria @50 among many others. In addition to planning and developing program activities, she also coordinates International Business Conventions for Corporates and business executives around the globe.

As a professional writer, Sandra develops research based content for Entrepreneurs and is also renowned for her articles and essays that cover productivity. What's more, she has authored two books; Secrets of the Anthem and Is God Making You Lazy? And that's not all for this unlimited powerhouse; she also counsels, teaches and



mentors teenagers in four different countries across Africa. And In recognition of her transformative work in the lives of people, programs and processes, she received the 2017 HRL Prince Saka Dbosz Junior Merit Award for Excellence in Leadership and Mentoring.

She is commonly referred to as Sandra Unlimited-(we don't need to guess why)

# Personal Take

Sandra loves words- Whether the string of alphabets from an encyclopedia or rambled writings of a six year old; she is in love with the English language.

She has a penchant for productivity, performance, and profit.

She writes against laziness, lethargy, and loss.

She is the first born in a family of seven girls.

She is a wife and also a mother to four fantastic girls aged twelve, nine, seven and five

She lives in Abuja, Nigeria.



## DISGUISED BLESSING

Kapela smiled at herself in the mirror, her rosy cheeks inflating like a balloon as she did. It was only three months back that there was a hollow in them, that extended to her heart. Despair had struck deep within her as an anchor of a ship not likely to leave the harbour soon.

At the funeral, her late husband's family had descended on her like a wake of vultures on a lamb. Women in small clusters threw her furtive glances, their mouths contorted as though to avoid a surging aversion. Harsh hisses accused her of killing her husband. Her own husband! Whom she did not choose to marry in the first place but had eventually become fond of. But what did that matter to them? She must pay! Off with her head, if they could get away with it. A life for a life! Or her life for their bread?

After the burial relatives from both sides met to decide her fate. The deceased's committee narrowed their eyes with hatred and disgust, piercing them at her through slits as they spat their venomous words at her, "We refuse to cleanse her! She will forever remain cursed!"

"She was no wife of our relative! We don't know her!" the women screeched in unison.

"Nika fwiti!" [Small witch]

"Murderer! How does one die without an illness first?!"

Thinking of her children was all Kapela could do to keep the reservoir of tears from flowing. But now she had more to look forward to.

She smoothed her crisply ironed uniform, savouring the fresh scent. The curtain on the only window in the dingy room fluttered, sending in streaks of sunlight as it did. Kapela could not contain her anxiety to meet with other children her age.

by Muyambo Mwenda, Zambia



# WORDS TO RICHES

My single parent had always been the pioneer and pillar of my strength, despite our unfortunate circumstances. She valued life. For somebody who had never been to school, she always emphasized the importance of education and how she believed in me. I despised school. Having to stand in a midst of students, their shirts nicely tucked in their trousers, shoes shining and I feeling like an intruder with holes in what supposed to be my school shoes, with an empty stomach anxiously waiting for tea time, my breakfast every school day.

We were queued at the assembly point, my mind gallivanting all over the place because I had left my mother sick at home with me being her only care taker. I was trapped in my own world when the Principal called all those entered an essay writing completion upfront.

"The winner of the essay entitled ONE IS ONLY POOR ONLY IF THEY CHOOSE TO BE is Goodwill Size"

I panicked, I thought I heard my name, everyone looked at me in disbelief.

"Goodwill, where are you, come here, this is a life changer, the African Union gives the winner the opportunity of a lifetime"

by Refiloe Thato, Motswana



## DO NOT OPEN

An envelope lays on a busy highway with words imprinted on it in caps lock which reads 'DO NOT OPEN'. The breeze blows it up and directly gets stuck between a White Range Rover Evoque's windshield and wipers.

"What's that Dave?" A woman in the passenger's seat asks the man driving.

"How would I know Kara?" Dave sulkily responds as he tries to wipe the envelope off the wind-shield.

Kara gets curious as she reads the imprints. "Have you seen what's written there?" She stares briefly but evasively.

Dave doesn't respond.

"What's wrong with you?" She bulges her eyes and raises her arms. "You've been acting weird all day. Is this about your gun license?"

"Have renewed it," he shakes his head and presses his lips firmly together. "Let's just get home. Tanashe is alone. The house help has probably left."

They reach their home in the suburbs around 8pm. With Dave out of the car, Kara remains to lock it down. As she walks round the car, she notices the envelope still stuck on the windshield. She grabs it.

#### DO NOT OPEN

"Is this a joke?" She puffs.

With ease, she opens it, finds a letter and starts reading it. Abruptly, her body becomes still. Her mouth slightly opens and her eyes widens. Everything in her hands drops except the letter and envelope. Voices start echoing from above.

#### DO IT! DO IT!

She walks to the trunk, opens it and sees Dave's gun. She grabs it and walks to the door. She enters and closes it.

From a distance, gunshots are heard across the neighborhood.

"Mommy no!" A little girls voice fades with the gunshots.

Dire silence returns. The door frailly opens on its own. A well closed envelope fly's out of the house and disappears into the darkness.

byBrian Ngoma, Zambia



# Darkness Unleashed

The phone rings as Josh is coming from the grocery. He answers, "Hello, Patrick, what's up dude?"

"J-josh, many in our class are dead!" Patrick said frantically.

"Dude, chill, speak slowly."

"I was attacked too... I'm at the hospital. Everyone in our class was attacked, except you... In fact you are the last one so you better run!," Patrick coughs a number of time.

"Really? Who attacked you?" Josh asks feeling anxious.

"Our te--"

Josh turns as he felt a grab on his shoulder. As he turned, he dropped his phone and flinched.

"Whoa! You startled me... Mr Phiri..." Josh takes a deep breath.

"Oh, I'm really sorry," Mr Phiri says, crouching down. Patrick was still speaking but was cut off as he picked up the phone. "The phone must have disconnected when it fell, I will pay for the damages."

"Yes, you should. My parents will be pissed, and I have to call Patrick. Damn, no airtime," Josh says as he pokes at his phone.

"It's late, go home."

"That's my destination, obviously," he says sarcastically.

"Goodnight."

"Later, teach," he waves his hand without looking at him. He receives a message. As he's about to open it, he hears a loud splash. He turns and sees blood dropping just before him, Mr Phiri squashed and killed by a large dark figure.

"You stubborn little prick!" the figure declares as its eyes light up. Immediately it grabs him by his neck and slams him to the wall.

"You-you killed my teacher," he coughs blood.

"Why do you care anyway? You and your classmates only caused him pain and misery," it laughs hard. "Your classmate's demise was... Memorable, though one escaped. Yours, will be too too sweet."

Half of its face opens to reveal a familiar face.

"Teacher?" Josh gasps.

by Mylord Zulu, Zambia



# 2018 AFRICAN WRITERS CONFERENCE AND AWARDS NOV. 30 – DEC. 2, 2018

Theme: Reimagining African Literature: New Voices, New Narratives in the Fight for the Girl Child.











CHARPERSON
Hajia Hadiza El-Rufai
Her Excellency, First Lady of Kaduna State
& Founder of Yasmin B-Rufai Foundation (YELF)

Mrs Halima Usman Chairperson, Association of Nigerian Authors (AMA) Alhoja Chapter

KEYNOTE SPEAKER Nahida Esmail Tanzania

Sandra Oma Etubiebi Nigeria

SPEAKER Faith Mutheu Kenya

#### PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 30 (ARRIVAL) •A NIGHT WITH STARS (STRICTLY BY INVITATION) – 5:30PM
SATURDAY DECEMBER 1: •AFRICAN WRITERS CONFERENCE – 9AM •AFRICAN WRITERS AWARDS/DINNER – 5:30PM
SUNDAY DECEMBER 2 (DEPARTURE) •FAREWELL AND DEPARTURE - 10 AM

**VENUE: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE ABUJA, NIGERIA** 

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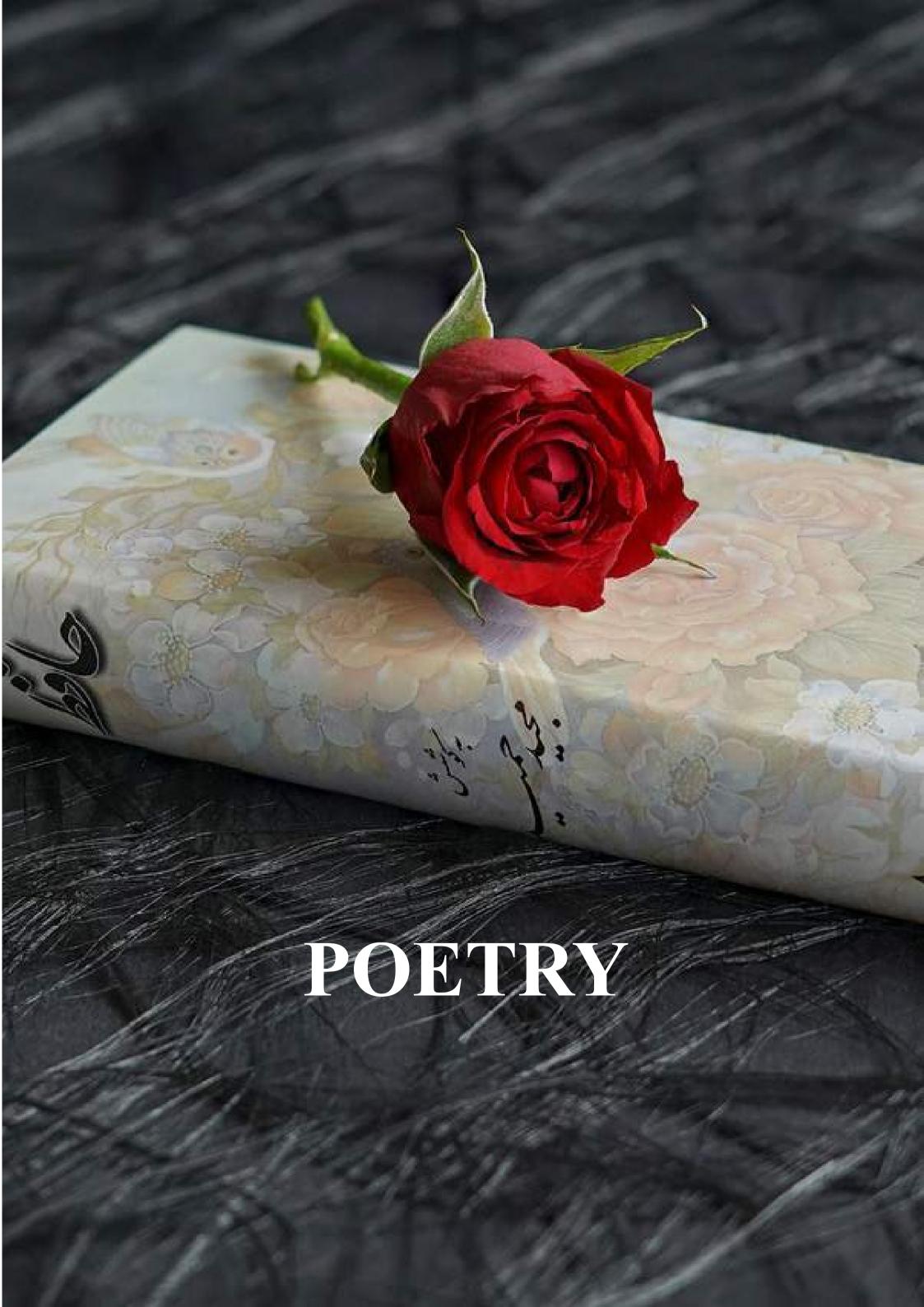














### **BLINKS OF HOPE**

My skin shines black
That the world thinks
That my heart is also dark
The art of their judgmental ink

There are moments I wonder
Whether the fields yonder
Have a better future for my parents
Because poverty rules their wallets

Tough years I spend in school
Barefoot, hungry, working hard
Hoping I won't end in the jobless pool
So that I save my nation
from the third world

Benny Wanjohi, Kenya

### **DEAD BONES**

I am the dead bones of my ancestors cut short in the rehearsal to breathe.

I am the sieve

between marrow

and the iron ring

around my neck.

I am untaught to speak.

Often times I am scared of what I have become.

I am a half breath

that was never complete

I lie oblique

in the pens of doctors

that are about to dismiss my arrival.

I lie at the mercy of a mother

who has become my rival

But I am forced to leap.

Am I not a calling anymore?

Am I a criminal that they should crucify my breath?

**Cutting my prayers short?** 

I was still talking to God before

you forced me out of the womb Mama...

I am the recycled bones of my ancestors.

Tshiamiso Makole,
Motswana

# Helpless

Today the cloud is dark.

The monstrous beast is aiming to gulp innocent blood, and the devil's feet is over heard fiercely cracking the skies.

Quickly the devil's teeth on the child's heart septum,

Joyfully casting sadism!

Forcing himself into this child's mouth as a comfort casket.

Squeezing tears in his eyes...

To flow like the high tides of the red sea

With uncontrollable sigh!

Today is another day of onslaught,
Slaughtering innocent,
And spill blood to dye the town red!

Vultures perching on bodies like branches of a tree,
Children sleeping in strange dreams,
Seeing the beast, the monster, the devil walk away leaving
Human skeletons and foot print behind,
As a reminder of his wrath!

Being born in Africa's become an opening to the gates of hell To kiss Boko Haram with red lips, here I'm, rub me off my parental love and joy! And prey with the Al'Shabaab, here I'm, make me an orphan Where herdsmen choose life of a cattle to worth more than me!

Tears of the African child!

Children are in total bewilderment wailing "Save Us"

Parents sniffing their last breathe wailing "Save my children " ...

Muhammed Tambedou. (Hamlet kid) The Gambia.



# **EGRET**

EGRET, RISE!
It is time,
the tempest rain is over
though, the wind is at traffic
and your plumage, like a laundry
mop, drunken.

EGRET, FLY!
Rest is the
nest, far away. Home
is calling, just
behind those barricades.

EGRET, EGRET!

Cork now

like a soldier's barrel,

boot-friend the crust – home is straight and stranded down the lane.

EGRET SOAR!

Fight that blur-r-i-ful cloud,
dodge the whirling gale let this clothe-line-peg hovering
meet Menopause.

EGRET, NOW
...rise, fly and soar the sky is all a sea, so, sail.

Ridwan Adelaja, Somaliland

## Not This Dust!

Call me lazy!

Call me dumb!

Call me stupid!

Call me foolish!

I'll take them all and make them my companions

They shall be the ladder on which I'll climb to reach your height

Have you ever wondered?

Have you ever wondered why I left school in the first place?

Classrooms, decayed in dust

Benches, broken; nails wounded my buttocks

But the teacher never cared. Her care was to her nails.

Who even cares? Youths are abandoned to their dreams

No one to help them stand up,

You claim to be in possession of the torch to illuminate our future

That same torch whose light you ceased in front of us

Throwing us in a pit of darkness, pulling us around with a rope of confusion

I'm lost, tortured by untold truths
Attacked by disillusionment
Buried by greed
Deserted by corruption
My hope is languishing in the bushes
My heart bleeds, my eyes swell
I'm drowning in tears, but I know I shall swim through
I shall wash off all the dust and tears

Nnane Ntube, Cameroon



### **BEAUTY**

Beauty is the currency of the world. A dime a dozen. Come collect your offer; Fill your coffer with material bound to unravel. Beauty is a beast. I remember being younger, I was told, "African men like big women," "Vibrant women." The Dark Continent hides its secrets in the rolls of flesh. In the shadow of the scale. In the extra portion of bread on the plate. Lucky for me. I hear; The weight is hidden in bundles of clothing, In chitenge and bomber jackets, In the soup of oxtail, In the burden carried by ambuyas. I've lived on the scale for a decade, or since I could remember. Whichever comes first. Whichever haunts me more. Exchanging air is an exercise I can't afford. The longer I hold on to it, The less I'm here. The less I feel. The better I feel.

> # Chitenge - African cloth/wrapper. Ambuya- grandmother

> > Petronella Nyirenda, Zambia

### TAMED MIND

An African child cries
Her tears bleaches the beautiful,
Charcoal tinted eyelashes
They sizzle and boil the once fertile land
They tickle the armpits of starvation

When the rain clouds scatter
And never comes back again
An African child weeps
The land becomes too stubborn to be tilled
And refuses to be generous
Corn seeds are buried now and die later
There is no food for tomorrow

Fate tamed the mind of an African child
Before Stone Age
Oracles foretold that
Agronomy is the future and glory of Africa
Boys sweat in vain behind the rows
Oxen draw ploughs on hot,
dusty afternoons
Their ribs are like guitar strings
as they hold their breath
To revive the glory
that their ancestors obtained in field

The mind of an African child was tamed and cursed By the societal norms composed by their forefathers It is designed to make them go to sleep on empty bellies when The rainfall never pays a visit again and agriculture is impossible.

Cynthia Katlego Matale, Motswana



### **Tears That Come No More**

All the tears have reached the city: Strolling down the red streets. Yawning invalid at miracles' best; Seated still since then. Rotten eggs still in the incubator: The black cock is impotent. Ride me not further this street: Trespass is in the statute book. Bread's not meant for us here; Did you hear the perimeter wall Shriek with laughter of pride? See the scalded bitch over! **Tears that come no more:** Where did they relocate? My skull's a dry coconut: I hardly posses my colon. My socket's a dry oil well: Drilled till mourns no teardrops. Rest me down this golden street; Till a super-natural flys by.

Omadang Yowasi, Uganda



### Beautiful

Our families are museums that look like ruins

And smell like ointments and herbs for the healing we always need When people come to visit us we are told to clean ourselves up Because dignitaries might want to touch us and take pictures When they show you the pictures and say look at how beautiful you are You see yourself looking like changing times and sales Nothing at all like your mother Beating your soul to let yourself out of this skin At home they ask you what's wrong with you You always go home to find your name They call you your mother's daughter You look at your mother carrying age and blessings in one body She divides herself between the world's needs Her lover still needs her to make room for him too "What's an angel like you doing keeping a body like this together?" You ask her, terrified with how she comes home to disaster and still says it's okay She says I'm preserving my parents and their parents I can't leave before I show you how to live

Sinaso Mxakaza, South Africa



### THE YEAR WE DIED

It was the year of the lords'
A year of saints and devouts
When the furnace of religion
burned high
And the embers of love waxed cold

It was a year of change
When we became sisters
of the order of Rose
A Rose wilted and striped to thorns
Where we substituted beds
for grasses
And walls for stalks

It was a year of coming of age
When womanhood was forced upon us
Innocence lost in
a-not-so sacred grove
When the realities of Mans' heart dawned

It was a year of rude awakening
When we saw hope drift on smoke
in the horizon
A year we lost the faith to fate
This was the year we died

Olofinnika Omobolaji, Nigeria

# SANDRA UNLIMITED

### THE BILLIONAIRE WRITER

BY GABRIELINA GABRIEL ABHIELE





A successful writer possesses a vocabulary of over fifty thousand words. From the stables of Nigeria is the word witty Sandra Oma Etubiebi whose mental capacity accommodates that and more. She has a magic wand for words; don't ask where. It comes easy for this graduate of Accounting who has found her occupational fortress in writing. Popularly known as Sandra Unlimited, she is the founder and CEO of The Billionaire Writer where she delivers research-based content and copywriting as well as editing services at world-class level.

In an Interview I had with Sandra, she talked about her recent book, 'Is God Making You Lazy?' which has received hundreds of great reviews within a short time of its release; the inspiration backing the writing of the book; her life as a professional writer; family; fashion; and what I call a writer's diet.

#### Give us a background to your passion for writing.

I burn for words. I always have. My earliest memories of my passion for writing dates back beyond three decades. My story reads like a common thread though: I was in Primary three when I was selected to join the debate team, and my mum wrote the text of my first debate. That experience introduced me to one of my first big words, which became my best and most memorable word: "buttress."

"I am here again to buttress my point that..." It was such a big beautiful word at the time. I used that word so much I should have worn it out –if possible. LOL!

I must have displayed a love for words, reading and writing –even before then – because I remember my parents always bought me storybooks to read. I heard that I appreciated book gifts than dresses or any of those girly things. Before I left primary school, I had read almost all of the 'PACESETTERS' book series. Then, the Pacesetters book series was a thing! How I looked forward to ending and starting a new story afresh. In Primary school, I found and grew in love with Literature. I cannot forget my first read of "A Tale of Two Cities" by

Charles Dickens. I was teleported into Old London, Paris and the world of Monsieur and Madame Defarge, and Dr Manette. I went on to read other literature pieces and enjoyed every single one of them.

Interestingly, after that first debate experience, my longing for big words grew to a fever-pitch notch so much that I began to read the dictionary as a novel. It was an enthralling experience at the time. The words would pile in my head, and when occasion presented itself—the words would come out at the right cues in every sentence. In Secondary school, I was tagged "Dico"—for dictionary, and my essays or scripts were exemplary.

My burn for words was legendary. You could find me picking up dog-eared burnout snatch-



es of paper from the dustbin to read. I would read a book simply because others said it was boring and could not be enjoyed -and I would always enjoy the read. Nothing was too boring. Nothing was too thick to go through. I would read and suddenly turn deaf to my surrounding like today's kids with their headphones.

I burned for words and still do although you will no longer find me reading just anything. I have learned to pick my teachers. I have learned choose. to My burn for words goes beyond the written pages. It reaches even to words spoken, conversations with strangers, and technical articulation for the

expression of a client's copywriting brief. I believe it is this lust for words, to hear it, see it, speak it, and write it, that fuels my passion for writing in general.

# Writing is a career not really viewed by family members as lucrative. So, then, how does your family react to this path you have chosen?

Interestingly, I have two families now. Before I got married, I had my parents and six younger sisters. Although everyone knew I was a lover of words, they knew me for many other things. I was intelligent, loved technology, always inquisitive, and was book smart in Mathematics. For the life of me, I would still wonder why I didn't just fail Mathematics so they would know how much I cringed from numbers. My father had great plans for my intelligence. So did my mum. I cannot forget the words my mum said to me when I turned 16 and out of Secondary School after declaring to her with fire and light in my eyes that I wanted to be a Writer. She said, "It is when people have run around in life and can't find anything else to do that they begin to write." Those words burned in my brain and for a long time I was disappointed at the world for belittling the value of something I so longed to be. But I later learned that my mother wasn't the world, not at all. She was only a little part of it and while her opinions counted, they were misinformed. Nonetheless, while in my parent's house, I embraced other things and even graduated as an Accountant –thanks to my Father the Accountant!

