

WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

**WSA**



JANUARY, 2020

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE AFRICAN WRITERS DEVELOPMENT TRUST



**20:**  
Rebirth

**An Unusual Friendship  
A Worm is but a Butterfly**

VOL. 4 NO. 1



JAN, 2020 WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

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Writers Space Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving new literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for her **March 2020 Edition** in the following categories:



*Short story*



*Flash fiction*



*Poetry*



*Essays*



*Children's Literature*

**The theme for submission is **Sacrifice****

The submission window is open from **1st of January to 14th January**. Response time is typically within **4 to 5 weeks after submission** window closes.

We look forward to receiving your best work!

To submit, please visit [www.writersspace.net/submissions](http://www.writersspace.net/submissions)

# Editor's Note

**T**here is a thing about life that makes it impossible to do it all in one go without any error or regrets: it's the human factor. In that regard, retrospection makes the idea of a second chance all the more compelling. Just as we cannot appreciate light without knowing darkness and we cannot appreciate good without knowing bad, so also, we cannot appreciate second chances without going through first experiences.

Regardless of what you believe in, life is designed to give us a second chance, and as benevolent as life is, so is writing. You don't have to get it right the first time. There is always another chance, another perspective.

Whatever is born anew, whatever is given a second chance, whatever comes again, is itself the tangibility of hope.

Writers' Space Africa (WSA) has stood true to itself as a platform that gives emerging African writers a place to show the best of their first. The Rebirth edition is a chance for us to do it all again: new milestones, greater strides, tighter community. The writers published in this edition have touched on subjects of culture, faith, society and identity, all in relation to the theme. I hope you, the readers, enjoy reading their work as much as the team did.

The new year is always replete with fresh vows and excitement for possibility. I'm excited to see what comes in over the course of the year 2020 and it is my hope that you will find new light and new wonder in the things you thought were old (and of course, may WSA be one of those things).

This year is like the Phoenix Year. The Phoenix, a mythical bird which is born again at the end of its 500-year life; the bird burns itself to ashes and rises again from those ashes to start life anew. This means that for such a creature, the end is never an end; it is simply a beginning.

The year 2020 significantly lies at the end and the beginning of a decade. Like the phoenix, nothing has ended. Everything has simply begun again. May the year be good and kind to you.

Always remember, ubuntu.

Warm regards,

**Nabilah.**

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## **FLASH FICTION**

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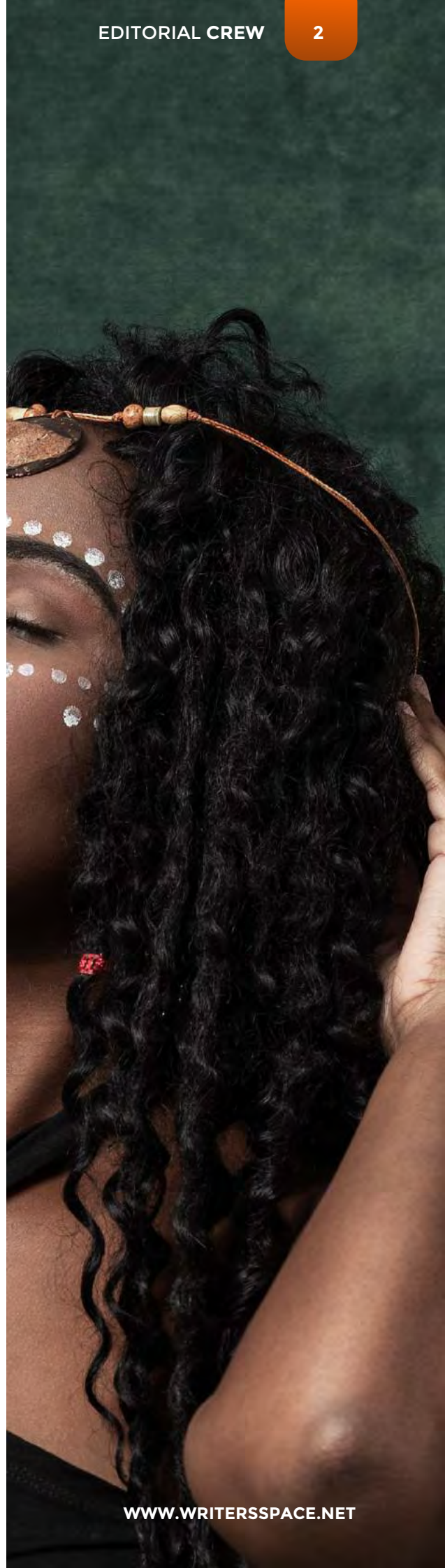
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## **PUBLICITY**

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# Table of Contents

Editor's Note	1
Editorial Crew	2
Table of Contents	3
Short Story	4-9
Flash Fiction	10-11
Children's Literature	12-14
Columnists	16-25
Poetry	26-37
Reviews	38-45



# SHORT STORY

# An unusual Friendship

Fatima Damagum  
Nigeria

It rained on the day I met Jummai. The type of light showers that start early in the morning and carry on well into the evening. The kind of rain my Hausa people would say caused 'zazzabi' (fever). How rain can lead to fever is a scientific theory that is yet to be discovered.

I digress.

Rain always makes me feel happy, and as such, I had a large smile on my face when I welcomed Jummai, my first patient, into the consulting room. So cheerful was my mood that I did not notice how apathetic she looked. A middle-aged woman trotted in after her and sat on the chair usually reserved for patients' relatives.

We exchanged the customary pleasantries.

I noticed she did not make eye-contact. Her head was bowed down

and she appeared to be staring at something on her feet. She was very tall and had the characteristic Fulani features of people of Agadez descent.

'So, what brings you to the hospital today?' I asked merrily. Nothing was going to dampen my mood.

Jummai shifted uncomfortably in her seat and as if on cue, the older woman began speaking. She was her sister in-law; her husband's older sister. She had brought Jummai from the village to be examined at her brother's request. Examined for what? I asked. Sister in-law exchanged looks with Jummai and swallowed hard. She wanted me to examine her privates. "Why?" I asked. All the while, Jummai had still not spoken a word. She was staring hard at her large feet. Sister in-law shrugged and mumbled incoherently.

I looked at Jummai and asked



quietly: 'Do you want me to examine you?'

She nodded ever so slightly, I almost missed it.

I got up and arranged the screen for privacy and asked her to undress and lay down on the couch.

That was when I saw it.

I was visibly shaken, but quickly put on my professional face. I reassured her and asked her to dress up.

It was then she opened up. Jummai was born with both male and female genitals. And while it is a common congenital anomaly seen in babies, I had never seen a grown adult with both parts. As a child, her mother had shielded her and protected her secret. She had grown up in a polygamous setting of three wives and 19 children, in a rural village in Bauchi. Back home, such things were not discussed.

**20: REBIRTH**

She had never been to school and had hawked 'awara' (soya-beans cake) instead, from the age of six. Her mother died when she was about eleven years old after a protracted illness, I presumed to be Tuberculosis.

Her first marriage was at the age of 15 years. She had never had a menstrual period. The man was a young farmer who had taken a shining to this tall, broad shouldered, flat chested girl. Two days later, he returned her to her father and divorced her.

Her father was aghast. Why? He had said nothing. Jummai had also said nothing. She cried throughout the night.

Jummai remarried one year later to a cloth trader who was in his thirties. He already had one wife and was fairly well to do. The marriage lasted one month. He however had the courtesy to







discuss with her father about her predicament. Jummai's father had summoned various marabouts who promised to pray for her for a token amount. They had chanted many incantations, fasted and sacrificed a whole cow, but everyday Jummai had woken up without any change. She still had not seen her menses and her breasts were slight fatty mounds which could not fit into any brassier. Worse still, her manhood was still very present and had not shrunk away as they promised. She was in despair. A local barber had brought up the idea of cutting off the penis, but she was scared and ran away to her aunt's house for two days.

By now, she had become the talk of town. She was a freak. What was she? A man? Maybe. After all she had a penis. A woman? Definitely. She had been brought up as one and she had a vaginal opening. A Hermaphrodite? What?

Jummai broke down in the middle of her story to wipe away tears. After she had regained her composure, she continued.

Her father had sent her away to live with his sister in a nearby village. It was there she met husband number 3. He had two other wives and wooed her with gifts. Her aunt had no idea. Jummai hid her secret well and prayed this new husband would accept her.

On her wedding night- she told him the truth. He had been shocked but she pleaded with him to let her live with him, even if he never had marital relations with her. She was tired of returning home in shame. She had cried hot, gut wrenching tears and he had taken pity on her. Husband No 3 decided to send her along with his sister to Kano for treatment.

I knew, at this point that she most likely had Klinefelter's syndrome. Her

hands were coarse, and her shoulders were broad. Even with her delicate Fulani features, she could pass for a handsome man. I asked her what she wanted. She looked at me strangely.

I explained to her, that we would run a few tests to confirm her gender, after which she would undergo a few procedures to help her become whichever gender she chose. I referred her to psychiatrist for counselling after setting up an appointment for her.


Throughout the day, I was numb. I didn't know what to feel. Anger at her parents and our society who had made such things a taboo to talk about and as such had failed her? Sadness at the young 19-year-old girl who was in so much emotional pain that it was palpable? I kept recalling the way she stared at the floor and the gentle way she wiped away her tears. Humour at the thought that in this era where

transgender people were fighting for the right to be recognised, a young illiterate girl from Bauchi wanted nothing than to be normal? Life can indeed be a cruel joke.

Meeting Jummai made me research more on her condition and the various methods of management. When she returned, I assembled a multi-disciplinary team. The results of her test were as expected. She was XXY. She had no uterus and her vagina was just a small opening which was blind ended. Her female hormones were very low, but most importantly, she wanted to remain female.

It has been many years now and whenever memories of Jummai cross my mind, I become humbled. I remember, the numerous clinic visits and our long conversations. I recall her husky voice over the phone whenever she called in despair and wanted reassurance about her treatment. I remember





the strong, silent tears of pain, she shed whenever she visited the gynaecologist for her serial dilation. More than anything else, I recall vividly her shy smile of relief, when she woke up from the surgery that removed her most distressing physical attribute.

Jummai's treatment spanned a whole year and during that time, our friendship grew, blurring the lines of professionalism as I accompanied her from one specialty to another. In a way, I felt responsible for her; like a big sister would; ensuring that she didn't miss appointments and making sure she followed through with her treatment, difficult as it was. Truth be told though; I soon became the student because from her, I learnt resilience and the power of hope, will and courage.

# FLASH FICTION

“However, she couldn't think of that now. She had a task to accomplish and she had been reborn for it.”

# Reborn

Ogechukwu Egwuatu  
Nigeria



She's the one", the quiet admission of the elderly mother and grandmother who was serving as midwife for this birth was met with silence. Those few words were enough to silence the screams of both mother and child. "Is she really?", the young woman lying on the bed covered in sweat and blood asked with a shaky voice which spoke of hours of crying and screaming. Without a word, the older woman brought the child to her, turning its hand to show the mark on the wrist. The sight of the mark brought back memories of the burial ceremony. Tears she didn't know had stopped were streaming down her face again. At the burial, they had said the rituals would keep her from coming back, and if not, the mark would make her think twice about it, yet here she was. She wasn't sure whether her tears were of joy at

the return of her daughter, or of the pain of the departure she knew would come much too soon. She reached for her daughter and her mother handed the bloody child to her wordlessly; she could feel the disapproval oozing from her. She ignored her and took the child. "Aduke", she said, her voice barely above a whisper as she stroked the child's cheek.

Aduke stared at her mother. She was sorry to cause her so much pain, but she had to return. She was lucky to have been given another chance. If she had to return again, she would ask to be born to another woman somewhere far away. She had caused this one far too much pain. However, she couldn't think of that now. She had a task to accomplish and she had been reborn for it.



# CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

“ The voice came again, “she is gone  
child, she is gone.”

# The Baboon and the Giant Banana Tree

Mosekiemang Kealeboga  
Botswana



It was a cold night and Sedi the baboon was sleeping with her mother. They had walked miles in search of water and food. The draught had killed lot of baboons that season and only a few were surviving and most of them had to search for food and water in different places. Sedi was still young. She couldn't do much without her mother. That night her mother only managed to find enough to feed Sedi. The mother was weak. Her hands and feet were sore with blisters. She was tired from carrying her, Sedi couldn't sleep that night and the cold didn't help. She wanted to help her mother.

When morning came, she tried to wake her mother. She thought her mother was just cold and wanted to sleep more. She called "mama, mama, wake up, the sun has come out, wake

up mama." Her mother did not respond. Sedi came closer and started to shake her "mama wake up, it's time, the sun has come..." Before she could finish her sentence, a small voice interrupted her. "She is gone child, she is gone." Sedi looked around to see who was talking, but she did not see anyone. The voice came again, "she is gone child, she is gone."

Sedi noticed that the voice was from the little plant beside the rock on which her mother lay, she was surprised but responded anyway "she is not gone, she is here. Can't you see her? She is here". She tried to shake her mother again, "mama wake up, wake up." The little plant explained to her that gone means she has passed on and she is not coming back. Sedi shook her even harder; she was crying so hard her eyes were sore. She didn't know how she

was going to survive without her mother. The little plant let her cry and sleep for a moment; when she woke up, she cried a bit more.

"You have to dig deep and bury her," said the plant. "How am I going to do that? I am too little to dig. I am also going to pass on like her. I am not going to survive. I am so thirsty and hungry" she sadly responded. She walked around the rock and wondered what to do. "I cannot leave her here. I should dig...no, I'll die too. No, I'll dig enough to bury her and leave.

eyes. She thanked the plant and the plant also asked for a bit of water; she did as the plant told her and something magical began - the plant grew tall.

She had never seen such a giant tree in her life. The water started to fill the rivers and other plants started to grow. The water carried her mother. She tried to stop her from being carried away by the flow. Now with a huge voice, the plant said to her, "let her go. She is going to watch over you wherever she is; she is resting



Oh, what should I do?"


She sat for a moment; the plant kept telling her to dig before it got dark. She started to dig. The soil was not as hard as she had thought. She kept digging, 'I can do this', she told herself, weak and hungry as she was. Just as she was about to give up, she couldn't believe her eyes. She dug again, "water!" She jumped and screamed, "water!" She laughed hard as she She was overjoyed. Tears flowed from her

and happy for you." "Goodbye mama" Sedi said. The giant tree started producing banana fruits for her to eat. This was so magical that animals of different sizes and types began to show up. She recognised some of the baboons from their village, and they hugged and lived happily ever after.





# COLUMNISTS



“ I can now stand on my two feet financially with a career I am very proud... talk about “Rebirth 2.0”.

“ I have to rebirth my ways, what does Africa have to do to achieve rebirth?”



# Life as we Know it Rebirth 2.0

Ugbede Ataboh

I recently waltzed into a new decade of my life, guys. I woke up on my birthday feeling liberated from the targets set for me by family, friends, society and myself to meet before clocking 30. God in heaven knows I tried to meet them all, but I guess He alone knows best.

I feel liberated from the target set for me by my family, my dad especially, to marry before 25. Few days after my graduation he said to me...

“Better marry quickly now that you are fresh out of the university. I don't want any agaracha in my house!” I am so glad He knows better; time is indeed a great teacher for both the young and old.

Those of you who know me, know how I fell into the trap of a religious fanatic just because

I was trying to meet up with the “marriage target” when I was 24 years old. Thank God for delivering me and giving a fresh start. This life na wa oh!

I feel liberated from the career target set for me by “my school friends.” The idea was to make our first million at 22, live fancy free in a rented apartment at 23 and own a luxury car at 24. Oh boy! See cruise...if only life was this straight forward. If wishes were horses, beggars would have a jolly ride mehn!

I feel liberated from contemporary societal standards... the kind of standards set by a community of confused “money miss road” socialites who know nothing about my struggles, pain, background or dreams. The kind of crazy standards that throw happy people into a state of madness and frenzy because they do not have a certain type of waist line, bust size or hip line. Just the other day, a colleague of mine at work wailed about how unattractive she felt because she did not have full hips and breasts.

“Ugbede leave all this one you are talking oh! I am ready to go to any length just to have big boobs and ass...there is this Hajiya at Wuse market who sells breast and bum enlargement pills. Babe! This woman even mixes Half caste lightening cream. When I am done using the complete set ehn...you sef go toast me”  
 “Wawu! Gelato on point!” I respond diplomatically.

Heaven knows I felt and still feel a deep sense of pity for her. Pity because it will lead her down a

20: REBIRTH

never-ending dark road. Guys! You all know “Black don't crack” right? I remember when I tried bleaching my skin in my early twenties because I wanted to look “exotic”. It was a total disaster the moment I could no longer afford the “Half caste set”. People of God! I looked like an old woman on crack!!! Thank God my skin healed and bounced back.

I feel liberated from the unrealistic standards I set for myself - “Happy ever after” without worries, challenges or troubles. One true love to walk into the sunset with - the kind of love that is void of betrayal; the pure kind of love that can only be found in the bosom of the Lord. I was such a naïve and unrealistic creature. Looking back now, I realize how pathetic my expectations and standards were.

I feel liberated from the grudges I carried for years because of the betrayals I experienced with friends, lovers and family members. Those grudges were nothing but venomous burdens. I made a decision to cast my burdens aside and love even harder. Oh yes! The more betrayal I encountered, the harder I loved the next time. This act alone brought genuine peace to my heart, soul and spirit.

When I clocked 29, I felt lost and out of sorts. I was ashamed of who I was because my career was not blossoming after years of graduating from the university; even my artworks were being priced like crayfish. I had no set career path, spouse or children. I felt the universe had cheated me by dealing me unfair cards. I looked in the mirror and felt ashamed; I was not “someone worth knowing” because I spent the significant years of my twenties trying to find love and look a certain way instead of working hard at developing my talents and buttering up my university certificate by furthering my

studies. I stared long and hard at myself in the mirror. I experienced an epiphany that spoke to my wounded ego and sad heart.

“The journey to wholeness begins with self-actualization”. The soulful message rested on my consciousness softly, but hit me like a sledge hammer. There and then, I decided to enroll for a professional course with the aim of transforming my raw talents into marketable skills. Not only that oh! My people, I prayed and cried out to the God of all creation from the core of my being. I prayed because my future, life and sanity depended on it. God being ever faithful blew wind upon my sails and gave me extra support and uncommon favour for every effort. People of God! There is God oh! I am a living testimony!

As it is, I have crossed over to the other side of twenty. I have no point to prove anymore; I have no set targets to meet because I basically failed woefully at achieving most of them before 30; the world has turned her attention to the upcoming ones. The spotlight is no longer on me so I am free to live my life the way I see fit. By failing to meet personal and societal expectations, I succeeded at gaining my own freedom. I've never felt so alive, so free, so beautiful...so accomplished. I do not have a husband and children at home, but I feel complete and well rounded because as an individual, I can now stand on my two feet financially with a career I am very proud... talk about “Rebirth 2.0”.





# The Rebirth of Africa and Religion

**Leo Muzivoreva- THE OBSERVER**

Allow me to reintroduce myself, I was born and bred in the Catholic church. The doctrine of Catechism is part of my DNA; the Holy Grail engraved in my memory. I am a staunch Christian, I believe. I graduated with a double major in History and International Relations for my first degree. That too influences a large part of my thinking. My religion and my education are at loggerheads as I deliberate on the issue of the rebirth of Africa. Christianity as a religion was used as a tool in the conquest of Africa, a historical landmark which changed the world order in unimaginable proportions.

The advent of colonial rule altered traditional religions in Africa significantly. Colonialists interfered with the African way of worship. Where the modes of worship conflicted with those of the colonialists, restrictions were placed on religious practice. African cultures were seen as primitive and were gradually

impoverished through neglect and suppression by colonial hooligans. The African succumbed to the colonial perception until African Traditional Religion died a natural death.

The conversion of Africans to follow a monotheistic faith such as Christianity started as far back as AD 300 under the rule of Constantine, the Roman emperor. Christianity was to become a dominant religion during the Roman empire, spreading first in the North of Africa, then rest of Africa. Polytheism, which was at the core of African faith, was undermined by the spread of Christianity. Islam was also gaining traction and spreading in North Africa and Asia at an alarming rate. This made the Romans edgy as they saw the new religion about to displace them from their still tenuous position.

Many of those converted to Islam were not only those of indigenous beliefs, but Christians. This gave rise to the crusades in AD 1096, a series of wars by Christians to win back "their" holy lands from Muslims; such crusades were brutal acts by greedy religious leaders of the West. Later, the Christian missionaries travelled through Africa, working tirelessly to replace - by hook or by crook - both indigenous beliefs and Islam with Christianity. They came to Africa armed with Bibles in one hand and lethal weapons in the other. Christianity thrived under colonialism and, together with Islam, became a dominant religion in Africa.

Colonialism succeeded not only in intruding on the religious beliefs of Africans and replacing them with Christianity, but also – as we very well know – both the politics and economics of Africans were hijacked and looted through colonial thuggery.

When Africa gained independence from colonial tyranny, it was political independence and as Africans we remained largely economically dependent on former colonial ruffians. Scores of years later, there has been no significant change. On the part of religion, there has been no movement to liberate ourselves from undue foreign influences. Africans appear to have completely abandoned their indigenous religions. Although to a limited extent, many practice certain cultural beliefs – these, however, play second fiddle to Christianity and Islam.

What defies logic is the choice of Africans to continue following Christianity in the modern day, when in fact Jews – whom we would have expected to be Christians, since Jesus Christ was a Jew – largely follow Judaism. Of about seven million Jews in Israel, only just more than 2% are Christians. Why do Africans follow Christianity when a significant number of Jews themselves do not follow this religion nor see Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Messiah?

The rebirth of Africa has become even more urgent under growing re-colonialisation under the false guise of globalisation. Africans need to reclaim their religion and culture, and discard many of those which were imposed on them, by embracing Afrocentricism as the essential element of the African renaissance as popularised by former South African President Thabo Mbeki a few years ago.

In Mbeki's words, "An essential and necessary element of the African renaissance is that we all must take it as our task to encourage she [Africa] who carries this leaden weight to rebel, to assert the principality of her humanity – the fact that she, in the first instance, is not a beast of burden, but a human and African being.

“An entire epoch in human history, the epoch of colonialism and white foreign rule, progressed to its ultimate historical burial grounds because, from Morocco and Algeria to Guinea Bissau and Senegal, from Ghana and Nigeria to Tanzania and Kenya, from the Congo and Angola to Zimbabwe and South Africa, the Africans dared to stand up to say the new must be born, whatever the sacrifice we have to make – Africa must be free!”

Looking at colonialism in retrospect, it derailed all the attempts and progress made by Africans for the civilisation of Africa. It is The Observer's humble opinion that religion is pivotal in any attempt to realise an African Renaissance. The current status quo will ensure that Africa will always be playing catch-up. It is only now that Africans are trying to use Christianity to make International influence, an endeavour that the Europeans used a century ago. I will be going to church regularly this year, that is what is indoctrinated in me personally - I have not been attending Mass lately. I have to re-birth my ways, what does Africa have to do to achieve rebirth?







# At a Cost!

## EPISODE ELEVEN...

Amami Yusuf  
Nigeria

**Z**arah had no idea of what the time was when her eyes finally came open, nor could she sleep back no matter how hard she tried. The sounds of crickets lurking around and the general darkness made her scared. She wondered how much longer she would have to remain there- terrified. She tried to avoid looking outside the lorry's window, just as she tried to keep her imagination in check. But as hard as she tried, somehow, she always ended up doing the exact thing she tried avoiding. She stayed a long time before she finally began hearing movement just outside- a slight shuffling of feet, a loud croaking cough and little flashes of light, which was most likely from a little flashlight, Zarah thought. She was grateful for the sounds and movement and soon, she was even more grateful as the day began to break.

Though the sun was not out yet, she could see her new environment more clearly now than the previous night when she arrived. One by one, the parked trucks slowly began to move, vacating the road and continuing with their journey to various destinations. Before long,

there were only two trucks left on the road- Kajiru's and one other which had broken down. The two drivers of that particular truck had gone at night in search of a mechanic and were yet to return. Zarah knew she was becoming a burden to Kajiru already and wondered what he was going to do about her. She feared he was going to leave her all alone and head-on with his journey. This realization brought a nagging fear to her heart and hot tears to her eyes. Just as she was wondering what Kajiru's decision would be, so was he. He lay awake beneath the truck for most parts of the night, thinking. He finally got up briskly, almost bumping his head as he rose. Whether he finally realized the day was getting bright and soon the FRSC would be out and fine him for parking on the road or whether he finally thought of what to do about Zarah, only he knew.

"Ina kwana, baba" Zarah greeted immediately he got into the truck, to which he responded with a smile and asked if she had slept well. Just before she answered, she heard Adamu climbing into the back of the truck. He soon settled in and went straight back to sleep. Kajiru seemed to have read Zarah's thoughts on why Adamu had been sleeping so much; he smiled and explained that he had had a little too much local alcohol. Zarah remembered seeing him puff on a cigarette one of the times they stopped while still journeying to Lagos. She nodded her head in response to Kajiru's statement and said nothing more. For a moment - only a brief moment - she considered pleading with Kajiru to take her back to Katsina. She would beg them to give her a different punishment, and she would be a loyal and dutiful wife to Mohammed. She would bear everything if that would guarantee her being with the people she knew and loved.

## 20: REBIRTH

She was almost certain her well-crafted plan would work out and everything would go on fine. Just as she was about to voice her thoughts to him, the truck pulled to a stop and he signalled her to wait for him.

"AUNTY JOY'S HOME FOR GIRLS" Zarah read the old rusty signpost just in front of an equally old and rusty dark green gate. She was curious about this place, but not curious enough to want to go in and find out. The sight didn't look appealing, yet she sat still and waited. It was almost a thirty-minute wait before Zarah saw Kajiru returning alongside a lanky, fair-skinned lady. She wore a bright lemon-green shirt, which revealed both her arms and a skirt which stopped just above her knees. Zarah went wide-eyed staring at the lady. She also left her hair open and in a frenzy. It was only then that Zarah also noticed the other women who were out at that time. She gasped and put her hand to her mouth. She couldn't understand why they were walking about without covering their hair, why some of their hairstyles were far from the usual cornrows she was accustomed to. She also wondered about their clothes and why other body parts besides their palms, feet and face were exposed. She remembered Zainab then, and how the mothers back in Dutsin-ma dragged the ears of their daughters and warned them not to associate with her. The thought of all these, as well as the sights before her greatly disturbed her. Her father would be disappointed if ever he saw her dressed like one of these women. He would never approve, and she knew.