After I got married, I became what I wanted to be. My kids see me writing every single day, talking to clients on the phone, negotiating my fees, leaving the house to a client's office and returning with 'gist' for my spouse. They feel the energy and zest with which I approach each day. They see the reverence and passion I have for my laptop and writ-



ing space –my family loves their Writer Wife and Mother. Now, my parents have come to appreciate and understand that those writing sparks were not false fires but indications of a lifelong engulf in penmanship.

You are popularly called 'The Billionaire Writer.' What inspired the name?

I gave myself the name and it stuck. The inspiration –as is for a lot of things I do– did not come from a singular event. It's actually combustion of insight, desire, and Rhema. One of my highest levels of motivation is relevance –I have to be relevant. My words have to be relevant. I have to make impact, and give someone else a reason to love life, love themselves and perhaps add to the value-chain of relevance for someone else. I have always thought like this. And, I have been successful in being relevant to people I meet, work with, and work for. Now, I want more. I would like to scale up on my relevance. I would like to reach a billion people with my words and writing. That's where the idea of the Billionaire Writer sprang up from. Then, I read about J.K. Rowling, her background, her writings, and her status as a 'billionaire author.' It resonated. I wanted that also. Finally, I saw the scriptures and I understood from it that I can have what I say. That was all I needed to go public with my name; The Billionaire Writer.

Interestingly, the clients, the money, recognition, and relevance has been on an ever upward and forward trajectory ever since.

## Writing professionally for fifteen years is a milestone. What kind of clients have you dealt with so far?

I write for Business Executives, NGOs, and Organizations with CSR initiatives, Institutions, MBA Students, and others who don't fall into any specific category but can pay my fees.

# Can we have an insight into the kinds of writing projects you handle; ghostwriting, editing and the likes?

I have a powerful ability to put words together and that has helped in my versatility across a broad range of writing genres and I keep learning every day. I write nonfiction and fiction, technical and expository writing, proses and verse, business and casual. However, for most of my clients, I prepare business documents, company profiles, copy for brochures, marketing materials, web contents, project documents, articles, speeches, essays, and book editing. Owing to my years of participation and experience working with NGOs, I handle a lot of NGO documentation from NGO naming, developing program concepts and communication materials. For the most part, I am that writer contented to write and be paid without attribution. I am a ghost. I have been so for a long time except for my books which I authored.



You just dropped a book on the shelf, 'Is God Making You Lazy?' How did you come about that title?

'Is God Making You Lazy?' is actually my second book 'on the shelf.' My first book, Secrets of the Anthem, dissected the Nigerian National Anthem into seven principles that make for individual, organizational and national success –if fully implemented. It's a good book you should read sometime.

The motivation for my second book and the title, 'Is God Making You Lazy' came from my personal experience and my observation of the

lives of a lot of people like me –talented, full of dreams, and Christian. Even with all my love for words and writing, there was a time I took a back seat to my life and watched time pass. On face value, I was going through the motions but not living intentionally. I was waiting for something to happen and doing nothing to make it happen. Until one particular day, I looked at my life and bank account, I looked at my hubby and our kids –we were not doing okay. Something was wrong. I asked myself a lot of questions and 'Is God Making Me Lazy?' was one of those questions.

God is not lazy, does not do lazy, and doesn't like laziness. In my book, you will find references that would actually make you see laziness as an abnormality for Christians in particular and everyone in general, so the 'sit-down-look' 'pray-only-do-nothing' syndrome isn't endorsed by scripture.

#### What's the response from your audience like regarding your book?

Wow, I have been inundated with feedbacks, questions and appreciation. It has brought me in contact with a lot of writers who want to get off their couches and create something tangible with their abilities. I have spoken with young people who don't want to get trapped in a web of mediocre thinking and unproductivity. And, I have met people of like

minds who appreciate and share my views.

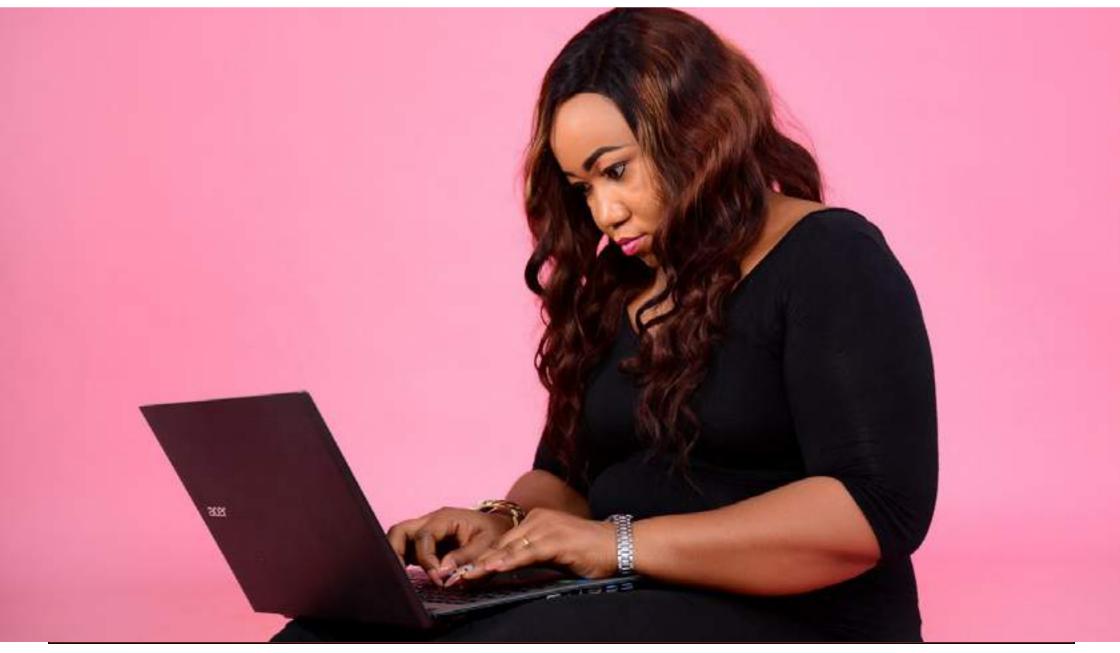
In the first chapter of the book, you talked about a life of mediocrity which you had to consciously rise above. Briefly tell us the challenges you faced in the journey and how you were able to overcome.

I have always been ambitious, hardworking and excellent, but like I said, there was a space of time I found myself negligent about what I wanted. It was an unfamiliar place that almost lasted four years. Although a little traumatic event signaled off those pity-party years, I found more and more ways to excuse myself, waiting for something to happen –all the while observing that I was really doing nothing. I had no push, and life too, returned with no push. When the truth hit like a hammer on the head, I made up my mind to go for the things I wanted. I started reaching out to friends who knew me in the past. I started being more proactive with my time. I set up shop again, after four years of little or no activity.

For such a powerful book as yours, why did you choose to make it free download for readers?

I have a third and powerful book to hit the market soon. 'Is God Making You Lazy?' is a prelude to that book. I decided to make 'Is God Making You lazy?' available for free so that more people will read and embrace this direction of thought and embrace the author as well.

For those who are yet to read the book and would love to, kindly avail us the information on where it can be accessed.



Interested readers can send a mail to 'thebillionairewriter@gmail.com' requesting a free download or visit www.billionairewriter.com

# After reading your book, people seem to be asking for more from you. How soon should your audience expect another release from you?

January 2019 and I'm keeping the title a secret for now.

#### You must be feeling fulfilled having great reviews from readers about your book.

"In every labour, there's profit," the Bible says. Great reviews are a part of the profit, so I'm grateful for that.

#### Let's talk about family. How do you merge your family with your career in writing?

My workspace is a sweet corner in my dining area 120 inches away from my kitchen and walkable distances from every other room in my house. The fact that I do most things from home helps and when I absolutely have to be out of the house, I have the unflinching support of my husband of 14 years and my first daughter who turns 13 in December, this year. I love my writing life and all the drama that comes with it.

# You have four beautiful daughters. Can you say your career as a writer has influenced your daughters in any way?

I tell my daughters stories all the time, and they are almost always the first to read my many unpublished works of fiction. They know that "mummy is a writer" and they tell me things like "you are always writing" "you are addicted to your laptop" "when I grow up I will have my own clients" "why do people ask you to write for them?" "How much will they give you?" "How can I write and let everyone read my book?"

I want to believe that this engagement with my writing process and the vibes they receive from me, helps them to think 'entrepreneurial', think 'independence', and raise their own sense of self. Presently, we raise our kids to be independent as much as possible. My first and second daughters, aged 12 and 10, write stories and essays, they sew clothes, my second daughter creates designs from nothing and makes animated videos, while my two little daughters, aged 8 and 6, have shown affinity for coding, graphics and language. My job as a mother is to fan alive every spark till it becomes a fire that can burn down any forest.

#### On fashion, what's your taste like?

I cannot be called 'fashionable' -although I always managed to look appealing. Growing up, I was the girl who wore "everything but what made her look hot!" That was something



a friend said a very long time ago. I was your big shirt and jeans only kinda girl – who buried her head behind her glasses and in a book. All that changed after I left the university and got married to a fashion forward kinda guy. I owe my appearance, largely, to my spouse who like Michelangelo carved out a hidden beauty. Yet, I basically wear what makes me comfortable –even if it's a hot pink skirt.

A healthy diet has a lot to do with mental efficiency, especially for a writing profession where the brain is constantly at work. Share with us briefly your kind of diet.

I eat anything, really. But being a writer means you are mentally active but with low physical activity when writing. So, I try to eat less carbs and increase physical activity when not writing.

You are a wordsmith. How do you play on words so easily?

I wish I can say precisely how it works but there isn't a formula. It's a flair fuelled by

years of exposure to the English language, literature, reading and writing.

### What do you do to improve yourself in your career?

I am committed to lifelong learning. I take online courses on Udemy, Edx, and Alison. I read a lot and study the best of samples in writing that's available in any genre I'm interested in. I joined several online and professional Writer groups especially in my copywriting field, and WSA -Writers Space Africa. Interaction and opportunities for learning are the environments I constantly expose myself to.

#### Can you boldly say that writing pays your bills?

Writing pays my bills - but not all of it. Earnings from my writing has seen my family through the roughest of times before my spouse began earning 5 & 6 figures from his real

estate business. Writing has put food on our family table. I have clients within and outside Nigeria, and as the exchange rate kept soaring, so did my bank account. I remember some couple of years back when people put hands on their heads in alarm for the spike between the naira and dollar exchange, it felt like I was the only one smiling. \$300 for a writing brief suddenly left me with a 25% increase when I received my money. But I'm not there yet, writing can and will pay ALL of my bills with lots of cash to spare. After all, I am the billionaire writer. When that happens, we should do another interview, don't you think?

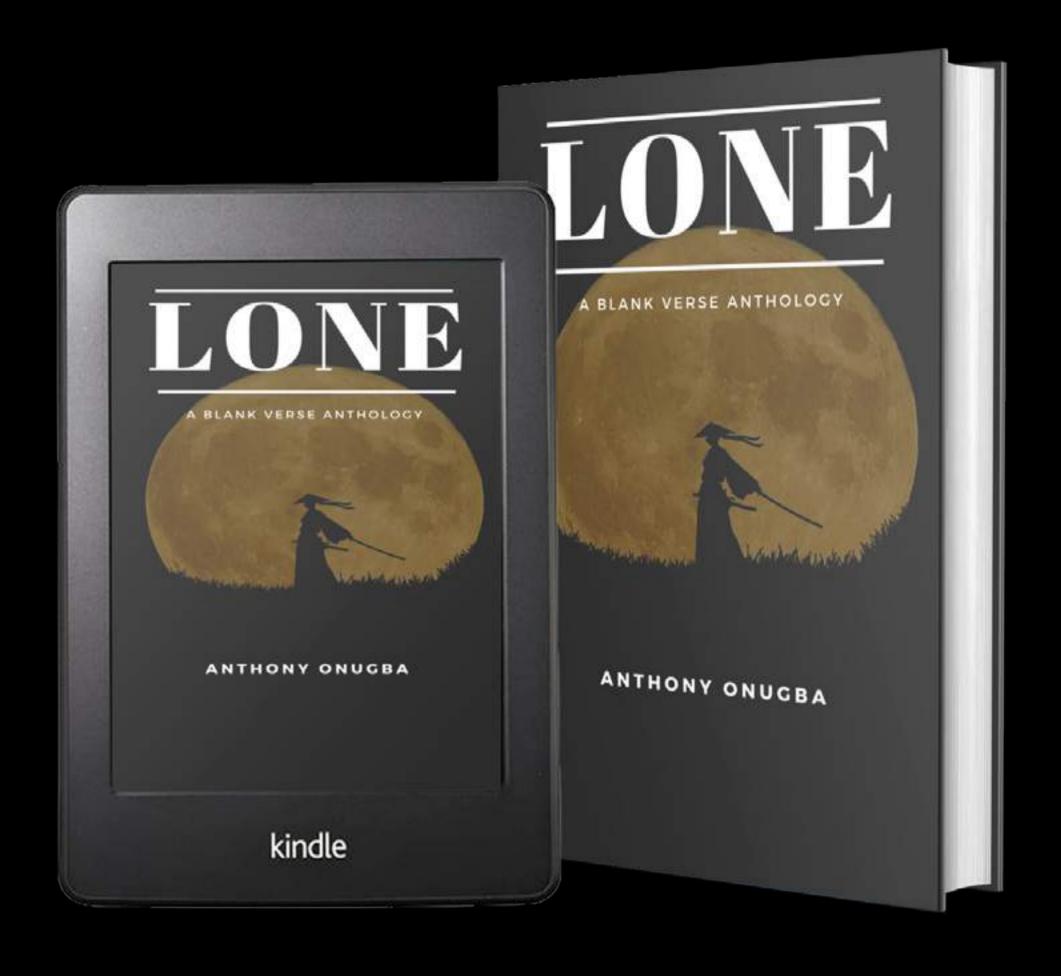
# Any plans in view to organize a platform where other writers, established and aspiring, can tap into your wealth of knowledge?

It is in the works, really. But seeing as that will be a whole new branch of service, I am not in a hurry to take on that responsibility just yet. However, we have Writers Space Africa where I am ever willing and ready to make out training sessions for the members.



Hair: SoPretty

Makeup: @Ashantymakeovers



# Coming Soon in 2019

\* The image on the cover is for promotional purposes only.



### ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL JOURNAL

The official quarterly publication of the Ethiopian Medical Association



Ethiopia's oldest medical journal, *The Ethiopian Medical Journal (EMJ)* is the official organ of the Ethiopian Medical Association (EMA). The journal first appeared under the title of both Amharic "P太子P太子 为为罗尔 夕比小" and English "Ethiopian Medical Journal" on July 1962. Since then, the quarterly journal played an important role to record the progress of scientific medicine, and to assist in rendering the practice of medicine in all its branches and in the academic of medicine in Ethiopia and Africa at large.

### ETHIOPIAN MEDICAL JOURNAL

OCTOBER 2016 VOLUME 54 NUMBER 4

DITORIAL

TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE, NOT TUBERCULOSIS

SCHOOL STUDENTS IN MID-EASTERN ETHIOPIA.

HOSPITAL, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

ORIGINAL ARTICLES

LATENT TUBERCULOSIS AMONG ADULT ETHIOPIAN PATIENTS AT CHEST CLINIC, TIKURANBESSA SPECIALIZED HOSPITAL, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA.

BURDEN OF TUBERCULOSIS AMONG STUDENTS IN TWO ETHIOPIAN UNIVERSITIES.

ART EXPERIENCED PATIENTS FOR TACKLING ATTRITION FROM HIV CARE: A MULTI-SITE COHORT STUDY

PREVALENCE OF RHEUMATIC HEART DISEASE AMONG PRIMARY

HIGH PREVALENCE OF ATRIAL FIBRILLATION IN STROKE PATIENTS ADMITTED TO UNIVERSITY OF GONDAR HOSPITAL, NORTHWEST

RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF PATTERN AND OUTCOME OF NEONA-TAL SURGICAL CASES AT TIKUR ANBESA UNIVERSITY TEACHING

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## Wait For the Right Time

Standing on the tallest tower,
I think I'm full of power,
Wishing I could fly,
But alas! I can't try.

If I could,
I would,
But I can't,
So I shan't.

Silly me,
To think I could be,
A ruler with a twirl,
Yet I'm just a girl.

Wait for your time,
My friend tells me,
The climb is steep,
The fruits are sweet.

Namara Lwansa, Tanzania



Namara is 11 years old. Her hobbies are dancing, reading and poetry writing. She would like to grow into a responsible, productive and independent person. Her ambition is to be a journalist. Namara was the third place winner in a nationwide poetry writing competition in Tanzania (August 2018) dubbed "A Poem for Peace". The competition was organized by The American Embassy, Soma Book Café and Waka Poetry Consortium.

## I'll Never Give Up

I am a child with dreams
Forever I must scream
I have goals to achieve;
I won't change them
No matter how much you persuade me.

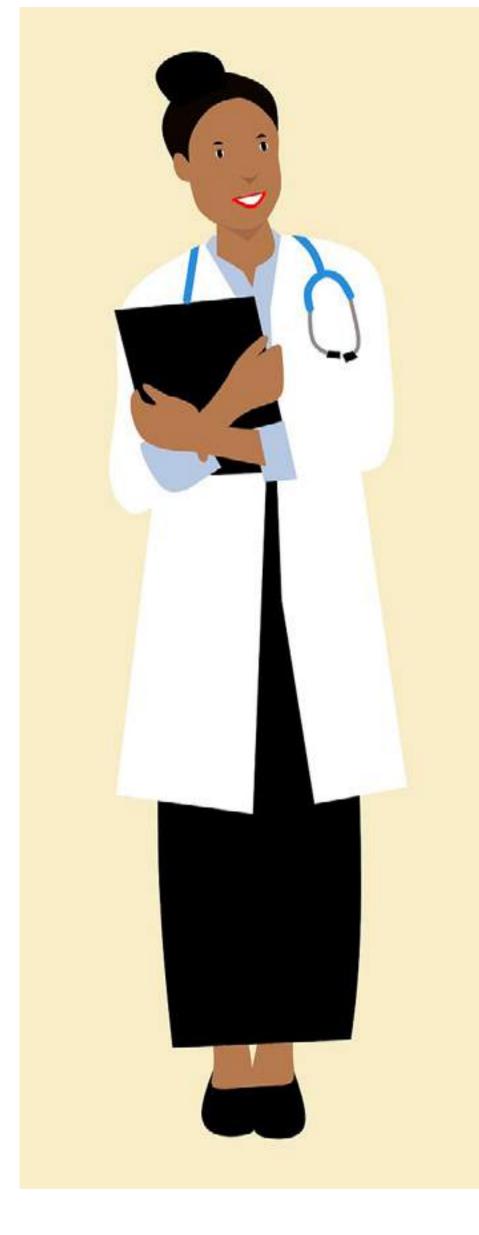
Sometimes life is tough
But you must be tougher
Oiling it with laughter
Lifting your dreams farther.

But I will never give up
No matter what comes my way
I will always man up
Because nothing is impossible
The word itself says 'I'm possible'.

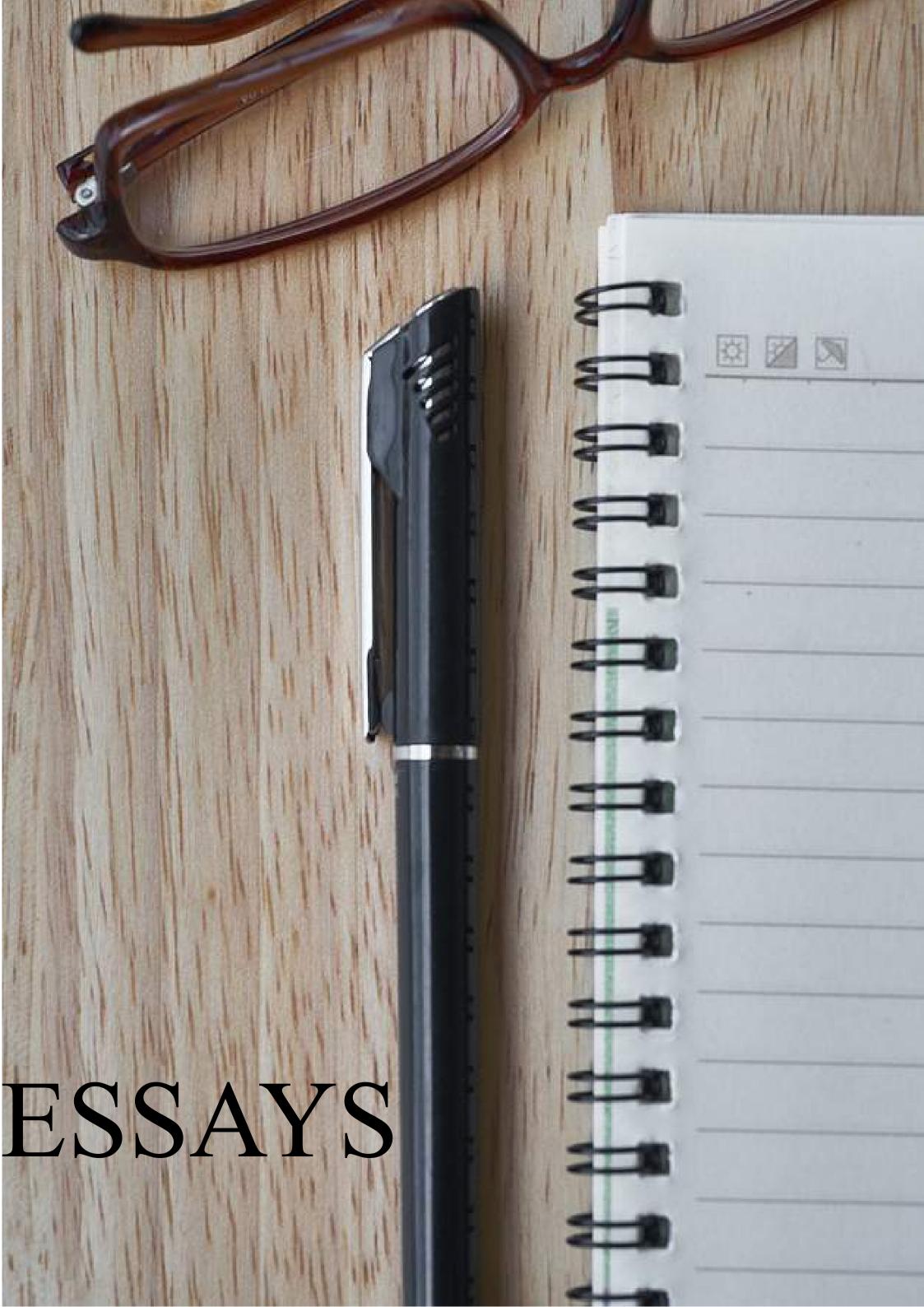
I have learned
The best way to predict your future
Is to create it
And the ONLY one to shut your dreams is you
Don't let anyone shut them for you.

People can talk about your dreams
And make them look like negative things
But I don't care
I believe, finally I will get my PhD

Lisa Ndobho, Tanzania



LISA Ndobho is 12 years old. Her hobbies are singing, reading story books, dancing. She would like to grow into a person who helps the poor and needy and make her parents proud in all that she does. She would like to pursue her education to PhD level. Hr ambition is to become a doctor.





# African Children Should Be Given **African Stories**

tural weekend at a school in the western young adults?" he went on to ask. sat to mark the final day of the event, he whispered a question to me. "What kind of stories do you write?"

"Fiction" I replied. Even though I had a few of my essays published and some read as speeches by different people.

"Do you think there is a hole to the

Two months ago, I was invited to a cul- kind of literature we give our children and

part of Kenya. A teacher at the school I agreed. He explained to me what he welcomed me and as he showed me the thought was the lacking component. Our way towards the hall where the students children were not being given the kind of stories that would build their knowledge about Africa.

> "But you know everything is changing and we are getting modernized. The world has become a village and we need to give children a wider scope of stories to make them understand the world without

geographical limitations." I said.

hit the nail right on the head.

identify with" the writer stated.

mushroom soups, boiled beans and roast- are played and native foods eaten. ed potatoes more than I do write about

children the knowledge about their home, He sighed and faked a cough; I knew I had equally film and its related companies have their fair share of blame.

Television, radio and other media outlets I had not yet gotten over the discourse of should reconsider giving African children that day that day when I found a piece of something indigenous, more related to our writing that talked about Chimamanda's homes than playing Christmas songs and phenomenal speech; The danger of a sin- animations that show much of the western gle story. I read it and the reflection from cultures. Really in Africa children don't the words rekindled the memories of the if yes then seldom-receive gifts from the small discussion; that even though story- chimney, they don't skate in the snow. tellers are trying, there is still deficiency Instead they go to church and sing songs in stories that tell the reality of the Afri- about baby Jesus, they wear new clothes can world as to how the children should and eat well, and they visit friends and get know. "The children need stories they can some gifts from parents. In some parts of Africa, the birth of Jesus is celebrated with Personally the two encounters have cultural dances and native songs of praise, changed the way I write, especially to mixing it with the influence of the western children, I endeavor to write more about religion, traditional musical instruments

ice cream and cornflakes. I am trying to When shall we give our younger genadapt to writing about mountains and eration something to be proud of? When landscapes my small niece and nephew shall the revolution start to make children can relate with even as I try to make them sit down in living rooms and watch Afriunderstand that in this same world, there can animations, with characters living in are places that have snow-The white thing homes like they do, playing village soccer they see in Christmas themed animations. without shirts and mothers carrying raffia, well pattered baskets to and from the mar-And the issue of Christmas animations ket places and water pots from the river? brings me on to another thing- that we Are we willing to give forth to a generation cannot only blame writers, poets and writ- that knows Dwayne-The Rock-but doesn't ten content creators for denying African know Omotola and Nnaji? Are we willing

Thailand Drama movies yet they haven't the world they have grown to see. heard of Sarafina? If the answers to these questions are yes, then we are already do- Let's swallow the animal stories for a home before knowing abroad

them adequately for the life that is coming for doing so? ahead of them. They are the future advomore than we do to our own home.

And we blame them when we see them copying from the western culture, we see them do things and collectively say "That By Kelvin J. Shachile, is not African." Of cause it is not and they **Kenya** have every reason to do that which you

to build teenagers who watch Mexican and consider to be not African. Because that is

ing that. If it is no, then we have to recon- while and teach our children about mud sider every part of the kind of stories we huts with grass-thatched roofs, let's forget give to our children. They need to know the beautiful houses with orchards in the backyards and instead have bananas and papaws. Let's show our children the real When I read that Writers Space Africa was people of Africa, the Igbo, Swahili, Xhocalling for submissions on the theme; The sa and the many others. Let's make more tears of an African child, I had to recount animations, cartoons, children and Teenthe memories and the encounters of my age films that will first teach our children childhood to realize the kind of a world I about our home as we teach them about was given and the world we are currently the world. Why can't they pick influence giving our children, For really there are from home and be well with the changing unseen tears in the faces of these inno- world than picking from foreign cultures cent young Africans. We should prepare that we end up sometimes blaming them

cates of our diminishing culture and the AndsoIsay, in as much as we might be trypride of the future Africa. These children ing to make our children understand the are the people who will make the West sit world, we should equally focus on making down and learn about us and respect us. them more knowledgeable of the history, We shouldn't feel inferior and always give culture, landscape, religion and the life in them a reason to make other parts of the their homes and neighborhood first. It is world more known, loved and respected only wise to know home, before knowing and meeting the world.



Not long ago there was a call-in program pen", one caller said (I paraphrase). on radio where the topic of conversation was moral decay in society. The case study The part that however requires a serious ther was arrested.

which part of the story is a case of moral the radio program. decay. Most callers to the program were

was a story of a young boy (I believe he was conversation is the perceived causes and in his early teens) who came home drunk. the proposed solutions to this 'problem'. I The father hit him because of it. The boy put problem in quotes because I do not bereported the father to the police and the fa- lieve that there is a problem here, but that is beside the point. Apparently, the two biggest causes are: increasing access to in-This case was being advertised as a para-formation technology (specifically social digm case of the moral degradation of our networks) and the phenomenon of human society- And at this point, it is fair to ask rights. This was according to the callers to

clear that the idea that a child could come The idea is that because children are being home drunk, and then have the courage to exposed to social media, their morals are report his parents to the police for disci-being eroded. How this happens is rarely plining him, was unconscionable. "When ever convincingly explained. The other part we were children, such things did not hap- is that as the gospel of human right takes

in inculcating good morals in the children. gard. "Parents are now afraid to discipline their own children," one person put it on the ra- What about the moral decay that is being dio program.

problematic. They include; the reintroduc- the things that are being complained about, tion of corporal punishment in schools, and it strikes me not as moral concern but fear state run 'national service' systems where of the unusual. Children are learning that young people are taught to 'work for the they can dress the way they like, they can country and be responsible'. This is rather love whomever they want and that the disturbing news for the African child. Cor- world is full of possibilities that are alien poral punishment is not only bad because to older generations. This is antithetical to it is a form of abuse, but it also perpetu- social conservatism. ates the idea that violence is a legitimate means of getting someone who is weaker I think that change for the better in the welthan you to do what you want. At bottom, fare of children in Africa is highly likely, but that's what this is about. The word 'morali- it is not inevitable. As long as ideas about ty' in this context is really code for "behav- corporal punishment and media censorior that is familiar and acceptable to me". I ship prevail in society, there is always the believe that there is a significant part of our possibility that significant progress can be population that is getting uncomfortable lost. because the world that they have become That is why it is important to stand up and accustomed to is slipping away.

The advent of new technologies like social networks and instant messaging is By good to Africa. More people are getting to Robert Banda Jere know how other people in different parts Zambia of the world are living. The possibilities of

root in Africa, children are emboldened. humanity flourishing are expanding. The They can now report their parents to the world is getting bigger. Xenophobia and authorities for corporal punishment. The prejudice is reduced when we can relate to effect of this, the idea goes, is that parents people that are different from us. Internet and guardians are now having difficulties connections are very important in this re-

decried? It is plausible that some children can learn bad habits from other people over The proposed solutions are potentially the internet. However, when you listen to

be counted.

# LOST HERITAGE

I want to be happy! I deserve to be happy but happiness cannot come in black skin. My portion is the dank walls that forever are trap me in this abyss of despair, and here, I struggle to make a fire. A fire of hope that burns despite the winds howling on it from each side- The winds that brings the ghouls to prey on my already bruised body.

Let me tell you my story, maybe you might understand the depth of my wounds and cry the tears I'm too broken to cry. Before they came, we had happiness. Our land was green, the trees flowed with sweet white wine, and our bellies went before us. We were brothers united by the sweat of our brow and our allegiance to our nchis. By the fireside, we told stories of our forefathers and the

wars they fought to make us many, yet one unique people. During the harvest, we gathered our first crops and offered to Ori, god of the land to thank him for the gift of rain and a bountiful harvest. And when the moon was full, we feasted with heaps of eba and bitter leaf soup.

Our maidens adorned themselves with the finest agada loins and cam wood, the young men with beads and we gathered under the icheku tree. With music so sweet and drums so loud, our praises flowed to our nchis. Whatever disputes existed met the wise and fair judgment of our Oba. Our children thrived and our parents lived till their bodies creased in many places. Those days were simple and we were content. Just when we thought nothing could go wrong, we heard from distant seas, the horns that sounded our doom. Without knowing, our cocoons were shattered and the shreds taken to faraway lands.

We heard the rumors that the gods had come with houses that floated on water, that their skin was as white and their hair had the shone like the sun. They were clad in fabrics we had never seen before hence we immediately agreed it was superior to ours. On the tip of their noses, another set of eyes rested that we believed could see our souls, the language from under their breathe was foreign. Astounded, we looked on at the embodiments of deities that walked among mere mortals. Alas they came into our lands from their abodes and with them they carried gifts.

So began our downfall, with pipes that produced smoke, smoke we thought was flavoured, and flavors that made us forget the fire that succeeds smoke. To welcome them, we offered them the white liquid which trickled from our palm trees, our precious matango but that too they cautiously spat out. For what was raw sap compared to the distilled elegance of Schnapps? Ah! We exclaimed for the gods knew the desires that lurked beneath our black skins. Soon, they told us that the foods that we cherished, which had fed our predecessors, made our skin rugged so we quickly abandoned them

for polished cans of fish. We called ourselves modern but for the right price, fools could be thought wise. They knew that we were irresistibly drawn to the bright coins they threw at our feet, more sparkling than the antiquated cowries we had known all along. Silently, we each lusted after the rounds, flashy demons, each man harboring a fierce desire to possess his own bundle.

They had their cords secured around our throats in tight knots. Perhaps, it was from there that they found the courage to defy our culture and test our allegiance to our nchis. They taunted our priests and taught our women the ways of a more sophisticated God, who they claimed loved us more than our carved statues and did not desire the blood sacrifices we offered like Ori. They preached forgiveness in stark contrast to the severe punishment our laws meted out. Slowly they had planted the seed of their relevance while we had left to wither, the forest of our freedom. With trifles, they had won a bounty so they wasted no time in turning us on each other. For their coins, we gave our brothers, whom they shackled and brought to yonder shores. In horror, we watched as they tore down our shrines and replaced them with wooden altars while we begged. To save their honour, our deities withdrew from us, to the safety of their palaces from where they looked on at the sacrilege which we had crafted from our greed.

They dethroned our rulers using our brothers as bait. Helpless, we watched as they seized our lands and burned our huts, a once mighty people brought low. How could we have seen the ugly faces hiding beneath white masks? Such wanton death and destruction as we had never known was dealt. Like dogs we had handed over our heritage, our destinies to the hands of strangers while we tousled over the bones they threw. Soon enough, we grew weary of the bed of thorns assigned to us. If death was our sanction, then it must meet us on the fronts of war not reclining as cowards. After all, we were men of war, no strangers to battle and our ancestors had fought many before to leave us this heritage. With this resolve, we took up arms against our masters and revolted.

Seeing that they could crush our bones but not our spirits, our masters quickly came together to find a solution. To sail away would mean that they accepted that black skin, inutile as they thought it had bested them in the art of war with nothing but resilience. More so, it would imply that they had lost the very wealth that though they profaned, had stored up for their royal palaces. True to his nature, our masters came up with the perfect plan. If our only desire was to be free, then it was a simple matter. They had

uprooted our independence and we had let ourselves stray so far away from our way of life that our existence was now intertwined with theirs. Like footprints in the sand, the wind had blown away the paths that lead us to the people we were and this they were well aware of.

The exchange was easy. We were left with our farms to do as we please but they decided what became of the proceeds; they taught us to read but not to reason; they let us choose our leaders, but even then told them how to govern; they said it was better to pray to their God all the while smuggling the very carvings we had venerated. And when one of us tried to break free, they offered him the glory of their cities, in a bid to separate him from the rest. And so, they made us the perfect slaves. Yes, we had our freedom but they defined its pillars. Unsuspecting, our hearts rejoiced, for the writings on the wall remained invisible to our eyes.

My tears flow for you, who bears the brunt of our ignorance, for we forgot that when the mango shines on the outside, it's rotting on the inside.

By Mbianyor Bill- Erich Nkongho Agboryah, Cameroon





### HALIMAFACTOR COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

In collaboration with

Gombe State University and National Orientation Agency



Literature and Creativity;
Tools for Human / Economic Liberation.

Date: 21st - 22nd November, 2018 Venue: Gombe State University Hall

Special Guest of Honour: **Dr. Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo** Governor of Gombe State (Grand Patron) Special Guest of Honour: Dr. Garba Abari Director General, National Orientation Agency Guest Author / Keynote Speaker: Prof. Zaynab Alkali Guest Author: Abubakar .A. Ibrahim













Being a writer isn't always sunshine and rainbows. I remember the first time I told my mother that I wanted to be a writer, she completely lost her mind. At this point we had already applied to law school which is what I always wanted to do, so she didn't get where the writing thing was coming from. I tried explaining that my passion had changed and then she said, "So now your passion is to write? What good is this writing going to do for you? Will writing put food on the table? Is it even considered a career that people go to school for? How do you even know if your passion will not change after this?" It was at this very moment that I realized that the journey I wanted to take would be anything but easy.

Okay so first you must face all the critiques that undermine your talent. I call them the "Favor-rights", they make you feel like you they're doing you a favor by giving you work. They tell you how you are inexperienced and know nothing about the real world of writing. One of my favorites is, "You don't need to go to school to be a writer, you just need a pen and paper". However, sometimes you find that critiques help writers improve in their writing. They don't always dissect your work in a negative way, at times it's in a positive and guided way.

I mean, of course you'll face rejection even before you begin writing. Where everyone will tell you that you can't, before you can even attempt to do. That's life, we always have to take it with a pinch of salt on the side.

Now when you eventually decide to stick with writing you are faced with a higher level of challenges. You struggle to find a school that is specifically for creative writing and or just writing. When you are lucky to find such a school, you are required to write an essay/letter of inspiration telling them about yourself and why you believe writing is the right career for you. I mean it's like you must always prove that you love it [writing] and that you are sure about studying it. You apply [letter and all] then the worst thing happens, you get rejected.

This is where your patience is really tested. A rejection letter to any writer can easily be taken personally and is the biggest instiller of doubt. You start questioning the level of your writing, you even start thinking that maybe your mother was right, that everyone was right about writing not being a worthy aspiration. Oh, especially that first rejection letter, it really gets to you. You start thinking about backup plans, maybe writing isn't for me, like I mean maybe it could be something I do on the side. Thinking like this is the worst thing you can do to yourself, because the more you think like this, the more you believe it.

Ever heard the saying "you talk to yourself more than anyone else, so be kind to you".

The best way to deal with rejection is to always remind yourself why you started in the first place. Think about why you believed that this was something worth pursuing and this way you will triumph over any hiccup you come across. As a person, one needs to always remember that the only opinion that matters, is your own. Remember if you believe and work on your craft then nothing is impossible.

By Nonhlanhla Radebe, South Africa

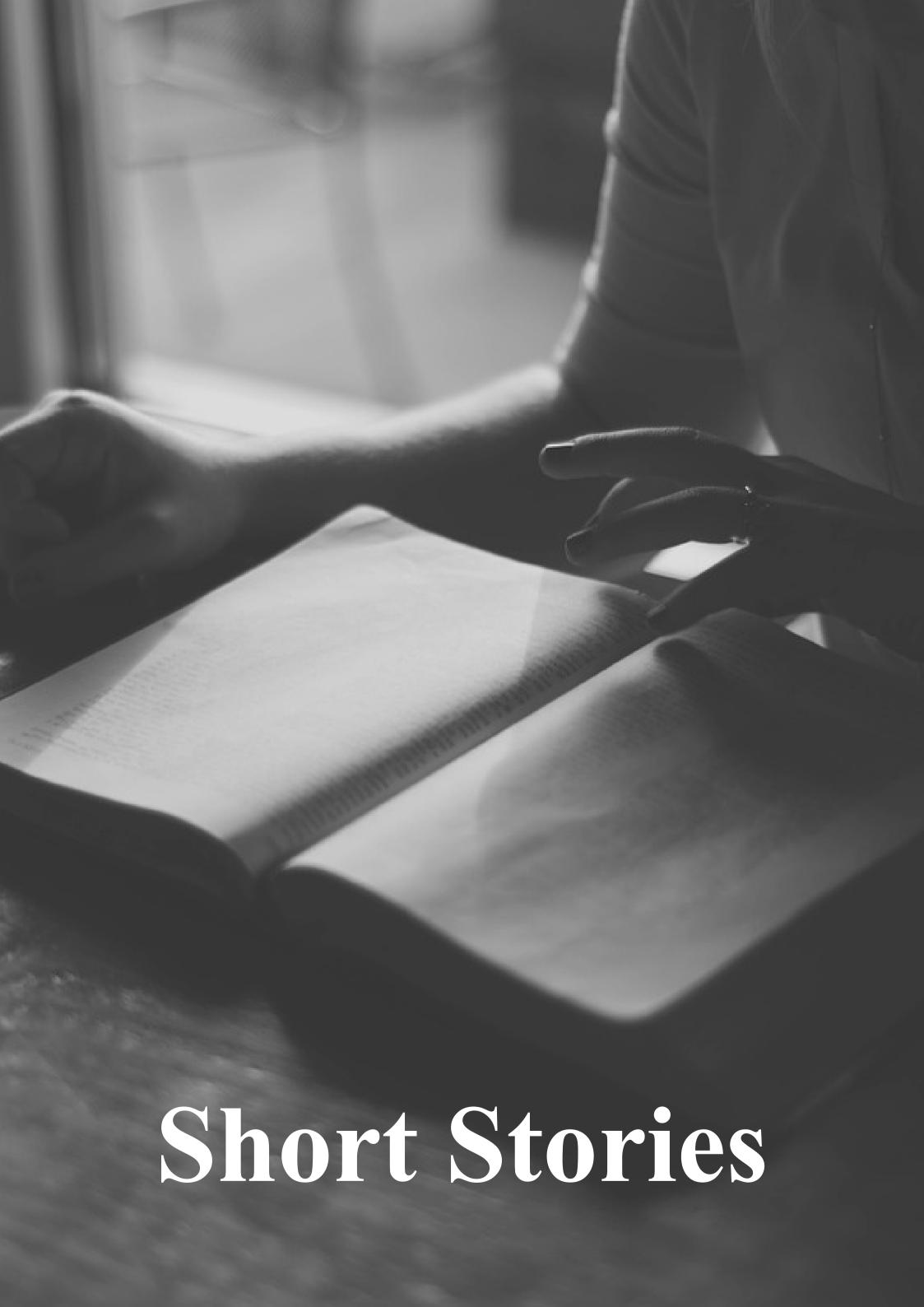


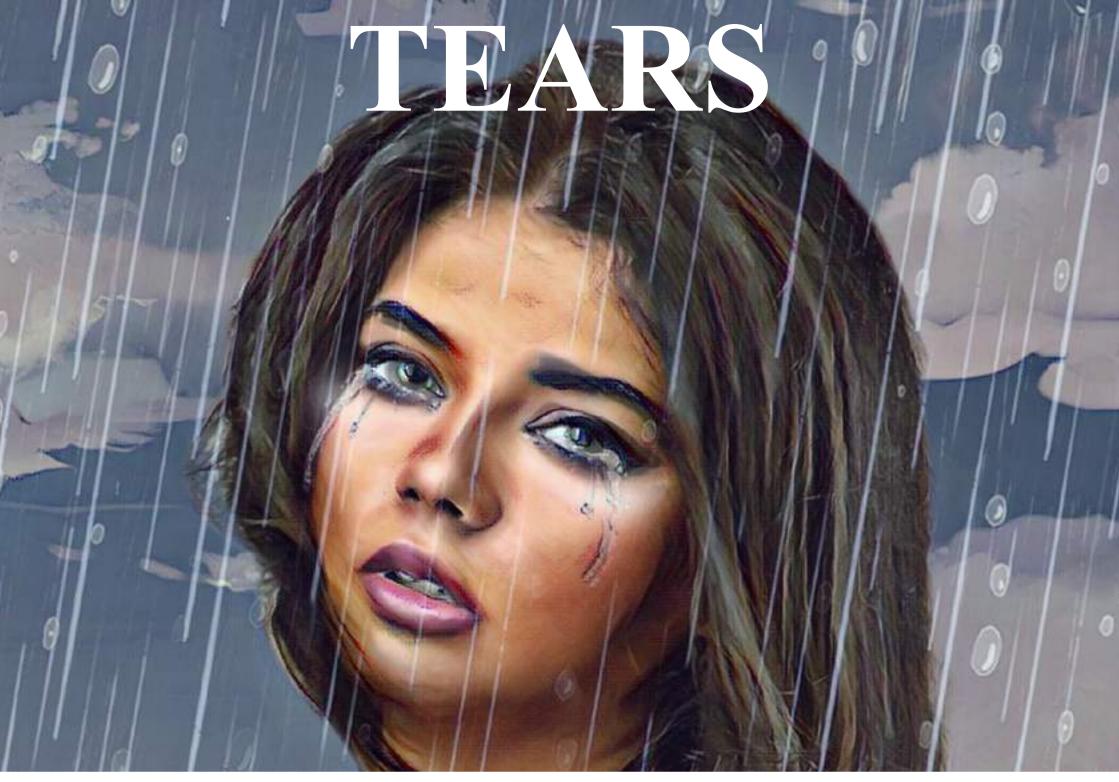
Art by Stephanie Okpala

Stephanie Okpala is a 19 year old Nigerian who hails from Anambra State and schools at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri.