As Kajiru and his companion got to the side of the truck where Zarah was seated, they stopped. Kajiru put his hand in through the window and opened the door from within - the handle control attached to the other side of

the door was broken and impossible to use. He noticed Zarah's hesitation to open the door, and now, her hesitation to get down from the vehicle. He looked at her and smiled again- the assuring smile she had started getting accustomed to in the past 24 hours. She came down quietly and slowly.

"Hello!" the lady greeted cheerfully and extended a hand to Zarah, shaking a reluctant Zarah's hand.

"My name is Lucy."

"Do you speak English?" the lanky lady, Lucy, asked again, seeing that Zarah had not responded to any of her comments. Lucy turned to face Kajiru, in a bid to get answers from him as Zarah still didn't respond nor make any attempts to reveal that she understood. He gave an uncomfortable and apologetic smile and turned to face Zarah. He lowered himself to her height with both hands on his hips. He immediately noticed her eyes filling with tears and he immediately wished the situations were different for the girl.

"Kar ki damu. Za'a lura da ke." He assured her that she would be well taken care of. She wished she could go with him, but reminded herself that she couldn't. Within the last 24 hours plus with their silence and little conversation, she had grown attached to him. He as well didn't want to leave her behind but he had no choice. He placed an assuring hand on her shoulder, "zan dawo, wata rana." He promised to be back, someday. The uncertainty of the day he would return forcefully released the tears which had welled up in Zarah's eyes. She hugged him and sobbed into his large grey shirt. It was like saying goodbye to her father once again: the uncertainty of seeing again and a future so blurred.





# POETRY

A person is standing in the rain, holding a large, vibrant red umbrella. The person is wearing a long, patterned skirt. The background is a dark, blurred green, suggesting foliage. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

# Resurgence

Comfort Nyati sdb  
Zimbabwe

Dissolve the old self in me, let rain wash away  
The past sorrows to flow in gutters  
The oceans to reserve my thriving past,  
Disband my bygones far from memory.

Recuperate the diminishing vigor  
To gather the fragrance of the New Year and,  
Re-establish a novel covenant with You.  
That sustains life for a while without end.

Revive brilliance in me Lord!  
As I stand at the foot of the year  
Worn out with harvesting a new breath  
That prolongs life with fresh blood.

Resurrecting from the timeworn year  
I'm swallowed in the marvel of newness,  
All is wonder of the first-hand moon,  
That retains light anew and tells of bright tidings.

Let the messianic rebirth evolve around me,  
To sow forgiveness were hate invades  
To water the seed of love in desert hearts,  
And reap the fruit of a soothing year.

A person is shown from the chest up, holding a large, vibrant green leaf in front of their face, completely obscuring it. The person is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved top. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The overall mood is contemplative and natural.

# New Leaf

Mukonya Mukonya  
Kenya

Alone, she sat outside,  
Barely lit compound...  
All sulky, she laments,  
About life, she reflects  
Trouble, sorrow, tears, have been her company,  
Suffered young, never knew happiness,  
Her birthday, no gifts, wishes; no family  
Life's screwed; useless. No reason to live.

Then up she looks; meets beautiful constellations;  
Twinkled, as if talking to her; singing even.  
She smiles... Smiles! She smiled! Disbelief!  
Life's been dull, could be beautiful  
No more laments, no regrets; new book, new her  
She's turned 20, no teen...  
She'll smile, freely, broadly.  
She'll live.

# I am a child of Time

**Titilope Monsure**  
**Nigeria**

I AM A CHILD OF TIME

I am a child of time; a birth to fate!

Alas!

I'm a broken clock counting in antagonist gears;  
many times,  
it says 'twelve' when it's already dawn.

My story is like that of an 'Abiku' predestined to a fate of multiple  
death and birth  
before he later stayed put, efflorescent and suit-able...

Since all these whiles,  
I was locked behind my age— in a womb of my lifetime,  
scavenging the company of time;  
immature yet ripening and seeking a Re-birth.

I hunt the tail of every next year for a big catch in a lagging den on  
my palms;  
and like so, I am tied down with shackles of budding hope  
at one corner of myself longing to be redeemed someday.

I live hence over the seasons;  
though my mind was an old mirror tarnished with years of  
experience and wish,  
its reflection was still as crystal clear as ever but broader than I can  
remember.

Yet I stood by my horizon over the nights staring, aging  
and reaping cognizance with the rising of the sun at the dayglow.

For my life is a planned episode broken into order of times;  
not until one lapses I can't live another—  
now I realize that if I never outgrew my girths  
and stretched to every borne---  
I might forever be stuck right in that Womb---dead!



# The Dawning

Edo-Omoregie Praise  
Nigeria

Sorrow and anguish could be heard in her cries  
You could see the pain, especially in her eyes  
You see, dad had gone up to the sky blue  
But his greedy relatives stuck to us like glue

Mom had been beaten down  
By loss, grief, suspicious questions and frowns  
There always was a wrangle when she tried to speak  
Like the forty-year-old eagle, she became just as weak  
Once full of life and flight  
Only to have her talons plucked and beak bent without a fight  
They made sure to subdue us during the set up for the burial  
At age ten I could interpret their actions as cruel

Just two weeks after the funeral  
Mom had to make a plea to her boss  
Seeing that her competency at the hospital was on trial  
Yet dad's brothers tried to choose from his cars with a coin toss  
Hiding the keys got me a beating, but it made sure they left with  
nothing

Two hours later mom came home very tired  
But her fatigue faded upon seeing me battered  
She was livid, no longer timid  
My uncles came back a-knocking, but mom wasn't cowering  
Spine straight, she strode to the door with a purposeful gait  
And I knew all that was left  
Was to clear the ashes and watch a fiery rebirth.



# When I Slumber

Adeyemo David  
Ghana

When I fall into the slumber  
Of death,  
Let my soul lumber  
Into the gates of eternity,  
Far above the terrains of the earth

Let life's memories  
Replay itself like a motion picture...

Let my unfulfilled dreams  
And unrealized potentials  
Relive themselves in another world,  
In a reality surreal  
To the existence I once led...

Oh! When I fall  
Into this deep slumber,  
Allow the termites to plunder  
The remains of my carcass asunder

For I will rise again,  
In a realm beyond the  
Burdens of these bodily pains...  
Life after death is real,  
I will surely be born again into a new being

# A warm is but a Butterfly

Temani Nkalolang  
Botswana

Pain is the nakedness that comes under the cold  
harmattan wind;  
Grotesque and gruesome in repose!

But like a pupa in metamorphosis, intrinsic for the big  
bang;  
Charles Darwin!

Love is but a narcotic to the brain, immersing your  
mental  
faculties to the Dolly Parton, Kenny Rodgers duet, "I love  
you to the  
Moon and back!"

Leaving you lonely in a desperate, "Jolene, Jolene, please  
don't  
take him just because you can!"

To know pain is to know love, for to live one has to know  
the  
Intercourse between heaven and earth!

Like a farmer with cutting shears, life prunes the  
innocent  
childhood arrogance and ignorance!

Wounds heal, leaving scars so ugly they are beautiful!  
Pain is a necessary evil, woven into the tapestry of life!

To go through it is to go through a furnace, to come  
from it  
is victory; rebirth!



# Rebirth

Ogunsuyi Adekunbi  
Nigeria

There is a tomb with my name  
Yes, I own a grave  
The cemetery has hairy armpits, I could tell  
from the embrace  
I am empty, waiting for skeleton to be poured  
into me like a tank  
Skeleton is a frame  
The frame means I will become a picture  
someday  
With a smile or not, a fear or a thought  
I thought graves were quiet  
I thought quiet means I shouldn't think  
A termite is the strangest friend  
A stringent friend  
This is no longer a grave  
I shall leave  
Living is the only place I can think  
Thinking is all I want to do  
To wash off the mud, I think of a name  
Zohar, meaning light  
Meaning I have been dark  
Meaning my mind has a shadow  
And I need a new womb  
Probably a placenta too  
To be born again the grave must vanish  
The girl must defeat the dark  
And shake the dust.

# It is Time

Petronella Nyirenda  
Zambia

I should take a break,  
Rest my body and lay mind amongst the softness of night.  
I should lie down in submission of labor.  
I should,  
But stars have a habit of falling and burning whatever haven I have left.  
Earth is known to shake and tremble under its own weight.  
So, it is time for me to move out.  
Everything I own is in a box.

The windows to my soul are closed.  
The curtains are finally drawn,  
The drapes are too heavy to be moved, to be changed.  
You can't see what's on the inside, because I'm not done sweeping,  
Not done with reinventing, renovation.  
It's a small space with a lot of potential.  
So, let me clear the air,  
Let me clear the smoke,  
Let me clear my mind,  
Let me start again,  
With purpose, with intent, with control.  
As much as God will allow.





# A Love, Reborn

Grace Tendo Katana  
Uganda

Surpass my worries  
Let not my trail fade.  
Glimmer, I will see you  
Like a budding flower.

Let not my trail fade,  
Quench my thirst  
Like a budding flower,  
May my spirit rise.

Quench my thirst.  
As segments of our hearts unite,  
May my spirit rise  
To beckon my inner self to life.

I give my all to you  
To cleanse away the chaff.  
And like a Phoenix from ashes,  
May our love be reborn  
To flourish, with a satisfied zeal  
Of happiness, and of affection.

# Born Again

Maruatona Tshepo  
Botswana

Born again

Love again

Live again

I found myself, finding myself in me

Only to relive a past I could not conquer

Whilst yearning for a future I could not touch

This led me to be stuck

Stuck in the present

Waiting for what my imagination should present

And yet, I still find myself yearning to

Be Born again

Loved again

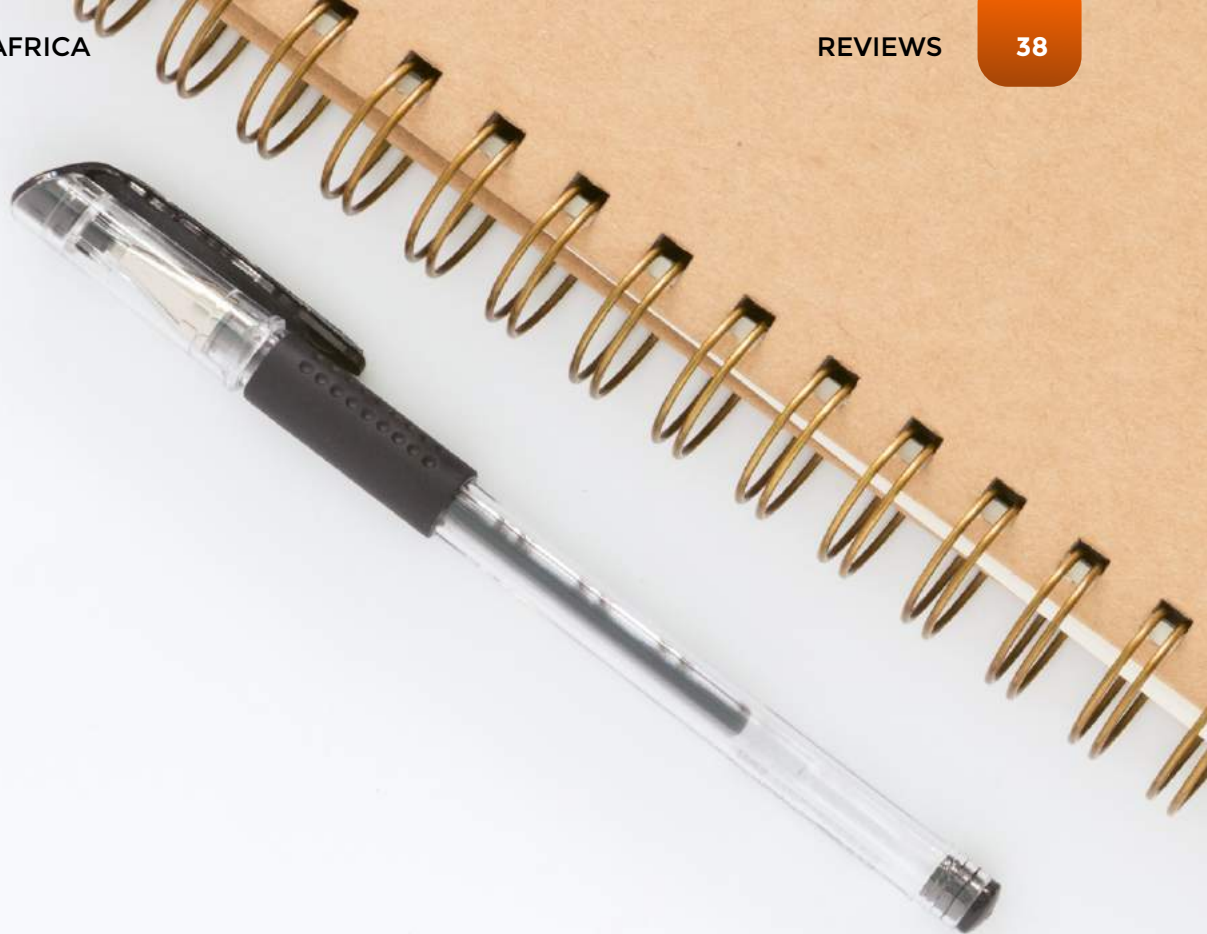
Living again

# New Coats

Omadang Yowasi  
Uganda

Put away those rags,  
Take this fine linen.  
Your sandals are worn-out,  
There's still an extra mile.  
Lizards have moulted  
To take over new coats.

Out of broken bones,  
You'll stand.  
Out of deep water,  
You'll wade.  
Out of broken walls,  
Your home will stand.



# REVIEWS



**GENRE: FLASH FICTION.**

**WRITER: TOCHUKWU PRECIOUS EZE, NIGERIA.**

**TITLE: BE ANYI, OUR HOME.**

**REVIEWER: AKINRINADE FUNMINIYI ISAAC, NIGERIA.**



"Be Anyi, Our Home" is a Flash Fiction written by Nigerian writer, Tochukwu Precious Eze. This can be found on page 7, December 2019 Edition of WSA Magazine. The story is written in the first person. The writer introduces a character that's seen as an observer at a festive event in the Igbo tribe. Where she stands watching, the Ogene team catches her attention with how they burned voraciously in passion, zeal, and strength. She describes how their dancing steps can make a man forget his worries. As if the scene of the Ogene team isn't enough to lighten up the atmosphere, she sees Nnenna; the lady. The soil danced around her feet as she tangoed with the air around her body. When her body goes low, her name is found on the tongues of the whole town. Nnenna! Nnenna! They all scream! In fact, with the way it's described, one will wish to enrol in Nnenna's dance group, if she has any.

The observer doesn't stop there. She sees men talking over the music, kegs of palm-wine being passed around, and the children chasing one another. What better way can one celebrate a festive season than this? Finally, the observer's ends at a point no man on Earth would want to miss; something that without it, an event has yet to take place. Do you think you know what that is? Perhaps. Perhaps not. Why not visit page 7 for the full gist. The lines are well painted with imagery, figures of speech, and local content. It's well-written flash fiction.

**GENRE: POETRY****WRITER: MORWMPHAKA SELLO HUMA, SOUTH AFRICA****TITLE: KWANZAA****REVIEWER: NNANE NTUBE, CAMEROON**

"Kwanzaa" is a narrative poem of four stanzas with an irregular disposition of verses: long and short. Through the traditional African way of recounting stories, the poet uses elements of oral tradition such as songs, dance, beating of drums, rituals and libation to lure his readers to love the beautiful story told with images of local colours: harvest, kola nuts, drums etc.

The introductory verse swiftly gives the reader an idea of what "Kwanzaa" means. Historically and etymologically, the name "Kwanzaa" which is firstfruits, comes from the sentence, "matunda ya kwanza" which in Swahili means "firstfruits of the harvest". The poem focuses on a festival of the firstfruits' harvest. It later becomes a holiday instituted in 1966 by Dr Maulana Karenga, a black radical FBI stooge, founder of United Slaves, a violent nationalist rival to the Black Panthers.

This festival is a 7-day celebration of community and heritage observed by many African-Americans from December 26<sup>th</sup> to January 1<sup>st</sup>. Therefore, Sello Huma's "Kwanzaa" is a timely publication that props into the annual cultural and traditional values of African festivals especially with the advent of Christmas and other celebrations.

The first and fourth lines of the 1<sup>st</sup> stanza, "we never forget the roots / and the riches from the soil," give us the purpose of the celebration and an idea of the celebrants.

The core message of the poem lies on the celebration of African communal feeling through words such as "sharing", "togetherness", "Ubuntu", "love"; all expressions that go to tie with the 7 principles of Kwanzaa (also known

**20: REBIRTH**



- Unity
- Self-determination
- Collective work and responsibility
- Cooperative economics
- Purpose
- Creativity
- Faith.

"Kwanzaa" therefore is a celebration of Africa's pride and core values.

Sello Huma is an excellent African poet whose skills in crafting African tradition should be encouraged. The way he narrates the amazing African-American harvest festival aims at projecting Africanness and the nostalgic feeling of being African - the son of a rich soil that never fails its people - is simply fantastic.

**GENRE: CHILDREN LITERATURE**

**WRITER: PRINCESSIA MREMA, TANZANIA**

**TITLE: GIRLS**

**REVIEWER: NGALIM JUSLINE VEEYEENYU, CAMEROON**

"Girls" written by thirteen-year-old Princessia from Tanzania, is published in the children's literature section of WSA online magazine, December Edition. Princessia acknowledges and recognises that girls are beautiful lyrics crafted by the Almighty maker whom she qualifies as the finest artist and his creation, girls, are masterpieces. She warns against those who seduce and harass girls and encourages all girls to stand firm and strong no matter the adversities.

Coming from a girl child, this great poem is suitable for children, particularly girls. The message is clear and a booster to girls who may already be suppressed by patriarchal societies. The language is simple, but the meaning could be deeper than it appears. Thus, women in general still have a lot to learn from Princessia's message.

Themes such as empowerment, determination, glorification and admiration of beauty (nature) and many others are glaring in the poem.

The poet's attitude is one of disapproval towards cultures that suppress the girl child; she has an attitude of encouragement towards the girl child.

Girls remains a must-read for all. Kudos, young writer.



**GENRE: ESSAY**

**WRITER: MUYAMBO MWENDA, ZAMBIA.**

**TITLE: THANKSGIVING IN AFRICA.**

**REVIEWER: OGALO ODUOR BERNARD, KENYA**



Festivals are found in almost all societies in the world, if not all. What makes some festivals more pronounced, more visible, more attractive and more consequential than others? Like, what makes Christmas a global festival - at least in Christendom - than the Kulamba festival of the Chewa people of Zambia? Or Incwala of the Swazi of Swaziland? Or Ayiza of the Ewe people of Togo?

“Thanksgiving in Africa” is an essay that explores the understanding of festivals in different communities around the world, especially in Africa. To attempt an understanding of the meaning of festivals in Africa through a Western perspective is to attempt an assassination of the very festival you seek an understanding of. Africa is a continent with multiethnic communities that treasure different traditions and cultures. In Africa, according to this essay, thanksgiving festivals are based on harvests and therefore, are dictated by the natural world (devoid of Western definitions and influences). Each community has different ways of celebrating and giving thanks. To ignore any of these traditional and cultural festivities is to ignore the community itself.

This article raises the question of the authenticity of modern festivals. Besides, the little known traditional and cultural festivals, especially in Africa, are argued to hold as much currency to the concerned communities as the global festivals to the modern celebrants.

**GENRE: SHORT STORY**

**WRITER: CHRISTINA H LWENDO, TANZANIA**

**TITLE: BEFORE FOREVER BEGINS**

**REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA**

Before Forever Begins is a short story published in the December edition of WSA magazine. It is written in the 3rd person omniscient point of view. The prevailing atmosphere around the setting is of music, both Christmas carols and secular songs. Nusura (the main character) is rummaging through piles and piles of clothes, but she's not getting one which matches her pending marriage ceremony. She's vexed up and after many attempts, she lands on one which she doesn't wait to try out. She goes to the changing room and she's face to face with the mirror. She tries to force a smile when an anonymous woman comes in staring at her. The woman intuitively realises that she must be scared about married life. She throws down clothes she has come with and picks one to try out. It's so beautiful that Nusura undoubtedly loves it. The woman decides to give her a small lecture about the dos and don'ts in marriage. When she decides to leave, Nusura begs her to attend her marriage ceremony.

The theme of pretence is highlighted in the story. Nusura pretends to shed tears, she pretends to cough when she wants to laugh, and the woman she meets in the changing room is later found to be a man. This brings out a twist in the story.

Symbolism is used in the form of the "mirror." As Nusura looks in it, she tries to project into her future in marriage. She doesn't find it happy. This is the reason she smiles vaguely at the thought of it.

Character and characterization: Nusura is naive and uncertain about everything especially her marriage dreams and if they'll come true. The woman is witty and loving. She comforts Nusura giving her parental advice.

The setting is significant and relevant to the theme of 'Festival'. In paragraph one, we hear Christmas carols, then the final marriage




**GENRE: COLUMNS**

**WRITER: AMAMI YUSUF, NIGERIA**

**TITLE: AT A COST**

**REVIEWER: COLIN STANLEY KARIMI (THE\_POWERHOUSE), KENYA.**



The column talks on the damaging stereotypes caging African women and their plight to acquire set standards by modern society. It is true that in some parts of Africa, people especially those who believe in tradition, pry into such successes for self-interest. With the character, Zarah is dethroned from the favour of her father's best interest for her future and she is plunged into the nasty jaws of tradition. It is evident that in some parts of Africa, the female gender is at stake with tradition, casting shade over the bright future of African girls. In this column, one is unsure of the detrimental consequences Zarah faces, but it is without a doubt that she overcame her challenges concerning tradition. Nonetheless, her quest engages her identity and is fruitful, but comes at a cost. One can assume that Zarah fell out of her father's favour by following what she believes in; thus, she crushes negative aspects of tradition and becomes victorious in finding her piece of mind. However, her father is distraught by her decision and disowns his daughter primarily because of tradition. The column is short and precise, yet it gives a diverse perspective of what the female gender goes through to find identity in Africa.

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE AFRICAN WRITERS DEVELOPMENT TRUST



Love

This Kind of Love  
To Love a Crazy Witch

VOL. 4 NO. 2



FEB, 2020

WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

[WWW.WRITERSSPACE.NET](http://WWW.WRITERSSPACE.NET)



Writers Space Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving new literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for her [April 2020 Edition](#) in the following categories:



*Short story*



*Flash fiction*



*Poetry*



*Essays*



*Children's Literature*

**The theme for submission is [Failure](#)**

The submission window is open from **1st of February to 14th February**. Response time is typically within **4 to 5 weeks after submission** window closes.

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# Editor's Note

**T**here is a common narrative that love is easy to write about. This is a half-truth. Like most things in life, love is a paradox: it has the ability to be all things good, and all things difficult.

I have begun on this note because I believe all stories must be told from more than one perspective. With Love, we are more inclined to speak of the supportive family, the butterflies in our bellies, the taste of good food and the talk of love at first sight. To tell the complete truth about love, we must be willing to talk about the hard edges that do not soften regardless of how much time goes by; the bad moments that make the good ones worthwhile; the loss that comes with gain; and the things we endure in a bid to hold onto what we know.

Love still remains the most powerful thing in the world; it is both the breaker of barriers and the builder of bridges. There is no force on earth that can hold both descriptions without being at once, ugly and beautiful. It is this reality that writers have an obligation of capturing.

The selected entries in this edition are a glimpse into the many facets of love as seen through the eyes of our contributors. It is in their collective work that you see how love knows no distinction – be it biological, familial or societal. Love is Storge – it tells us there's nothing better than family; Love is Philios – we all know the warmth of great friends; Love is Eros – some of us will have the privilege of experiencing how possible it'll be to become two in one; and Love is Agape – selfless, unbiased, unconditional, unadulterated.

I hope you enjoy reading Love as much as the team did, but more than that, I hope you get the chance to experience the whole truth of love.

Always remember, Ubuntu.

Warm regards,

Nabilah.

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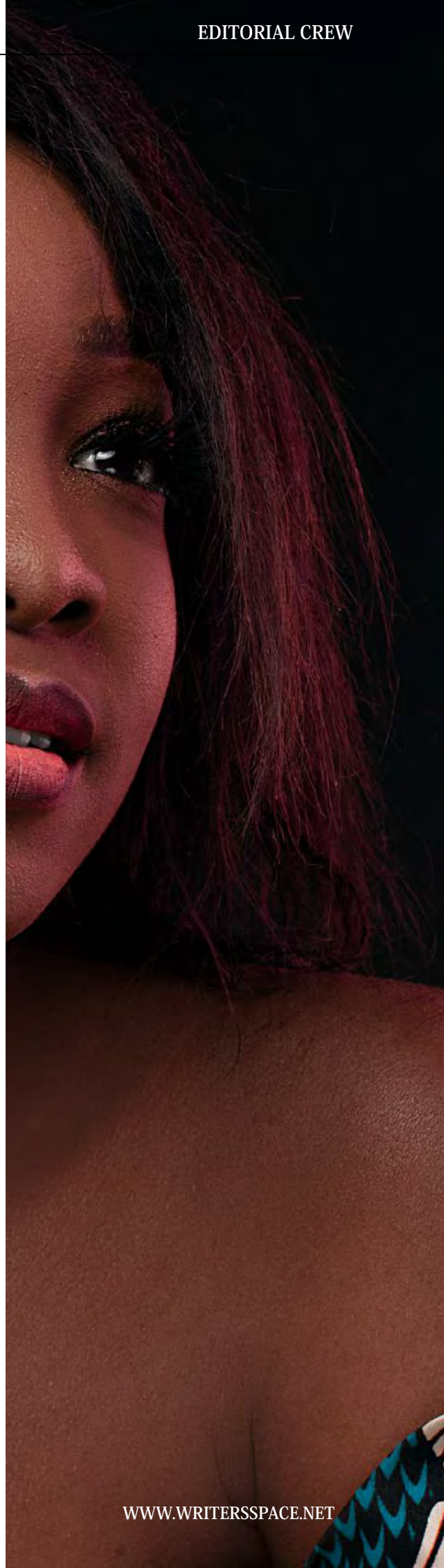
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## LOVE



# Table of Contents

Editor's Note	1
Editorial Crew	2
Table of Contents	3
Short Story	4-7
Flash Fiction	8-9
Columnists	10-17
Poetry	18-27
Reviews	28-35


A romantic scene of a man and a woman walking on a beach at sunset. They are silhouetted against the bright orange and yellow sky, holding hands. The ocean waves are visible in the foreground, and the sky transitions to a deep blue at the top.

# Short Story

“It was okay because I loved him. He loved me too, he always reassured me”

# This kind of Love

Jacqueline Ngao  
Kenya



**I**t is midnight again and Samu is not yet home. I absent mindedly rub at the goose bumps on my arms and shiver a little. It is a chilly night, yet the shivers seem to be completely unrelated to the cold. A stray dog barks in the distance; closer still, there is the sound of glass breaking. Somehow these sounds have become familiar; over the months they have come closest to being confidants. Most nights they keep me company, we vigilantly wait for the sky to get even darker so that Samu can finally come home. Sleepiness stings my eyes; my weary body begs for sleep, but Samu is the man I love and so I wait.