Stephanie is studying Petroleum Engineering.

The title of her artwork is: ANNIEART





I closed my eyes and clenched my fist. My heart was pounding uncontrollably; I could feel my feet shaking. I held my breath as the speaker spoke. He had announced the second and first runner-up and now he was taking his time to fill the audience with suspense before announcing the winner of the competition. It was a championship final. I had made it through all the stages of the competition and I was finally at the championship final, the grand finale of the international spelling competition.

I was quite nervous and all I could hear myself say was: Lord please help me win, help me make my mother proud. Please let me make my family. . . before I could complete that statement, the grand announcement was made. I heard my name clearly from the speaker's mouth. It rang in my head. I felt a shiver run through my spine. Goose bumps appeared on my skin. As I walked up to the stage, the crowd cheered and screamed my name, Nne! Nne!!

The walk to the stage felt longer than before. I couldn't wait to get up there to collect my trophy. Yes, it was mine. It was in my name. The cheers increased, the applause became thunderous as I approached the stage majestically. The trophy was handed to me. It was even more beautiful than it looked from where I had sat. I was very excited. I lifted the trophy high above my head and I turned to face the crowd. A standing ova-

tion followed. It was like everyone had wanted me to win. I was overjoyed as I looked through the crowd for my mother. I heard her voice from behind me, I turned to look at her, and I blinked. When I opened my eyes, it was a dream.

"Who are you talking to?" She asked.

"No one, I was only dreaming about a spelling competition and I won. I was given a beautiful trophy in the presence of a big crowd," I replied drowsily.

"You had better stop dreaming of things like that and face the reality. I have placed the akara and bread in your tray. You should get going before the akara gets cold."

"Ok ma." I replied.

"I hope you'll have good sales today," she said as she tied a black scarf around her head.

"I'll do my best ma." I replied.

I got up from my bed and changed my clothes. Ma helped me to balance the tray on my head. I stepped out of the compound and started shouting, "buy akara" as I walked from one street to another.

My mother never supported my dream of becoming a champion at spelling. She believed that the destiny of a female child lies in the kitchen. She felt I was going too far, she was scared for me. All she had was me and my little brother. My father had left us to the other side of the river shortly after my brother was born. I was barely eight years old and my brother was just a few months old. My mother was devastated. I could remember how she cried at his burial. We lost him to an accident. He was crushed by a car. Even with the way my father died, my mother was made to go through all the rigours of tradition. Her hair was shaven clean and she was forced to drink the filthy corpse water to show that she has no hands in the death of my father.

My mother was very young when she got married to my father. She never went to school. I guess that is why she got married so early. That was also why she did not value education.

In the short time my father spent with us, he made sure he sent me to school because he believed in education. He was quite educated. He completed his secondary education and was about to commence his tertiary education when his father died. He had to stop schooling as the responsibility of the whole family was upon his shoulders.

I always wondered what my family would have been like if my father had completed his education. Maybe we would have been rich. My father put so much effort in teaching me how to read and write thereby arousing my passion for spelling. I was really good at spelling. Once I represented my school in an inter school spelling competition

and I had won. Things were going on fine until I lost my father. A year after my father's death, I dropped out of school. Ma could no longer cope with paying for feeding, clothing, rent and school fees all by herself. Even though we had cut down our expenses, we could barely afford two meals a day. All we had was akara and bread I and my mother sold. However, things had gone from bad to worse.

A lot of thoughts passed through my mind as I walked through the streets with my tray full of akara and bread. I imagined myself at the championship finals. I imagined that I had won the competition. I saw myself holding a trophy and everyone was screaming my name. I imagined the joy on my mother's face as she watched me receive the trophy. I imagined how happy little Emma would be. I gazed intensely at the sky and I noticed the weather was changing. The sky was dim and the clouds were pregnant. It was obvious there was going to be a heavy downpour. I adjusted the tray on my head and headed home with my dress being blown to and fro by the wind. I managed to keep my tray balanced on my head despite the wind. I had walked a few miles and was quite close to my house when the wind became unbearable. I had dust in my eyes. I stopped under a mango tree and waited for the wind to calm down. The wind blew and blew some more, sweeping the ground and making the trees dance to its beat. It blew for quite some time before it calmed down.

When it did, I balanced the tray on my head and continued my journey. The road was littered with dried leaves, empty sachets of biscuits and many other kinds of trash. As I made my way through the trashy road, a piece of paper caught my eyes. I stopped, brought my tray down from my head and picked up the paper. It was a flyer for an international spelling competition. My eyes flung wide open in wonder. I checked the date and it was in the next two weeks. I could not believe my eyes. I was standing before a once in a life time opportunity, the answer to my prayers. In my hands, I was holding the key to my dreams. I rushed home to tell my mother the good news but she was not excited to hear it. She did not even like the idea.

I continued to sell akara and bread on the street, trying hard to make money for my family to survive. One afternoon while I was hawking, someone called out to me. "Mai akara!!" I rushed to where the person was standing to sell my akara. He handed the akara he had bought to some children whom I later found out were his students. He was a tall well-built man, he was dark in complexion and his name was Mr. Dan. He asked me about my school and I told him my story. He said I could join his class. He taught children how to read and write for free. I was excited; it made me feel like I was in school.

I attended the class for a few days and Mr. Dan was really impressed with my spelling ability. I told him about the competition; it was only a few days away at that time. He encouraged me and taught me new words. He trained me physically and mentally until I could say for a fact that I was ready for the competition. Meanwhile at home, I was having problems with Ma due to the massive downturn in the yield of my merchandise as I spent most of my time at Mr. Dan's class. Ma suspected something was wrong and she found out soon enough. She trailed me to Mr. Dan's class and embarrassed Mr. Dan and I in the presence of the other students and everyone who cared to be a part of the audience.

She dragged me home by the ears and severely punished me. She forbade me from going to Mr. Dan's class. I begged and begged but she did not change her mind. Four days away from the competition, I tried hard to convince Ma to let me go. Mr. Dan also tried his bit but Ma turned deaf ears on all our pleas. Mr. Dan had already bought the registration form for the competition; he had also booked our flight. I cried but Ma was still adamant

Three days to the competition, my brother fell ill. He was vomiting at intervals; he had severe diarrhea and abdominal pain. The symptoms were clear. It was cholera. The thought of it sent shivers down Ma's spine. She had just lost her husband, was she going to lose her only son as well? I felt sorry for my brother as I watched him cry out in pain.

Then I made Ma a promise, that I would win the competition and come back home with enough money to treat Emma. If only she would let me go. Ma finally gave in and gave me her blessing to go for the competition. She prayed for me and wished me success. I had one day left to make the journey to South Africa where the competition was going to be held. I spent a whole day at Mr. Dan's place preparing for the big day. With my preparations and Ma's prayers backing me, I was unstoppable.

Very early the next day, we were set to travel. Ma could not see me off to the airport because she had to stay home with Emma. I never imagined it could be so difficult to leave Ma and Emma. It was at that moment I realized I was leaving home. My heart was heavy as I turned back to look at Ma. I saw tears in her eyes and tears rolled down my cheeks.

A few hours later Mr. Dan and I arrived in South Africa. We were just in time for the registration and we headed straight for the venue. We had no idea that the state had been placed under a curfew. We noticed that the streets were empty but since it was our first time in the country we assumed that it was a norm. We were arrested for vio-

lating the curfew rules. We pleaded with the police officers but they turned deaf ears on our pleas.

Our case moved from one desk to another and from one office to the next. They talked to us harshly and repeatedly told us that a Nigerian was never to be trusted. We spent a lot of money paying fines and we were finally deported.

As the plane touched down at the airport, I realised my doom. I remembered my brother's illness and the promise I had made Ma. Now where were we going to get the money to treat my brother? What was I going to tell my mother? My heart melted as I stepped out of the plane. I was back at home. I was back with nothing to show. I fell to the ground and let the tears flow freely.

When I got to the house, the door was open. I went in and I found no one. The house was empty, our property was gone. I was scared. "What could have happened to my family?" I asked myself. "Where they evicted from the house? Did something happen to my brother? Did Ma travel? Well at least she wouldn't travel with all the furniture!" So many questions ran through my head.

I asked the neighbours, they told me that the landlord had evicted us from the house but no one knew where my mother and brother had gone. With the help of Mr. Dan, I was able to find my mother and brother. They were staying in a nearby abandoned farm house.

My brother got better. Ma had treated him with herbs. I continued selling akara. My dreams of becoming a superstar at spelling had died. The profit we made from the akara we sold was just enough for food. For a while we were fine, we had enough to eat and we even had savings. And for the first time in a long time, we were happy. But that happiness did not last.

My brother fell ill again and it was more severe than ever. It was cholera in its ugliest costume. It was more than we could handle. We rushed him to the hospital, paid the numerous bills before they could admit him in the so called government hospital. He spent two days at the hospital and those two days he completely drained us. We had spent all of our savings and we even sold some of our property. And just when we thought things could not get any worse, NLC went on strike and so all government parastatals went on strike including hospitals. My brother was discharged abruptly. His condition was even worse than it was when he went to the hospital. We could not afford a private hospital so we treated him with herbs. He was not improving at all. In fact, he was getting worse. My brother was dying. I was scared. My mother was sad. We had no one to talk to.

Mr. Dan came to visit us. He told me he had no money. He handed me an envelope, he said it was all he had. I opened it, inside was a piece of paper. It was a ticket for a local spelling competition. The competition was three days away. I thanked him and dropped it on a chair. It was quite obvious that I wasn't interested in it. The next day I came across the paper; I picked it up and looked hard at it. Then I said to myself, "there is no harm in trying." And my mum replied, "this could be the light at the end of the tunnel." Surprised, I turned and looked at her. She had a faint smile on her face. I caught the smile and smiled back. Her optimism gave me hope.

Throughout that night and the next morning I studied for the competition. It was a small one; an inter-state competition. I won it but for some reason I wasn't very excited. All I wanted was the money to treat my brother. When I got home, my mother was outside waiting for me. I was holding my prize in my hand.

"How was it," she asked.

"It was fine. I won," I said.

"Congratulations dear. What did they give you?"

"A book and a pen," I said sarcastically. She looked at them and burst into laughter. And I laughed too. We laughed for a while and then she said, "why don't we feed your brother with the book and treat him with the pen." Her countenance changed, she became really sad. She had built her hopes on my spelling competition and once more it had collapsed. It was yet another fruitless one, she thought within her. I read her mind, I looked straight into her eyes and then I screamed, "congratulations Ma!" You are now the proud owner of twenty thousand naira!"

"What? She jumped out of her chair like someone who had been stung by a scorpion. Looking into my eyes, she knew I wasn't joking. She then screamed for joy. I had never seen my mother that happy my entire life. She had such a beautiful smile. And that smile is what keeps me going.

Now here I am, standing in front of the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland, Washington. I am in the United States, the venue for the 2018 International Spelling Bee with my mother by my side holding my hand. Emma is right beside me holding on to Mr. Dan.

Yes! There was light at the end of the tunnel. We didn't just get to the light, we came out of the tunnel. Now we are heading for the spotlight and we are here to win.

Abu Blessing Nne, Nigeria

# DUSKIS BAD NEWS FOR GIRLS

#### Meaza Aklilu Hadera, Ethiopia

My heart is beating fast. It is getting dark and my little sister is not home yet. Unlike any other day, my baby sister is two hours late today.

For a village like ours, dusk is bad news for girls. I still remember my incident. I was only twelve back then. I remember I was getting back home from the market place. I was singing happily because I was going to live with my brother in the city. I had bought everything that I thought I would need in the city. I had been walking for a while when I heard someone's foot steps behind me. I was too afraid to turn around and I was still too far from home.

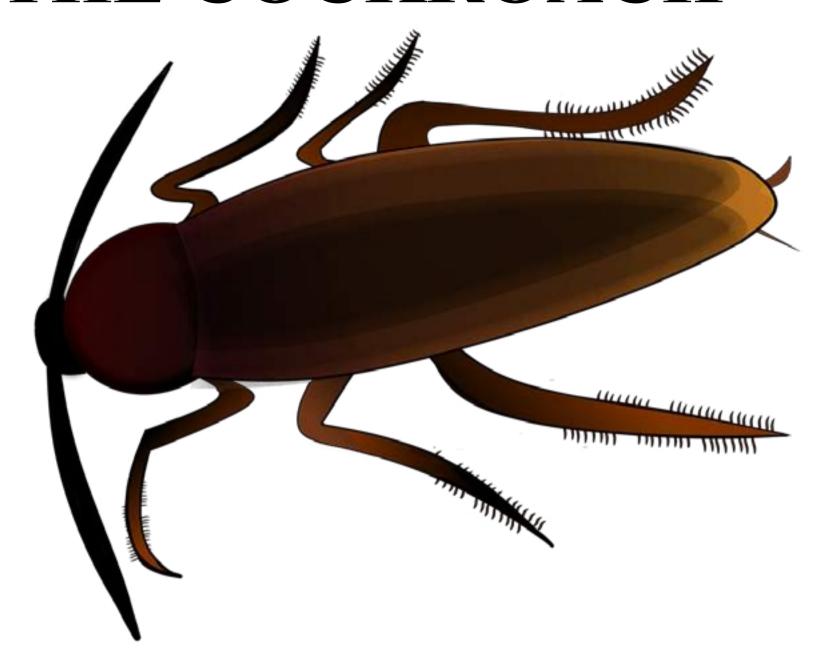
The footsteps got much closer to me. Then someone pulled me back by my hair. I screamed and turned around. In front of me were four boys, one from my village, his name was Solomon. Suddenly, something struck the back of my head and that is the last thing I remember. When I woke up, I felt dizzy and there was blood all over my legs and skirt. I walked home in pain. I found my mom sited outside our house waiting for me, a worried look on her face.

She took one glance at me and tears formed in her eyes. She guided me to the bathroom, washed me, then gave me clean clothes to change into. She told me not tell anyone about it and that with time I will forget it ever happened. So I kept it to myself. She said that if people knew they would talk and I would be shamed. The following week I went to live with my brother in the city, but I did not forget. Now I am a nurse, I came back to my village a few months ago.

I see my sister and my heart pounds in my chest. As she gets closer I notice the way she walks is not normal. I run towards her and hug her.

"Are you okay?" I ask, but I already know the answer to my question. "Solomon and his friends...?" She cries. My legs give way under me when I hear his name and I scream. I am angry, and I feel ashamed. He had taken my innocence, and now my sister's too.

# THE COCKROACH



The cockroach crawled on the hole-riddled mabati walls of the single room that Neema lived in. The presence of the uninvited visitor disturbed her. It seemed many things in her life were uninvited. She slowly rose up from the mattress on the floor but her effort was in vain. The pangs of pain hit her again. The previous night he had come home drunk again and beat her up again. Just like all other nights, Neema had screamed for help. But her neighbors were now used to her screams and beatings. They knew it would happen again and again.

"Ouch, wooii!" She screeched in pain. Her effort to rise up was a dismal failure. Slowly, Neema laid back down on the stained dirty mattress. Her eyes slowly surveyed the single room. It was also drab and untidy. A kerosene stove, drugs, and dirty clothes were strewn all over the floor. Her eyes rested on the red worn out slipper. Then back to the cockroach that had now come into her direct line of vision. It seemed to draw her deeper and deeper into the nightmare she tried to forget.

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"Mamiii! Ichooloooo!" "Mamiii! Ichooloooo!" "Mamiii! Ichooloooo!" The mid-morning breeze carried the children's voices and laughter. Children down the dusty Mzima Lane

in the Wizara Civil Servant Estate, Nairobi strutted along to join the rest of their friends. Holidays always meant fun and games. Neema too ran along to join in the singing game. She was always the bubbliest and most play full. At nine years old, you could tell she was destined to be a beauty. Her coal black hair, dark chocolate skin tone and the deep coffee brown eyes captivated many. They said she would be a head turner. For Neema, that was the least of her concerns. All she cared about was having a blast with her friends.

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He came from Rwengo Village. He was waiting to join Masomo University, Nairobi and he was Mr. Rutere's younger brother. The children simply called him Anko ya Jemmo. In Rwengo, he had been known as the village's bull because of his ways with the girls. When he impregnated the chief's daughter, things became difficult for him in the village as the chief wanted him dead, so he took cover in his elder brother's home in the city. He took his bull-ish ways to the city and he had been having his way with house girls on Mzima Lane when their Madams were at work. He always watched Neema play, so he befriended the children. He bought them sweets but he always gave Neema more sweets than the rest of her peers.

"Ankoooo yaaaa Jemmoooo! Ankoooo yaaaa Jemmoooo! Ankoooo yaaaa Jemmoooo!" The children would shout excitedly when they would notice him standing by the playing field. They would run towards him and hug at his legs. But his gaze was always fixed at Neema.

For three months, Anko ya Jemmo meticulously planned. He had keenly observed their routine. Every Thursday afternoon Neema's aunty went to the market and she usually stayed there for about three hours. Since the holidays were now over, Neema was usually alone in the house after school. At that time of the day, the neighborhood was quiet. He was home alone since his nephews were in school for remedial classes and his sister in law had chased away the house help after she found out that she was pregnant. Everything was just perfect.

He called her to his house and gave her sweets. He told her they would play a game.

- "What game?" Neema asked innocently.
- "A very interesting game," He answered, breathing heavily.
- "What kind of game?"
- "The kind of game that big people play."
- "But big people do not play games. They go to work, come home in the evening and bring

food."

"Well, I'm telling you that they play games and I'm going to show you how to play it." He said, patting her coal black hair.

"They don't play!" She repeated with a hint of annoyance.

"Do you want chocolates?" He asked her, rubbing her back. His breathing was becoming heavier.

"Yes!" Her eyes widened with anticipation.

"Well! You will get lots and lots of chocolates and sweets and ice-cream after we play that game." His hands had moved to her little thighs, up her dress then inside her pants. "Aww!" she exclaimed. "You're hurting me Anko."

"I will hurt you even more if you scream. And you will never see your mummy and daddy and your baby brother and aunty and all your toys and your friends. You get that." He barked. "All those sweets were not for nothing." Then he carried her to his bedroom.

Neema was scared and she cried. She knew he was going to hurt her. He threw her on his dirty sheet. He ripped her dress, then her tiny panties.

They found her in a thicket that night, cold, naked, and unconscious. She was rushed to hospital and it took three days for her to regain consciousness. She told them what happened. He was arrested, and then released a few hours later, Mr. Rutere knew people in high places. The next day he left Wizara Estate for university.

The cockroach moved again. Her eyes moved with it. It seemed to carry her life with it and her nightmare went on unfolding.

It was never spoken of at home. In fact, it was a forbidden topic. Neema learnt to be silent but she always felt dirty. Years passed on and she grew to be a stunning beauty. She grew knowing things. Things that helped her cope. Men wanted her. She hated them but she still yearned for their love.

At twenty she was already an alcoholic and a heroin addict. When her mother confronted her about the missing items in the house, she ran away from home. They found her in a drug den in the Shauri slums. They tried to take her to a rehab center but it was all in vain.

Anto was her main supplier. He too wanted a piece of Neema. So he began supplying

her with free doses of heroin and he was always kind to her. She thought he loved her. He wanted to have her and despite her drug use, her beauty never faded.

Neema moved in with Anto and it was all rosy in the beginning until the beatings began. First it was a slap and he apologized. Then more slaps kicks and apologies. She walked away but always returned for her free dose. It happened again and again.

After a few months he told her that nothing was free and that she had to pay for her keep. That night he came home with a client for the night. Neema resisted. Anto beat her up and threw her out into the dark rainy night. In the days that followed, he locked her up without any food and her lifeline, the dose.

After that she submitted and entertained Anto's clients every other night. They ripped her up little by little, until she had nothing else left to give.

The cockroach continued its journey on the wall. Then something inside her snapped. Suddenly a cloud lifted off her drug-dazed mind and it became clear. The floodgates broke open. Neema cried tears that had been locked up. Tears for her stolen innocence, her broken soul, body, and things that had been left unspoken.

She found the voice to cry and speak out. The tears had somehow revived her. She rose up from the mattress, picked up the red, worn out slipper and crushed the cockroach. She hit it with all her might as tears and screams flowed from her. The cockroach carried all her nightmares. She felt free, and the tears stopped.

That night Anto came home drunk as usual. He strutted in and stopped. She was seated on the mattress and as he stared into her eyes, he realized that something was different about her. He felt uneasy as she slowly rose from the mattress, her eyes never leaving him.

"Where is my food you little whore?" he barked. She laughed sarcastically. "How dare you laugh at me, you whore!" He angrily moved to slap her. She grabbed his hand before it landed on her face. "This is last time you will ever lay your hands on me and this will be the last time I will ever be silent again." She said furiously and walked out into the warm night.