The night light casts a shadow on the carpeted floor through the window I opened to keep me awake. I try to make sense of the shadow formed and my mind gives up a few minutes later. I smile in nostalgia, remembering when Samu and I first met. He was extremely good at riddles and I was quite the problem solver. For some reason, no matter how hard I racked my brain, I

hardly solved any of his riddles. I guess that's why I completely hated his guts when we first met. That and the fact that he walked with such confidence and ease. It didn't help that I found him attractive. In hindsight, I think I hated that he threatened my intelligence in such a nonchalant way that even hating him seemed wrong, and of course that infuriated me further. Somehow, during that class trip we took, the line between hate and love magically thinned out. Slowly, we became more friends than enemies and later, more lovers than friends - must have been something about how opposites attract.

When we got back to campus two weeks later, we had hung out long enough to miss each other's company. Unfortunately, exam season had just descended upon the campus and we somehow drifted apart, each on a mission to secure their degree. Many days later, Samu bumped into me outside campus and needless to say, we picked up right where we left off.



He walked me from my dormitory to the cafeteria; we shared a plate of food occasionally as all love birds do; mokimo was our favorite meal. I unwillingly fell head over heels in love with this man. I put up a fight initially; to me, emotions are for the weak, but soon enough I came to realize I wasn't going to win that fight and resigned to what fate had in store for me.

A muscle cramp on my leg brings me back to reality, I look at the watch and realize that I've been sitting in this one position for 45 minutes. Samu is still not home; even the stray dog has resigned to silence. I feel the fear creep into my heart, an icy grip that makes it hard for me to breathe. It hasn't always been this way, only recently has fear been my default emotion when thinking of Samu. Five months after the class trip, he and I had become so inseparable such that it made the most sense to move in together. It was amazing really, living together much like a fairytale. I hadn't had much of those and I welcomed the feeling with LOVE

open arms - perhaps too eagerly.

When I first began to know Samu, I discovered that he was quite introverted, even more introverted than I was. I always thought that was one of the reasons we took to each other so well. Another thing I loved was how protective he was. I hadn't ever had that much amount of care directed at me. Soon I was so deep in love I couldn't remember how I had ever survived before then. And just like any other kind of love, I overlooked some things, banged doors, raised voices, insults. It was okay because I loved him. He loved me too, he always reassured me...after he had calmed down.

One night, Samu came back home completely drunk. He was unable to continue with school; financial difficulties at home, he had said. That was the beginning of the downward spiral; a drunken Samu slowly became a common occurrence. Then the violence swept in, and it still amazes





me how quickly life turned into a nightmare.

From afar, I hear someone fumble with the gate - it's him. I can hear footsteps climb up the stairs now. They sound more like a person carrying the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; a weight I'm willing to bear with him, but I'm not allowed to. I slowly walk to the door, and stop by the mirror. I observe the fear in my eyes - a strange sight. And my face, I look tired like I have aged overnight.

I'm surprised as to when things got this bad. Where have I seen this face before? The memory comes to me at once, almost painfully, as vivid as a dream. A drunken father stumbling past a corrugated wood door in the dead of night. A woman, my mother, waiting quietly opposite the door. Then there is little me, out of my bed, awoken by the noise. I sneeze a little, and she turns swiftly, the fear still stuck in her eyes. Firmly, she gestures at me to go back to bed. I run back to

bed, but those scared eyes follow me and haunt me even in my dreams.

I gasp at the irony of life, the cruelty of it all. Bracing myself, I walk to the door. Samu stumbles in. He forcefully grabs my arm and throws me on a chair. I'm taken back to a conversation that took place 17 years ago. "But why do you stay mamii?" I ask after seeing her tend to one of her wounds from the night before. "I love your father Shiro. You wouldn't understand." she answers turning away to hide a tear that streams down.

In present time, Samu begins his assault much like every other night. I zone out as blow after blow rains down on me. I should probably run away and save my life, but Samu is the man I love. I guess it's a small price to pay.

Tomorrow I know he will apologize because he still loves me.



# Flash Fiction

“Besides, leaving a man because he cheats is like leaving Zambia because it rains”

# Victim of Love

Majory Moono Simuyuni  
Zambia



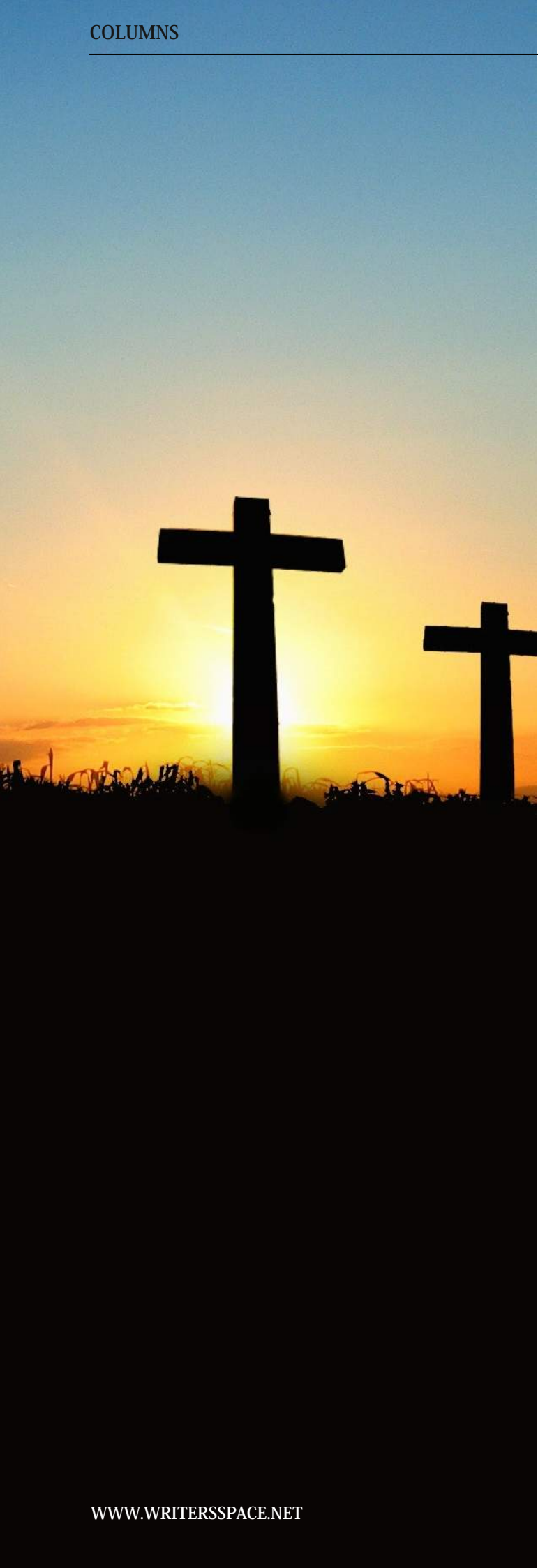
**F**orgive him,' they had told her. 'A man who loves you will always batter you,' from the infinity of their wisdom, they had advised her. 'Besides, leaving a man because he cheats is like leaving Zambia because it rains,' they had added.

We put her to rest today.

A romantic couple walking hand-in-hand on a paved road that curves through a snowy, mountainous landscape. The woman is on the left, wearing a brown puffer jacket, a grey sweater, blue jeans, and black boots with white polka dots. The man is on the right, wearing a dark jacket, dark pants, and brown boots. They are both smiling and looking at each other. The background shows snow-covered hills under a clear blue sky.

# Columns

“Happy Valentine's day in advance, my friend.”



# Life as we Know it Love

Ugbede Ataboh

**L**ove is an intense feeling of deep affection...or even more. Modern medicine has been able to prove that babies fill parents with a deep sense of love.

I know a true story of a mighty King who had the whole universe in the palm of his hand; He beautified and structured it, yet, it still seemed incomplete without the sound of hearts beating rhythmically in the silent air waves. Thus, the creation of the first man came to be and this King became our Father. This mighty king displayed His unconditional love by covering the nakedness of Adam and Eve after their disobedience that birthed the original sin and led to an unfortunate separation between the Creator and man.

This same King flung an infinite number of stars upon a blanket of clouds and promised an old nomad and his barren wife descendants who'd outnumber the infinite stars. I know an even truer



story of this king tearing open the Red sea just so His children whom He delivered from the grip of a villainous monarch could walk on dry ground to the other side of the sea. This deliverance was completed centuries later when He sent His only begotten Son to serve as a sacrificial lamb on an altar of betrayal just so his shed blood could wash away the original sin of Man and reunite willing races to back Himself.

I am living in a legitimate story of how this King provides everything I need just so I can feel and be complete in Him and everything He represents. My proof of the existence of this omniscient loving being is in the way the soft strokes of His paint brush create a myriad of dreamy colors across the sky at dusk and dawn.; it's in the mysterious conclusion of a life and the beautiful start of another; it's in the promise a new day holds; it's in the miraculous disappearance of a deadly brain tumor overnight; it's in the way a man can wake up amidst the poorest of the poor and go to bed in his own mansion; it's in the very air we inhale and cannot account for. I dare say proof of His existence and unconditional love are in the little and big things around us which He gives to us freely.

LOVE

I know you were expecting me to tell you tales of my wild romantic escapades and the feelings they sparked in me, but none of them can or will ever come close to the unconditional love of God. So, what is love? God is Love and love is God. Remember that you are loved even though there is no caller ID like "Bae" or "My lover" on your phone contact list. Remember that you have everything you'll ever need at your disposal because God pulls at the heart strings of both man and beast and can make them work in your favour; all you need to do is ask and believe.

God planted the wild flowers for your pleasure so you can stroll into a field and pluck a bouquet for yourself even if no one gives you any this season. You go to bed every night, wrapped in his loving and protective embrace even though you have no lover to keep you warm.

Know that you have no reason to fear because He is the one who watches over the watchman at the gate and above all, He is the only one who loves you with an everlasting love.

Happy Valentine's day in advance, my friend.

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# The Observer

Leo Muzivoreva  
Zimbabwe

It is February, a month renowned for love. Love is certainly in the air and somewhere out there, someone has, is about to, or has met someone new. However, words, poorly and unconsciously chosen, can indeed hurt not only first impressions, but also your credibility, relationships, and opportunities for any type of advancement in whichever case you may encounter in your social or professional life. Based on personal experience, I have come up with a few words that must NEVER be said when you meet someone new...

## 1. 'I think ...'

Saying "I think" is sometimes acceptable, but only if you truly are unsure.

Using 'I think' can make you appear wishy-washy. When you know something, state it directly: "The meeting will be at 3 p.m."

## 2. 'I love your dress'

Avoid commenting on a person's personal appearance or belongings – even if it's positive – when you first meet them. It's too personal and out of place. Even after you get to know them, be careful what you say and why.

Because of varying power relationships and pecking order in society, it's often the safest bet to avoid comments on a person's physique or outward





appearance unless you're certain on how it will be perceived. It might work in your favour but it might also scream: "Pervert Alert"

3. 'You look different than you sound over the phone'

Don't begin a conversation by implying that you're surprised, disappointed, or puzzled by the fact that the person did not meet up to your predisposed expectations.

4. 'Honestly'

Drawing attention to your honesty at that moment can lead people to wonder, "Is everything else they're saying not true?"

5. 'You probably heard X about me, but it's not true'

Don't draw attention to any rumours that may be going around about you. It makes you seem like you think you're important (maybe you are – but you don't want to give off this impression), and maybe the person hadn't heard the rumour, until that moment.

6. 'Can you do me a favour?'

You just met this person. Don't immediately ask for their help.

7. 'I ... I ... I ...'

Self-absorption should be avoided in any first conversation.

"I" is the smallest letter in the alphabet, so don't make it the largest word in your vocabulary..

No one is impressed when a person dominates a conversation or talks too much about himself or herself, especially the first time you meet someone.

To avoid an I-centric conversation, show sincere interest in others by asking appropriate questions and actively listening. "How did you get into accounting?" "What brought you to this city?" "What do you believe are the key challenges in living in this city". Get to know them, through good questions which foster good conversation...

8. 'How much do you make?'

The amount of money a person earns is a very personal matter

"It's considered rude to ask, and unconscionable on a first encounter," she says. "If you're really that curious, or it's important that you know, instead of committing this faux pas, do some research on sites like Glassdoor, PayScale, Salary.com."

We all stand to improve our ability to craft a positive first impression, particularly in the words we say.

Perhaps, the most effective remedy is to focus on the best interests of the other person because, nearly all the faults of conversation are caused by a lack of consideration.

Be careful of what you say, when you meet someone new.



# At a Cost!

## EPISODE TWELVE

Amami Yusuf  
Nigeria

There were about thirty teenage girls housed within the walls of "Aunty Joy's home." The owner, aunty Joy, was a well-built woman who looked almost 50. She looked sporty and agile, yet was extremely lazy- virtually everyone could tell upon first meeting her, that she was lazy. The way she carried herself and reluctantly responded to things revealed this trait about her. However, she was a very cheerful and simple woman, which was another character of hers which people noticed immediately. She was all hugs and kisses over Zarah when she walked in with Lucy. Zarah was the first Northerner they had in the house and they were all excited to have her. They were all curious to know what Northern Nigeria was like.

Zarah sat quietly in the chair she was offered, and watched them as they got busy, trying to register her and give her all the necessities she would need. So far, Zarah was finding the whole Lagos experience foreign and strange. From their mode of dressing, to the way they spoke and even to the weather. A heavy downpour of rain had begun falling while she was still in Aunty Joy's office. She always loved the smell of earth whenever rain fell. It brought back memories- of she and Kamal

playing in the rain, against their father's warnings. Though she was very far from home, the memories she took along with her made her feel she was still with them. The sound of a loud bell reminded her she was in Lagos, in an orphanage for girls. The orphanage was privately owned and received a lot of donations from NGO philanthropists and individuals.

"It is time for lunch. Jeka lo." It was only after Lucy had made the statement that she remembered that Zarah doesn't speak nor understand Yoruba. "Let us go" she repeated, to which Zarah stood to her feet. They shared a small umbrella as they walked out of the tiny office. Aunty Joy's was not a very big or fancy place. One could see all the structures in almost one glance. Everything seemed to be on a straight line- the offices, the tiny classrooms, the dining hall/kitchen, the dormitory, the little open space behind and finally the fence which caged them in. There were a few trees around, which barely provided enough shade. The buildings were old and whitewashed. There was almost nothing about the structures or environment to be admired. Lucy had been saying something, but her mind was too far to comprehend what was said. It took her about a minute before she even realized that Lucy had been speaking to her. She still said nothing and they completed the walk to the dining hall in silence.

"We are grateful for this food. Bless the hands which have provided, and bless us too." The unison of thirty female voices called together, and afterwards the girls sat down to begin their meal. The dining hall was a small square-sized little space with an old standing fan, one light bulb, four windows and six long wooden benches in the middle of the room. Lucy led her to one of the benches and told her to sit and wait as she went out into the little kitchen just beside the dining area. The other girls kept turning and staring at

LOVE

Zarah, yet no one said a word. Zarah was shy and uncomfortable and looked down at her now-dirty hijab. She noticed she was the only one who was wearing a hijab. The other girls were putting on uniforms- white straight gowns and an optional white scarf. It was Monday afternoon and they had just concluded their classes for the day. The orphanage provided them with free primary education; and when the girls advanced both in age and understanding, they were taught vocational skills as long as they had not been adopted yet. Zarah kept her eyes and head down as she fondled her hijab, whilst waiting for Lucy. A small statured girl, who was sitting at the edge of the same bench as Zarah, kept leaning forward to look at her. Zarah noticed from the corner of her eye and tilted her head towards the girl's direction. The girl smiled, revealing her not-so-white teeth and then put a spoon-full of rice in her mouth. She chewed funny too, and Zarah only half smiled.

Lucy returned a few minutes later with a plate of rice mixed with beans. The rice had no color in it, and the beans was overcooked. Zarah collected the plate from Lucy curtly and said nothing more. Lucy immediately decided she didn't like Zarah very much. She seemed rude and arrogant as little as she was. Zarah on the other hand had noticed she hadn't been on her best behavior since she met Lucy, and felt awkward about giving off the wrong impression.

Most of the girls finished their meals and left the hall, heading to the dormitory. Soon, only three people were left in the hall- Zarah, Lucy and the small statured girl. Lucy was giving Zarah the rules governing the home- "You and the other girls are responsible for keeping your environment clean. There are morning classes till 1pm, every day except Saturdays and Sundays. You must be in your white uniform every day when it has been given to you..." She said a lot of other things, some of

which Zarah did not pay attention to. Afterwards, Lucy took her to the dormitory and gave her a mattress and a blanket. The dormitory was a long space; it was a narrow hall-like room with bunks on each side. As they walked, the other girl tagged along and walked beside Zarah. She stretched out her hand to hold hands with Zarah, but Zarah didn't take the hand and they all walked on in further silence.

The rest of the day had come speedily and it was already time for the girls to retire to bed. The little girl - Susan, as Zarah had come to find out - had hung around Zarah for the rest of the day. Susan was especially overjoyed when Lucy put Zarah's bed next to hers. They spent the rest of their day together in silence- Susan too shy to make conversation, and Zarah not ready to loosen up and make friends. Susan was pretty- small eyes, flabby cheeks, pale rough skin, short hair. Zarah intended to thank her for the day, but at the time, it felt too heavy to say.

It had been ten days since Zarah came to the house, yet no one in the house had heard her voice; she not spoken a word. Some wondered if she was mute. Within those ten days, aunty Joy had frequently called her to the office to talk with her, but Zarah only merely listened and never said a word. Her eyes were always sad and she was almost always lost in thought. Everyone was curious about her and wondered what her story was. They wondered how Kajiru had found her. How she had found herself in Lagos, all the way from Katsina. Everyone but aunty Joy wondered, though she also had her curiosities about her as well. She was itching to know the full story of why Zarah had to run away from her home. Aunty Joy understood it was a difficult time for the thirteen-year old, and was eager to see her pull out of the depressed state she was in.

That Thursday evening, Susan caught Zarah wiping tears from her eyes like she had been doing almost every night. She was genuinely concerned about Zarah but didn't know how to go about asking or cheering her up. She slipped out of her bed and went to Zarah's bed. She handed her something wrapped in paper, accompanied by a tiny piece of neatly folded paper. Zarah was a little puzzled but took the wraps. She glanced briefly at Susan, as if asking if it was okay to open it then, she began to slowly unwrap the paper and Susan kept smiling. The tiny piece of cake inside almost fell to the ground, but Zarah was quick to catch it. The Home made a tradition of celebrating the girls' birthdays with home-made cakes. Lucy was the one who always baked the cake whenever it was someone's birthday. Zarah had missed dinner that day and therefore didn't get any piece of cake. Susan had noticed her absence and saved hers for her. Zarah said nothing and carefully went on to unfold the paper.

"Eat kak. Dot be sad." Susan had written in a very clear and neat handwriting, though her spelling was a little poor. Zarah read the note more than once- not because she didn't understand it, but because she didn't know what to do or say. She thought of returning the cake, but she also wanted so bad to have a bite. She was touched that Susan had sacrificed her share for her and decided not to return it. Zarah ate half of the cake in one bite and offered the other half to Susan. She collected the remaining piece shyly from Zarah's hand and smiled. Zarah smiled back at her- a warm, genuine smile. There was that funny chewing again and this time, Zarah laughed.

"Thank you!" she said to Susan finally, and those were her first recorded words in the home.



# Poetry



# Fate

Esere Akporehe  
Nigeria

As we kissed under the plum tree,  
My legs disobeyed gravity  
The harmattan season gave way  
For our joyful love to blossom.

It felt like a risky adventure,  
As we kissed under the plum tree.  
Our hearts raced a drum line parade  
And, every nerve danced to the tune.

The hair on our arms gave signals;  
It was a predestined moment  
As we kissed under the plum tree;  
No soul dared foul such purity.

It had been designed from the start,  
Ever since our first date strapped onto  
Our mamas' backs while they gossiped,  
As we kissed under the plum tree.

A woman with dark skin and short, curly hair is smiling warmly. She is wearing a bright yellow, off-the-shoulder dress with ruffled details. Her right hand is raised near her face, with fingers slightly spread. She is wearing a gold watch on her left wrist. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting with foliage.

# For Rita

UkaOrji Ogbonna Senator  
Nigeria

The calm in your eyes,  
The sweetness in your smile,  
Paints a tomorrow  
So lovely and beautiful.

Love died  
Only to rise again  
When my eyes fell upon  
Your dolce sky.

Whoever sees you has seen Africa  
For your beauty radiates  
With its very essence.

Some day,  
I will learn how to spell,  
Recreate  
Africa anew.  
For in your womb,  
I see Africa  
Nestling into handsome sons,  
Pretty and lovely daughters.



# (Im)Perfect

Glory Mboh  
Cameroon

Like a flower with a thorn  
Or a beast with a single horn,  
You have flaws.

Sometimes you sing the wrong note,  
Sometimes you wear the wrong coloured coat.  
You break the laws.

But you are still a rose, and that won't change.  
You are still the unicorn  
That rides into my dreams and livens my fantasies.

Your song transports me to planets light years ahead  
And when we get there and it's cold  
You don't hesitate to wrap me in your coat.

It might not seem like it,  
But you're just the perfect fit.

And for my life was a seed planted in a test bed  
manured with patience and persistence,  
certainly, I might never sprout out of my toils of timely soil.



# Love is

Mwanduka Peggy  
Kenya

Love is the purest of things,  
And awesome is the joy it brings,  
It does not count deeds done,  
Not a single one, none.

You see, true love is selfless,  
It gives sacrificially, endlessly,  
But we folks are endlessly selfish,  
Always giving to ourselves, times countless.

Love is not defined by circumstantial acts,  
Neither covered in racial garments,  
Nor is it a mindset that's stereotypic,  
Love is true and authentic.

Love is making them smile,  
It is wiping their tears while  
Giving them assurance and hope,  
Love is being present and helping them cope.

Love is an oxymoron  
It is bitter sweet,  
It is a phenomenon;  
It's awfully great.



# Love's Abode

Emmanuel Isidore Umanah  
Nigeria

Where  
On earth  
Is this Love  
No eyes can see  
Many ears have heard  
Various lips have proclaimed  
And no hand has ever touched  
Except the simple silent heart  
Who beholds Love in the air she takes...  
Daily bread and water, mornings and nights;  
Behind every face: gloomy or bright;  
Each sun's smile and rose's fragrance,  
Morning hymns from bird and man,  
Night breeze from seas and trees,  
Dark nights and bright days,  
Men: known or not,  
Far or near:  
Love lives  
Here!




# Our Love Life

Philip Chamfi  
Ghana

A perfect mélange of bodies, souls and spirit  
A lifetime mixed with licorice  
A love life blessed like a hyacinth plant  
So small, yet sweet smelling and closely together  
It glows and brings brightness to the eyes  
A heartbeat which calms the body  
It worries about nothing  
Our love will virtually be deified by the world.  
We explored it genuinely;  
All the niggling was of no essence  
A love life well lived.

# The Portrait of Love

Akinmayowa Shobo  
Nigeria



Paint me a portrait of love  
Whose measure confounds body statistics,  
A security against the unfavorable winds,  
The fickleness of looks  
Or the shade of the black hue.

Paint me a portrait of love  
The picture of two young birds  
Warm company of two hearts in sync  
A rich soup of black royals from distinct histories  
Reflecting the serenading rays of the African  
sunset.

Paint me a portrait of love  
Beveled,  
Though in the tranquil sadness of their economy,  
Soaring high up with the eagles  
Wade unfazed against mountain-high litanies.

Paint me a portrait of love  
An ageless ore,  
Rooted in a stimulating medium of trust  
Firmly neglecting every wanton thrust  
And bowing torrents of communal knocks.

Paint me a portrait of love  
An insane conviction made for two  
Gallant spirits fighting for garlands  
Forged out of pure heaven  
Wrapped in enduring baubles.

# She is Love

Faith Chepchumba  
Kenya

She's your favourite song  
The one you put on replay.  
She makes you smile all day long.

She's your favourite beverage  
The one you always love.  
She drowns out your rage.

She's your favourite time of the day  
That which you take to unwind.  
She makes you focus all day.

She's your favourite season  
The one you relish.  
She becomes its perfect reason.

She's your favourite story  
That which you love reading.  
She makes you forget every worry.

She's your favourite tune  
The one you enjoy.  
She keeps your heart immune.

She's favourite in your life  
The one you love dearly.  
She makes you forget strife.

LOVE

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# To Love a Crazy Witch

Obioma Obinna  
Nigeria

The tick-tocking clock talks of love and time,  
of a heart adorned with timeless beauty,  
At the fourteenth hour, she says:  
'It is strife to love one who takes your breath away.'  
Each time she whispers your name ,  
a fadeless star descends from Jove;  
that ranks you amongst burning passions of pain and pleasure;  
turns you on to turn you down; bites your lips when she kisses it;  
makes you boil with anger, in a hot cauldron  
that softly simmers you with guilt; /ensnaring your senses/  
to pull you away from yourself with no strings attached.

But lo! It's to these heartstrings you've made purchase.  
Though you fall and bruise all bones,  
your heart shall be aglow with desire.  
And /like a morning glory/, your life hangs on  
/between reality and fantasy/ where  
she's traded her heart for a genovese coin  
lost in an ocean of sharks and dolphins.  
'Find it!' she says.  
You can't be underwater and breathe fine  
like you could swim without fins.  
So, you die with your eyes open, /a bittersweet death/  
/searching for the silvery heart of a white witch/  
until she whispers: 'Wake up, I love you.'



# Reviews

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GENRE: SHORT STORIES

WRITER: FATIMA DAMAGUM

TITLE: AN UNUSUAL FRIENDSHIP

REVIEWER: LATEEFAH KAREEM (NIGERIA)



**F**riendship. Some say it is the need for the other's company; some say it is needing something you cannot afford from someone else; others say it is for just companionship. In this short story, Fatima tells us about a friendship incited by a need to protect the other.

The story revolves around the life of Jummai, a young lady born with the congenital anomaly of having both sexual organs (hermaphroditism). She was called a freak of nature from husband one to husband two's house. It is husband three who finally resolved - after pleading on her part - to give her a chance.

Her doctor finds her case quite intriguing and follows up on the matter, giving not only professional but also emotional support, leading to their friendship. According to her, Jummai has taught her “resilience, hope, will and courage”.

It was a most captivating read, one of the best in my 2020 so far. Great job, Fatima!