Muthoni Nyaga, Kenya





#### CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Writers Space Africa (WSA), an international literary magazine, published by the African Writers Development Trust (AWDT), is calling for submissions for its 24th edition under the theme "Christmas in Africa". We encourage the submission of poetry, short stories, etc from children below 18 years of age. There is no word restriction. In addition, we're accepting literary works from writers above 18 years in the following categories:

Articles/Essays – 1,200 Words maximum
Flash Fiction – 300 words maximum
Poetry – 1 poem, maximum of 24 lines
Short Stories – 1,500 words maximum
Jokes – 1 joke per writer

Artworks – maximum 3 artworks in high resolution

Personalised quotation - 1 quotation and must be the original work of the author

Please note the following:

- You're only entitled to submit for one category.
- The Deadline for submission is November 12, 2018.
- Our editors will revert to selected unpublished writers on areas of improvement in their work.
- . Due to the number of entries we receive, only selected authors will be on our website.
- The author retains copyright.
- Your work must be thoroughly edited before being uploaded.
   We will in turn edit selected entries to suit the publication.
- The magazine will be released on the 1st of December, 2018 on our website.
   To submit, please upload your work through our submission portal below.
   We ONLY accept MS word documents.

Artworks can be sent in either JPEG or PNG formats.

Entries can also be uploaded at www.writersspace.net.

In case of technical issues, please send an email to info@writersspace.net

## WWW.WRITERSSPACE.NET

December 2018Edition **Issue 24** 

**Empowering African Writers** 

DAWN OF A NEW CALENDAR Markham Marcus Kafui Ghana

A BITTER-BROKEN CHRISTMAS

Tanyaradzwa N.L. Mtema Zimbabwe

**FAMILY TIME** Phodiso Modirwa Botswana

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT William Khalipwina Mpina Malawi

MY BIG BROTHER: THE CHRISTMAS HERO Hannah Hazvibvumesu Tarindwa Namibia

PLANTS AND CHRISTMAS-VALUABLE AND INDISPENSABLE Ojji Chinazaekpere Joy Nigeria

MY CHRISTMAS VS GENA Meaza Aklilu Ethiopia

> ONCE IN A YEAR Benny Wanjohi Kenya

I BLEED YOUR INK Claudine Karangwa Ingabire Rwanda

# LUBACHA DEUS LUBACHA ABDUL

Behind the Blossoming Burt Award

0

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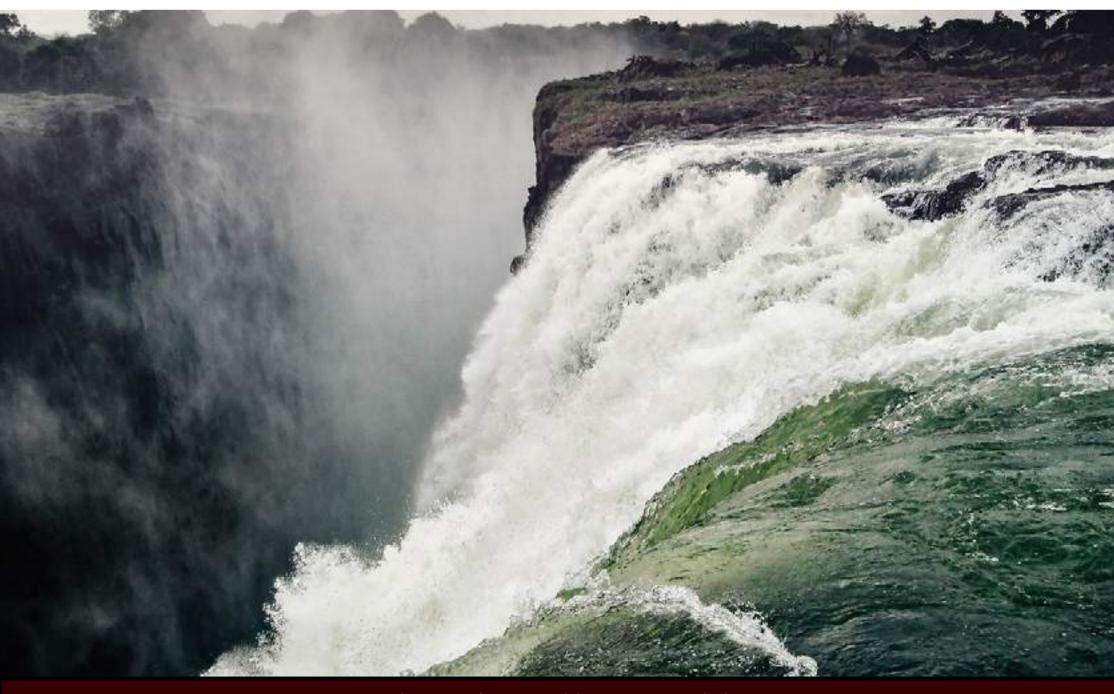
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#### Featured Writers

Esther Enewerome Odafe - Nigeria
Benny Wanjohi - Kenya
Markham Marcus Kafui - Ghana
Idris Firdaws Onozasi - Nigeria
Esther Imonmion, - Nigeria
Claudine Karangwa Ingabire - Rwanda
Tanyaradzwa N.L Mtema - Zimbabwe
Phodiso Modirwa - Botswana
Miriam Kalekye Kyalo - Kenya
Isaac Kilibwa - Kenya
Gift Siyame - Tanzania
Fautia Mogaeka - Tanzania

Ojji, Chinazaekpere Joy - Nigeria Meaza Aklilu - Ethiopia Kimberly Chirodzero - Zimbabwe William Khalipwina Mpina - Malawi Hannah Hazvibvumesu Tarindwa - Namibia



# Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.

It's a wrap! 2018 is hugging us goodbye. We mark the end of year in style. It goes in record, that we held our first ever writers conference. From all corners of mother Africa, we assembled at Abuja for a physical get-together.

We got to meet in person, the people behind the great works we've been enjoying. Virtual interactions have been awesome and now face-to-face mingling even great.

We celebrate you, dear reader for your continued support, undaunted love, feedback and the solid sense of togetherness this past one year. Also, to our contributors, who let their craft find a home with us, thank you for the trust. We hold you in high esteem.

We gracefully acknowledge the fact that, the end of a line, is the beginning of a new race. Catch you here again in the New Year for another literary road trip across Africa. Happy holidays!

Wakini Kuria, Kenya, Chief Editor, WSA





# Welcome Address Delivered at the 2018 African Writers Conference and Awards November 30 - December 2, 2018

The African Writers Development Trust AWDT is a Non-Governmental Organization that exists to integrate, empower, and mentor Writers and Arts Enthusiasts of African descent. AWDT promotes reading culture, encourages cross cultural learning, sharing of creative ideas, mentoring, capacity building among writers irrespective of their economic, religious, cultural, tribal, national, political or philosophical orientation.

Currently, the AWDT publishes Writers Space Africa (WSA) –a highly acclaimed and widely circulated monthly literary magazine which features works of writers from all over Africa to a global audience. Past and present editions of the magazine are available free to download at www.writersspace.net.

The organization also publishes Poetica, a magazine dedicated to everything poetry from poets and writers of African descent. This magazine is published quarterly and can be downloaded for free at www.poeticamagazine.net.

The African Writers Conference is an event conceptualized by the African Writers Development Trust aimed at bringing together writers of African descent to a common platform, building bridges for the transfer of values, engaging a conversation on how to advance the fight for the girl child as well as other collective shared interests.

#### The objectives include:

- To provide a gateway for continuous engagement and cross interaction on the issue of the girl child.
- To promote cross cultural discussion that will lead to the development of literature on the African continent.
- To foster mutual understanding for peaceful co-existence.
- To identify, endorse and celebrate excellence in African writing.

For more about AWDT, please visit www.writerstrust.org. Do enjoy the conference.

Regards,
Anthony Onugba,
Co-founder and Executive Director
aonugba@writerstrust.org

#### Winners of the 2018 African Writers Awards



Winners have emerged at the 2018 African writers awards held on December 1, 2018 at the International Conference Centre, Abuja, Nigeria. The event which paraded the finest writers in Africa was a celebration of the beauty of the girl child. The winners at the event were;

- 1. Children's Literature Manu Herbstein (Ghana) for 'Roise'
- 2. Flash Fiction Maryhilda Ibe (Nigeria) for 'Fragments.'
- 3. Poetry Chiamaka Onu-Okpara (Nigeria) for 'A Battle Cry to be Read Loudly and Softly.'
- 4. Short Stories Benson Mugo (Kenya) for 'Dawn.'

Special awards were also given to some writers of African descent who have contributed immensely towards the growth and development of the African literary space. Those recognised were;

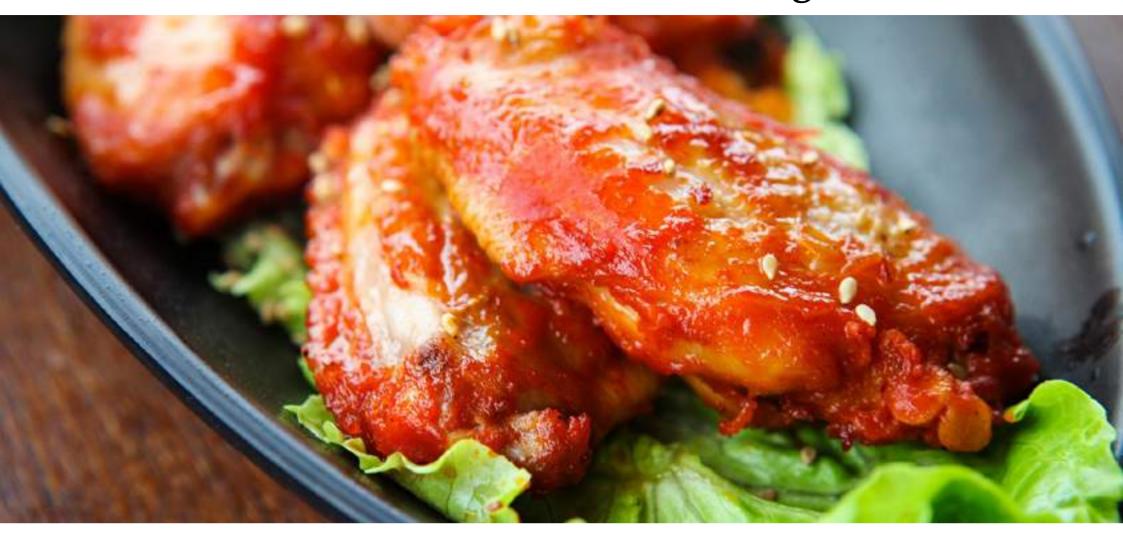
- 1. Sandra Oma Etubiebi (Nigeria)
- 2. Wakini Kuria (Kenya)
- 3. Edith Knight Adhiambo Ochieng (Kenya)
- 4. Nahida Esmail (Tanzania)
- 5. Halima Usman (Nigeria)
- 6. Saka Dbosz Junior (Nigeria)



# FLASH FICTION

### CHICKEN WING

#### Esther Enewerome Odafe - Nigeria



The aroma of fried rice and chicken heavily filled the air around the face-me-I-face-you compound we lived in. The sound of firecrackers mingled with the excited voices of children showing off their new clothes were heard. The girls would swing their heads just so their beads could jingle, and the boys would argue whose sneakers had brighter lights.

"Mama Ejiro happy Christmas o!" A neighbour greeted.

"Happy Christmas Mama Chidi."

My Mother responded as she served my brother, Dafe, and me a plate of fried rice and a piece of chicken— typical Christmas delicacy. Dafe joyfully took his plate while I stared at the piece of meat.

"Ejiro don't make me collect that food from you!" Knowing my Mum's temper, I quietly walked away but I wasn't satisfied. I had assisted my Mum in frying the chicken the previous day so I knew we had more than enough to go round.

Immediately she left the house to greet the neighbours, I walked into the kitchen and opened the pot of fried chicken. I picked up a drumstick to eat but realized that it would be easily noticed if it was gone so I put it back and picked a wing instead.

"Ejiro!"

"Ma," I answered and ran to the kitchen. Dafe was standing beside her with a smirk on his face. "How many pieces of chicken did you take from this pot?" The look in her eyes cautioned me not to lie. But something else was wrong. Why would my Mum ask how many pieces of chicken I'd taken when it was just one missing from the pot? Unless...

I looked at Dafe and I knew he had seen me take the chicken wing. "It was just one wing." As soon as I said those words, what followed was a deafening slap.

## POETRY



### ONCE IN A YEAR Benny Wanjohi -Kenya

Good morning! The sun rises in the east Announcing arrival of the day of the feast The dog yawns, the dove leaves its nest Insects, visit flowers, from their night rest

The bell at the tower of the Church rings
Time to attend the Christmas service
Sing about the birth of the King of kings
And hear a sermon from Pastor Gervase
Before returning home for the festival

The goat bleats, kicks, and fights for its life As it succumbs to the grandfather's knife Activities increase in every wife's kitchen As they prepare round chapatis and chicken

Mounted in the middle of the homestead A homemade Christmas tree is twinkling Relatives arrive with city sweets and bread As children excitedly play in a gathering around their uncle who's acting Santa Claus

Smoky pots from every hut are brought out On sisal mats the old and young spread out To merry with the delicacy of every dish Until darkness calls for the goodnight wish!

\*Chapati - a flat pancake of unleavened bread cooked on a griddle.

#### DAWN OF A CALENDAR

Markham Marcus Kafui - Ghana

When the midnight angelus sounds And the fire crackers begin to kindle forth, Rejoice ye men of women, Rejoice women of men Oh Rejoice, all ye inhabitants of the earth For harvest is past and harvest is here Leap forth mortal men for there are those who seethe And there are those who seethe not The stars are a witness to the shift in time But let the immortals judge between the old and the Gregorian For some speak with and some speak without So men of the field, save the moment Let your wells birth water till dust settles on your heart Thus the moon dances to your merry quietly As dawn awakes, Only to await your next harvest.

#### SOUL-MATE CHRISTMAS Idris Firdaws Onozasi - Nigeria

A promise I made, quietly to myself
To find a soul-mate, this Christmas
One with a face that lights the firmament
A beautiful soul, an adoring heart

The first I met, has the soul of a priest
But a crooked face, surgeons can't correct
The second, beauteous, a master piece
But has a troubled heart, so violent

The third, so polite and full of love
But his soul so corrupt, he is a thief
The fourth, his face gorgeous like rose
But when I look closely, his nose doesn't fit

So they all are, with missing parts
Until I decided, to admit defeat
I couldn't find a soul-mate, this Christmas
But sure I will, on New Year's Eve.



### THE CHRISTMAS AURA

Esther Imonmion, - Nigeria

Can the night fade away

For excitement till dusk

As the euphoria paves the way

For celebration nonstop.

The night seem longer than usual
Voices of children playing in the moonlight
Mothers in some sort of cooking ritual
As we all watch the night.

The sound of sonorous music reverberates the air
The smell of steaming stew inspires hunger
As the dark births a day; bright and fair
The shouts of MERRY CHRISTMAS quake like thunder.

#### I Bleed your Ink Claudine Karangwa Ingabire - Rwanda

For my words that flow like a river, With the ink spewing across my page, So much to say, so much to write to soothe your soul, Let me narrate between the lines of your stories, For my heart to bleed the pain from the scars that you carry, For my voice to be heard as I speak for the voiceless, It's not that you are numb and helpless. This ink that flows in my veins, Pregnant with stories untold, Alphabetical surges Steaming, Building up wails and screams, Thunderous claps and ululations, Emotions swirled up inside, Let me be the mouthpiece. Let me articulate your inner most, When you fail to fathom. When you fail to shape letters, to form the right words to express yourself, Let me bleed your ink.

#### A BITTER-BROKEN CHRISTMAS

Tanyaradzwa.N.L Mtema - Zimbabwe

Hastily she waited for the day.
She dreamt of it so beautiful,
Beautiful than the long gone decades.
Chanted with joy, a heart full of imaginations.

Preparations adorned the beauty of their homestead.
Women meandering from one corner to the other
A busy day it was!
Girls and boys at one end enjoying their melodramatic plays.
Christmas a season of shared happiness with suspended sorrows,

It was not as perfect as it seemed.

It's not Christmas without the "Jerusalem dance."

What then is Christmas without rice and chicken?

What is Christmas without our luscious brew?

Men gathering in unison share the joys of life,

Kissing other men's lips as the mug of brew circulated.

And then fate takes a twist turn! Sweeping away the joy of the day Fire!

Men and women scattered all over with buckets of water. Sight-seeing the thatches of our old hut falling inside as, Ears dominated the cries of agony made by the innocent soul. It was too late!

He died a painful death!



Holding the floods at bay When the lack and diseases rage They are back to their own again

**Back to celebrate Christmas** Over large meals and loud chatter To remember a Christ born Share gifts heartfelt Because here in Africa Christmas is synonymous With family time

#### THE VILLAGE IN SEASON

#### Miriam Kalekye Kyalo - Kenya

Before the New Year's crossover
Bus parks are full of crowds
It's departure time for everyone
As they usher in the festive season

Children graze at the roadside
Children gaze toward the main road
To see if uncle will surprise them
With gifts of shoes and garments

The kids answer to the calls of mothers Who're making the sweet chapatis
There are whistles and ululations
As they play merrily in the wet sand

At sunset the clan sits round the bonfire

Where the elders tell ancestral tales
With silent bites of the roasted meat
Echoes of laughter run into darkness

The long-distance relatives unite
As they recapture missed moments
The cocks crow in low rhythmic tones
As if they know their slaughter hour is
nigh

Traditional dancers wear intertwined leaves
Making uniformed entertaining moves
Marking the end of one season
Till the next, when it'll be Christmas again



#### CHRISTMAS IN NAIROBI Isaac Kilibwa - Kenya



Hectic, the last sennight, has always been

As masses flee the capital for home.

Of humans the choked streets have been scrubbed clean,

The unfamiliar breeze allowed to roam.

All roads lead away, coaches new paths tread,

Sardines packed with nostalgia ridden men,

Flee, like to honeymoons the newlywed,

Men do not mind their slim pockets bitten.

But the forlorn city, ah, she exhales,

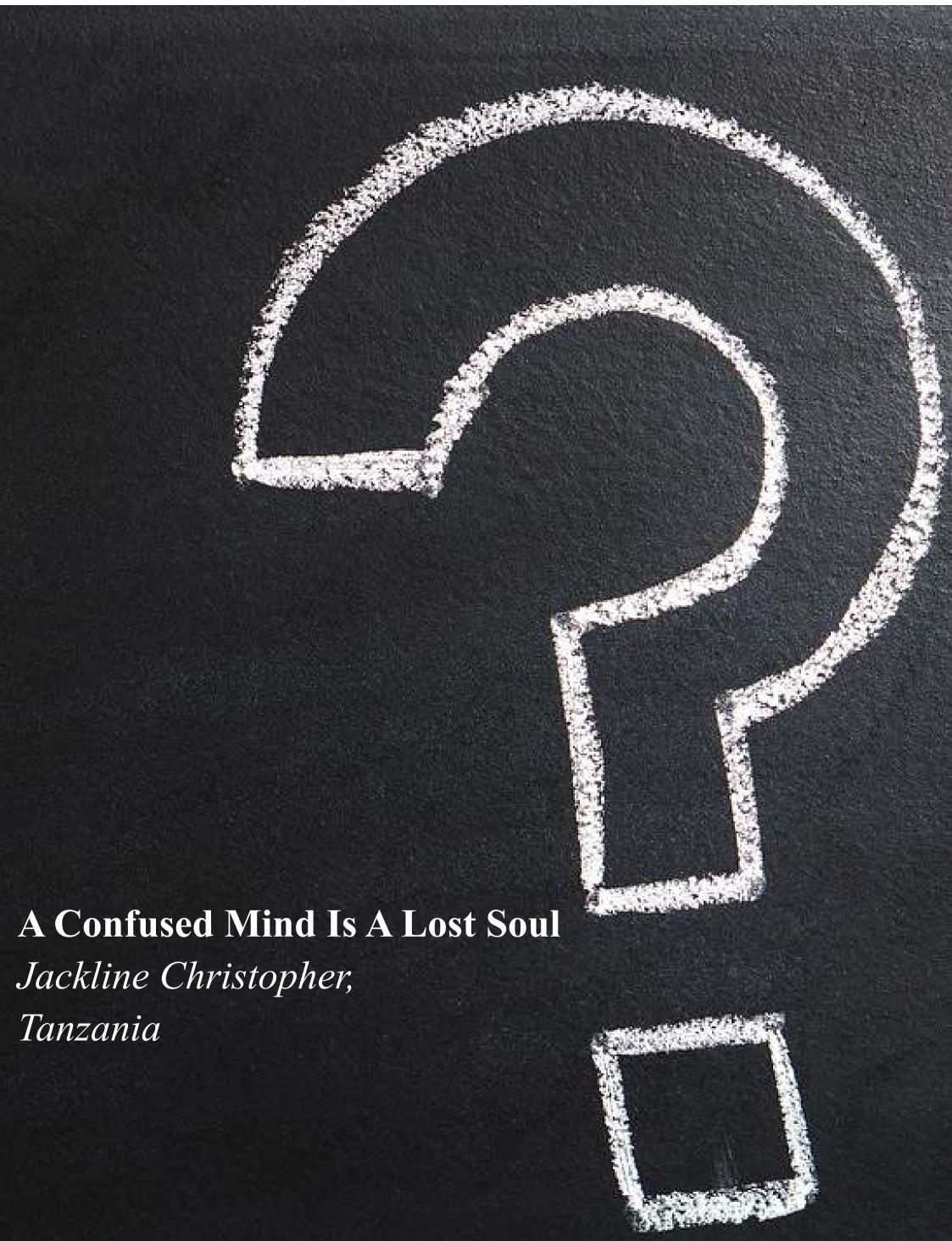
And leisurely stretches her nimble limbs.

Serene poetries shrug from their shy shells

And breathe amity with their silent hymns.

As calm as they come is Nairobi's Mass,

Drained of guarded harm, noise, and sad flowers.



## LUBACHA DEUS LUBACHA ABDUL

Behind the Blossoming Burt Award
BY SANDRA OMA ETUBIEBI



If I hear you say you don't care for recognition for your work as a writer, I may greet you with respectful silence, but be sure that somewhere within the frenulum of my tongue I have called you a liar! Sure, recognition or not, many writers will always write -some for the joys and the rush, many for fame and fortune, and others for a cause. Yet, who says you can't have it all? Who says that a cause is without its rush, its fame and fortune? While all of this is playing back and forth within your cerebral cortex, let me introduce a modest, humble, and brilliant writer who is presently enjoying the notoriety that comes with recognition and applause for a work well written.