GENRE: FLASH FICTION

WRITER: OGECHUKWU EGWUATU FROM NIGERIA

TITLE: REBORN

REVIEWER: NGALIM JUSLINE VEEYEENYUY (CAMEROON)

**T**his brief and magnificent story by Ogechukwu, set in the delivery room, presents the rebirth of a child, Aduke, who is born again to the same woman after her previous burial. Despite the rituals performed at her last burial to stop her rebirth, she returns again.

Fear, panic and sad memories grasp this woman as the child is identified as her daughter reborn. She has a retrospect of her predicament with this spirit child. She's caught in a dilemma, whether to rejoice at the return of her daughter or recall the pain she will experience as it is certain she will soon depart again.

Aduke herself admits that she has tormented this woman a lot and would desire to be birthed by another woman the next time she reincarnates. Nonetheless, she can't do otherwise because she is back for a goal; "She had a task to accomplish and she had been reborn for it."

Reincarnation, superstition, rites and rituals, sorrow, lamentation and pessimism are some dazzling themes in this flash fiction. The flashback technique is used to effect suspense and the setting is no doubt a pure African traditional society. This work respects the principle of brevity in flash fiction writing and resonates the magazine's theme.

I personally feel this work would be lovelier if developed into a short story. Notwithstanding, it's a great piece and a must read.



GENRE: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

WRITER: MOSEKIEMANG KAELEBOGA, BOTSWANA

TITLE: THE BABOON AND THE GIANT BANANA TREE

REVIEWER: TWINOMUGISHA RACHAEL, UGANDA



**L**ack is an aspect of life tricky to deal with; death of a loved one another so bothersome to handle, and or even to heal from. Imagine a child faced with this, singlehandedly!

We are introduced to Sedi in the first paragraph of the story. The young baboon is faced with conflict: most baboons have been dying due to famine. On this night, her mother manages to get her food, but she is very frail, and passes away shortly afterwards.

Sedi learns about her mother's demise through a little plant that watches her struggle to wake her mother's cold body up. The little plant encourages Sedi to dig a hole and bury her mother's body.

A frail, scared, hopeless, and doubtful Sedi goes ahead to harken to the plant's call.

This is it! A quick rebirth of hope for Sedi. It's an answered prayer.

Even though Sedi is going to lose her mother eternally, she isn't going to lack food, and as an added blessing, she gets a magnificent reunion with her family!

Miraculously, the little plant grows into a huge banana tree and produces fruit for the animals. (What if your whole blessing was masked as your biggest problem/loss?)

Want to know the miracle leading to the rebirth?

Read the story: page 13 of the WSA magazine, 20: Rebirth.

The title of the story is catchy. The lyrical sound in baboon and banana gives the feeling that children should memorize the title, and the story as well.

The writer uses language suitable for children of different ages.

The story is short enough that children will not get lost in the lines and its plot is straight enough to help children keep track of the message in the story.

We are drawn to the themes of parenthood, loss, obedience, hope and rebirth.

The story is suitable even for adults to read considering its diverse themes and lessons.

Very well done, Mosekiemang Kaeleboga!



GENRE: COLUMNS

WRITER: AMAMI YUSUF (NIGERIA)

TITLE: AT A COST!

REVIEWER: COLIN STANLEY KARIMI; THE\_POWERHOUSE (KENYA)



**I**n the last episode, we have the main character Zarah who secured her identity by casting out tradition. With a father's favor out of reach, Zarah starts her own journey of self-discovery where she meets Kajiru.

In the first paragraph, Zarah is tired as a result of a disturbance in her sleep, even the sounds of crickets shake her very being. With such a depiction in this paragraph, it is evident that Zarah lost herself as she sought a new identity. More so, with the theme being rebirth, it is critical to note that for Zarah, it is not a destination, but a journey. Her trip signifies a painful process. With the last episode bearing the theme identity, Zarah apparently broke off from her original roots: her tribe.

Kajiru was kind at first as she saw an individual who is going against the famed traditions. In fact, the character Kajiru is engaging as it seems Zarah was not the first girl he saw opposing their traditions. More so, Zarah's loss of her father's affection is evident as she feels attached to a stranger even though they have not engaged in meaningful conversation for close to an hour.

The topic of not neglecting traditions is critical to the sustenance of an individual; tradition itself gives one a name and identity. As such, tradition is indeed the root for society. At the end of the column, Zarah feels empty after parting ways with Kajiru, which closes the debate on the importance of tradition. Zarah now envelopes herself with groups of women who share the same views as her own. A new dawn; her rebirth.

GENRE: SHORT STORY

WRITER: CHRISTINA H LWENDO, TANZANIA

TITLE: BEFORE FOREVER BEGINS

REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA

**D**eath is a painful pill to swallow, but have we ever seen in it as an opportunity to be reborn of faith, focus and feelings regardless of the agony of loss?

"The Dawning" by Edo-Omoregie Praise is a snapshot of loss, pain, untold sufferings and renewal of strength.

It is a four-stanza narrative poem with unequal distribution of lines per stanza: S1, 4 lines; S2, 8 lines; S3, 5 lines and S4, 7 lines.

Edo-Omoregie Praise makes use of a rhyming couplet in stanzas 1, 2, and in the quatrain of stanza 3 (aabb, ccddeeff, fgfg[h]) and an irregular rhyme scheme in stanza 4.

The first stanza depicts the agony experienced by the persona's mother and the cause of that agony. The persona makes us understand that the mother's sufferings are as a result of the loss of her husband as well as the unruly behaviour of her in-laws.

The use of the rhyming couplet - aabb - here may suggest a spontaneity and chain of sad experiences the persona's mother is trapped in.

The second stanza projects a sequence of maltreatment, torment and suppression that defines the mother's experiences after the death of her husband. Words such as "loss", "grief", "suspicious questions", "subdue" highlight the trauma both the persona and mother go through.





Stanza 3 throws light on the audacious and wicked attitude of the persona's uncle.

In stanza four, the persona expresses the unique reason that revived his mother's strength and led to the rebirth of focus: the zeal to protect her child from the grips of wicked relatives.

Ultimately, we learn that a child is a mother's reason for living.

No matter how dead she is physically and psychologically, if the child is in danger, a mother will rise from the ashes and face whatever obstacle. This is the message that captures this beautiful poem by Edo-Omoregie: a mother's rebirth to protect her child from the hands of danger.

I particularly enjoy the flow in the poem and the skilful use of diction.

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VOL. 4 NO. 2



MARCH, 2020 WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

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Empowering African Writers

Writers Space Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving new literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for her May 2020 Edition in the following categories:



Short story



Flash fiction



Poetry



Essays



Children's Literature

The theme for submission is Solitude

The submission window is open from 1st of March to 14th March.

Response time is typically within 4 to 5 weeks after submission window closes.

We look forward to receiving your best work!

To submit, please visit [www.writersspace.net/submissions](http://www.writersspace.net/submissions)

# Editor's Note

The first time I heard the words 'alternative foregone', I was in secondary school sitting in my Economics class; the subject was Opportunity Cost. The simplest way I could hold onto the definition back then was to think of it as the price of what could have been and this definition has roamed the halls of my subconscious since then. The most basic way to put this concept into one word is to call it 'Sacrifice'.

If you think of this strictly in Economic terms, you may be tempted to think that it is an easy and thoughtless action. However, a Sacrifice is always a conscious act; a willing decision. In African climes, a majority of us more readily attribute this act (of virtue) to our mothers and the women in our lives, but as a virtue, Sacrifice is human nature. How, when and why we do it can be one of the most important decisions of our lives.

In this month's edition, the team has taken its time to go through all the works that came through. From entries like The Dance Competition in the Children's Literature section that showed how sacrificial acts go beyond familial ties, to The Seamstress in the Flash Fiction section that touched on enduring pain for the happiness of one's child and the poetry entries that speak of the sacrifices of our fathers; I can assure you that this month's read will be well worth your time.

On a last note, I would like to point out how inevitably the concept of Ubuntu found its way into the stories of Sacrifice. All of life is at its best when it happens for the greater good of another. It is my hope that when you read the works of these writers, you will find a common thread drawn across Africa; one that reiterates how the act of Sacrifice is human nature and when we do it, we do it for the sake of better days ahead.

Always remember, Ubuntu.

Warm regards,  
Nabilah.

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# Table of Contents

Editor's Note	1
Editorial Crew	2
Table of Contents	3
Short Story	4-9
Flash Fiction	10-13
Columnists	14-16
Children Literature	17-18
Articles	19-20
Poetry	21-28
Reviews	29-32



# A Part of Me

Yaqub Abdullahi  
Nigeria



Funsho hummed his favorite song, Never Say Never, by Justin Bieber as he bathed.

The golden rays of the Monday morning emerging sun cascaded into the bathroom through the small window. Birds chirped from a nearby tree. Funsho stopped, listening to the birds before he continued to hum the rest of the song lyrics.

The water streamed down his body and he shut his eyes. My life is going to change soon. His lips stretched in a smile. Things are about to get better for me.

Funsho's thoughts were interrupted by a bang on the

bathroom door.

"Are you planning on spending a century just to bathe?" A tiny voice that could be mistaken for a female's, said. "Stop singing and hurry up, Funsho. God, I hate sharing a bathroom with you."

Funsho chuckled. "I'll be out in a minute." He heard the footsteps withdraw from the door.

Funsho and Gbenga had lived together since they finished university. The two had been friends for ages, and despite their contrasting characters, they got along well. Working as graphics designers at Global Wiz-Tech, they had agreed to live together in a rented apartment. But everything was going to change soon.

I won't have to share an apartment with Gbenga anymore, Funsho said to himself as he washed his hair. Very soon, I'll move out from here. I'll get a penthouse at Ikoyi, the classy neighborhood. He smiled.

Funsho hurried out of the bathroom. Gbenga was standing before the door, arms crossed. He was shirtless, displaying the hair on his chest. A towel was tied to his waist, covering his thighs. Gbenga was a light-skinned guy, a little taller than Funsho.

"We should reorganize our bathing arrangement." Gbenga's forehead creased. "It's a bad idea to have you use the bathroom first."

Funsho stifled his laughter as Gbenga went into the bathroom. "Be fast, we're late for work."

"Courtesy of a guy who loves to daydream in the shower," Gbenga shouted back.

In his room, Funsho spent another extra minute trying to find the perfect outfit. He settled for a white shirt and green suit. As

he stood before the mirror, he wondered if he was properly dressed for the event. Was the outfit formal enough? Would it make the panel think he was better than his rivals?

Gbenga's voice drew him out of his thoughts. "Are you ready?" He was by the door, dressed in a simple blue coat and jeans.

"Sure. I'm done." Funsho stole a glance at his reflection in the mirror. "The suit is great, right? I'm nervous."

Gbenga walked into the room, smiling. "You're looking gorgeous for someone who is going to become a partner soon."

"Stop teasing me." Funsho said. "The final starts today, and this nervousness is overwhelming my happiness. What if I don't get the partnership? What if the judges think someone else deserves it?"

Being a partner at Global Wiz-Tech was every employee's wish. Every three years, the company would create a list of five experts from each department who had a significant impact on the company. These five would go through a series of tests and interviews. Whoever came top was made the company's equity partner. The partnership came with a promotion in rank, increased salary, and many other advantages. Funsho had made it to the list of five.

Gbenga waved a hand in dismissal. "Frodd said you're the first on the judges' list so far. No need to overthink something we both know you'll get." He chuckled.

Funsho laughed. "That's good."

"Now let's get going." Gbenga turned to leave. "I am not running for the partnership and I can get fired for being late."

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By eight a.m., Global Wiz-Tech was already buzzing with activity. People breezed in and out of doors, carrying papers from one office to another. In each cubicle, computer geeks

were busy creating new webpages, designing and completing sites for clients.

When Funsho got to work, he went straight into Frodd's office. Frodd Ekere was the head of Funsho's department. He was a burly man in his late fifties.

"Are you ready for your big day?" Frodd said the moment Funsho stepped into his office. "It's the final week."

"I'm quite prepared, sir." Funsho bowed.

Frodd nodded. "I trust you. Your presentation should be topnotch, you know the decision will be made on Friday."

"Got it," he answered.

Frodd shuffled to his feet. "I'll see you in the conference room by ten."

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The day was almost over when Funsho exited the conference room. The interview was stressful. The panelists had shot him question after question, digging through his entire career at the company. At one point, he thought he had lost the partnership. But when he finished his presentation, he saw smiles on most of faces on the panel. He couldn't wait to share the news with Gbenga.

His phone buzzed in his pocket, making him stop. Funsho's eye lit as he saw the caller ID. It was Iya Agba, his aged grandma who raised him after the death of his parents twenty years ago. Iya Agba saw him through hisThe caller continued. "No medicine is working for her, and she thinks she's in her last days. All she calls is your through her sale of farm produces.

Funsho smiled as he answered the phone. "Hello, maami."

"Hello. Is this Funsho?" The voice wasn't his grandma's. "I'm Iya Agba's neighbour." Funsho noticed the urgency in the tone.



"Y-yes."

"Iya Agba is very sick. She has been like that for a few weeks now."

Funsho's chest tightened. Why was he just hearing about this?

The caller continued. "No medicine is working for her, and she thinks she's in her last days. All she calls is your name. She wants to see you, one last time."

Water pooled in his eyes.

"How soon can you get here? Tomorrow?"

Tomorrow? Funsho's eyes widened. He couldn't miss a day in the final week. It was an automatic way to lose the partnership. He couldn't travel all the way from Lagos to Osun where Iya Agba lived, and be back in a day.

As if reading his thoughts, the caller said, "Mama Agba is dying, but her last wish is to see her grandson. You have to be with her in her last days. We'll be expecting you."

Funsho stood in the middle of the hallway, too dazed to speak. The news that Iya Agba was ill was a blow, then her request to see him. The mere thought of not going stung his heart. Should he ignore the woman who sacrificed a lot to ensure he was raised well? Should he abandon the partnership he worked hard for?

He turned back and went into Frodd's office to explain the situation.

"You can't leave," Frodd flared. "You'll lose the partnership. You can't! Our department can't! You have to postpone that leave."

Funsho left, torn between the choice he had to make.

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"You've been moody all day," Gbenga said as they drove home that night. "I heard your presentation went well, so what's the matter?"

Funsho slumped his shoulders. "Iya Agba is sick. I got called today that she might be in her last moments."

Gbenga's eyes widened. Funsho had talked about his grandmother countless times.

"She wants to see me before she dies, and that could happen at any moment." He sighed.

His friend's eyes grew wider. "I'm so sorry to hear that. What will you do? What about the presentations?"

Funsho dropped his head. "What do I do? I don't know, I can't lose it now, but I can't ignore Iya Agba, either."

They reached a traffic light and Gbenga pulled the car to a halt. "Look, God knows you've worked for this. The partnership will be available forever, your grandma won't. If she dies now, without you seeing her, the grief might haunt you for the rest of your life. Do you want that? In three years' time, there will be another partnership election, you can get selected again." He shrugged. "That's my two cents on the matter, but don't do something you'd regret." The traffic light turned green, and Gbenga resumed driving.

"Thanks." Funsho nodded. "I think I know what to do."

As painful as it was to leave, Funsho knew he had to. It was time to sacrifice something for the woman who made him who he was. He could repay her with thousands of gold bars, but it was nothing compared to her spending her last moments with him. If seeing him would make her happy—or even live a bit longer—he was willing to sacrifice the partnership.

# Nonexistent Picket

Haruna Dahiru  
Nigeria



Nothing prepares you for a life of challenges like fatherhood. You might think you're doing the right thing always, trying to put yourself out there for your family to have a happy life but you'll always find yourself at the tail end of appreciation.

My life has generally not been easy. I was raised in a family of six where my parents both did the best they could to provide for me and my siblings. I never got what I asked for and anytime I persisted, my parents would put these words to my face: "You're growing, learn not to always ask for things." These exact words forced me to accept maturity at an early age. I always saw my siblings as competition in getting my parents' attention.

My mother was a big-time hustler who did three things in a day in order to get money for her children's upkeep. She was out very early in the morning to sweep the community center, which was a job of chance because if you were late, there would be nothing left for you to sweep. At noon she roasted corn by the road side and at night, she was caught in the

many crowds of road side banana sellers. She hustled relentlessly every day and still had a way of maintaining her home.

My father was a security guard at a table water company. He was never around during weekdays, but was at home for weekends. He didn't talk much with us. His ear was always on the distorting way noise from the radio which made the presenters sound like they were fighting for their voices to be heard. My mother always called his radio the Freedom Fighters FM. Whenever I was alone with him, he would always ask how my mother was doing and what we needed in the house. I would say she is fine and try to use the opportunity to ask for something, but he would always say "put your family first before your own needs". This made me see him as a man who never liked me and made me question if I was his son. Little did I know, he was preparing me for a task ahead.

I spent little time with my peers. I was always in a hurry to go back home to my siblings or always running an errand. I wasn't a person to attend any gathering of my peers or be found at a

social event. This earned me a few nicknames like ajebo, boy-girl, woman wrapper - popular names given to anyone who lives a careful life.

One time, my little sister fell sick and I was left home to take care of her. Her constant vomiting, restlessness, cries and nagging, I took them all. My efforts were not always crowned because I always ended up getting a scold for any little thing I missed.

Sundays were the only days I was allowed to have anything I asked for. It was always a full house because my mother would prepare a big pot of rice with lots of fish and meat and invite people over. Sunday was a day we all waited for every week.

My parents didn't have much but yet they still had their ways of making us feel content and loved. We never asked how they did it. My mother was everyone's favorite because she was always around us and her way of handling things was perfect. She knew when her children were hungry, sad, or in need of something. She was the definition of love and support.

Watching them live their life the way they did and still taking time out to make us feel happy was something I really admired. I wanted to be like them and leave a good example for my own children if I was ever to have any.

But I guess I didn't know it all, I wasn't prepared. I haven't learnt.

I got married to my wife some years later and in ten years' time, I was a proud father of three. My wife of a replica of my mother. She always cared for our children when I was away and I would watch them say they loved her, but all I would get were demands for something new, after which a denial would send them crying to their mother's arms.

I was home one day when my son came home and asked me a question.

"Dad, I have an assignment question for you. It was given to us in school"

"What is it son?" I asked him, enthusiastic over having a father and son conversation with him.

"My teacher asked me in school to choose a debate topic on who is a better parent; a father or a mother" he said in his sweet little teenage voice.

"Which one did you pick?" I asked him

"I picked mum of course" he said smiling. I was not surprised by his answer, but I was a bit disappointed.

"Why did you pick your mum?"

"I picked her for a lot of reasons. She is smart, she helps me with my homework, she makes the best food, she even allows me visit my friends too." He said making me feel inferior. I gave a deep sigh for his answers created a void in me. I felt invisible.

"Why didn't you pick me?" I asked him in a friendly voice.

"You're not always around to play with us. You come back late from work and you don't speak much to us." He replied holding nothing back.

I turned away sharply in disappointed. I had a flashback to my father who was always sitting alone and looking at us while we played or had a discussion at home. I felt like him in that moment. How he was away at work and my mother would fill in for him. Little did I know that I would be in his position someday.

I looked at my son and thought about how best to explain to him about life and fatherhood. There he was making it look like I was not contributing to his life, I was completely nonexistent in their little world. Who would tell him that I was always the shoulder their mother cried on whenever she was tired and ready this give up? Who would tell him that I was the one who made him smile on his birthdays dressed as his clown? Or that I was always away working to keep them



going? I've had sleepless nights thinking about how to make their lives better than mine?

How would I explain it to him?

I then saw it crystal clear, fatherhood is underestimated, a nonexistent picket. My wife's little moments with the kids was what their growing minds were made up of. All the laughter and joy. I wished there and then that I could go back in time and hug my father, sit with him during his loneliness and listen to his distorted Freedom Fighters FM with him. I realized he was always proud of us but had a stern way of showing it. He was always looking at us and feeling proud of what he

making us become - better than he was.

Those happy Sundays were his most memorable days because those were the days he saw us all smiling at what he got us and he loved the smile on our faces when we bit into the spiced meat in our food. Those moments, those little moments he had with us were the ones he cherished more than anything else and that is the joy I want for myself.

All I want my children to learn is appreciation and nothing more. I will always be there to support them and build a wall of appreciation around them, even though I'll still exist as the nonexistent picket. After all, I've lived a life of sacrifice.

# The Seamstress

J.T.NAGUNDI  
Uganda



The sequins are sharp and brutal for such dainty things. Mary dips her bleeding fingers in ointment and resumes her toil. She blinks once, twice, thrice. When did she last take the drugs? She flicks the thought away. At daybreak, it might be too late.

All that remains is the bodice. She rests her head against the toilet seat. Her skin itches like a cheap blanket. "The sequins are in place," she mutters holding the dress up. An owl hoots outside her door.

"My Dorothy is beautiful, sequins or not," she snorts

reveling in the image of her baby floating down the aisle.

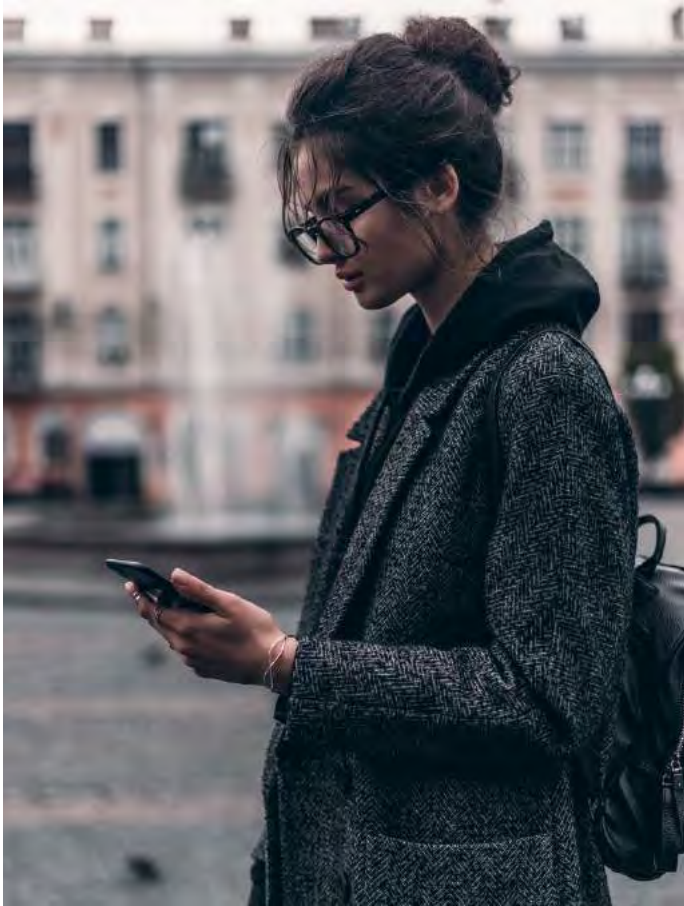
Nausea rolls up her throat. She hurls the dress aside. Her life shines red in the sparkling bowl.

"One month to live," the doctor told her three weeks ago.

"One hour to dawn," She wipes her mouth and flushes the blood. "Now for the changing gown."

# At the Junction

Mary France Ibanda  
Uganda



Across the road from where I stood, a taxi tout called out to travellers in a vigorous sing-song manner. The distinct names of the destinations were one long gibberish word, because the sharp harshness of their consonants had long been run over by tongues too much in a hurry to say them right. Weekend traffic was lazy. Little children took their time crossing the usually busy road and bodaboda riders stopped for passengers in the middle of the junction.

From the sidewalk new life lay ahead of me. All I had to do was cross the road to the other side and find the

consonants of my destination. My lips quivered, my hands shook, my vision blurred.

'Just one step,' I thought.

The touch on my shoulder was light. I barely felt it. Softly tipping my head backward, I turned around to face her - my mother!

With the back of my hand, I wiped away the tears to see her better.

'How did you find out?'

'You cannot runaway. It is only a recipe for more problems!'

'It is too much mother and it's too late. I am fed up!'

'This time he was in our bed with the house help! My bed!' I wailed.

'Go back home my child.'

'You call that a home! Mother!'

'It is the only home your children know!'

'Children! What about me mother?'

'Do you know why I'm here?'

Silence. Her rheumy eyes started tearing.

'It is because I'm being a mother. Return home and be a mother to your children.'

I turned in time to see the last passenger get into the taxi and watched as freedom drove away. With the back of my hand I wiped the tears away then hailed down a Bodaboda to take me back to hell.

# Beasts of Valour

Timi Sanni  
Nigeria



It is a sad thing that we have to die—a multitude of us, each day. Our guts are spilled in the open spaces of filthy abattoirs. We watch our brethren die, wondering if tomorrow comes with our own bells ringing. We are beasts of valour but we die like slaves. It was only yesterday I discovered that our dead brothers are wheeled off, grilled, peppered and salted to make something humans call “suya”.

It is indeed heart-wrenching that we face the menacing-looking butcher's knife, brave even in the face of death like martyrs, slowly shedding our life with each spurt of blood only to become food for these humans. Ask Black-horns he won't even lie to you. Remembering my days on the farm, only the two of us

with our horns nailed together and that metal 'thing' tied on our backs, we would till the land till it became one vast earthly bed. I remember old Baba Agbo would smile and pat our backs.

But the problem is not with the sacrifice, after all our distant cousins—rams, were sacrificed in the time of Abraham. It's with the way they treat us, these shit-for-brains idiots who call themselves humans. Sometimes I get so angry that I see red flashes and want to do nothing but trod over them, stuff my hoof into their mouths and shove my horns up their butts. But we are children of nature and she tells me no to repaying evil with evil, she says it is a privilege to die in her way. I believe.

# The Saviour

Itohan Osadiaye  
Nigeria



The race to a land safe from the pangs of slavery had left him and fifteen others between the devil and the red sea. No one had ever made it across the river Ayetoro alive.

Remembering how he had fought the fierce slave masters, he was more than determined to save these ones; he had come too far to give up.

"I would rather die in this river than be a shackled slave" Adesusu, a woman heavy with child, said.

"You won't die neither will your baby. No one here will die" came the reply of Dayo, their leader.

"But I've heard tales of how nobody has ever made it across this river. I heard it always takes the lives of those who dare enter. Now I know why the slave masters stopped pursuing after us. They knew we had met our water loo" said a frightened Seyi.

"Would you rather go back to being slaves? Fear not. We will pass through this river even if it's the last thing I do". Dayo, said. He knew something about the river that no one knew. It was best he kept it to himself. He couldn't risk these people changing their minds and going back to being slaves.

The journey across the river Ayetoro began.

As they made their way, the wind became violent. It came with thunder and lightning. The tides increased and came with great turbulence. They tried to keep the boat steady but it boat capsized. This came with cries and shouts for help.

Against all odds, Dayo managed to get all to safety but his life was the ransom.



# Offerings, Sacrifices and Scapegoats: A rant

Leo Muzivoreva - THE OBSERVER  
Zimbabwe



Ever stopped to wonder what and why we make sacrifices and are oftentimes sacrificed by our fellows?? Or perhaps wondered how the idea of sacrifice came to be?

Whereas an offering is a bloodless sacrifice of food or something physical and a libation is an offering of liquid, a sacrifice carries with it the idea of a ritual killing of an animal or human. We can locate the concept of the sacrifice in numerous mythic traditions. What they all have in common is that they are either an attempt at appeasement or a

tradeoff of something now for something greater later (like regeneration or an increase in power). In some cultures, a king or a representation thereof is sacrificed to guarantee the continuation and livelihood of the kingdom or tribe. The Aztecs engaged in human sacrifice both on a daily basis (to aid the sun in rising) and on a widespread scale (they regularly sacrificed thousands for events like the dedication of a new temple). In the classical era, we have examples such as Iphigenia. Her father Agamemnon must sacrifice her in order to satisfy Artemis. He has killed

a deer in one of the sacred groves of Artemis and in retaliation she blocks the winds necessary to travel to Troy. In some accounts, she is sacrificed, in some she is saved, and in others a deer or goat is substituted for her. During the Roman Empire there existed a set of practices known as the taurobolium in which a bull was sacrificed above a pit containing the initiates who were then baptized in a rain of bull blood and body.

Although globally and chronologically there is no linear movement away from human to animal to symbolic sacrifices, we can

see a lessening of — thought not end of it — this practice to a large degree. There is a very practical reason in that humans and animals are resources and widespread sacrifice is counterproductive to building, maintaining, and expanding a strong nation. Also, rulers were not always thrilled at the inevitability of being killed at the end of their reign, and although some commoners bought into the idea of sacrificing themselves and were even treated as celebrities, for many the prospect of being thrown off a cliff, burned, entombed alive, or eaten did not always bring elation. And if, according to one theory, one of the points of festivities and rituals surrounding sacrifice is to alleviate guilt on the part of the participants in the killing, such guilt is lessened if one sacrifices a lamb or better yet offers a bowl of honey instead of killing a human being.

Now we arrive at the concept of the sacrificial lamb and the scapegoat. A scapegoat is someone who dies for the benefit of a society, who takes on society's collected sins. Outcasts were often used as scapegoats, presumably because no one cared about them. Kept on hand as

offerings at yearly festivals or for when a drought, plagues, or other difficulty afflicted the city, they were then exiled or stoned. More recent times have seen plenty of examples of scapegoating. The Holocaust or Shoah was an example of mass scapegoating leading to genocide and extermination. The us versus them mentality exists in our own moment with its talk of walls and wars and travel bans. In addition to scapegoating of entire nations or peoples or ethnicities, there exists examples of micro-scapegoating that occur, for example, in the home environment or the workplace. Scapegoat theory in social psychology explains that we use others as scapegoats and blame them for our own problems. Unfortunately, this process often leads to feelings of prejudice toward the person or group that is being blamed. Remember that scapegoating involves an unfair system of reward and punishment practiced by one group or person with power over another group or person. Punishment can include exile, ostracism, relocation, taking away resources, and other such injustices on a global or even an individual scale. Scapegoating can





occur for a number of reasons: as learned behavior, as a response to a misperception of a threat to power, jealousy, as an ineffective and improper attempt to regulate a dysfunctional environment, as a misguided method to cop out of and avoid addressing a different problem, the feeling that someone must be made to "pay" for some act, and as a transference of blame. In short, micro or individualized scapegoating involves isolating a small group or one person as way to avoid examining the larger, dysfunctional pattern or system—the bigger sickness that then goes untreated.

A closely related version of the scapegoat in psychology is the identified patient. This someone has been selected to represent the difficulties of the group, often a family. While the identified patient often manifests the negative behaviors of the group, he or she is often the first to seek help, speak out about what is going on, and, consequently, punished by the group or head of the group for doing so. The identified patient, then becomes a way for the group to project its inadequacies, its failings,

its problems onto the identified patient and away from itself. Doing so is a reactive, rather than proactive, maneuver and strategy by which the group hopes to avoid addressing, claiming, and then changing its own behavior.

So, we must always ask ourselves several questions. When we condemn another person or group, are we doing so because they are actually in the wrong or it is a way to make them carry the burden of our own issues and mistakes and make us feel better about ourselves? When judgment comes down against us, do we actually deserve it, or are we victims, forced to absorb and answer for the flaws of some other entity? Is there a better way?

# The Dance Competition

Immaculate S. Ajiambo  
Kenya

Once upon a time, in the animal kingdom, there was a bountiful harvest and the king called for a dance competition to celebrate. All animals were to organise themselves according to their families. They would then get food prizes that they could store in their granaries.

One day, the trumpets sounded. Then two drum beats followed and the parrot was heard in his sharp clear voice.

"Greetings to all of you. It is the pleasure of the King to remind you that our dance competition will take place in two days' time. All the best in your preparations and may the best family win. See you then!"

The Elephant's family and the Hare's family shared a dancing ground during their rehearsals. On the last day of practice, Hare's family was not in action.

"I have not seen any of Hare's family member today at the ground?" said baby Elephant.

"Me too. I thought they would come later into the day but there was no sign of them." Said Mrs. Elephant.

The Elephant's family talked about their friends and wished that nothing terrible had happened to them. Mr. Elephant decided to go to the Hares' and find out what happened.

It was dark outside. Most animals had gone to rest early as they waited for the big day. Mr. Elephant did not meet anyone on the way. On arrival at the Hares' house, the youngest Hare was sited under the tree singing. When he saw Mr. Elephant he jumped up to meet him on the way.

"Good evening Mr. Elephant."

"Good evening to you." Replied the elephant.

Gesturing him to their house. "You are welcome home. What brings you at this hour of the night?"

"Aha! I came to check up on my friends. Aren't you my friends?"

"Yes, we are friends." Assuring him with a smile.

"Good. Where is everyone?"

"Oh. It is sad. We did not come for the dance practice today because our father got ill last night."

"Indeed, that is sad!"

Mr. Hare had a terrible fever. He complained of pain all over his body and joints. His family decided to take him to Mr. Zebra, the healer who lived in the next jungle. They had hoped that he would feel better soon and be in for the contest.

"When did they leave?" asked Mr. Elephant.

"Not so long ago, this evening."

"I will be after them now. I know they have not gone far."

The decision to follow them came as a surprise to the young Hare. He could not believe it, that Mr. Elephant was going to miss being at the dance competition because he wanted to help in carrying his father to the healer.

"But...the rule is that all family members must dance. Are you willing to disappoint your family on this?"

"Don't worry, friends are precious. True friendship has no room for loneliness and pain. We are together in this."

As Mr. Elephant rushed towards the route to the next jungle the young Hare was left smiling at himself. He said, "Sacrifice is an ingredient to genuine friendship. Thank you, Mr. Elephant."

# My Grandpa's Farm

Rachael Twinomugisha  
Uganda

My grandpa lives in the village, away from my home in town. He lives on a farm. There are many cattle on the farm and some of them are fierce. They chase after people and hit them to the ground but they don't chase after grandpa. There are also many chickens, goats and sheep on grandpa's farm. Many people come to buy chickens, milk and eggs on the farm.

One time many chickens on grandpa's farm died so fast. A man dressed in a white coat and white boots, on a motorcycle with a box said that they had suffered from a strange disease but grandpa didn't notice early enough. If he had taken time, he should have noticed blood in the chickens' poop and known they were ill. Grandpa said this man was the animal doctor.

A short time after the chickens had died, the cattle followed. They had very big feet and mouths. Grandpa said they were swollen, and that they had a disease. The animal doctor said they had the foot and mouth disease but grandpa didn't have enough money to buy the needed drugs.



Before long, famine struck the village. Grandpa managed to save only one cow – Ichuri – and no matter the famine, he refused to sell it. He sold all his goats and sheep and the chickens too, leaving just one chicken whose name is Chickie. He and all the people on the farm suffered from hunger day in, day out but he kept Chickie and Ichuri, the cow.

A month later, Chickie started laying eggs. Grandpa immediately brought a male chicken from his neighbor's house. It mounted Chickie, and she started hatching her eggs. After that,

Grandpa had so many chickens on his farm again. About a year later, Ichuri also had a baby. Grandpa said her baby was called a calf. Because grandpa sacrificed, his farm now has many chickens and cows. Grandpa is very happy once again. He has managed to buy goats and sheep from the money he gets from selling milk, eggs and chickens.

There is enough food on the farm and everyone is happy. I love visiting grandpa's farm now. I love working on the farm and listening to grandpa's stories.

# The Sacrifice of Dreams

Grace Mashingaidze  
Zimbabwe



One day, last year, I was scrolling down my Twitter feed, as one usually does when they want to be abreast with the latest news. If you are familiar with Twitter you know there is a plethora of news, views and interesting -very interesting randomness- statements that are meant to raise the eyebrows of whoever is reading; and sometimes you (deliberately) fall into the Twitter rabbit hole by reading the comments on a tweet, the comments on the comments on a

tweet, threads upon threads and so on. However, on this particular day, I came across a tweet that I will never forget. It was a cry for help which accurately summed up what many Zimbabwean millennials go through daily. In it a young woman expressed how she disliked going to work to the point of depression and physical illness, but for the sake of her financial stability wouldn't leave her job.

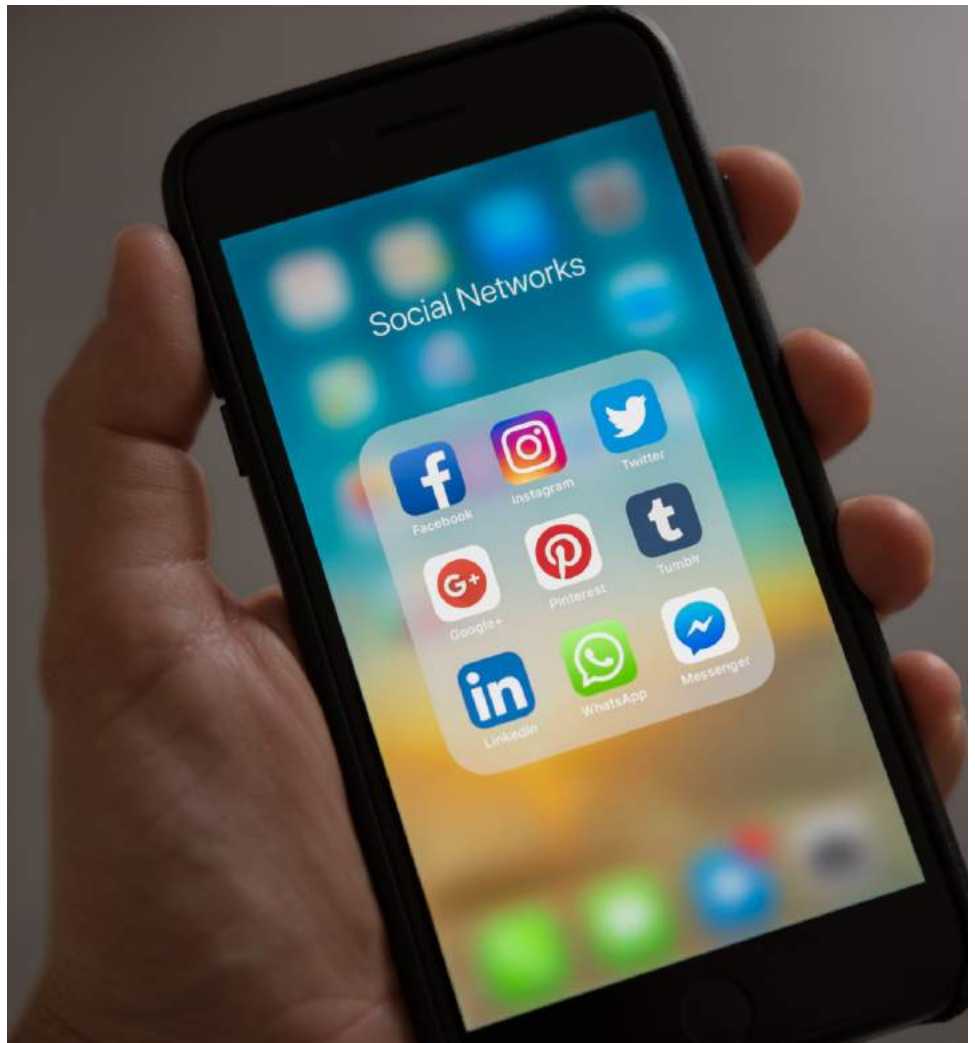
Many Zimbabwean millennials have grown up listening two messages:

that of their parents or guardians who insist that they live better lives and achieve more than previous generations, and that of the mostly Western media which highlights that living out your dreams is the ultimate key to happiness, success and fulfillment. In and of themselves, neither of these messages is wrong. As the generation born in post-independence Africa, we are supposed to represent the realization of the dreams of those who came for before us- black people who can be on equal footing

with their white counterparts and hold their own in an increasingly globalized world. The encouragement to do better than our parents is the encouragement to surpass the limitations which were placed on our people in previous generations. On the other hand, following our dreams is indeed a noble but sometimes impractical pursuit. It makes us bolder; it makes us happier and for many it makes life worth living.

A deteriorating economy has however, made it more difficult for young people to build better lives for themselves and their families and at the same time realize their dreams. The people who have been able to do so are the exceptions as the latter are usually sacrificed for the former and vice versa, or, quite tragically, both are sacrificed for survival. The stories are as diverse as they come, someone who trained to be a marketer is now a vendor, someone who longs to be a musician, has an 8 to 5 office job - the common factor is that there are unfulfilled dreams aplenty.

In a world where many incorrectly find their sense of purpose and worth in their job, the physical, mental and emotional cost of being unhappy with your career path is great and underestimated. According to studies, it can lead to weight loss or weight gain,

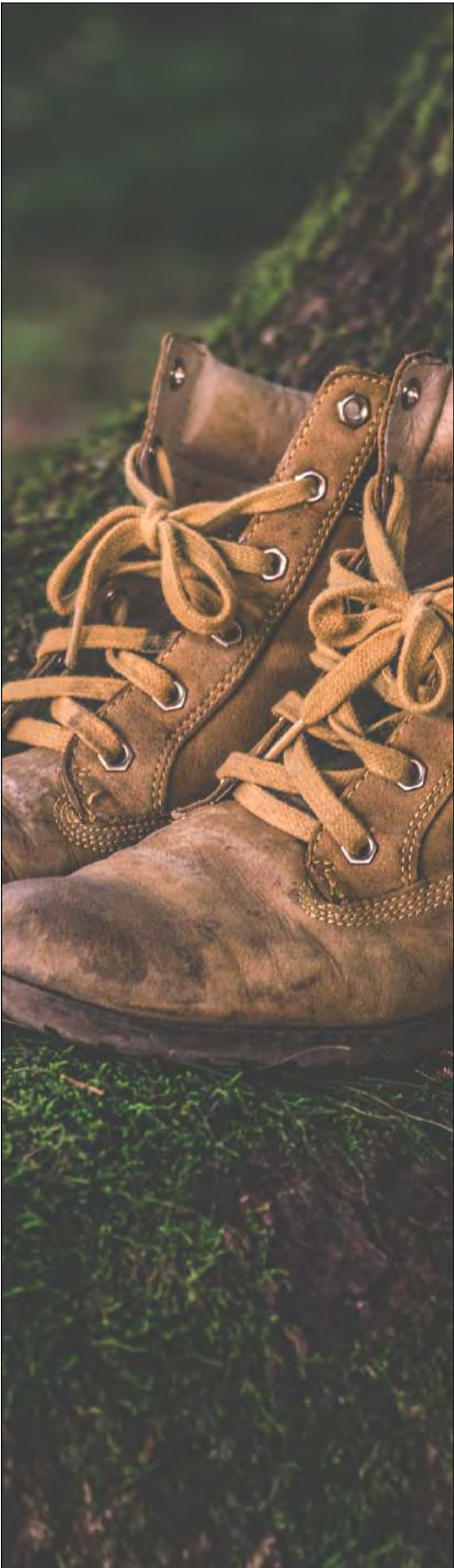


depression, anxiety, losing sleep and a loss of confidence and self-worth.

For the aforementioned young woman to come forward - albeit on a platform like Twitter - must have taken some courage. Expressing such thoughts to an older family member may be met with a sympathetic 'shingirira mwanangu'; an encouragement to be strong and to push forward, because our default mode as a nation has become survival. This young woman's story is not the first of its kind that I have come across nor will it be the last. Her story elicited empathy from those who read her tweet because they

could see pieces of themselves or of someone they knew in it.

In the times we are living in, there are no easy answers to the personal fulfillment vs. survival problem. In a country where poverty is prevalent the cost of losing your sense of fulfillment and the cost of losing your financial security may seem to be of equal weight. What is certain is that those determined individuals who have managed to attain both success and happiness through their careers instill hope and belief that a time may come where there will be many others like them.



# Daddy's Boot

Joy Ng'ethe.  
Kenya

Daddy's boots,  
Like grandma's hair'  
Are old and grey,  
Worn out and losing color.

Daddy says his boots,  
Are here to stay,  
Still good as new,  
Serving him as they should.

Daddy's boots I'll replace when I am bigger,  
To say thanks for his hard work,  
His money he spared for us,  
Even though he needed new boots for work.



# I'm a Storyteller

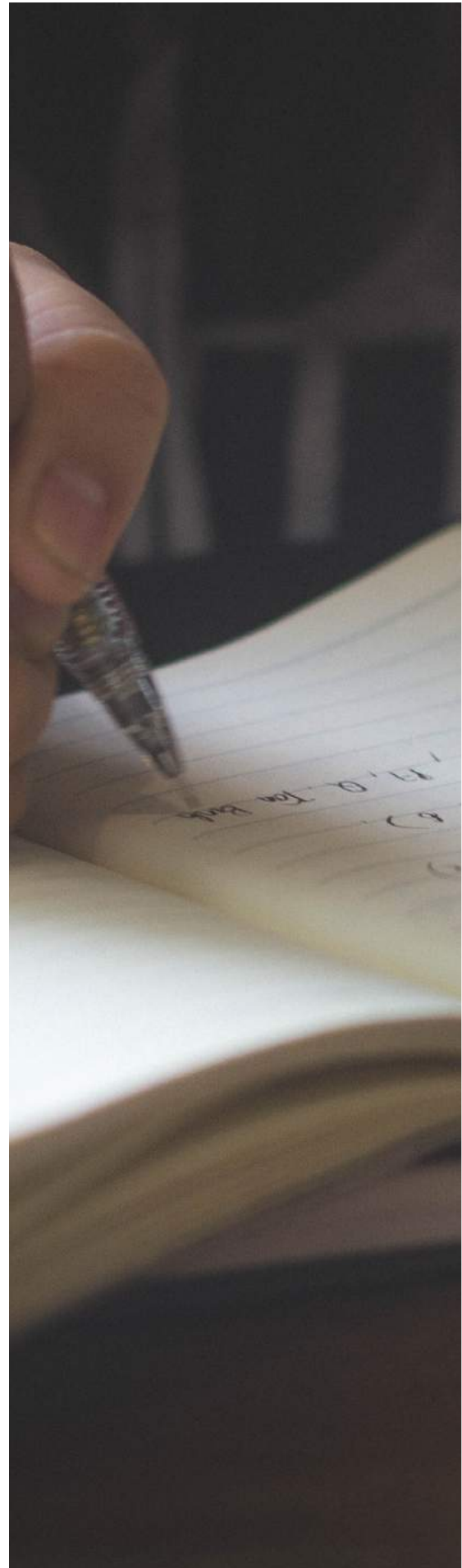
By Thuto Vanessa Seabe  
Botswana

Time's sacrifice I am,  
Sleepless nights my cup of tea,  
Caffeine runs through my blood...  
So I may pour out on paper.

Tick! Tick! Tick!  
Goes the clock,  
Minutes melting into hours,  
My lover's impatient hands  
try to caress me from this table.

The night lamp illuminating  
the shadows under my eyes,  
Self-doubt is setting in...  
Should I erase that line?  
Is it good enough, am I?

These words I write...  
Why do they take so much from me?  
It's draining living on paper,  
inked on pages but a ghost in reality,  
Who am I When words run out?



# The Unpaid Debt

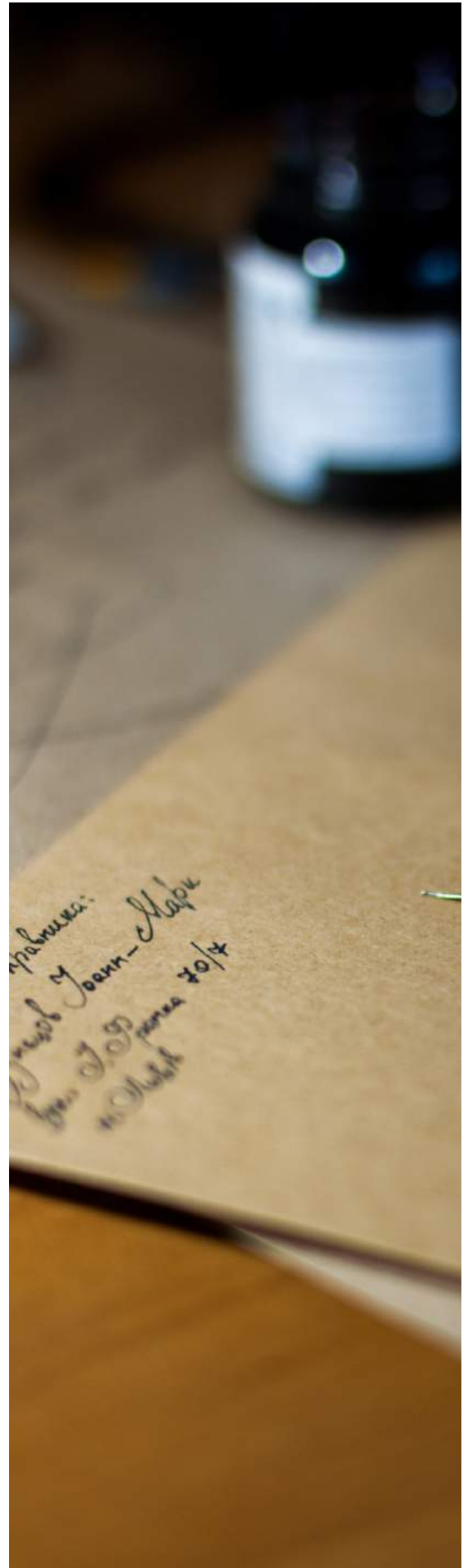
Thomas Arthur Opio  
Uganda

On one dark cold night,  
When I was nothing but filled with fright  
She offered me her scarf  
While she remained unarmed to face the elements.  
At one fateful afternoon meal,  
After I spilled my soup and its accompaniment  
Rather than scorn me, she offered hers.  
As if I were a project for development,  
She would pull resources from wherever to make me  
go to school.  
And forego luxury,  
To make sure I was a better me.  
Sadly, she passed on three weeks ago,  
After offering me her heart for a transplant.  
Was that really a sacrifice?  
Because I am still hurt.

# Letter from a Father

Ademokoya Adedayo  
Nigeria

From the milky half-moon, the  
Lips rounded in grief of another  
Labour. My heart is the river of  
Bleached thoughts with no sponge  
I saw how the kangaroo curls her  
Joey and the love flows from mother  
To offspring. How your mother runs  
Through the pain of bearing you with  
More than 76 hours of labour exchanging  
Her life for you. She lives but I know you've  
Taken the smile of my wife. She's creaking like  
Dried bamboo waiting to be made for fire. In  
exchange  
For your joy, she loses her sleep. Pointing at invisible  
Shooting stars and her eyes yearns for sleep  
Her hands weary of carrying you but she  
Loves you more than her hands  
You've become a dream come  
True for her but you have  
Stolen my wife from me  
I'm not jealous, I just  
See how she has gone  
From living for herself  
To living another's life.



# Sacrifice

Amarachi Maduka  
Nigeria



Would you do anything for me?  
Accept my demons  
Lay in the closet where my skeletons hide  
You know,  
The whole cliché deal really  
Or better still  
Could you be selfless while I am selfish?

# Who will bell the Cat?

Faniyi Oluwatomewa  
Nigeria

Who will bell the cat?  
One who can bear the cart  
And has more than he can eat  
To feed a stranger not a feat  
One who has more than he can spend  
It isn't hard to give or lend.

Who will bear the cat?  
He who give but will never miss  
Will never know what giving is  
He'll win few praises from his Lord  
Who does but what he can afford.

Who will bell the cat?  
He whose eyes and mind  
To worldly things are blunt  
The widow's mite to heaven went  
Because real sacrifice it meant.



## Brief biography:

Faniyi E.Oluwatomewa (popularly known as Tommy Brian) was born on the 6th of May 1998. He is a student of the department of Chemical Engineering, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso Oyo State Nigeria.

He is a vision inspired young leader, spontaneous quick thinker, colourful writer, poet, teacher, social activist, teen coach, a girl-child advocate and an inspiring motivational speaker. His passionate interest in writing and choice of words is always something to watch out for.

In just 21 years of existence, Faniyi Oluwatomewa has positively impacted thousands of lives and our nation as a whole through different platforms.



# The Road Home

S. Su'eddie Vershima Agema  
Nigeria

These roads are a collection of gravel and holes  
Hiding miseries and sweat, lost sacrifices  
Blood mixed with tar poured to be trampled upon  
By endless tyres and the back of hurting heels

These roads are the sum of our souls  
You can glimpse it in the holes  
They deliberately dig for bottomless contracts  
That open the gates to the afterlife

These roads lead home...  
But home is where we serve the tale of our souls  
Buried in the laughter of those whose lives are our  
death.

## Brief biography:

**S**. Su'eddie Vershima Agema is a husband and father, a short story writer, poet and cultural enthusiast. Among other awards, he won the Association of Nigerian Authors Poetry Prize (2014) with his collection, Home Equals Hole: Tale of an Exile, Mandela Day Short Story Prize (2016) and was nominated for the Wole Soyinka Prize for African Literature (2018). He has also been shortlisted for the Abubakar Gimba Prize for Short Stories (2015) and the PEN Nigeria/Saraba Poetry Prize (2013). Su'eddie has just completed a Master's course at the University of Sussex where he was President of African Writers and Black History Month/Project curator. He blogs at <http://sueddie.wordpress.com> and is @sueddieagema on Twitter/Instagram/Facebook.