He is Lubacha Deus Lubacha Abdul -what a name! Born 27 years ago in the Western Zone of Tanzania along the shores of Lake Victoria, Lubacha is a teacher specialized in Literature and Linguistics. He is an editor, aspiring publisher and youth activist; all bounded together into a developing writing career. He lives in Dar es Salaam.

Our WSA Celebrity for this month is the proud winner of the 2018 CODE Burt Literary Award. If you're like me -curious to know more about the award and the man Lubacha - you'll enjoy my robust question and answer session where he eloquently talks more about himself, his writing, his award, and his fans.

Enjoy!

Q: What role does your specialization, Literature and Linguistics, play in your writing and ability of expression?

A: Prior to specializing in Linguistics, I had a limited ability of expressing ideas in English language because I don't belong to English language native speaking community. When I switched my writing to English as the way to connect to the world, I was obliged to have a great knowledge of the language. Linguistics has played a great role towards widening the understanding of socio-linguistic patterns that in turn has enforced great expression whenever I lift my fingers to type on a screen. With literature, I am comfortable that whichever feature I include in my writings I have a great understanding of it. For example I like using extended metaphors (literary conceits), de-familiarization and the question of binary opposition when assigning roles to my characters. Studying literature and linguistics has propelled me to write my works weighing them on formalist approach of criticism which denotes that the key to understand the text is by the text itself. As a literary critic I do close reading.

Q: Tell us about your writing?

A: To me, Writing is more than just getting words out of my head. It's a well-practiced way of thinking, behaving and creating. I like storytelling, not because am too verbal but because I have that passion of playing with words in a good way. I write young and adult fiction, with thematic focus that affects them positively. I always give an insight of judgment to the society about issues affecting both young and adults. An Austrian novelist, Peter Handke, once said "If a country loses its storytellers, it loses its childhood." That's true. This is what keeps me writing fiction works to accommodate the changes and misconceptions derived from societal systems. Although my first two writings are novels, in the near future I am going to write poetry, short stories, flash fiction and plays.

Q: What propels you to write? What do you write about and why?

A: What propels me to write is the duty I have as a writer; to write for the community. Writing is a habit patterned over a routine. I write every day to make a great flow of my ideas. Writing is practice. And If I realize what I've written doesn't make sense to me, I erase it. There's no loss when the mind is not satisfied. But every day I must have something to download from my mind. I write about socio-cultural issues and their effects towards creating a responsible generation.

Q: Growing up, what were your dreams for a career? And how does that measure up to your experiences today?

A: I grew up in Chato district, seeing my uncle holding books from Monday to Friday on his way to and from school where he taught English language. I was pulled to be a teacher since then. Whenever I saw him in the evening, sitting on a wooden chair in the yard, holding his English written book on the left hand, while occasionally sipping his tea after each thin rustle of paper, I asked to sit by his side, throwing childish questions about reading. He was kind and loving and responsive. It was the best feeling as I grew up knowing that teaching and books are an everlasting engagement. When he passed away in 2004 while I was 13, I missed a figure to ask and learn more about the secret behind the books. He left books which I couldn't read because they were far advanced compared to my education level by that time, and worse enough were written in English, a language that I hadn't mastered yet. I started reading Swahili stories, most of which were written on newspapers. When I was appointed a school librarian (pupils section), I got a chance to interact with variety of books. Although I was young, it appeared that I fell in love with adult books especially those with adventures and unbeaten heroic char-

acters (Ben Mtobwa's book was my first encounter in the library). With exposition to many books, I completed series of readings within a short period of time and I felt like I had discovered a new world that was hidden behind tall mountains. Reading books influenced me to write. Growing up knowing that teaching and books are inseparable entities made me believe that I can teach and write at the same time and now, here I am; a teacher and writer.

Q: When you self-published your first novel in 2016, did you sell it? What did you do with it?

As I majored in Literature and linguistics at university, I made a commitment that before my graduation I must have something for my classmates (relating to my course of study) that would be our greatest memory. When I self- published My first Girlfriend, I sold it at a lower price that was affordable to anyone (on campus) who wished to buy. I was amused by the people's positive response that gave me the courage to make writing my greatest companion in life.

#### Q: What is the Burt Awards?

A: The CODE Burt Literary Award is a literary award and readership initiative that recognizes excellence in locally authored and published literature for young adults aged 12-18. The objective of the prize is to champion literacy, build language skills, and foster the love and habit of reading by ensuring that young people have access to high quality, culturally relevant, and engaging reading materials. In 2008, CODE established the Burt Literary Award with the generous support of Canadian philanthropist William (Bill) Burt and the Literary Prizes Foundation. First established in Tanzania, the program has since expanded to Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya, the Caribbean, and Canada.

CODE is a Canadian based international development organization that works in partnership with local organizations to expand literacy in Africa, the Caribbean, and Canada by supporting the professional development of teachers and librarians, by providing children and youth with access to high quality reading materials, and helping to strengthen the local book trade and national publishing capacities.

Q: How did you hear about the Burt Awards? What informed and influenced your

decision to enter?

A: A friend recommended the awards to me, after he read my first novel. Although he had a little clue about the awards but he advised me (if possible) to submit my novel My first Girlfriend for 2016literary prize competition, assuming that it could win. I didn't hesitate. When I approached CBP(Children's Books Project) the novel was rejected on the grounds that it didn't fit the criteria of the target audience(Young Adults) but I was enriched with information about the award, thanks to Happiness, the coordinator. Learning that the competition was open to anyone, I was influenced to write something that would fit the criteria. Therefore I had to go back and twist the scope of the audience in the new novel I was working on and came up with If she were Alive, a title that hooked the award in 2018.

Q: There are many writers with good manuscripts out there, please explain to them the possibilities that abound in entering their works into such contests.

A: A quote from Janice H. Reinold explains it all. She says that in today's modern world, people are either asleep or connected. That's true. Writing is enterprise that a writer needs to be connected to a variety of situations and people. I would say this; Writers with their manuscripts on devices and papers have to interact. They have to attend literary festivals, book fairs and reading hubs and stay closer to social media. Information is the most valuable commodity. You cannot be informed unless you keep yourself in a network. In Tanzania for example, there's Peer Writing Support program in which writers write their stories and submit them to a local facilitator who does literary critique together with writers during our meeting sessions. The aim of this program is to keep writers well equipped with quality and relevant stories that would be published or submitted in such contests and keep them in a network that would provide them with relevant information about various opportunities.

Q: Are you aware of the process behind the judging process for the Burt Awards? A: For BURT awards, I am not sure if the criteria put on the calls for submission are the only hints considered in judgment. Perhaps there are plenty of them but I am not exposed to. All I know are the general criteria put on submission calls for stories to be eligible to contest; one being focusing on young adult as the primary audience. The

requirements are always made clear when the calls are made. That's what guides me before I throw my story into competitions.

Q: When and how did you receive the news that you won the Burt Awards?

A: To be frank, I wish I knew about it before I lifted my feet to the awarding hall but it never happened. I got the news about winning when I was announced at the ceremony. It was all revealed on the spot. The feeling of waiting was so scary that I felt unusual tautness in my stomach. It could've developed to acute diarrhea if they delayed announcing the winners, I swear.

Q: So, how does winning feel like?

A: Several times I tried to imagine how Cristiano Ronaldo felt whenever he lifted a Ballon D'Or or Golden boot award but couldn't grasp the real feeling till winning knocked at my door. Winning thrills the body parts, making the body boil while pushing the adrenaline to allow humorous and enthusiastic blood flow. In winning, there's a kind of pleasure you can't explain clearly by words, but to cut the story short, it feels good to be recognized.

Q: How do you hope to maximize your new found status and influence?

A: I need to diversify my writing by widening its scope; I mean engaging into other genres such as short stories, poetry, plays and flash fiction. I have been receiving calls and emails asking me if I have done other writing apart from novels and I think the time has come to quench their thirst. I have a plan to release an anthology of short stories next year. When it comes to literature, I believe I can write anything worth reading and plagiarizing.

Q: You have a desire to become a publisher. Tell us more about that.

A: In Tanzania we are struggling to build readership culture. We are investing in youth to let them regard reading as part of their life. To supply the reading community with sufficient materials to read we need to encourage youth to write consumable works. As aspiring publisher, I'm determined to create a harmonious firm that would help young writers from secondary schools and universities (Who cannot get a room to publish) to have their works published and linked up to the market after launching them. As a publisher, my role is to let upcoming writers get exposed to the world of writing. The approach will base on publishing anthologies developed from different stories written by upcoming writers basing on one theme that will be communicated by the publishing

house. The theme will change in each call for submission to enable young writers swim in a wide ocean of ideas.

Q: Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

A: Hilary Hinton 'Zig Ziglar', the American author and motivational speaker said there's no elevator to success, you have to take the stairs. Well, I am really excited by the steps "stairs" I've taken up to this far. It's really encouraging that I am not stuck to where I was before. My writing is growing, improving from one stair to the other, with a bunch of folks behind me. In five years, I see myself as someone with deep expertise in writing and publishing industry. I see a public figure whose influence is piercing across the seas to other continents. I see a role model, a symbol of hope and existence. I see me.

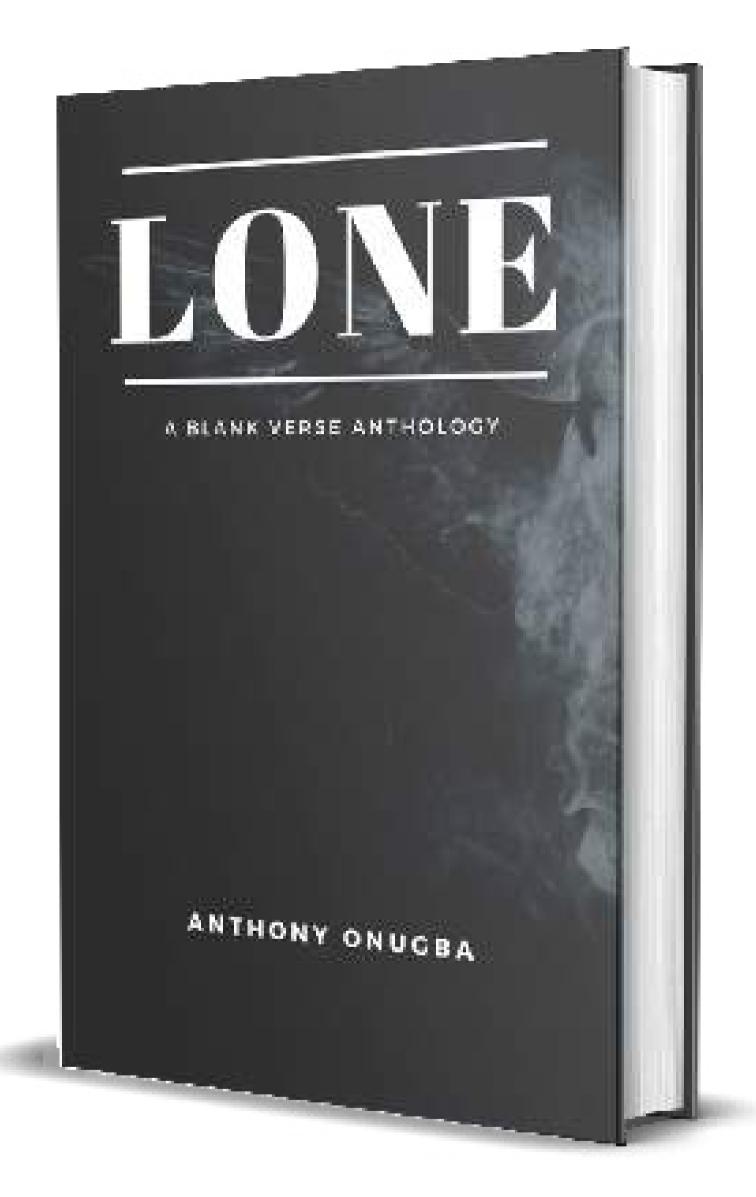
Q: To your growing fan base, what would you say?

A: I love my fan base and I am proud of it. They have been too supportive to the extent that I feel privileged and humbled by their love for my works. Whenever they don't see a new release they don't hesitate asking. I like it. You guys (My fans) have my word that this is just the beginning. I won't let you down, I promise. We had a good start and I hope it doesn't end here. The future is exciting. You just have to be ready. Thank you.

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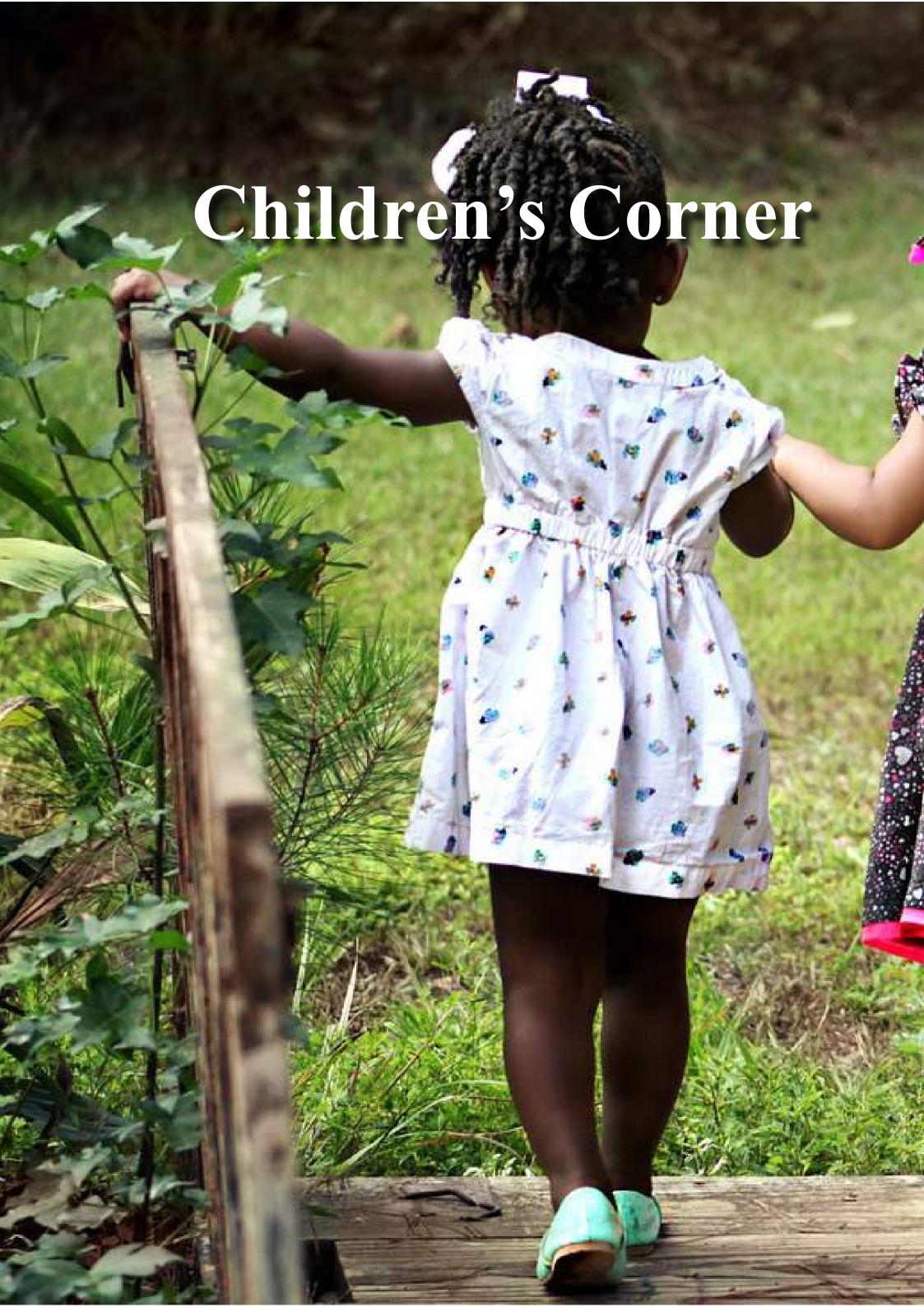
You must have felt it too, didn't you? The richness and realness of a passionate personality driven by a consummate love for the literary space –I know I did. Oh, but there's so much to Lubacha Deus Lubacha that space cannot provide! Did you know that he is currently on a unique mentorship programme to build his skills towards the publishing industry, or that he had received Editing training from Children's Book Project (CBP) in 2016, that he works with Bridge for change, a local Non-Government organization that acts as a career hub for youths in Tanzania, or that he is also connected with READ WITH ME programme run by CODE from Canada and Children's Books Project (CBP) from Tanzania? It's amazing the many things I get to hear, learn, and imbibe –did I tell you I love my job?

Thank you dear Lubacha for such inspiring moments beyond these written pages, and more awards to your works; we pray.



### Coming Soon in 2019

\* The image on the cover is for promotional purposes only.



### An Absentee Father Gift Siyame

Father's footsteps are heard for the first time in days, Mother gets up and holds a spade, "Open the door," father yells, Mom tells me to be still.

Morning comes and we're all alone again,
Mom's bruised yet flashes a smile my way,
I see her holding back tears but I'm not that strong,
So I run upstairs and cry all day long.

I sleep without a proper meal,
I don't get it, what's his deal?
Why did he marry my mother?
Did he really have to become my father?

I give up on him,
For he'll only come back in my dreams,
I have to start fending for the family,
I'm only five, why did he do this to me?

Oh father,
What have you done to mother and I?
You've left us all alone,
To fight life's battles on our own.

This is so unfair,
I dare say this so-called father is a bag of air,
I pray I don't grow up to be him,
From today this father is no more to me.



GIFT Siyame: She is 12 years old. Her hobbies are writing poetry and reading. She would like to grow up into a compassionate and kind African citizen. Ambition: To be a paediatrician.

## My Imagination in a Book Fautia Mogaeka

As I open the book,

Not caring about the look,
Ready to be engulfed,
In a world full of wonder.

As I read the first line,
The picture in my mind is divine,
I forget the world around me,
Oh, the images I see!



Funny people, tall and short,
Riding on the back of a horse,
People playing tag on the shore,
Others building sandy forts.

On and on I read,
Other images leaving me bewildered,
And suddenly I am in the end,
I sit back with a beam,
And Alas! I disappear from my dream.

FAUTIA Mogaeka: She is 12 years old. Her hobbies are: reading, poetry writing and singing. She would like to grow up to be an industrious and responsible African citizen who respects and helps the poor and needy. Ambition: To become a Scientist.

Fautia was among the fifty best poets in a nationwide poetry writing competition in Tanzania (August 2018) dubbed "A Poem for Peace". The competition was organized by The American Embassy, Soma Book Café and Waka Poetry Consortium.

## My World, My Peace Jasmine Kapya



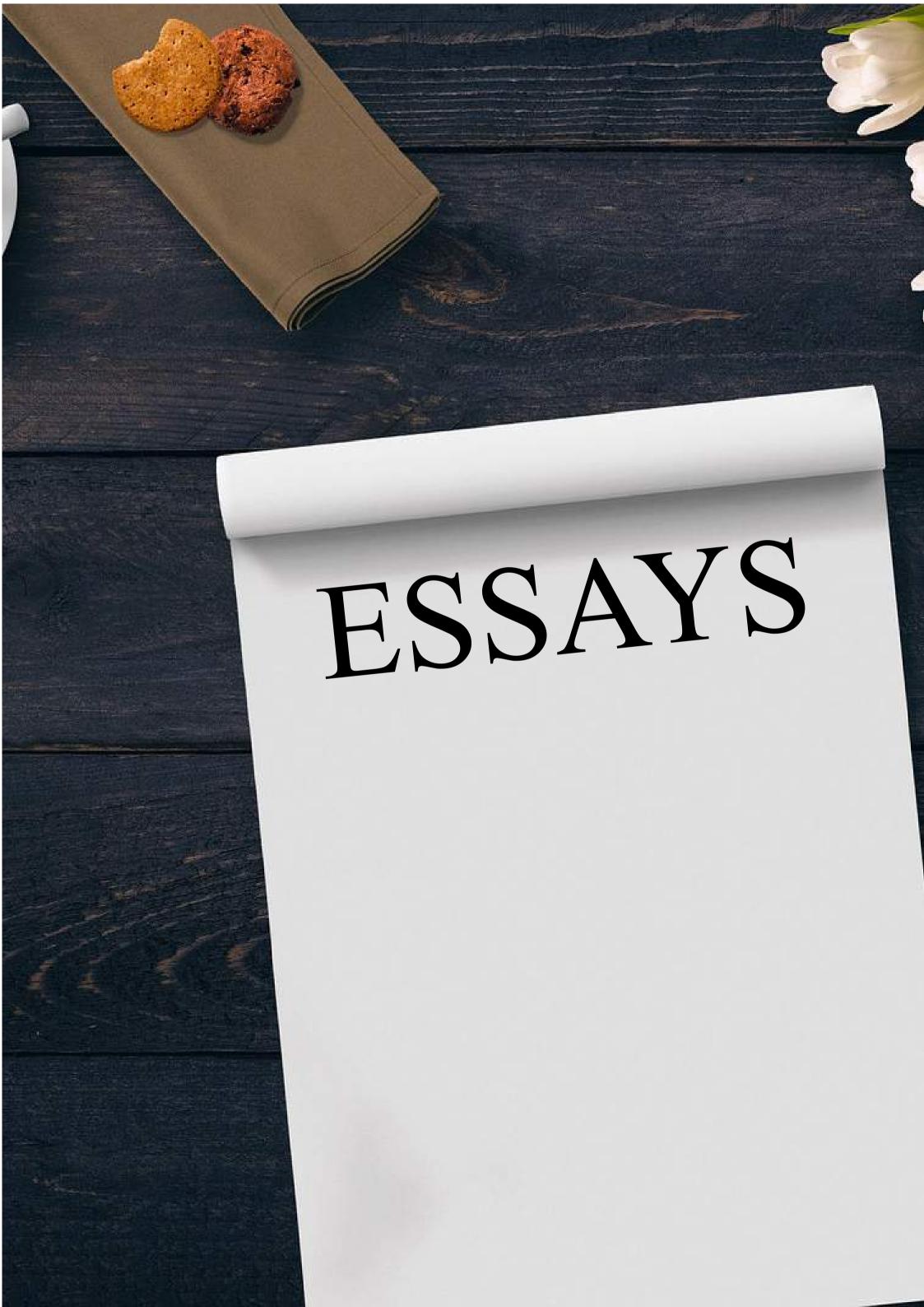
Did you know that big things come in tiny packages? But to my surprise some haven't had it for ages Something that our souls and hearts mostly desire That makes us calm and be admired.