# Sacrifice

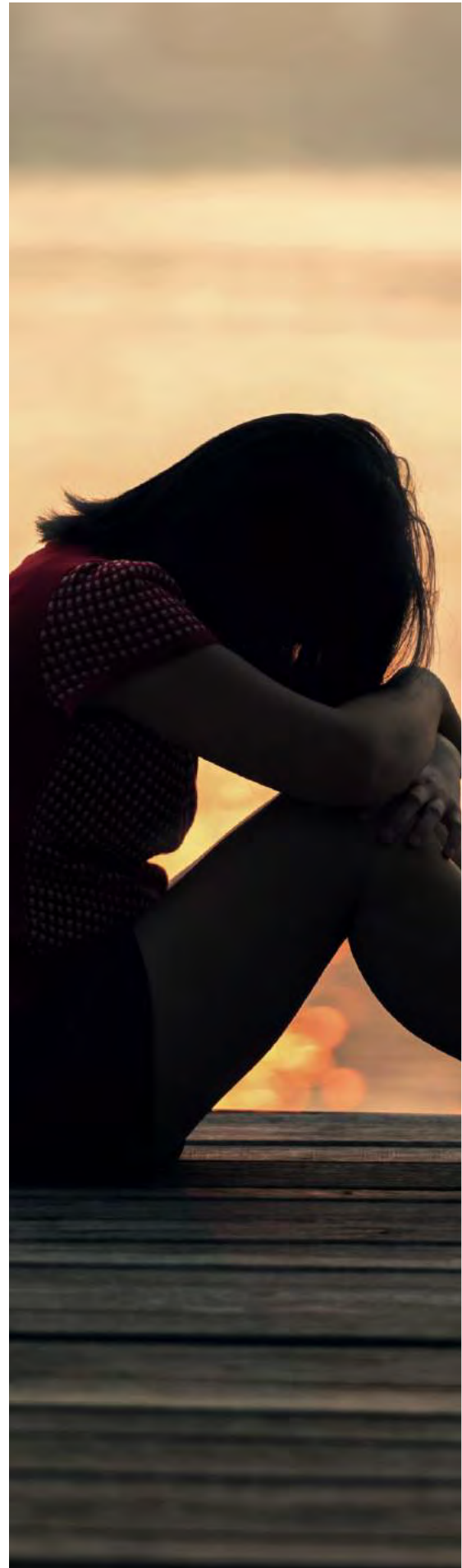
Praise Okwuchi.  
Nigeria

It's been all day long  
And I haven't moved an inch,  
Is this how love sits on the swing  
With silence sticking out it's tongue?

It's still the same old song  
More ancient than Rome 'o' and Juliet,  
Using our hearts to hold this palette  
Painting our thoughts on this slate called Love.

Could this be it, what Mama endured for years?  
The sweet bitter taste of silence,  
Mixed with the spice of endurance  
Her eyes lifting fury and holding back tears.

We were much younger, till we grew stronger  
To understand that Love is an offering,  
A sacrifice we offer for our offsprings  
An oath made to forever, till we breathe no longer.





GENRE : FLASH FICTION

TITLE : VICTIM OF LOVE

WRITER: MAJORY MOONO SIMUYUNI ZAMBIA

REVIEWER: TAMUNOMIEIBI MILDRED ENOCH, NIGERIA

This excellent piece of work is written by Majory Moono Simuniya from Zambia. Victim of love is a micro flash fiction, made up of 48 words and has all the elements of a flash fiction piece which includes brevity, unambiguity and a sudden twist at the end of the story.

The story gives a well written background. It begins with the second act not giving room for details.

The story revolves around a wife who was made to stay in an abusive marriage because of what society would say. Her husband eventually kills her.

The characters in the flash fiction are nameless. The protagonist of the story is 'her'. The others are 'we', 'they' and 'he'. The writer smartly writes about a multitude of people only referring to them as 'we' and 'they'.

The setting of the story is in one scene which is an effective way of writing a flash fiction piece.

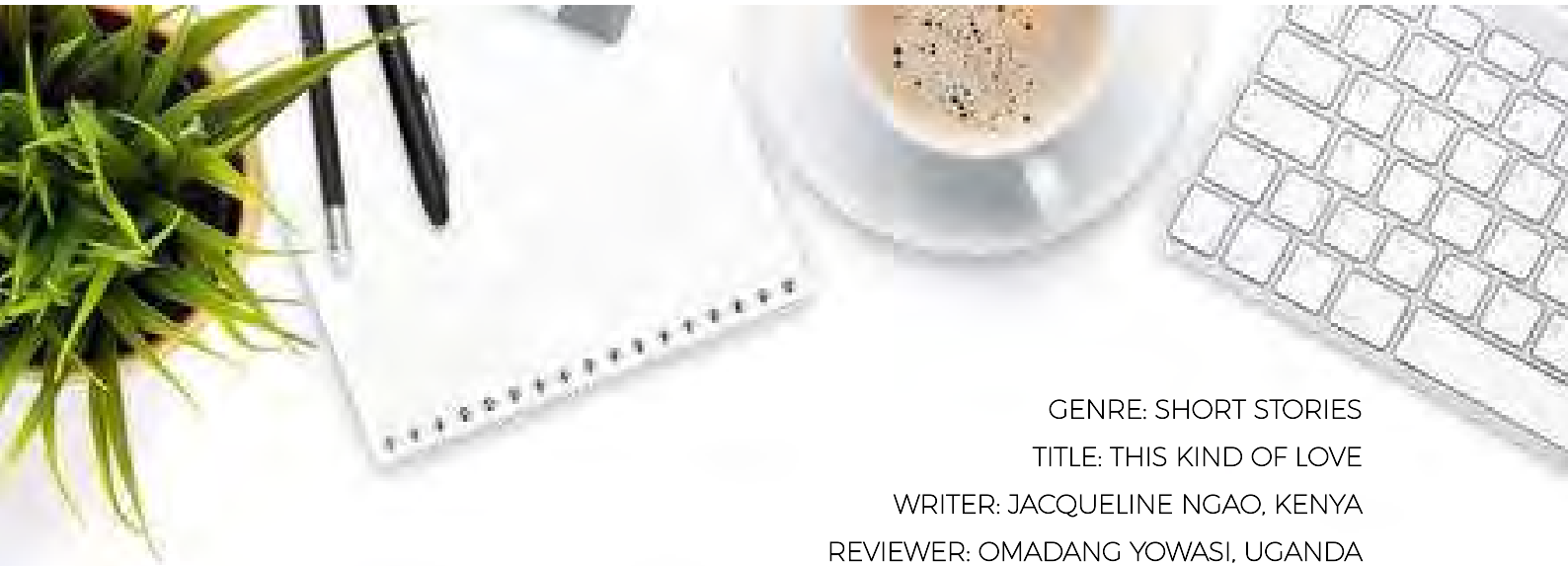
For once, one would think that the antagonist of the story is 'he' (the husband of the protagonist), however he has allies in 'they' because of their inclusion in making her stay with an abusive husband.

As always, it ends with a sudden twist; one which makes you take a deep breath and reflect on what just happened.

The title of the flash fiction is symbolic. Love shouldn't have victims but Victors.

The story is also poetic using figures of speech such as simile - 'leaving a man because he cheats is like leaving Zambia because it rains'.





GENRE: SHORT STORIES

TITLE: THIS KIND OF LOVE

WRITER: JACQUELINE NGAO, KENYA

REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA

|| "When a woman loves, she loves for real." These are not my words but R Kelly's. Is Samu the narrator's perfect match, Is the narrator mad, does she first have to wait for death before she escapes? These are some of the questions that roam in one's mind when and after reading this short story.

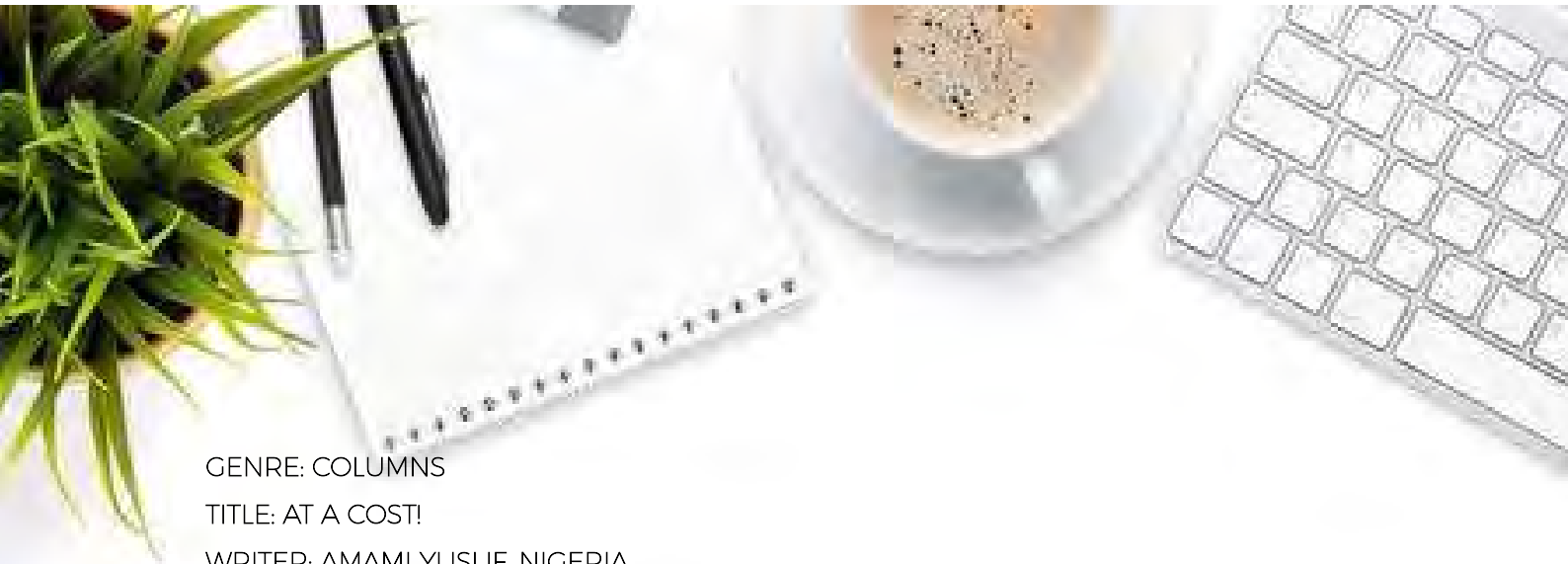
The narrator is a woman patiently waiting for her lover whom we later know as Samu. She's worried and fear takes a toll on her. It is night; sleep "mocks" her but she doesn't sleep not until her Samu is back. This is not how life used to move initially; it changed at a time the narrator didn't expect. Her Samu drastically changed to a drunkard. After hours of waiting, she walks to the mirror, she's taken back to her childhood memories when her mother used to wait for her dad in the same way only to receive blows and kicks. It is the same treatment she now receives from Samu but she can't move on and leave him because he's the man she loves. This faithful night, Samu comes back, throws her on the chair and beats her hard. She recalls how her mother told her the way she loved her dad. She stays, hopeful that he'll apologize because he loves her.

It is an intriguing story that checks on the strength of love in this modern era of advanced feminism where women have become "more delicate." Waiting for Samu to come back, waiting for Samu to apologize, waiting for love to flow afresh, waiting for everything!

The themes of love, domestic violence, patience and endurance are succinctly portrayed in the story. Through illusion and flashback, we learn about the narrator's home. She is married to Samu who resembles her father in character by chance. The use of symbolism can't be underestimated. The mirror, where she recalls her mother symbolises the past and the present. It's through this mirror that she sees herself in the footsteps of her mother.

Character and Characterisation.

It is through Samu's character that we learn about the narrator's father and the resemblance of both. She's patient, loving and forgiving.



GENRE: COLUMNS

TITLE: AT A COST!

WRITER: AMAMI YUSUF, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: COLIN STANLEY KARIMI

From the previous episodes, it is obvious that Zarah was clear of any memories she had of her home back in the village. It was through her wit that she found Kajiru, who understood her situation and his conscience prompted him to take Zarah to Aunt Joy's Home as he thought it would be a solution to the troubled child. Sourcing from previous episodes, it is plain to see that rural Nigeria is still stuck in tradition, which symbolically pushes development from their areas during a time where the women folks are being empowered.

Through episode 12, we see Zarah breaking off from her past. However, she is reluctant to let other teenage girls into her space. With Susan constantly on her business, it is evident that Zarah detached herself from people who were close to her. Nonetheless, her father is seen to have noticed her daughter's free spirit at a time he cautioned her against playing in the rain with Kamal, but she defies him. As per her age, Zarah's father might have been thought of as irresponsible. However, it is in fact a show of love that he decided to let her daughter be, and allow her to live according to her beliefs and principles. This is the first display of love between a child and the parents. It is without doubt that the parents' greatest joy is seeing their children happy.

As for the proprietor of the orphanage, it is cynical to claim that she too, was a victim of bad tradition. Concerning the hefty donations she received from donors, it would be unusual to have the building walls whitewashed, as one would expect them to be state-of-the-art buildings. More so, her interest in Zarah's story reveals a space within Lucy. It is as if she gets confidence or let's say satisfaction once she gets to listen to a victim's story. Or perhaps, she used the information to align needs to the victim in accordance to the intensity of the story.

Susan is an interesting character as she sort of understands the trials and tribulations of the newbie Zarah. She showed love from first sight, but Zarah kept dismissing and turning a blind eye to the moves Susan made. Despite this, Susan illustrates that love takes time and patience. It was through a piece of cake that Zarah let her guard down and began to express the feeling of love. Episode 12 is fascinating as love as a theme is showcased on several occasions, and it is without a doubt that the love Zarah's father expressed towards her catapulted her journey towards self love and discovery, which is evidently crucial to her survival in the city of Lagos.



GENRE: POETRY

TITLE: THE PORTRAIT OF LOVE

WRITER: AKINMAYOWA SHOBO, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: ESTHER MUSEMBI

What is Love? The persona is trying to understand by defining what he thinks Love should be; by picturing it.

In S1; Love is immeasurable, it defies statistics, unshaken; and goes beyond just looks and color.

S2: Love is a warm connection between two people. It binds people with distinct differences together.

S3: As opposed to 'modern love', no money, no love. Love does not rely on the economy -bad or good- to make it work, rather it rises above it.

S4: Love is a rock. It is firmly rooted against temptation; it does not budge.

S5: We cannot truly understand Love as it is insane to try to do so. It's just a strong enduring conviction made for two people. It has to be fought for sometimes, but is worth it.

The poem is very rich in wording which strongly brings out the message the persona intended. 'ageless ore', 'gallant spirits fighting for garlands.' The rich imagery works well to paint a picture, just as intended, 'two young birds together, warm company of two hearts in sync.' Personification: 'firmly neglecting every wanton thrust and bowing torrents of communal knocks.'

The title is apt and fits the message.



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## A Failure's Worth

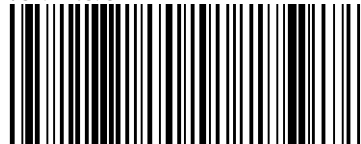
Cupido Stephanie  
South Africa

## Silver Lining

Ngang God'swill N.  
Cameroon

# Failure

VOL. 4 NO. 3



APRIL, 2020 WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

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# Call for Submissions

## Theme: **Transition** (Becoming)

Writers Space Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving new literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for her June 2020 Edition in the following categories:

- Short Story
- Flash Fiction
- Poetry
- Essays
- Children's Literature

The submission window is open from 1st of April to 14th April. Response time is typically within 4 to 5 weeks after submission window closes.

We look forward to receiving your best

To submit, please visit [www.writerspace.net/submissions](http://www.writerspace.net/submissions)



# Editor's Note

**T**o fail is one of the hardest, yet most constant part of our lives. For some of us, we are afraid to fail because we hold ourselves to the highest of standards and when we fail, we find it hard to face ourselves. For others, the fear of failure lies in the standards society holds us to; in this case, when we fail, we find it hard to face the people around us.

We forget that our failures have always been the doorway to some of our greatest successes. Sometimes, you cannot know what you know (or what you don't know) if you do not first fail at something.

The analogy of learning to ride a bicycle comes in very handy in learning the lesson of failure. There hardly ever was a person who did not fumble or fall when they first learnt to ride a bicycle. There is a joy we all experienced when we finally got it right and the joy gets its weight from knowing what it means to fail at it.

As a teacher, I would tell my students to never be afraid of failing. For one, they had already failed and there was nothing they could do to change the outcome of that test or exam; for another, there were other tests and exams to come. In telling them the second part, I gave them what I believe to be one of the most important lessons of life: true failure lies in when you refuse to try again. It is okay to fear failure, but it is never okay to accept it.

The entries in **Failure** are a glimpse into how we approach the subject of failing. As always, the team had the best of times putting together this issue.

It is my hope that as you read it, you will learn to always find the silver lining in the things you fail at and where there is none, you will create one for yourself.

Always remember, Ubuntu.

Warm regards,  
Nabilah.



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# Table of Contents

Editor's Note	1
Editorial Crew	2
Table of Contents	3
Short Story	4-8
Columnists	9-15
Children Literature	16-21
Poetry	22-31
Reviews	32-36



# Down and Out

Nyasili Atetwe  
Kenya



**A**t ten minutes to fulltime our hopes began to dwindle.

"Let's go home!" Nato nudged at my ribs. I didn't move. Anything could still happen. Ten minutes in football is a lifetime. The one-goal lead St. Luke Secondary had over us could be erased anytime. We just needed Matasi to get the ball.

A win would not only salvage the school fees I had put in a bet, it would leave me with five thousand shillings to spend on myself. I could afford the school trip that

Mam had refused to pay for. I could buy Linzi, my love, the chiffon tops they sold at the boutiques in town and she would know I really loved her. A loss would make Niko five thousand shillings richer and where would I get the money to clear my school fees arrears? We had to win.

For most of the match, the once-obscure St. Luke's "Tigers" controlled the tempo of the game. Even with two goals ahead, they still appeared hungry for more glory. One half of the stadium cheered them on: those were secondary schools that we had quashed and vanquished on our way to this provincial final match. They were now more than glad to see us humbled.

We had come this far on pretty much a clean sheet. To score against us was no easy feat. We were the provincial champs. For five straight years, we had bagged the provincial football championship and flew the provincial flag at the national level, bringing the national trophy home two years in a row. Matasi was instrumental in all these wins. He had scored the fourteen goals that had cemented our pole position in this tournament alone. This would be his final year playing for us. He was sitting for his national exams in November.

When the coach kept him out at the start of the match we knew he was saving him for last. It gave St. Luke's Tigers some wiggle room to flaunt their tiny prowess. They quickly confiscated our plot at the midfield, waltzing into our half with total abandon until Matasi came on board. Two minutes later, Indeché advanced the slumbering St. Luke's defense and rolled the ball to Matasi who side-footed home from about twelve yards away. We erupted in cheers, lighting up the other half of the stadium that had remained quiet and forlorn. We were not just students of Ludodo High school, villagers had also

joined us because the stadium was a stone throw away from our school.

St. Luke had their own "Matasi"; a guy they called Pepe. He was short and untamable and as fast as a bullet. Once he got the ball he curved open our defense completely and effortlessly. He missed four clear goals and netted in the painful two. He was up for a hat trick just four minutes to full time. He got the ball from the right flank, galloped with it towards the penalty area. But he had Marcus Lumbe and Joana Matayo to contend with, guys who in other matches were formidable walls around our goalposts. They appeared clueless as he dribbled past them, winning himself and our goalkeeper acres of a scoring chance.

The cheers from the other half rose into the air like a concrete pillar and I almost followed Nato who had long left the stadium in a huff. Pepe fired from the bottom-left hand corner at the edge of the penalty area. Our goalkeeper dove but couldn't reach the ball. It hit the corner of the goalpost, rebounding back into play. Then Indeché got the ball and we all rose to our feet. He galloped to the left-hand side, outpacing the St. Luke's defenders. Then, he saw Matasi headed to the penalty area and shot a sublime pass at him.

Suddenly Matasi had two defenders blocking him and they knew better than to give him any shooting space. He threatened a shot. One of them turned to block the kick, while the other simply stirred, not fooled. Matasi took advantage of the turned defender and inched into the goal area from the left side. Realizing his mistake, the defender grabbed his jersey and shouldered him off the ball. Matasi sprawled on the ground towards the goalkeeper.

The referee called for a penalty. The St. Luke's players could not contain themselves and ganged up around the referee. He reached for his armor in the breast

pocket and fetched out a yellow card, which he flashed at their protesting captain.

By now, the match was past full time. We only had four minutes of extra time, two of which were consumed in the futile protest by the St. Luke's players. We knew that with some more minutes, we would teach them a good lesson in footballing. This was our golden chance to get an equalizer and send the match into extra time. Then we would run them mad around the pitch and whip them like stray dogs.

The referee cleared the other players outside the penalty area. The stadium went quiet as Matasi was left facing the goalkeeper with the ball between them. Matasi walked towards the ball, picked up and swirled it in his hands and then placed it in the penalty spot. He stepped back and gazed at the goalkeeper, with his hands on his waist.

Suddenly, our side began chanting.

"Ma - ta - si! Ma - ta - si!"

Then the other side replied.

"Out! Out!"

It became a song of its own.

"Ma-ta-si! Out! Ma-ta-si! Out!"

The tempo increased when the referee blew the whistle.

Matasi dropped his eyes to the ground, leaned forward and trotted towards the ball. He fired a left-footed crisp screamer, and with his body, he threw the goalkeeper one way, while the ball volleyed the other way.

The ball flew inches above the left-hand corner of the goalpost, crushing into the crowd. The whistle blew and that was the end of us.

# The Original Lottery Ticket

Nat Proteus  
Nigeria

I breathe a sigh of relief as the car heaves and begins the journey. It's 9am. I hope to get back home before my mum does at 3pm. Else, I'm dead meat.

I look around the Sharon. A couple in matching Ankara sit to my left. A man in blue suit, a nursing mother and an old woman occupy other seats. The car stereo plays nostalgic music by P-Square. I open my sling bag and peek at my ticket. My winning ticket. A hundred thousand naira could be mine if I made it to Kaduna today.

I could hear mum's voice ringing in my ears, 'Tabat, money doesn't grow on trees. If you go there, you will regret it.'

I feel a twinge of guilt. She may be right. But we both know that the little profit she makes selling tomatoes will not be enough to send me to a good secondary school next session. I'd hate to watch my friends leave me behind. I pray this works.

"So, you're also going for the Wayne lottery?" The married woman beside me peers at my ticket. I

push it down my small bag.

"Yes."

"Hmm, children of nowadays,' she turns to her husband. Always looking for get-rich-quick schemes."

"What's that about?"

"It's one of these factories that makes biscuits. The manager seals fake lottery tickets in some of the packets and suddenly everyone is buying them."

Hater. Critic. Just keep quiet.

"Why call them fake. Has no one redeemed them?" he asks, giving me a side look.

"Several have. Boys and girls. They all return with the same story."

The driver lowers the volume of the music. Everyone is listening with rapt attention to her shrill voice.

"The manager himself tells them that the ticket is fake and that only the one with an original ticket will claim the prize."

Oh my God. Is mum right?

The man in suit chuckles. "A brilliant marketing strategy!"

"No," she says.

"Do you know how many children have travelled long distances only to get their hearts crushed? It's just

a matter of time before one of them is involved in a road accident."

My blood runs cold.

"God forbid!" says the old woman. "What does the winning ticket even look like?" asks the nursing mother.

The married woman pauses for dramatic effect.

"No one knows."

\*\*\*

I arrive to find the Wayne Biscuit Factory premises teeming with children. I meet a boy a bit older than I who looks friendly.

"Hi, I'm Tabat. How do I begin?"

"I'm Abrack. You have to fill this form before you go in."

He hands me a form with blanks for Name, Age, Address, Phone Number of Guardian, Passport, Ticket Number and such.

"You're Bajju, right?" I ask.

"Yeah. You too?"

"Sure." I say with a smile.

In minutes, I join the queue. About fifty of us sit on plastic chairs under a shed. A girl comes out of the manager's office. She is angry and tearful.

She walks away without a word. A boy goes in and a few minutes later, comes out.

"He said my ticket is fake. Such a waste of time. Blatant lies."

Occasionally, someone comes out and says, "He said my ticket is original! He'll call me back. All the best guys." Did they cook that up to look good?

As the line grows shorter, I feel more uncertain. I pray my case is different. Abrack goes in. Four more girls before me. When he comes out, he looks at me and shakes his head.

"I'll wait for you."

It is 2pm already. Mum is getting home before me for sure.

I need this to work.

"Next."

\*\*\*

I sit down on a black leather chair. The manager is a fifty-ish Lebanese with gray curly hair. He had stacks of files on his table and many more on the ground. He looks at me with calm eyes and says, "What's your name?"

"I'm Tabat Tanquat."

"Give me your file and ticket."

He looks at the code on the ticket and on the form. Same. He rests his elbow on the table, adjusts his glasses and turns my ticket in the light. My heart clutches and beats faster. Everything slows down as he

says, "I'm sorry Tabat. This ticket is fake."

"Oh God."

My mother's angry voice re-echoes in my head, "You're not going, I forbid it. And if you mess with me, you won't forget it for a long time." She had gotten worked up over it last night. And she was right.

Tears line my eyelids. I inhale and exhale.

"Did you really intend for someone to win this or are you just mocking us?"

"No, of course I intend for someone to win. But that person must have the original ticket."

"Is this a scam?"

"No, it's not."

"What's the difference?"

"I didn't charge you to register."

"Then how do you intend to make a profit? People may win at a lottery. But the organiser always makes more."

He looks me in the eyes.

"That's smart for your age. But I'm not doing this for profit."

"What then?"

He stands and walks to the window overlooking the courtyard.

"There's something, someone I'm looking for."

"Is this an experiment?"

He glances back at me.

"Of sorts, yes"

After a brief silence, he turns back and says, "But you don't have the original ticket. You need to get back on your way."

"I may not have the ticket, but I may be the one you're looking for."

\*\*\*

I return to Zonkwa with Abrack. We joked and laughed. Soon we forgot about the bad news. He was schooling in St. Francis and had pranked his teachers enough times to keep my stomach in knots most of the way. While I had found my ticket in a biscuit from my aunt who came visiting, he had gotten his after tricking his uncle into buying a carton.

He also feared he may not make it to senior secondary.

As we draw closer to home, my stomach twists. It is past 4pm and I didn't have a phone to call home. Mum was definitely home, cooking dinner. Abrack is an orphan and his uncle won't query him. I didn't want to tell Abrack so he wouldn't offer to come along.

I arrive home. I write his number on a paper. We bid farewell and I walk into the house.

Mum had not only finished cooking, but had eaten. On the centre table was the legendary belt.

"Tabat, why are you doing this to me? After all my warnings, you still chose to go to Kaduna. What if something had happened to you?"



Don't you know you are the only one I have? Achat nna ku amey? Do you want me to die?"

"I'm sorry mum."

"Oya, pick pins."

I put the tip of my right index finger on the floor while raising my left leg. I remained that way for so long I feared I will lose the ability to walk. Each time I wobble and fall, she uses her belt to realign me.

After what felt like hours, she said, "Stand up. You can go to your room. And don't think there will be food for you tonight."

I fell asleep as soon as I lay on the bed. I woke up later in the night with a raging hunger. I flashed my torchlight. On my reading table

was our red food flask.

\*\*\*

About a week later, we had a visitor. When I opened the door, it was the Lebanese with gray curly hair. He was smiling. He sat with mum and I in the parlour.

"Congratulations, Tabat. You've won a scholarship for your Secondary and University education."

I screamed and jumped up and down. My mum was shedding tears of joy. I hugged her.

The Lebanese placed a wad of new thousand naira notes on the table, exactly where she had kept the legendary belt.

"This is for the family."

He turned to me.

"The lottery was a test. You see, everyone in life fails. The difference is in how you respond: with resentment or curiosity. Five of you won. Your faces will be in newspapers tomorrow."

"You said you were looking for someone. Who was it?"

"The company was passed down to me by someone who believed in me. I'm looking for someone who will succeed me. But you must finish school first."

He turned to my mum. "Sorry, I have to go. I need to congratulate one more person."

"Who's that?"

"A boy called Abrack Takunak."

"I'm coming with you! Wait."

I turned around.



# Of a Failing yet Wealthy Land

Leo Muzivoreva : THE OBSERVER  
Zimbabwe

**T**he presence of some of the world's fastest growing economies in Africa serves as fodder for the Africa rising narrative. A walk around capital cities of Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Angola, even Mozambique, will put a stamp on the discourse that Africa is rising at a significant rate. The crane-filled skylines, construction of road networks and railway lines, multi-million-dollar mansions and business malls erupting across major towns and cities, and growing technologies are but a few indications of the continent's ascent to prosperity.

But even as people across the globe engage in discussions about how fast the continent is growing, ironically, the other discourse that goes hand-in-hand with this narrative is the astounding number of people in the continent who are still grappling with deep-rooted poverty.

One can only wonder why there is still a widening gap between the rich and the poor and why Africa is still struggling with poverty



despite the fact that it is home to a major percentage of raw materials that are in demand around the globe.

During the recent World Economic Forum in Davos, African leaders argued that powering Africa will answer the continent's growth in future. According to them, powering Africa will create jobs, cause industrialization and business expansion.

Indeed, powering Africa will contribute a lot to growth on the

continent, but for Africa to grow sustainably, it will need to pursue comprehensive methodologies that address all the bottlenecks to development. There is a need to understand what the areas in need of reform are and the quest to understand why Africa has been held back for so long. The observer takes you through what could be the hindrance to progress in Africa.

## **1) Civil Wars and Terrorism**

The argument that civil wars and terrorism, contribute to poverty is a no-brainer. Wars disorient people

and leave them destitute. They also disconnect businesses from their clients. Moreover, roads and communication networks are destroyed or barred which further cripples these businesses. Industries collapse, people lose jobs and investors lose confidence in the affected country thus pushing the affected region down the economic slopes. Then, of course, there is the trail of death and scores of people left injured, not to mention the loss of property which adds to the increase in poverty levels in areas marred by wars and terrorism.

According to the 2015 Global Terrorism Index, the cost of terrorism to the world was \$52.9 billion in 2014. This is the highest number since 2011. In the same year, 32,000 people died due to terrorism acts. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency has led to over 100,000 deaths since it started its brutal operation more than six years ago. Reports from the oil producing country say that business activity in regions like Kano had dropped by 80% by 2015. Apart from business disruption, the revolt has caused sporadic migration, abandonment of professions and jobs, discouraged foreign investment, food scarcity and dehumanized people. All these factors put together attract

poverty in the region.

Nigeria, which became Africa's largest economy in 2014 is experiencing economic challenges with World Bank's Global Economic Prospects 2016 predicting that the country's economy will continue to slow down. With such high economic impacts and deaths, poverty is inevitable.

## 2) Corruption

Dubbed 'Kitu kidogo' or 'chai' (loosely translated as 'something small' or 'tea') in Kenya, corruption has taken root in most African countries. This has contributed to the plight of Africa today. Senior leaders in government and private sectors alike have resorted to taking bribes. A survey by Transparency International (TI) indicated that most African governments are not able to meet their citizen's expectations due to rampant corruption.

The respondents said that corruption in the region was increasing despite the campaigns and activism by civil society and the population. The police were identified as the most corrupt group across the region. In every news bulletin, at least one story covered is about how a high-ranking official is under

investigation over corruption allegations. While this is good news to many, the laws on corruption are lenient allowing those caught in the act an easy passage.

## 3) Education and the knowledge gap

Up till today, some African households cannot afford basic education for their children. Although some governments in the region have taken up the matter of providing basic education as a government project, many areas lack schools and even where schools exist, they are sparsely located, posing a challenge to the young children who would rather help at home than make the long walk to school.

Inadequate skills and knowledge cripples the economy as there is no skilled labor to drive the nation. For Africa to be competitive, there is a need to invest in reinventing its education and research systems. A majority of African youth are not employed today due to inadequacy in education and technical skills. Corruption in form of nepotism has also affected the rate of employment on the continent.

## 4) Health and poverty

Health and poverty are interconnected. When a



continent is not able to create a quality health system and infrastructure for its own people, it risks falling into a trap where the economy remains stagnated. Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of poor health. Poor living conditions increase the chances of poor health. In turn, poor health entraps communities in unending poverty. One of the consequences of diseases is that it depletes individuals, households and communities' energy to work to build their lives and the society. With less individuals working to

make their lives better, poverty creeps and entrenches its roots.

WHO reports that approximately 1.2 billion people in the world live in extreme poverty - surviving on less than one dollar per day. Diseases, especially communicable ones, spread more rapidly in communities that are poor and do not have access to basic amenities. Take for example the spread of Malaria which can easily be managed through simple and vital but scarce utilities like mosquito nets and repellents.

HIV/AIDS, cancer among other diseases have also contributed to increased poverty levels in Africa. These diseases, apart from 'decapitating' the victims, leave families and communities in debt which further worsens their ability to sustain themselves.

### 5) Geographical Disadvantage

In this case, nothing much can be done. Being placed in a geographically disadvantaged location only calls for innovative ideas to utilize the available resources to advance lives.

A significant number of African countries suffer because they are landlocked - geographically unlucky. A country like Switzerland is landlocked but it is surrounded by stable economies, creating a platform for trade. On the other hand, most landlocked countries in Africa are surrounded by unstable and conflict-filled countries. Uganda is a landlocked country bordered by South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. These neighbors feature civil wars all year.

Although Africa boasts of indigenous and numerous resources, they are poorly distributed among countries and within states/regions in those

countries. Despite that, governments have not adopted strategic ways to redistribute such wealth to the citizens.

Wealth distribution is an issue, but what is even more disturbing is how great and promising resources like oil and precious minerals are exploited by foreign investors and big corporations which pay little or no taxes to the countries in which they operate. Such practices have left Africa twirling in poverty.

### **6) International Aid**

In the recent past African leaders have been heard arguing that International Aid has curtailed Africa's growth efforts. At the fourth World Government Summit in Dubai, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda said that donor support should not be relied on forever but instead be used to build institutions and the economy.

"Our vision is to make sure we are able to stand on our own feet and develop our country, attract investment and do business. There is no reason why we can't grow intra-African trade to the levels we see in America or Europe. What is good is not necessarily being small but good management of whatever you have, small or big," he said. "There is no reason why we

can't grow intra-African trade to the levels we see in America or Europe."

Even though some non-governmental organizations have helped Africa through support in health, education, governance and in other sectors, some firms have been accused of using stories of desperate Africans to advance their own selfish goals.

The Kibera slum in Kenya is one good example. Kibera, the largest slum in Nairobi and second largest urban slum in Africa is located just 5 kilometers (3.1miles) from the capital, Nairobi. The slum is filled with a sea of NGO's which have not done so much for residents who continue to scavenge for a living in these tough economic times.

Another outlook into Africa's failing economy is the loss that Africa is experiencing as the foreign-aid-giving countries suck Africa dry of its resources. The outflow costs to Africa surpass the inflow that gets to the continent in form of aid. Health Poverty Action highlights that Africans are losing almost six and a half times what their countries receive in aid each year.

Africa is also to blame when it comes to misappropriation of aid

funds and corruption among the officials. Africa has the potential to rise above any other continent if only it lays emphasis on shunning corruption and providing basic amenities for all. If we look keenly at what is coming to Africa in terms of aid and what is going out of Africa in terms of profits, tax evasion and debt payments, Africa can be summed up as wealthy.

In fact, Africa is financing other continents.

# Life as we know it

Ugbede Ataboh  
Nigeria.



**I**n life, the physical realm is controlled by the spirit realm... if you have doubts about this, wait and watch the mysteries of life unfold before your eyes. Fortunately for us, both realms are controlled by the power of our thoughts and declarations. All of this, I discovered after I met an old mountain dweller on my hiking trail last month. From the sight of him, I knew he was no ordinary being for there was something

**luminous about him. He stretched forth his hand and decreed...**

*"You still have a long way to go, your destiny is filled with turbulence for you will battle with failure at every twist and turn. For every victory you enjoy, there will be a force waiting around the bend to subdue you."*

*A cold sensation moves up my spine as I look around and realize my hiking companions are nowhere in*

*sight but I maintain a calm outward disposition. "Errm...Sir, I don't know what you mean. I'm just here to appreciate and take in the beauty of nature...I'm not here for a spiritual consultation" I reply.*

*"Correct me if I am wrong...You are the first female in your family and your parents parted ways before you uttered your first sentence. Yes indeed! You are highly favored for most of the merits you have enjoyed*



in your life came without you toiling. strength.

You have eagerly searched for a life companion but found only shadows of men who plundered and passed through you like smoke."

"Why can't I move?! Have you charmed me with black magic? If It's money you are looking for you won't get a dime from me" I whisper with the little strength I can muster.

Where is everybody? Why does this place seem unfamiliar all of a sudden? The clear hiking trail is nowhere in sight. This place is a thick forest with a dead kind of silence. Silence so thick I can cut through it...Jesus please help me! Why can't I speak? I have suddenly lost all my

"Listen carefully and fear not for I have very little time and so much to tell you before Time and Space reclaims this split moment. Love has evaded you all this while because the world you denounced wants you to curse mankind out of frustration and give up the ghost! Your case is peculiar though, because for every heartbreak and betrayal you've encountered, you've loved even harder and given so much more. In truth, you used to be what the universe refers to as ogbanje. You ought to have returned to the realm you came from a long time ago but you cut off your link to them with your zest for life

and powerful declarations. There are many of your kind upon the earth. Exiled souls, cursed to live desolate among men for rejecting the ancient creed and refusing to dance to the beat of the sacred drum of the dead. Not many have been able to escape the wrath of the mother of dead souls for she lays a curse on all who desert her. You, on the other hand, she cannot touch, because you adopted the religion of truth and continually abide under the shadow of the Ancient of days despite your sinful ways. The rest is now up to you...look behind you!"

I look back on my path to see how far I have already come and I see a white sheet stained with the deflowered blood of a child; I see raw loneliness; I see unrequited Love and disappointment; I see bitter lessons and splashes of wicked colours.

I walk on without bidding the old desert dweller goodbye. My course is set on the path leading to the high mountain. I journey for days and lose count. When I eventually reach the peak of the mountain, I place my feet on the solid rock, rip all my clothes off and set my sight upon The Creator...my Creator- YESHUA HAMASHIACH.

I decree upon my life's journey- True

*Love and happiness; Music and dance; Good health and affluence; Fruitfulness; Renewed youth and vibrance; Color and fulfillment.*

*Challenges will come but I will overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of my testimony- Rev: 12:11. Whatever force of failure that tries to subdue me, I will destroy!*

*I call forth the four winds and command them to carry my declarations to the four corners of the earth and they obey without delay. "This assignment is long overdue" they whisper upon my skin. They return and place a seal of affirmation on me...a tiny black dot on the bottom right corner below my lips.*

*"The yoke around your neck has been broken. Reign in victory among the living... Farewell!"*

**"Ugbede!"**

**"Yes?"**

**"Why are you standing by yourself on the trail with a weird expression on your face?" Jamal asks as he walks towards me.**

**I look around me... I am back on the trail with countless birds chirping above. "So strange Jamal, something happened just now ...but I can't remember"**

**"Nothing happened jare! You are**

**just a lazy girl who can't keep up with her hiking group. Come let's go!" He responds as he pulls me forward.**

**"Ah thank God! I could have sworn something strange just happened to me...maybe it's just paranoia and a little bit of..."**

**"What is that on your face?" Jamal asks with an amused expression.**

**"Where?"**

**"Here" He touches the skin below my lips with his index finger. "Here, use my phone as a mirror"**

**"The moment my gaze rests on the black dot, it all comes back to me and I remember everything"**

**"For how long was I standing there Jamal?"**

**"What kind of question is that? Just a few seconds...why?"**

**"I feel as if I travelled for days" I reply.**

**"My dear, that's what hiking does to you. Come on let's go!"**

**As I join my hiking group, I look up at Him with a thankful smile on my face and in return, He blesses me with the golden rays of the sun. I no longer believe in the entrapment of destiny but in the power of my declarations intertwined with the grace of my Creator, Yeshua. You and I were created to win and not fail; to be the head and not the tail...failure is not our destination but a springboard which shoots us to victory over and over again.**



# Nyakato and the Spelling Competition

Grace Tendo Katana  
Uganda.



**N**yakato was a very tiny but very clever girl for her age. She would do what defeated her older mates and this won her favour from everyone. She solved almost every exercise in her class.

One day, her school had to prepare for a spelling competition and a sports competition. Nyakato got so excited and so did her teachers and classmates. She was chosen

among those to participate in the spelling competition because her teachers knew that she would win. She wanted to participate in both competitions, but her English teacher told her to concentrate on one - the spelling competition.

Nyakato was prepared for weeks before the day of the competitions. When the time for the spelling competition reached, Nyakato became nervous all of a sudden.

She paced to and fro, she rubbed her hands and breathed in but she could not calm herself.

"All will be well, Nyakato." Her teacher said trying to sit her down.

Nyakato looked up at her teacher with questioning eyes. Her teacher brought her a glass of warm water which she took in one gulp.

"Are you better now?" Nyakato





nodded yes.

Her turn came to spell and she went over to the microphone. She looked all around the hall and saw that everyone was looking at her. She got so scared and ran out of the school's main hall with tears in her eyes. Her teacher followed her closely to see what had happened.

"What's wrong, Nyakato?" Her teacher asked.

"I am so scared," Nyakato replied wiping away a tear

"But you have worked so hard to this day. They are just your schoolmates!" her teacher said, "Come, let us go back inside."

"No! I cannot. I am so ashamed now." Nyakato cried.

Her teacher soothed her and was able to convince her to go back to the hall.

Once back on the stage, Nyakato trembled and tried to spell the words. This time around, she managed to spell all the words that she was given. She went through from the first round to the fourth round without any problem. In the final stage, Nyakato trembled but

then began to spell the word that she had been given.

"A-T-H-O-R-I-T-Y"

The bell was sounded and one of the judges said, "No." It is A-U-T-H-O-R-I-T-Y. "

Nyakato ran out feeling very bad for having failed such a simple word.

Her teacher was glad that she was at least able to spell.

When the teacher found her at last, he made sure that she was comfortable.

"Next time you will win, Nyakato."

Her teacher comforted, "Next time you will. I am very sure about that."

# A Failure's Worth

Cupido Stephanie  
South Africa

**B**ozo was sitting in the park all alone one day after school. He was very sad and was holding a book in his hands.

Meanwhile, Buddy came to the park to play with his new frisbee which he got for his birthday, but realized that he could not play alone. He needed a friend to play with.

He searched and searched the park for a friend. After a while, he spotted someone sitting under a tree and walked over to introduce himself.

"Hello, my name is Buddy. What is your name?"

Bozo sighed, "I'm Bozo", he said sadly.

Buddy saw that he looked very sad and decided to cheer him up.

"Nice to meet you Bozo. I got this from my uncle for my birthday, would you like to play? It would be fun!", Buddy said politely.

"I can't", Bozo said grumpily.

"Well, we can play another game if



you want", Buddy suggested with a huge smile.

"I told you I can't. I can't do anything", Bozo said in one breath.

He was very irritated and sighed very loudly this time.

"What do you mean?", Buddy asked, very confused.

"I'm not good at anything, I fail at everything", Bozo said, hopeless.

Buddy went to sit next to him and crossed his legs.

"Everyone is good at something". Bozo shook his head, "I don't know", he said, "I'm trying to do my homework, but I'm struggling to

figure it out".

"How about this", Buddy said, "we can figure it out together and then you play the frisbee with me? Deal?"

Bozo smiled for the first time, "I guess that would be okay. Okay, deal!"

Buddy was very chuffed; he made a friend whom he could help. He was always happy whenever he could help.

They quickly went to work and Buddy realized how smart Bozo was; he just needed to concentrate

; he was not a failure.

Bozo was also happy that he made a friend. "You are very smart", Bozo complimented Buddy.

Buddy laughed. "Thank you, that's because I read a lot of books. You are also smart, you know?".

Bozo blushed and lowered his head. "Me?", Bozo asked shyly.

"Yes, you just need to concentrate more, then you will be the smartest kid in school!" replied Buddy.

Working as a team, they finished Bozo's homework quickly and they could finally play with the frisbee. They threw the frisbee from one to the other, happily enjoying their game.

Bozo threw the frisbee a little too hard and it landed on someone's lap, sitting across from them in the park.

It was a big boy and he looked twice their age; he also had a frown on his face and looked really strong.

The boy got up and picked the frisbee up. He started to walk in their direction.

Bozo looked at Buddy and saw that

he was smiling. He wondered why he was smiling. Bozo was very scared, so he decided to ask Buddy straight up.

"Are you not scared of him?", Bozo whispered.

Buddy laughed. "No silly, that is my friend Bucc. He is also my neighbour".

Bozo was relieved and smiled nervously. Bucc reached them and said hello and Buddy introduced Bozo.

"Nice to meet you, Bozo", Bucc said in a friendly voice.

"Nice to meet you too", Bozo said. Bucc looked at buddy, "Is this your frisbee?".

"Yes, thank you for bringing it over", Buddy said smiling.

"Do you mind if I play?", Bucc asked. "Not at all!" Buddy and Bozo said at the same time and they all laughed. They played happily in the park until sunset.

Bozo was so happy that he gained two friends and he no longer felt like a failure. He felt worthy to be called a friend.



# Avorvi

Azah Edem  
Ghana



**A**vorvi was a mute six-year-old who did not fit very much in school, but loved it there. She wanted to always go to school but her mother would sometimes take her to the market because most people did not understand what she could learn in school.

She hated the market. There were too many grown-ups there and she did not like that they always came to make signs - which meant nothing to her - as though they were speaking to her instead of just speaking. She was dumb, not deaf. She knew she could communicate in sign language. It was a series of signs representing words that would help her talk normally to anyone else who knew the signs. The head teacher was trying to teach both her and her mother. But these grownups were just annoying as they assumed because she couldn't speak there was a problem with her hearing too. They would shout at the top of their voices as if they were on one end of the ocean and she on the other.

The most annoying was her uncle, Efo Gabor. Efo Gabor was the village drunk and jester. He was also her mother's reason for sadness. He always found it important to tell Avorvi's mother how much of a failure she was because her womb was not good enough to bring forth a normal child.

Avorvi's mother ignored him



outwardly, but she would cry and lament when she thought Avorvi was asleep. She did not have a husband because Avorvi's father had another wife in another town and had deceived her. It was bad enough that she was seen as a bad example and now her daughter could not speak.

She however taught her daughter to respect elders regardless of how they behaved. Her whole family lived in the same compound and every day Efo Gabor would make her mother feel sad. Avorvi was so angry about the whole issue but

could do nothing about it.

She tried to involve her mother in other activities especially her sign language studies and her mother became so good that she was hired to teach sign language at the school. Her mother was happier now and learned to feel important.

Soon the school had more children with physical impairments because people hid their children no more for fear of ridicule from people like Efo Gabor. This made Avorvi so happy she told her mother she would work hard at school and become a great success.

True to her word she became an important and respected woman in her community. Avorvi showed her mother that no matter what happen no one was truly a failure.



# Yesterday

Onimisi Asuku  
Nigeria

Yesterday, I painted today with a brush, liberal!

Yesterday, I painted today in colours bright and  
shadows menial.

Yesterday, I stroked the canvass of my dreams in  
dabs, swipes and unbroken lines  
Lavishly with wanton abandon,

Yesterday, I sang a song, an undertone for today,  
A sonorous Sotto voce cresting in a crescendo of  
soulful applause!

But Today is here with rains I did not paint,  
In colours I never mixed, somehow creeping on to  
my canvass - hues without herald; shadows cast by  
failings, a part of my soul.

Today, the present I'm given is not what I  
painted...nor what was promised Yesterday.  
Yet I paint again, in dabs, swipes and broken lines  
What will be today tomorrow, and tomorrow,  
yesterday.

With more flourish and even more lavishly, the  
bright colours of hope!  
Inheriting hues, shades and shadows as is true of  
living,  
I paint again, with more caution than I did today,  
Yesterday - the bright colours of hope!

# Silver Lining

By Ngang God'swill N.  
Cameroon

Today they returned  
like nasty potent parasites;  
our wedding vows, your face.  
Failure, my seasonal bride.

The memories haunt;  
honeymoon and kids.  
Bloody salty falls,  
like acid; a kiss of hell.

Fruit of inequity,  
this unending marriage;  
I'm addicted  
or is it just fear of change.

You called again,  
I fell off the wagon, again,  
like a seasoned junkie.  
is there salvation for me?

I appreciate still,  
the silver lining;  
shedding light in the dark,  
teacher. Life's greatest staff.

Yes; wet kisses, caress, orgasms.  
Occasionally. There's another,  
much different; defining me,  
and it's not you.





# I Rise, I Fall and I Rise Again

Adewara Joses  
Nigeria

Sometimes, I wear courage like a treasure  
I colour my fears with green and yellow crayons  
I rise high like a giant.  
Sometimes, I fill the vacuum of my thought  
With the memories of Father's tales  
And with the ellipses left in the corner of his cheek.  
And most times, I return home with a broken leg  
I fall into ditches  
I lose my torch, I fade into obscurity.  
Sometimes, I fold my mother's prayers into my  
spines  
So, when it is dawn, I rise high again  
And face the world  
And face life.



# From the Day I was born

Letlojane Simo  
South Africa

From the day I was born, I was never perfect  
I fell when I attempted to crawl, stumbled and fell  
when I tried to walk  
Yet I never gave up on a dream to walk - today I am  
running.

From the day I was born, I failed repeatedly  
I uttered words with no meaning, made sounds that  
made no sense  
Yet I never gave up on a dream to talk - today I am  
singing.

From the day I was born, I was never born to fail  
I have fallen, stood up only to fall over and over again  
Yet I never gave up on a dream to win - today I know  
failure is not a mark.

From the day we're born, we were never born to fail  
We were born to try and try again until we succeed,  
even when we don't succeed  
Failure is never the end of our story, but the beginning  
of a new chapter.  
Please turn over!





# A means to an end

Ndlovu Nobukhosi .P  
Zimbabwe

Failure is a means to an end,  
Like curtains hiding the morning light,  
A handle to open the door  
A bump within the road'  
It causes temporary distress  
To make it all worth the delay.

It separates the weak from the strong,  
By playing a game of wills  
Leaving success to those who are worthy,  
To open the curtains and grab their destiny  
And learn from the hurdles  
That are stumbling blocks in their race.

Like a thief at night,  
He whispers sleep to the school child,  
Abscond work to the laborers  
Laze around to the breadwinners  
So that he can laugh his lungs out  
Of having won the game of willpower.

However failure is just but a feeling,  
Which plays hide and seek  
Like the changes in seasons  
It is only temporary  
A means to an end  
Solidifying the pathway to success.

# Dear Failure

Nyotta Christine  
Kenya

Find me a new song,  
A dissimilar tune would be a delight,  
Purposive to change my life.

Lies cloud my mind,  
Urges boil within me,  
Rain on me anew.

Enlighten me further,  
Show me a new path,  
Uphold me, dear.

Crying heals my heart,  
Carrying the weight,  
Epitome of my story.

Silly me, strength, I must find,  
Forward, I must move,  
Far and wide, I intend to go.





# An Unwanted Friend

Awer Piol Tiek John  
South Sudan

But a must-have he is!

When I remember him,  
I tighten my grip on my goals.

When I think of him,  
I unfriend extravagance.

When I recall him,  
I am motivated to give a helping hand.

When I see him,  
I sip my coffee and say, "THANK YOU GOD".

# Afraid

Kiboi Victoria  
Kenya

Afraid  
Of making victors of my demons.  
    Damned to reprise  
    Same old mishaps,  
To stumble on the very stones  
    That fell me afore.  
    Afraid  
    To try again  
    To fail again.  
Of giving in to the terrors  
That whisper in the night.  
Fear, you devious friend,  
    You cunning thief,  
    I shan't allow  
    Your velvet embrace  
To plunder any longer.





# Breathe

Makole Tshiamiso  
Botswana

I breathe...  
with such difficulty.  
Air escapes my lungs  
as though exiled  
and has so much loath for my nostrils  
a place it used to reside  
with such ease.

I'm dying  
I'm crying...  
I'm trying to breathe  
But my breath slips  
I am counted with the deceased that  
failed to breathe.

I'm dying  
I'm crying  
I'm trying to breathe  
my breath slips  
as I fail to breathe.

My eyes shut and light escapes  
poison lashes over me  
and I beat myself for days I wasted...

I give up and give in  
to the world  
I have never seen.

# Failure

Isibor Peter Ibhane  
Nigeria

A teen lay on a couch,  
a finger to his mouth.  
Both eyes watched from the south.

An agama climbed and fell,  
its mind one couldn't tell.  
Determination its energy fuel.

Failure crept into its brain  
looking for a nest.  
Determination left it no space.

The agama had an aim  
and it wasn't a joke or game.  
Again he climbed all the same.

A busy reptile nodded at each fall  
as a resentment for failure  
till it climbed well & success found.

Not achieving a good aim,  
failure may stare us with cold eyes;  
stare us in the face.

Determination to forge ahead  
is vital to grasp success.  
Both distant human eyes learnt this.