When will war end
If there is no one brave enough to stand and defend?
When will terrorism stop?
Is there anyone who knows
Where peace could be bought?

Peace, many are fond of your work,
That keeps many hidden shadows in the dark
Peace you're something we need to acquire
For you're something that keeps us inspired.

We shall fight against violence And keep hatred wrapped in a pit Let's join hands and promise to be true I welcome you, Mr Peace.

JASMINE Kapya: She is 12 years old. Her hobbies are reading, writing, taking part in science experiments and listening to music. She would like to grow into a humble and committed individual out to change Africa and the world for the better. Ambition: Neurosurgeon.





# PLANTS AND CHRISTMAS VALUABLE AND INDISPENSABLE

#### by

Ojji, Chinazaekpere Joy – Nigeria

Christmas is a time Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. It is a festive, colorful and well celebrated event by Christians on the African continent and all over the world. Christmas, uncommon to most of us, also portrays the significance of plants. From the 19th century till date, natural plants such as the Pines, Spruce, Mistletoe, Coniferous trees, amongst others, are used in the beautification of homes, churches, streets and play grounds during the Christmas festival. However, in most African countries, artificial Christmas trees are used in place of natural plants.

Most Africans can attest to the fact that Christmas delicacies are most times preferred to meals eaten on ordinary days not necessarily because it's more delicious, but because the season comes with a feeling of warmth, love and fun. In Nigeria, most individuals and families travel to their respective villages for the Christmas celebration, uniting both enemies and friends. Most times, the children often have to eat from a large bowl of soup. They sit under trees at night singing songs and sometimes exchanging gifts. It is a time to merry and visit relatives one hadn't seen for a while. Christmas is a time to consume the cow, goat, chicken, turkey and fish within a space of two weeks to one month, and not necessarily from your home.

It is a seasonal experience and is much fun compared to other seasons. The harmattan wind blows as though it's assigned to rip the flesh off your bones and may eventually leave your skin shrunken and white as snow. One needs to keep warm by the fire, have a warm bath and a sumptuous Christmas meal spiced with the smoke from the wood, giving it an entirely different taste from cooking with a gas cooker or stove. All these boil down to the usage of wood as an energy resource and plants for food in African homes, with an increase during the festive period.

An average African child would always want a dress for Christmas. It's not fun without showcasing a colorful designed outfit. Many parents may not afford to get a new dress for their children, but for Christmas, something must be done. Dyes and resins used in the textile industries are secondary metabolites derived from plants. The more we fell plants for the benefit of the textile industries and other human activities without replacement, the more we pose a threat for the unborn African generations, leaving them with little or no fun for the Christmas.

If I need a fabulous natural Christmas tree by my doorway this year, then I must encourage reforestation or replanting of that felled species. It encourages sustainability and balance in the ecosystem. We need rainfall after the harmattan; other organisms require a habitat just as Africans are privileged to exist on earth.

Plant species have become vulnerable, rare and some are undergoing extinction as a result of man's impact such as agriculture, industrialization, urbanization, mining and other activities. The indiscriminate use of pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, construction works, dumping of municipal, industrial sewage and toxic wastes by man have steadily reduced the quality of our environment leading to ecological im-

balance such as erosion, pollution, deforestation, disease outbreaks, desertification and other negative effects on the environment. Plants cannot strive well in such conditions and would eventually die. Man is adversely faced with these threats.

We need plants for food, shelter, oxygen, carbon and water cycling, purification of air, aesthetics and other valuable purposes. Therefore, conscious efforts should be put into place when harvesting natural resources (plants).

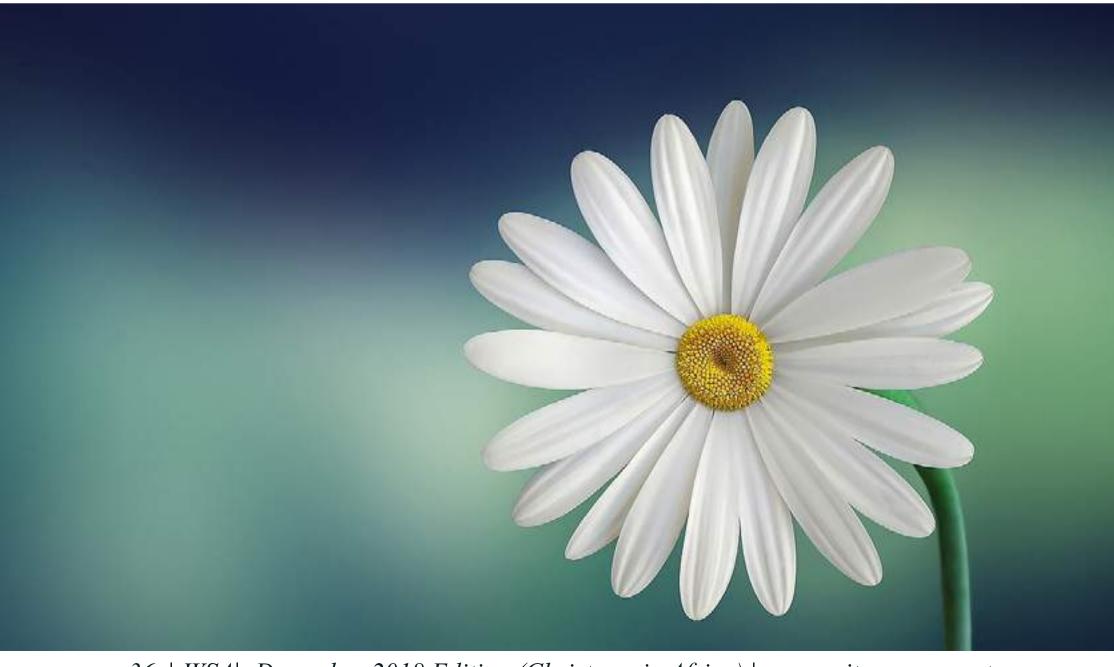
Forests (plants) should be conserved by reforestation, forestation, prevention of bush burning, prevention of plant disease outbreak, educating the general public and establishing laws/agencies to check mate irrational use of the forest resource. This will go a long way to preserve the plant population.

Christmas activity is just one facet posing a threat to plants, compared to other major human activities. Christmas is a gift to the mankind. Enlightenment will help us celebrate it better.

**#People Loving And Nurturing Trees (PLANT).** 

#Create a Better Atmosphere for Christmas.

**#Plant a Tree Today and Plant Christmas at Heart.** 





### My Christmas Vs Gena

by

#### Meaza Aklilu - Ethiopia

It's January 6. I am traveling to Ethiopia for the first time to visit my grandparents. I hate traveling when it's New Years time, but my daddy convinced me otherwise

We arrive at the capital, Addis Ababa around mid night. The well decorated airport tells me that it is still Christmas time. I'm so tired that when we get to my grandparents house, I head straight to bed.

The voices of many people shuffling their feet up and about wake me up in the morning. It feels like they are very busy with something. Then, there's a gentle knock on my door.

"Are you awake?" I hear my father's voice

"Yes, come in." He is carrying a beautiful Ethiopian Traditional dress on his hand. "Are we going to church?" I ask him that because the only time we wear beautiful clothes is when going to church.

"No." He smiles at me. "We are celebrating Christmas."

"What? Why today? Didn't we already celebrate it two weeks ago?"

Sitting on my bed, he raises his index finger up in the air and says "That was USA Christmas, but we are going to celebrate Ethiopian Christmas today."

"How is that possible?"

He thinks for little while, puts on his long explanation face and says;

"The difference between The Gregorian Calendar and Ethiopian calendar is pronounced even in the way the twenty-four hours of a day are counted or in how a day beings or ends. In Ethiopia, the day starts when the sun rises early in the morning and day ends when the sun



sets. Day hours count from one to twelve since sunrise. Similarly, night hours count from one to twelve from sunset to dawn.

Ethiopian Christmas falls on January 7 of the Gregorian calendar which corresponds to Thahisas 29, 28 when it is a Leap Year (Zemene Yohannes)-Year of John, of the Ethiopian calendar. Thahisas corresponds to December but unlike December in the Gregorian calendar, Thahisas is only the fourth month of the Ethiopian year which begins in September."

We call it "Gena or Lidet". Gena is both a cultural and religious holiday at the same time. Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Gena festivity is preceded by weeks of fasting and the holiday is known as "Lidet" (or B'irhane Lidet) – literally means "birth" (Nativity)." And with that, he hands me the dress and walks out. I quickly dress up and head to the living

room. Everybody looks so great in their traditional white clothes, but there's no Christmas tree.

When we sit down for breakfast, plenty of traditional dishes are served. Traditional foods like kitfo, tibs, key wot, gomen, ayb, doro wot and so many other dishes I know nothing of. Traditional drinks like tej, tela, areke. I never saw such plenty food all at once.

Everybody starts giving me Gursha when I start to eat. A gursha is an act of friendship and love. When eating injera, a person uses his or her right hand to strip off a piece, wraps it around some wat or kitfo, and then puts it into his or her mouth. During a meal with friends or family, it is a common custom to feed others in the group with one's hand by putting the rolled injera or a spoon full of other dishes into another's mouth.

I felt loved and protected. After the meal, I went outside to watch the kids playing. The game resembled hockey, surprised, I asked my cousin "Are they actually playing hockey?" "This is not hockey. This called Gena or qarsa. It is a traditional field game. It is played among

two teams who attempt to throw a wooden ball in the air and hit it with sticks, the goal being to prevent the opposing team to bring the ball to their village. We play this game around this time of the holiday. It is where the Holiday name Gena gets its name." said my cousin. They invite me to play and it is an incredible game to play.

We spend the rest of the day going to our Uncles and aunties house to wish them "Melkam gena" happy holiday.

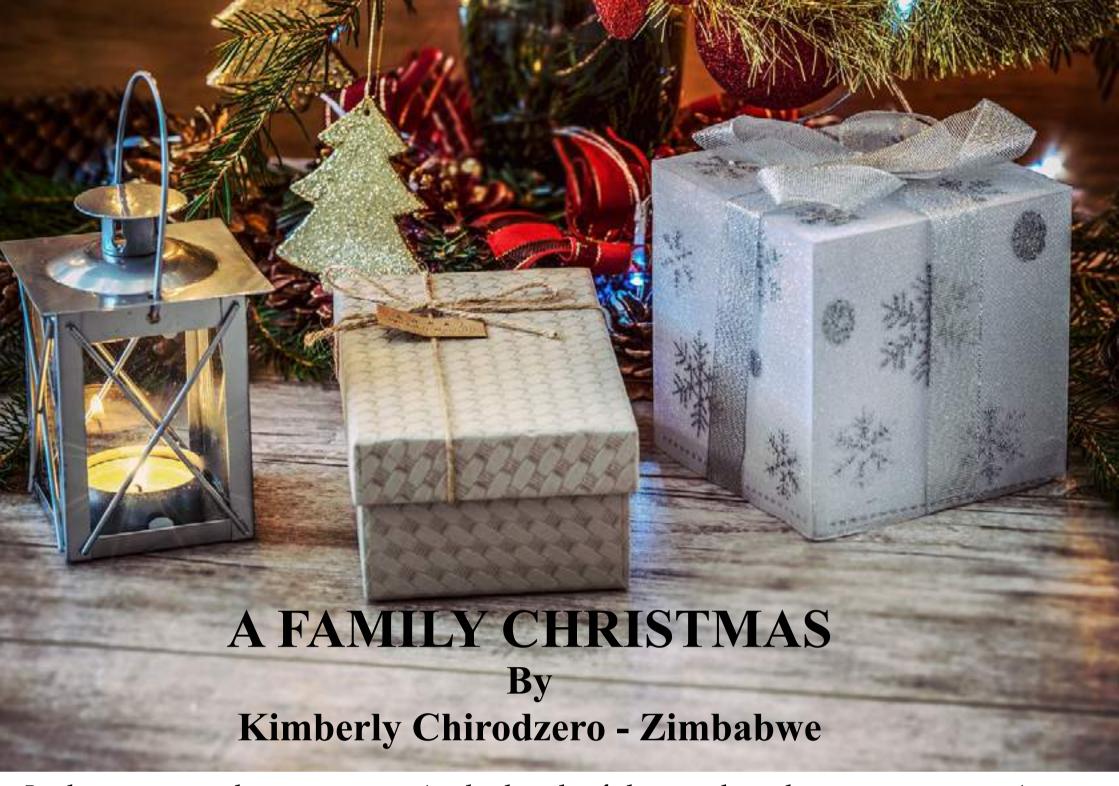
I got to celebrate two holidays related to the birth of Jesus Christ; Christmas and Gena.

Melkam Gena!

**Merry Christmas!** 







It always starts the same way. At the break of dawn when the rooster crows, Aunty Vongai opens all the bedroom doors in the house and screams, "Merry Christmas," until we are all wide awake and grumbling. She ignores everyone's grumbling and the lethal looks thrown her way. Deep down no one is really angry at her anyway. In exactly three hours Aunty Vongai has made sure everyone is bathed and dressed in their best. The older girls, my three cousins are in the kitchen, finishing up on the Christmas feast. The older boys, my two brothers are outside setting up plastic chairs and a huge oak table under a mango tree, whose overhanging branches will provide shade when the sun gets hot. No one bothers Grandma until everything is set up.

This year I turned sixteen so I don't fit in with the older girls or the younger children, my nine-year-old sister Lindiwe and Aunty Vongai's last born, eight-year-old Matipa. I am still sitting by the window when a loud knock comes at my door. "Father is here," the excitement in his voice is palpable even through the closed door. "He is early," I mumble with a scowl. Christmas is Father's one defiant act against his second wife. After Mother died, our father married the personification of Cinderella's evil stepmother. Our house became a battlefield until Father had to choose a side. He chose the evil woman over us then came and dumped us on Grandma. Every Christmas he comes without fail, car loaded with groceries and clothes for us. Themba, my oldest brother

and I ignore Father but Vusi still harbours dreams of having a real relationship with the treacherous man. Still, he is my father and it is Christmas so I will greet him.

Grandma's house is a two-storey mansion. All her five children contributed to building it after she told them she wanted a house in the city. Although huge, it is also homely. I attribute this to Aunty Vongai's touch. Aunty Vongai is an African woman in every sense of the word, but when her husband decided to marry a second wife because all the children they had were girls, she couldn't take it so she left. In the living room, I find my aunt sitting with her youngest sibling, Uncle Tino whilst Father sits by himself to the side. I approach him and greet him respectfully.

Uncle Tino is grinning at me and nudging his phone at me. "Look at your cousin, Thandi. Isn't she the cutest baby ever?" he says, all smiles. Uncle Tino lives in the UK with his wife and their one-year-old baby. For years Rosa couldn't get pregnant but Uncle Tino only loved her more. It's comforting to know that betrayal is exclusive to my father. I used to fear that treachery is embedded in our blood. Uncle Tino is my hope so I let him show me all the baby pictures in his phone. He tells me that his wife is in the kitchen helping my cousins and they left their toddler in the UK with Rosa's family.

In the kitchen, my cousins are moving in tandem as they pass casserole dishes and pile rice, beef stew, and chicken in them. Mary and Miriam are the eldest, identical twins. Maria their younger sister smiles as she follows their instructions. Rosa is laughing at something as I come in. Uncle Tino's wife is beautiful and she has the easy bearing of a woman who knows she is loved. We hug and exchange pleasantries then the twins pounce on me. Before I know it, I am stuck carrying casserole dishes from the kitchen to the mango tree outside.

A car parks in the driveway close by and Aunty Rudo exits. She is Grandma's fourth child. She looks tired, as she always does. The reason for her tiredness exits the car next. Uncle Brian is a drunkard and the bane of his wife's existence. He can never keep a job and leaves all the responsibilities to my aunt. No one knows why she stays with him and such questions are not asked on Christmas. Their son comes out and I wave him over. Kuda and I are the same age. I rope him into helping me carry dishes from the kitchen. I think he rather likes being around happy people and no one does happy like the twins on Christmas day.

By the time Kuda and I are done setting up all the dishes and plates, the whole family

is walking out of the house and across the lawn. When everyone is seated, Grandma raises her oak cane for silence. She uses the cane on all of us and as a way to command our silence. The moment that cane goes up we all fall silent, even Lindi and Mati. Grandma is the matriarch of this family and we all pay her the respect she deserves. "Thank you all for being here, my children and grandchildren," she begins the same way she does every year.

"Only one of my sons is late being here but he called me to say he is coming." Someone sniggers but nobody utters anything. We would all forgive Uncle Mike anything because we all think he hung the moon. "God has blessed me with a big and happy family. All my children are blessed and their children, wives, and husbands," Grandma goes on. "Well, besides my oldest son who is now married to a witch." Several people choke at this statement including Father. I hide a smile. "And my daughter married to the fool."

"Bring me my rice and chicken, child," Grandma calls out. Despite all the different kinds of delicacies prepared each Christmas, Grandma's meal of choice is always rice and chicken. She says that is what Christmas means to her and she is too old to change now. Someone has placed an old radio on the lawn, the kind that plays cassettes. The riveting voice of Oliver Mtukudzi croons out an all-time favourite. Amidst the laughter and dancing, no one notices a car pulling in to the driveway until Uncle Mike starts walking towards us. Uncle Mike is a wanderer. He has never married and he travels the world following unsubstantiated myths. He is odd for an African man but he is ours and we love him. He is always telling wild tales of his travels and he always brings a weird but fitting gift for everyone.

After Uncle Mike has greeted everyone, the twins approach him. "What did you bring us?" Miriam demands as Mary nods vigorously. Uncle Mike smiles mysteriously and lowers his bag to the grass. He takes out two identical silk scarves printed in reds, blues, and yellows with art printed on it. "These are Grecian silk scarves telling the story of the twins Castor and Pollux who loved each other so much that when Castor died, Pollux asked the god Zeus to let him share his life force with his twin. The two were transformed into stars." As he speaks he points to the artwork that tells the same story. When the twins remain motionless, Uncle Mike looks uncertain. "You were born in June under the sign of the twin brothers so I thought...," he trails off as Mary brushes away tears and Miriam carefully takes the scarves as if they might break.

He turns to me next. "I found this whilst wandering the streets of Dublin earlier this year," he pulls out a long silver chain with a circle hanging on it. The design looks like hearts interlocked and knotted over and over in unbroken loops but still producing more heart symbols. "It's called a Celtic love knot," Uncle Mike indicates the design. "What is that?" I ask putting it around my neck. "It's a symbol for love. As your name means loved one I thought you should have the matching symbol around your neck because we all love you, Thandi." I thank Uncle Mike with tears in my eyes because he has given me something I desperately needed after Father's rejection; to know that I am still beloved.

Uncle Mike continues to go around giving his gifts to gasps of shock and delighted laughter. I have no doubt he buys our gifts at the local flea market in whatever city he happens to be in but he buys them after considering who we are inside. As I look around my family I catch them in a moment when everyone is either smiling or laughing and my heart is full. Even Father is smiling as he watches his brother give Grandma her gift. It is a casing for her cane. A casing that Uncle Mike swears once belonged to a long lost queen. Although my family is not perfect, on this one day we are united. We laugh and dance with each other and travel beyond the borders of our home through the gifts Uncle Mike brings.



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# The Christmas gift

## William Khalipwina Mpina - Malawi



Christmas day would not go without a party and sharing of gifts. It was a day for activities most people baptized themselves into without a groveling gesticulation. That the day was the birthday of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, was an indubitable fact but as it turned out, everybody celebrated the day as if it was their own birthday. It was said that the dynamics of society had led to the evolution of handling the day but I thought everybody was just oblivious of the day. Jubilations, merry-making, eating and drinking, everybody doing with the day as they wished for countless decades had driven the entire community into thinking that sitting in a church talking about Jesus was a waste of time, but to enjoy themselves and probably commit the worst sins on this day.

I have a friend whose feet did not touch the floor of the church. On Christmas day, for the sake of nourishing his incessant yearnings, he would rush to the market and buy a bottle of fruit juice, one kilogram of meat and two kilograms of rice which he would send to his wife by a bicycle taxi. Undoubtful that both his wife and child were nurtured with what they requested, he would scamper straight, wave at the nuns at Salubeni Catholic Church, and visit Ma Phulani for a gourd of masese, locally brewed beer. After that, he would trot to Aunt B Bottle store and get 'cold' ones till midnight. At exactly 00.01 hours, he would stagger home with a comprehensive feeling that the day had been well spent; his back followed with curses from his girlfriend, a bar girl, for not spending a night at her house.

I have always wanted to celebrate the day differently, like spending the whole day worshipping God, mainly for the gift of life, but forces from friends, neighbours, and relatives had propelled me to go eating and drinking without thinking too much about God and Jesus. Almost everybody, on Christmas day, would spend their income and forget about life after Christmas, especially the month of January. I crowned the month of January a high ranking

accolade and called it General January because most people braved it with steeplechases; biting into the whole thirty plus days without money.

Chrissy and I had prepared for this day long before and saved enough to pull down the 'General'. We calculated to spend the day indoors to escape from the slavery of extravagant spending. Decorating the sitting room with a Christmas tree, beautiful flowers and a myriad of tiny fairy lights, she ensured that our radio was blaring out Christmas carols. Our expectation was that we would have visitors but limited to sister-in-law Nyakhave with her husband, Uncle Chrispin with his wife, Nephew Neffie, Brother Chipi and Bigman Chifundo. As we waited for them, a girl known as Aufi about ten years old slithered into our house. She was a Muslim girl who had befriended Chrissy for a long time. I thought Chrissy had deliberately chosen not to tell me about her because of her shabby dress. All I thanked God for was that she was one of our visitors on this important day. Composed, she seemed to know exactly why she was here. We warmly welcomed her.

Earlier in the morning, Chrissy had confided in me that I had to give her enough money to buy all nice Christmas things because we might have visitors we did not know. This was true. Stuffed with brown chicken pieces, well-cooked rice and a lot of vegetables, the dining table provoked my hunger to eat more than I always did. There was a five-liter bottle of fruit juice and a bottle of wine which Bigman Chifundo requested on the phone. Our guests arrived carrying gifts, their faces beaming with laughter and smiles. We ate, drank and made awful speeches; imitating political leaders. Laughter, thanks, dances, and sounds of happy birthday songs mixed with shrieks of joy filled the air.

Aufi, all of a sudden, went outside and leaned on the wall.

Chrissy ran behind her. "Why stay outside? Let's go inside. Feel free. Eat, drink and dance," Chrissy said.

Her face downcast, Aufi shrugged her shoulders. It was like she was uncomfortable after eating strange food, but her small mind was laden with thoughts.

"I saw you brought something. Was that our gift? Where is it?" Chrissy asked.

"I hid it behind the house. I thought you do not allow such gifts as makaka (dry cassava) and nandolo (peas). I was about to throw them away."

"No, bring them here. In fact, Richard likes them."

Aufi strolled behind the house and came back with the parcel. She later offloaded what was eating her mind; first the death of her mother. Second, mysterious deaths of three of her neighbours including a prominent businessman in her village and the headmaster of a primary school who had promised to help her. Finally, she told Chrissy that she was sent to look for Richard and give him a Christmas gift.

Chrissy felt sorry for Aufi and hardly vacillated to invite me to this meeting. I signalled Aufi to follow me as I led the way to sit under the mango tree, where she slowly narrated her story beginning with an introduction of her mother who was a nice, intelligent and hardworking woman. I remembered her mother. This was a girl who, during her prime,

out of all the girls in her village, had done her parents and everybody proud by excelling in education. She passed with good grades at her senior secondary school level. But she did not see light at the end of the tunnel. No breakthrough after so much hard work because she got pregnant and married early.

I looked around to check if Chrissy was listening to this. I saw her laughing with nephew Neffie. After she finished explaining, ten minutes later, Aufi pulled a torn envelope from her dress.

"Before my mother died, she said I must give you this letter on Christmas day," Aufi said. "Thank you." I immediately threw it into my trouser pocket. "I will read it later. Let's go back into the house." I persuaded the girl.

Straight from the place, I rushed to the toilet and opened the letter. It said.

#### Dear Richard,

I hope you will understand what I have to say. First of all, I would like to ask for your forgiveness. You must forgive me because I have opted to write to you after such a long time and I wished for you to read this letter after my death. For many years, I have lived on earth a very bitter woman. I never achieved what I wanted in life. I was a fool. I trusted my parents more than trusting myself and focusing on the bright future that my teachers thought I would have. Secondly, I would like you to forgive me for denying your hand in marriage. I am sure you know that I carried your pregnancy. You were willing to take me as your wife and 'help the baby grow healthy and attain a good education,' if I must use your language. Instead, my mother said you were not rich. I had to marry a fisherman who already had four wives just because he was rich. It was painful to abandon my Christianity for Islam to satisfy the wishes of my parents and my new man. When your daughter was born, she was named Aufi by a man who was not her father. Four years later, the man died. Five years after he died, there was pain all over my body. Richard, please forgive me. I had to write this letter because the future of Aufi is uncertain. Accept my Christmas gift.

Sincerely, Martha.

Dusk had fallen. Chrissy was enthusiastic to hear what Aufi was up to. I thought she saw that I was nervous. While the guests in their drunken state were chatting clamorously, she leaned on the wall as she waited for my explanation. Aufi was inside the house sleeping on the sofa. I begged Chrissy to follow me out into the evening air. The sky was bright with stars but my heart was dark, laden with the weight of this unforeseen circumstance. When we reached where the light from the security bulb was glowing ridiculously, I threw the letter into her palms. Before reading the letter, she stared at me. I looked away. She read it silently and later heaved out a sigh.

"Let's go inside. This is our special gift on Christmas day." She whispered in my ear. "Alright," I responded.

As the guests were staggering back home after the party, Chrissy prepared a bath and a bed for Aufi.

## MY BIG BROTHER: THE CHRISTMAS HERO

## Hannah Hazvibvumesu Tarindwa – Namibia



The silence after Garikai slammed the door sent cold chills down my spine on the hottest day in October. Surely I had not just experienced what happened in our house. My oldest brother had done what we had thought could not be done. He had spoken words that even refused to replay themselves in my head. For those thirty seconds of silence, I could have sworn I heard the echo of the slammed door, ridiculous as it may have been at that time.

My step-father instructed us - my younger brother and I - to leave the sitting room and we did so unquestioningly as we did all other things in that house. Yet Garikai – the door slamming big brother - had just broken that order of unquestioned obedience in our household. My younger brother, Gonesai, went to the backyard through the kitchen door. He was probably headed to our mother's vegetable garden where he found solace weeding unwanted plants or watering the whole garden until someone reminded him that he was not the one paying for the water. I, on the other hand, was not satiated by what had just happened in our small Kambuzuma house.

I retreated to my room, eager to hear what that man we called baba and never daddy had to say to my mother on the unruly and rebellious behaviour of her son, who she should have taken to the Apostolic faith church, to get deliverance as prescribed by his sister, who

seemed to be the chief advisor of most, if not all of our family decisions and activities. We were forced to call her tete, she had refused to be called aunty, saying that it made us seem like strangers, not knowing that that was the intention, to keep her at arm's length. Our home was a small five-roomed house with thin walls; often times it seemed I was the only who remembered that fact.

The first voice that spoke was that of my mother, as soon as she thought I was enclosed in my room.

"We are not discussing this Phillip," she said curtly, having seemingly found the courage to speak against him for the first time in a long time. Something must have been in the water that day. Within a minute, I heard the front door closing and not with a slam as had been the case a few short minutes before. I sighed, knowing there was no story to wait for. I went on to my three-quarter bed, which was supported on two sides by bricks ever since the legs broke off some years ago.

I began to wonder what that year's Christmas was going to be like without Garikai. It would be strange to you my reader why I would think of Christmas at such a time of family tension. Well, it was because ever since I was fifteen and Garikai nineteen, he was the self-designated Father Christmas of the neighborhood and I was his elf. It was something we did without the knowledge of our mother. We made extra cash and Garikai had warned me that if our mother found out, we would not get any extra clothes or the secret lunch we would have in town at a fancy restaurant of our choice on the 27th of December after three days of working, getting photographs taken with ghetto children and giving them chocolate sweets in return for anything between 50 cents to US\$3.

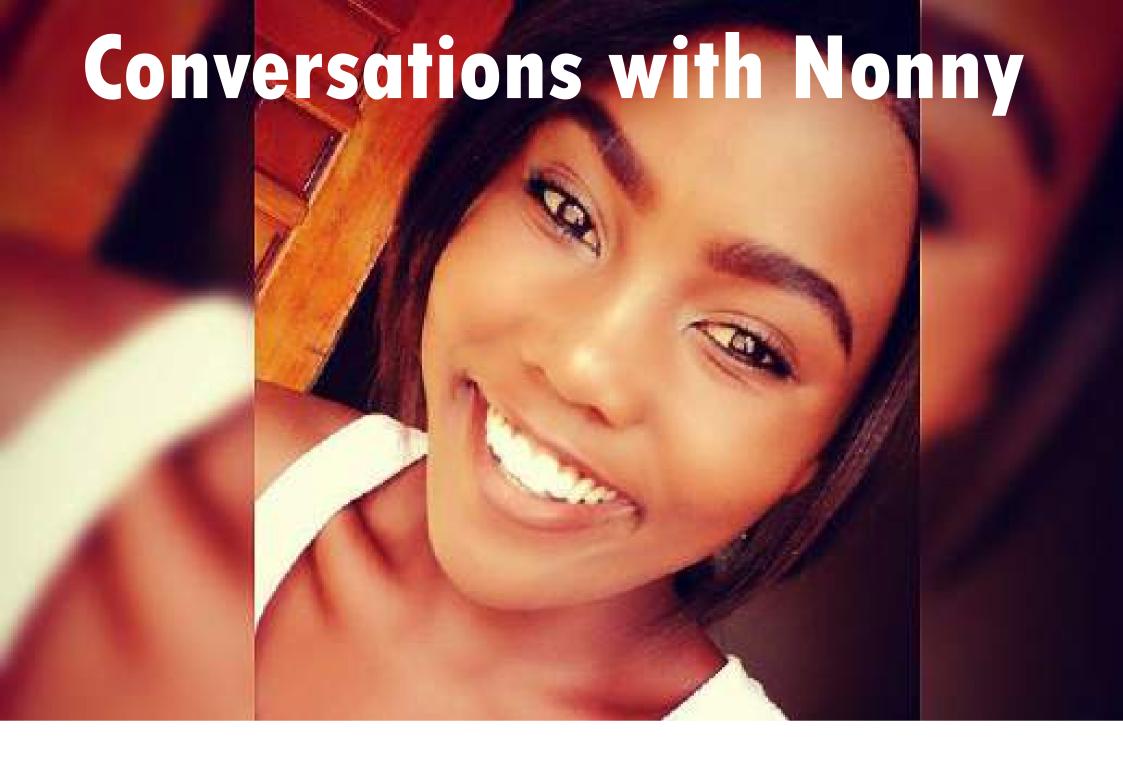
For the first two Christmases, we did not work in Kambuma but in other ghettos, Warren Park, Kuwadzana 5, and Kuwadzana 7. We had friends there so we could change into our work uniforms and have a shower when we were done. Our friends' parents praised us for being innovative in harsh times and helping our parents whilst other children were just waiting for their parents to give them food and gifts. We just smiled back at the compliments, they had no idea that this was our escape plan.

In our third year, we wanted to enlist Gonesai, who was now sixteen years old and had finished writing his 'O' level examinations, but he refused, stating that it was a silly business and embarrassing. Garikai and I knew that in addition to thinking the job embarrassing, Gonesai was slightly more afraid than we were of our step-father finding out. We had been afraid but by year three, we had some savings and the risk was worth it.

The day that Garikai had slammed the door after telling our mother how she had abandoned us by marrying that cheating giant who caused us grief, I felt elated but frightened by what was happening. Our stepfather had just walked in from work in Glen View, he was shocked to find his wife shivering and weeping whilst her 23-year-old son towered over her. He had asked what was happening and Garikai had, to the shock and surprise of all present in that room, looked the man straight in his eyes and said, "You do not question how I speak to my mother." Then he had stormed out.

After all that drama, the only thing on my mind was our Christmas business and the money we had saved in order to escape not only the national hardships but the burden of a mother who sought solace from a cruel man who cared little for her children. That was in October, now in December, while in a coach to South Africa with my two brothers seated next to me, headed towards a new reality. I wondered if, in South Africa, we would find a place where our Father Christmas and his little helper show would be welcomed. Garikai was sleeping. He was my forever Christmas hero.





## So it's Christmas, what's the big deal?

To tell you the truth, I never and I still don't understand what the hype is about when it comes to the month of December. I mean I get that it is the end of another year, the festive season to most. Yes, it is the season to be merry! But it is also season where we a faced with the challenge of "Marry Christmas" and "Merry Christmas". Initially, I had planned to talk about all the nice activities people get up to during the festive season. When it hit me, I honestly do not see the reason why we make a big deal out of another month on the calendar, with 31 days. I mean, what is the hype about?

Come to think of it, at home we have never really celebrated Christmas like that. We never got a huge tree, decorations, or even the presents. When I would watch Christmas movies and see other kids enjoying such a Christmas, I would ask my mom why we never got all those things and she would always say the same thing to me, "Nonhlanhla! That's how white people celebrate Christmas, we are not white." When she called me by my first name, I knew better than to question her again.

Now, Christmas ekasi (The Hood) was a bit different from what I saw on television. I am not sure about other African countries but down here, in South Africa, we have somewhat of a common trend. The trend is every year in January people are broke and have no money to spend. This is most common with black South Africans, especially in the townships. Mostly everyone is concerned about all the debts they made in December to fund a fancy and lavish lifestyle. One thing you must know about us is, that when December comes, everyone needs to be on point. There's no time for bread or pap (expert at braai parties), we eat chicken and rice with salads every day.

As I grew up, I realised that everyone around me wasted money on trivial things. When asked why they would do this, they would respond, "Ke Dezemba Boss" meaning "it's December Boss."

In December, people usually get paid their year bonuses, schools are closed, and most work places close for the holidays. So during this time, we have a lot of free time on our hands. What do we do? We go shopping, we go on holidays, we go to weddings, and we go drinking from Monday to Monday.

I mean, I don't have to be anywhere in the morning, so why not?

December has everyone feeling like there is no tomorrow. We pay no attention to the fact that there is still 11 more months before the next December, we only focus on the here and now. Please don't get me wrong, I am in no way against having fun and people living their best lives but doing everything now, at the same time, not thinking about the future? Now that's just being reckless and irresponsible. I know you are probably thinking, "Oh my God! Nonny is such a party pooper." But youknow what, come January Nonny will have money for groceries, Nonny will have transport money to go to work, and best of all Nonny will be debt free.

So my advice to you this festive season is to drink and be merry but before you do that make sure that the kids at home have new and proper school uniform for the coming year. Make sure that you put aside money for school fees, textbooks, groceries and everything else you might need in the New Year. Most importantly, DO NOT MAKE DEBTS! If you don't have the money to make it happen, don't borrow from someone else because you will end up paying so much more than you initially needed.

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



# **BLUNTNESS IS BRUTAL**



# Gender Issues: What Are We Teaching Our Children?

It's Christmas season- a moment to jolly with the kids, right? Yeah. You must be thinking of those memorable beautiful things to give to the young minds. Toys, clothes, a visit to the zoo, amusement park, and many more are great ideas. But while doing all that, find a moment- even if it's just five minutes- to educate your kids on gender issues and the importance of gender unity during those moments of bonding with them.

This article isn't about Christmas, really. It's about kids and what we teach them in Africa and the world at large. It's about schools, their teachers and what they tell the kids. It's about you as a parent or guardian consciously developing interest in knowing what they tell your kids at school. It's time to create a gender balance among boys and girls of the world today and it begins with first, painting a positive picture of the girl which depicts equality.

I'll start by narrating a past event in my life. When I was a kid in primary five (here in Nigeria), I was once asked to go on my knees because I dared challenge my teacher's ideology. It was Social Studies class, and he was teaching on the topic, Family. He made a statement: "Once a woman's bride price has been paid, she becomes the man's wife and PROPERTY." Then, he asked the class to repeat after him. All did except me.

He turned to me asking why I said nothing. I shook my head angrily with the abrupt reply: "Because you're lying. I don't believe you!" I told him straight in the face that girls weren't properties and deserved respect. He was infuriated and yelled at me to kneel down beside the class door. That memory lingers in my head till date. I sustained injuries on my knees because I stayed on my knees till the closing hour- 12 noon to 3.30pm. I was just ten years old.

At teenage age, I once heard of a woman who lost her daughter. Sympathisers told her that her loss wasn't that great because she had her son alive. Now that I am older, I often wonder what teachers teach boys all over the world about ladies; likewise what they teach ladies about men. I now understand why there has been so much domestic violence in homes. By the time a boy is told his wife is his property, he would definitely treat her like a property (beat, slap, kick, and even kill).

Back then, schools organised debates with topics like "BOYS ARE BETTER THAN GIRLS." I recently found out that such debate topics are still used in some schools. In fact, I witnessed one during my NYSC year in 2016 where I served my country as a teacher in a secondary school. I had to speak up against the idea. The principal felt I was challenging his authority- I've always been a stubborn individual, in the positive sense, though- but when he listened to the facts I presented to him, he jettisoned the topic.

It is a very detrimental topic for young minds to debate. It would mold their perceptions negatively on both sides; boys would see girls as less and girls would see boys as oppressors and evil. The tenderness of their minds would make them unable to absorb the consequences of the debate which would, in turn, lead to a lasting war between both genders for decades and centuries.

There's need to look into what is being taught in school curricula, and to what these teachers tell their pupils and students. What you inculcate in a child today is what impacts on his mindset and molds his beliefs. I should educate you on this today if you are oblivious of it: teaching a child the wrong thing is rubbing that child of his or her right to good education; it's an abuse of the rights of the child, after all, a child is entitled to and has a right to good education.

Here's a reason you should be concerned as a parent or guardian: Child Rights International Network (CRIN) revealed some bizarre false facts being taught to kids in schools on gender which is unknown to many parents. It reads, "According to secondary textbooks in India, unemployment has increased because women have taken the jobs, (sic) donkeys work harder than housewives and complain less..." (CRIN)

Look around you today, men bash women and vice versa. This is as a result of gender disparity which was inculcated in them right from childhood. The culture of superiority was imbibed in men which denied women of their rights and opportunities; however, women, upon enlightenment, felt betrayed and fooled and thus, express their grievances through aggression towards men while the men refuse to soft pedal on their superiority mentality.

If this issue of creating a gender balance mentally is not addressed while it is still early, I fear a future where men and women will live in enmity- survival of the fittest gender would become the case. We need each other- male and female- to survive, develop, and advance, else, the world would only malfunction. Education begins from home; therefore, the responsibility lies in ourhands as parents and guardians to change the mindset of children on gender issues.

This season, I indulge you not to discriminate the children based on their masculinity or femininity. Wishing you all a gender unbiased Christmas.

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**Footnote:** I am deeply grateful to all my readers who took their time to read each article on my column throughout this year. I wish you well this holiday and I assure you that Bluntness is Brutal will be bigger and better next year.

To honour some of my readers for their followership, I will be giving three of them \$42 each based on the following guidelines:

- Download the January, February, and March's edition each month it is released
- Read it
- Write a summary of the article on my column for each of these three months listed and round it up with your perception of the article and the columnist
- Post on your Instagram handle, follow and tag me (@gabrielinagabriel)

Winners will be selected in April. Readers from all nooks and crannies of Africa and beyond can participate. There's a probability of increasing the number of winners as well an increase in the prize. Goodluck.

#### About the columnist

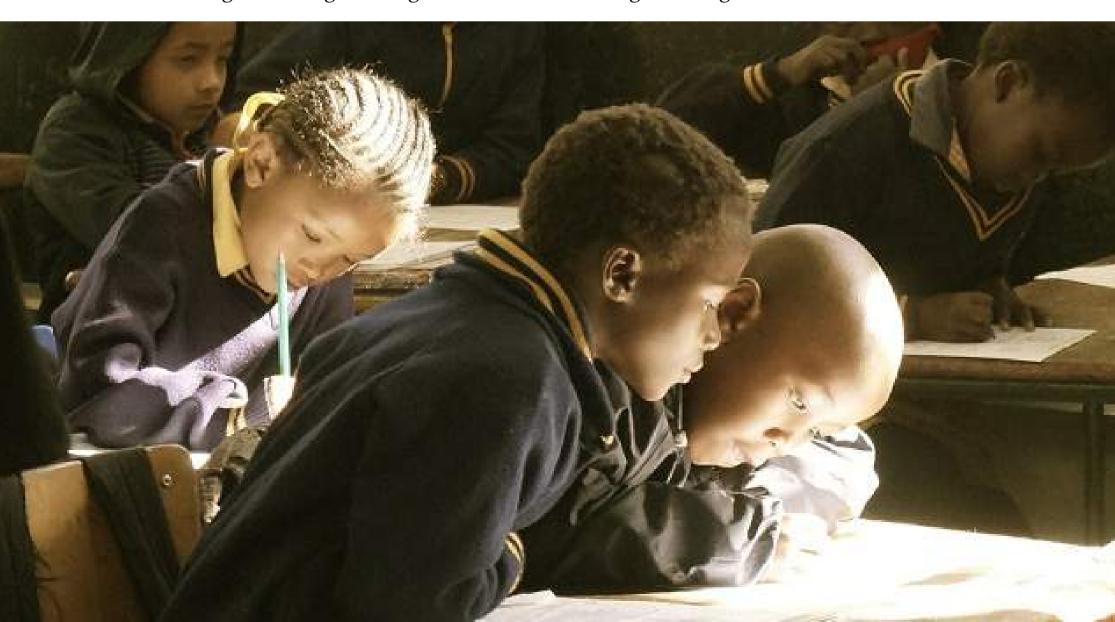
Gabrielina Gabriel-Abhiele is a writer, editor, blogger, and broadcast journalist; a columnist with Writers Space Africa online magazine.

She is the CEO of The Roaring Writer which renders book editing, ghostwriting and social media management services.

She was shortlisted among the finalists for Homevida 2017 scriptwriting competition, as well as the winner of Writers Space Africa season two flashfiction contest.

She uses her writing, often times, to address nature or preach her propaganda. She believes that writers can and have the responsibility to effect change in their world through writing.

She can reached via gabrielina.gabriel@gmail.com or theroaringwriter@gmail.com







#### CALL FOR SUBMISSION

Writers Space Africa (WSA), an international literary magazine, published by the African Writers Development Trust (AWDT), is calling for submissions for its 25th edition under the theme "New Beginning". We are also accepting submissions from children below 18 years of age for the children's corner. There is no word restriction.

We accept submissions in the following categories:

Articles/Essays - 1,200 Words maximum

Flash Fiction - 300 words maximum

Poetry - 1 poem, maximum of 24 lines

Short Stories – 1,500 words maximum

Jokes – 1 joke per writer

Artworks – maximum 3 artworks in high resolution

Personalised quotation - 1 quotation and must be the original work of the author

Please note the following:

You're only entitled to submit for one category.

The Deadline for submission is December 12, 2018.

Our editors will revert to selected unpublished writers on areas of improvement in their work.

Due to the number of entries we receive, only selected authors will be on our website. The author retains copyright.

Your work must be thoroughly edited before being uploaded.

We will in turn edit selected entries to suit the publication.

The magazine will be released on the 1st of January, 2019 on our website.

Please visit www.writersspace.net to upload your work