**GENRE: SHORT STORY**

**TITLE: NONEXISTENT PICKET**

**WRITER: HARUNA DAHIRU, NIGERIA**

**REVIEWER: BILDAD MAKORI, KENYA**

**T**he nonexistent picket is a wonderful short story that truly sheds light on the theme 'Sacrifice'. The title of the short story is symbolically used by the writer to talk about someone who is seemingly invisible to those around him.

The short story is about the narrator who talks about his interaction with his son when he is asked a question in school - who the best parent is. The son asks the father this question and the answer the son gives is the mother. The father feels disappointed in a way, saying that by the reasons his son gave him for his answer, fatherhood is underestimated despite the sacrifices he as a father makes, which go unnoticed by his son.

The major writing style used by the writer depicts contrast, clearly seen in the flashbacks he has written. The narrator recalls how he was raised and reflects on whether he is doing as his parents did.

Also, there is a clear picture coming out through the vivid descriptions used and this helps the reader create a picture in mind of what is going on in the story.




**GENRE: FLASH FICTION**

**TITLE: BEAST OF VALOUR**

**WRITER: TIMI SANNI, NIGERIA**

**REVIEWER: LEBOGANG SAMSON, BOTSWANA**



**T**his is one hell of an intriguing topic, one I must commend - it is a good read! *Beast of Valour* is a flash fiction of 249 words written by Timi Sanni from Nigeria. One of the elements which qualify this story as flash fiction is the way the author randomly started the story; it started somewhere in the middle. Yes, what greeted me first before everything else was the fact that there is death in the picture (it is a sad thing that we have to die...) This opening line kept me on my toes, anxious to discover who died, how and why they are dead.

The plot thickens when you realize that characters are nameless as the persona kept on saying we, us, our. The use of these pronouns on behalf of characters made it difficult to tell the gender of the protagonist, but as the story transforms, you realize that one figure of speech employed here is personification as the protagonist is an animal, a cow in particular; one that laments about the maltreatment they endure at the hands of humans even though they portray great qualities of being heroes to the human race. Despite this, cows get viciously slaughtered a fact clearly shown in the line "we are beasts of valour but we die like slaves." This is where the author highlights on the theme 'Sacrifice' as the persona tearfully narrates how they are brutally butchered for people to feast on.

The twist surfaces when the writer introduces the second setting. He begins by talking about the killing and spilling of blood in abattoirs, then immediately switches to the farm - tilling the land (plowing); hence the use of brevity and unambiguity, resembling the level of creativity by the writer.

At this point there is the antagonist here - old Baba Agbo would smile and pat our backs. Now you see how humans can be hypocrites? They have the 'Beast of valour' but still butcher it for their consumption; at the same time, they make it do manual labour; tilling their lands to produce crops for people. There is also an element of humor in this flash fiction; our distant cousins - rams, were sacrificed in the times of Abraham!

Towards the end, another poetic tone appears, one which is very common in a limerick which is characterized by the use of vulgar language - stuff my hoof into their mouths and shove my horns up their butts...

Lastly, another nameless character pops up; (she) in this case refers to mother nature who consoles the beast by saying it is a privilege to die her way, meaning the 'natural death than being killed'.

Overall, the flash fiction served its purpose. It is a beautiful piece.

**GENRE: ARTICLE**

**TITLE: THE SACRIFICE OF DREAMS**

**WRITER: GRACE MASHINGAIDZE, ZIMBABWE**

**REVIEWED BY NAMSE UDOSEN, NIGERIA**

In *The Sacrifice of Dreams*, the writer takes us on a journey through the dilemma of fitting in or standing out. It presents the battle young millennials face in trying to create a niche for themselves or towing the line of the generation before them.

The article is written in an impersonal tone and from an observer's perspective.

Although it has its settings in Zimbabwe, the message is of universal appeal. It's something most young Africans can relate to.

I, however, feel that an article of this nature should have a personal touch to it. The writer should throw in some personal events to buttress the point.

**GENRE: POETRY****TITLE: LETTER FROM A FATHER****WRITER: ADEMOKOYA ADEDAYO, NIGERIA****REVIEWER: COMFORT NYATI, ZIMBABWE**

**L**etter from A Father is a poem that consists of 23 lines and its structure resembles that of a concrete poem. The principal theme of sacrifice evolves in the entire poem although from L9 to L12 is where it strongly emerges. In this context it is vivid that the mother assumed the place of a sacrificial lamb in the labour room in order to serve the life of her child.

Moreover, this piece is written from the perspective of a father who is a widower as is already suggested by the title. The father writes this letter addressing his child in a nostalgic tone filled with grief about his deceased wife who died in giving birth to this child. This poetic letter also serves as a tool which the father uses to comfort the child who was deprived a mother figure from the moment of birth.

Despite the unfathomable memories he had of his demised wife, the persona maintains that tone of optimism and joy when he confesses that; "she loves you more than her hands, you've become a dream come true." Faced with the images of how the wife died, one thing that keeps him hopeful is the characteristic traits of the child which resembles the mother, such as the smile.

The use of a heart and river imagery perpetuates the intensity of pain he suffered upon losing his wife and this is supported by his metaphorical admiration of the Kangaroo. It is clear that the persona finds it difficult to cope with and ward off the fresh memories of his wife; this is stimulated more by the presence of his child, and because the more he sets his eyes on him the more he misses the wife.

Atmosphere: cold, unbearable, depressing, somber

Attitude: awe, contemplative

Overriding themes: melancholy, mourning, heroism, sacrifice

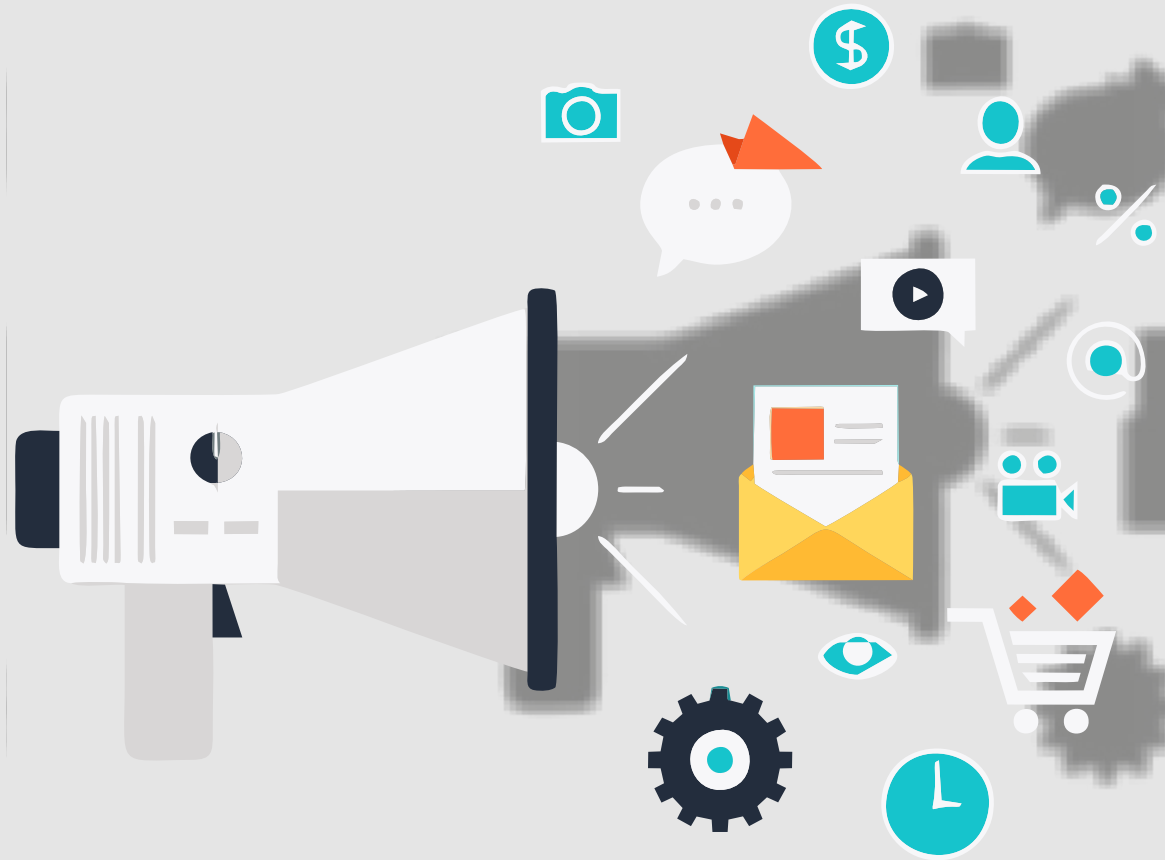
Tone: bitter, regret, gloomy, grim

Diction: detailed, narrative, simple to grasp

Moral: let go of the past, for the present to find its place.



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# SOLITUDE

VOL. 5 NO. 3



MAY, 2020

WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

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# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

## THEME: FEAR

Writers Space Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving new literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for her **July 2020 Edition** in the following categories:

- Short Story
- Flash Fiction
- Poetry
- Essays
- Children's Literature

The submission window is open from **1st of May to 14th May**.  
Response time is typically within 4 to 5 weeks after submission window closes.

We look forward to receiving your best

To submit, please visit [www.writersspace.net/submissions](http://www.writersspace.net/submissions)



# EDITOR'S NOTE

In a conversation with a good friend, she reminded me that writing is lonely. Writers themselves may sometimes be the party and yes, understand the fun of it, but this is very much imaginative. The act of writing is only embarked upon alone.

In very much the same way, life can be just lonely, writing especially when it comes to the heel of failure. There are things that one must do alone regardless of the people we have who walk through life with us. It is a part of the process, no matter what we do, we cannot cheat the process.

In reading the entries for this month, I have come to realize that there are many ways in which we as individuals approach solitude as a bird carrying (unnoticed) the course of its life as a jealous vulture who pushes one's mind beyond the reality of the present, as the erasure of memory of truth and eternal above. All these are the ways in which our writers for the month have chosen to express what solitude means to them. Though they all wrote in different forms and told different stories, there is one connecting quality that is full of many moments where we are alone.

You can choose to see solitude as a negative state of being, or you can see it as a cushion in your life; the ushering into another phase. As writers, we must embrace solitude as the refined of our technique. On that note, I implore you into hiding your mouth and let solitude be the birthplace of the next big thing.

Always remember, Ubuntu.

Warm regards,  
Nabilah.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editorial Note	4
Editorial Review	5
Table of Contents	6
Short Story	7-9
Columns	10-13
Children's Literature	14-15
Flash Fiction	16
Article	17
Poetry	18-23
Reviews	25-30

# ADELAIDE, I WHISPER



Paul Wafula, Kenya



\*\*\*\*

Day 4.

I have not seen that smile for a while. Adelaide's smile is warm and fuzzy feeling that came with it. She was the embodiment of genuineness and hospitality. Damn, I miss that smile. I miss our brief conversations, her interjecting that mad and laugh nervously. You already picture her confidently touching my hands,

looking straight into my eyes saying "you are mine."

Adelaide was sweet. Adelaide is drifting away, you know! I'm slowly drowning in this ocean, and the last face I want to see is yours. I heard the door open and two women in white aprons and face masks approach my bed. They are carrying a metal plate with a syringe. Feet tense. My skin becomes

stiff. I am used to needles.

"It's injection time, Brody," one of them says with enthusiasm. I should point out that my name is not Brody. "Now hold still," the other bloke says, fastening my right hand on a table by the bedside. I am fidgeting and sweating a lot. The needle pricks my skin for the first time, almost a jump. "We'll have to do it again," the other bloke says.

It's finally over! I am rubbing the injected part of my skin. The pain is slowly fading away and I see the face of Adelaide. Sweet Adelaide. It's been so long without you. Please.

Wait, she is in my room! In my room. This feels like a memory. She is lying on my bed, pestering me to get up from my computer desk. "You work too hard, muff," she says. "Yes, do. I was always slow to her advances. She gets so fed up little broody and comes to lean her head toward my chair. I know she is pretending to take interest in my work.

"You are writing another alien abduction story aren't you?" She asks with a sarcastic tone. "Yes Sherlockam," I reply and for a moment I look into each of her eyes and get lost in the gaze.

\*\*\*\*

Day 48.  
There is something I need to remember. Truth once held dear,

but my head can't wrap around. I know it is something important. Hopefully will come back to me. At this moment though, I can hear footsteps across the hallway. Ah yes, it is time again for the daily injection. Yesterday I was able to hold it together. Today I think I will do so. Wait, my wall has a picture of a woman scrawled on it. I think I know that woman. I touch it. I believe I know who drew it. Perhaps this is the truth I was supposed to remember. The door is opened and once more like clockwork, the two blokes are here to give me my injection. I don't tense. Barely fidget. I stretch my right arm ready for the needle to prick my skin.

Suddenly, a name hits my mind. Adelaide, whispers as my tongue goes numb and my head becomes drowsy.

There she is in the distance. We are in a place of nothingness. Dark and desolate. How would I describe it. "Adelaide, come. Can you hear me?"

I shout. She turns and smiles. Yes, that smile. I remember now. I remember the warmth it came with. She keeps fading away and I keep trying to reach out. "Adelaide! Adelaide, please. Please don't go!"

\*\*\*\*

Day 72.

I don't know why I feel miserable today. They've been painting over the wall in my room for a while now because they don't like me scrawling on it. They want me to forget something and honestly, I think I have.

I don't know what my name is. Don't remember if I ever had a family. I always have this feeling that there was someone special in my life but I can't remember it. The drug they make me forget. That's the only explanation.

The door opens and the injection routine commences. At this moment I am immune to the needle. Barely feel it in and out of my vein. All the while I am staring at the blank white

wall waiting for the effects to kick in. Darkness as I find myself in a familiar place this memory that has held on for this long? I hear sounds of children laughing two of them run past my legs and almost trip.

"I'm fast that you Adelaide, a young boy says after beating young girl in a race. This is a happy memory, but I barely see it to recognize it. The boy trips after another round of racing. He starts crying. The girl stretches her hand out and says, "Hold on to me as tight as you can! I'm here and won't let go."

\*\*\*\*

Day 96.

Something different in this past time for my daily routine. It is awful, still and quiet. Wait, the footsteps, but they belong to a single person. The door opens and for the first time get to see a face. It's a lady. She's fairly plump and wearing spectacles. She is a doctor

kind of vibe.

"Brody, the procedure is near completion. The injection and re-orientation procedures were just part of phase one of leaving the past behind. You still want to join the organization, yes?"

"Yes, I guess. But Adelaide, Brody, that's not my name!" I answer. She takes a moment before replying. "But you barely remember who you are. You don't ever remember how you got here. Everyone who comes here seeking your help will always see Brody. You did something good, Brody. You wanted fresh start. And now that you are getting it, you have to pay us a favour for a favour."

"What do you mean? What did I do? What favour?" I ask. "Now, Brody, we talked about this. Fresh start means no back page. On the side of your bed is a file and a watch. It is time you shape this world into what it is meant to be."

As she spoke, the two blokes who

used to administer medicine to me walked in wheeling a strange sort of device on a trolley.

"One more thing we made slight adjustments to your face," she says. I reach for the mirror that was above the file and the watch. I do not recognize his face. But then again, I don't remember how I looked.

Here I am slowly internalising this moment when the device starts growling. There's a bluish light. I feel this moment of isolation as I slowly fade. The room starts to disintegrate. There is excessive white light. I briefly see this beautiful face, she smiles at me.

Adelaide, I whisper.

# LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

Ugbede Ataboh, Nigeria

After my recent spiritual encounter slipped into a melancholic mood, I was feeling so blue...so down and out to the point that I had done a personal evaluation of myself. I have obviously been drifting through life without a clear awareness of what I really like or who I am. I recently realized that I have been living within the cultural and religious dictates of morality; and by doing so, I robbed myself of the opportunity of getting to know myself and my strengths like.



Dear reader,

kindly find an outline of my personal

evaluation below:

PS. Try not to be judgemental, condescending or self-righteous...life

has a way of tossing us into unexpected scenarios and due to this, we become unique without our beautiful imperfections.

## PERSONAL EVALUATION

-I aspire to please God but I'm currently not doing a great job at it because I get carried away with satisfying my flesh needs and work on

this because God is my everything and He deserves my best.

-I try to work at being the best of my talents & skills with each passing day. I should work harder at this though, because the importance of intellectual development can't be overemphasized.

-Unlike before, I now try to be actively involved in family matters. I hope my extended and nuclear family will eventually become

closely knit because, after God, family is everything I learn this after seeing how far people from good homes usually go, not because they are the best kind of people, but because of their solid background which lends them support when they stray or fall. -I have learned from my past failed friendships and relationships that it's important to understand the importance of setting boundaries where people are concerned. Isolation from people



will reduce drama though at the expense of the personal growth, knowledge and experience that comes with socializing strongly and getting hurt from trusting easily. I used to be terrible at maintaining relationships with people but I am currently mastering the art of coexisting with the worst kind of people by expecting the worst from people before expecting the best. I have proven right by being terrible then 'moka because I expected it but if they prove me wrong by actually being nice then it's a win-win for both of us!

-I dislike and avoid disloyal and disrespectful people; also do not like users that when I find myself exhibiting the same traits.

-I now know that only God loves me unconditionally and has brought me this far and determined to succeed in life.

-I can't date several men simultaneously - probably because I am a hopeless romantic who always tries to build romance even in shallow relationships.

-I am not a saint! Give into my

desires occasionally have done things I am proud of.

-I used to be attracted to guys my age because of their boyish charm but I realized they do not suit me. My personality is strong and can be threatening to my age mates. Hence the need to switch my taste to successful, playful and intelligent old men - culinary skills would also be appreciated. I don't think these qualities are too much to ask for!

-I hate being alone even though I enjoy my own company sometimes. I used to think a good man would be instrumental in helping me build my own home and space. I don't think so anymore. After losing my childhood friend to asthma last month, I have decided to do all cart to build a home for myself since I hear and treat each day like gold.

-As a regard to love and romance I feel disappointed in myself for not making the best personal choices. I have failed myself by being complacent with my body and my personal space. I have failed myself by not being bold enough to want

more and get more to see to be going around in a circle and this needs to stop. I have messed up my personal life up and I need to make some deliberate changes, I'm tired of my personal mess.

-My spiritual encounter during my hiking trip has opened my eyes to the world beyond and the divine power embedded in our declaration. I am now careful with my words and try my best to always make positive declarations in every circumstance.

-My inner line has always been my kryptonite, unfortunately, has pushed me into the wrong groups too many times. I'd rather be in the midst of happy people going forward, people who don't necessarily have to be romantic interests. When this Covid-19 pandemic ends, I will sign up for weekend dance classes since I love dancing. I don't care how much it'll cost me because I'm sure it will be so much fun and worth every farthing! It is common knowledge that Creative and Writers love solitude, but not me. At this point in my life, I don't need solitude!

# RIDING SOLO: A CHOICE NOT A CURSE

Leo Muzivoreva: THE OBSERVER, Zimbabwe

Summe lead the way with skimpy outfits, poses on social media, trips to the beach and yes a wave of weddings, which can make it seem like everyone is getting hitched. But on the contrary, a recent study has revealed that more of us are single than ever before. Since society seems to think there's some deep, dark reason behind being single, here are some reasons why half of the population remains single:

You have come Miss Mr Right and deserve better than Miss or Mr Wrong.

You are fiercely independent and will not apologise for it.

You have high standards and so far, none has met them.

You are figuring out ME before worrying about US.

You love the freedom of being able to do what you want, when you want.

You would rather be someone who is single than someone who is settled.

There is nothing more annoying than

anos friend relative asking when you are going to get engaged, shack up or tie the knot. Why do these benchmarks exist in the first place? Are the people who follow them happier, healthier?

It is time to toss the stereotypical has a little to do with being lone. timeliness and share your victories of independence with those who dry to pity you.

Things being single are great.

Did you know that:

Being single is associated with a decreased risk of adverse health effects from dysfunctional marriages and intimate relationships.

Singles are more likely to be fit and healthy. Singles tend to go to the gym more, eat healthier and have lower stress levels. Studies indicate that people gain weight after starting a relationship.

Single people also get more good quality sleep than people who share a bed with a partner.

Single women have better mental health than married women,

especially married women who have children.

One of the greatest fears of being single is that loneliness will creep on you like a hungry yeast ready to consume you. The truth is loneliness has a little to do with being lone.

Albush have experienced loneliness in a crowded room, felt empty in a relationship. The reverse is also true – you can feel blissful moments of solitude. Being happily single is really not so different from being happy under any other conditions.

Here are some tips to being happily single:

Get to know YOU. Find out exactly what you are passionate about and cultivate it. Spend your time as much as possible, learn to be happy in a way that does not depend on your relationship status.

Build a healthy relationship with yourself. YOU are complete. The choice is yours, whether you use it or not.

Build your tribe. Be happy, you social



calendar. Don't expect others to reach out to you.

Have plans. Take a weekly art class, attend a community event, or do yoga.

Have a pet. Coming home to a live being is incredibly rewarding that part of you that wants to love.

Get physical. Reconnect with your body. Get yourself shaped while those endorphins keep your spirits

flying high.

Rediscover your creativity. It's a perfect time to play when the moon is watching. Come, colour, or paint something!

Step out of your comfort zone. Go somewhere new, or do something different each week.

Work towards your goals. Nobody is stopping you from getting the career that you want.

Get a hobby. Whatever it is, it's your boat. This will not only fill your time but will give you something interesting to talk about with other people.

Travel. Explore, read, and discover.

Be grateful for what you have. Find happiness and contentment in what already exists in your life.

Learn continuously because smart is the new sexy.

Be good to yourself today. Find contentment and within yourself. Be cool, calm, and collected with the person you love. You!

Living the single life symbolizes freedom, independence and untapped potential for growth. Whatever your relationship status, don't feel pressure to conform to be happy with who you are.

Waiting for the right person is not a compulsive or a "must do".

Solitude could be blissful, embrace it.

# THE WARMTH OF FRIENDSHIP

Immaculate S. Ajiambo, Kenya



**Y**ep! Yeep! The whole class stood to clap for Madge. She was amused, evident in her smile. He ponytailed her hair to deftly sway away shyness. "Madge, that was a very interesting story. We all loved it, right class?" Their response was a resounding YES.

With a curtsy, "Thank you for loving my tale." "Where did you get it, Madge?" asked Manuel. "A friend of mine shared it with me. She has so many stories, I visit her every day after school for some minutes to keep her company. Sometimes, I share my lunch with

her. She has enough energy." "Wow! I would like to meet her." Manuel bid.

Saida whispered, "Madge, will you take me to her today evening?" Unfortunately, Saida's wish was crushed when Madam Rose asked Madge not to take anyone there instead they could plan a visit as a class on the Saturdays.

The long-awaited day finally dawned for the class. Five students of Baraka Junior Academy that morning they assembled at school. Madam Rose had asked them to ask their parents for their host. They had sugar, wheat flour, salt, cooking oil, toilet paper, juice, fruit and much more.

Before leaving, Julia the class prefect reminded them to be disciplined throughout their visit. Madam Rose encouraged them to be mindful of their words.

"Guys, have a feeling that today's going to be lovely. I can feel it in my bones," said the excited Abir. Everybody laughed at his remark.

The ne burst out singing in a happy voice because she was so happy to see her friends.

Madge announced their arrival at her friend's house. It seemed so short because they had been so anxious to get there. The kids marvelled at the sight of the mud hut that slanted down one side with a brown awning over the door. The old lady sat under a tree beside the hut. She was covered in a faded yellow kanga. A stick lay peacefully at her side.

Madan Rose went over to the old lady. She was seen to nod most of the time as the old lady nodded.

Manuel asked Madge, "Have you noticed that the old lady has not uttered a word since Madan Rose arrived? Are you sure she is the one who narrated to you that beautiful story?"

"Yes, you just have to be patient with her. She once told me that a good listener should be a good listener as well." Replied Madge.

"I see."

"You see, she has been living alone for

a long time after losing her two daughters to cancer. It was expensive for her to manage the condition."

"What are the grandchildren?"

"They were taken by their fathers. They used to visit her but not anymore. It has been six years since she last saw them."

Those words broke the pupils' hearts. Madge told them how her visits with her sister had been comforting to the old woman. She now had friends to share joy and laughter with. They cleaned her house, did her laundry, fed her and ensured she wore clean clothes after her bath.

Madan Rose cut the pupils short when she called them to meet the old lady.

"Sasashosha, ucugogomwaitu." She was greeted in the synonyms of her grandmother in the local languages.

The old lady's eyes brimmed with tears of joy that had been long since she

was called sweet name by vibrant and enthusiastic kids.

"Karibuni umbani, hewelcomed them.

The heartily sang songs Madge had told her she loved:

Malaika nakupenda malaika,  
Malaika nakupenda malaika,  
Nami nifanyeje? Kijana mwenzio,  
Nashindwa na mali sina wee,  
Ningekuoa malaika.

The atmosphere was light and filled with happiness. They sat down to listen to her narrate the story of Simbi and Nasikufa, a popular story from the Luhya community. At the end of the narration, everybody vowed to be good girls so that they would not fall into the hands of the ogre because of pride.

Madan Rose led the kids giving the old lady the gifts they promised to visit her often because for them, their friendship had no room for loneliness or pain.



# SOLITUDE

Proteus Nat, Nigeria



Sandra flopped on the bed and looked at the blurry ceiling through her eyes.

She clenched her fist tight around the packs of hallucinogen, then brought it to her face. This had been her only friend for over a year but she had never bought this many tablets at once.

Amploxolifin. Don't take more than 3 tablets at once.

She plucked one, threw it in her mouth and chewed.

She had never been the life of the

party or talkative. She preferred being lonely watching movies.

That way she could keep her secrets to herself. Like what her dad did to her when she was 12.

Laughter floated from the next door and her chest tightened. Her landlord often had visitors. Their laughter seemed to mock, teasing her with what was possible.

Another tablet. Chew. She wondered how it felt to have a friend you could trust completely.

Someone you could genuinely laugh with.

The light in the room dissolved into a brighted with brilliant blue flashes. Her head got dizzy. She felt at home as the edgy feeling of loneliness washed away.

A furry black and white cat with wings flapped towards her. "Hey, Sandra, how've you been? I've missed you so much. He kicked her face. "Linus."

"It's been a while. He purred while she stroked his head. She wanted so much for someone anyone out there to show her some care.

"Linus, do you think it's all my fault? Another person?" He looked at her with big round hazel eyes. "Sandra, you..." The red light went pale and returned into a vapour. "Linus, wait! But the cat was gone.

He was about to say something important.

# SOLACE

Chisom Osuigwe, Nigeria

I am sitting outside the passage way, just looking out through the entrance door and willing my mind to dispel the uneasiness and refresh my thoughts.

My seat is a stack of six plastic chairs without backs. There is a moldy crate of Guinness lying around the passage and it rests my legs.

The sun is blazing and that's why I couldn't stay inside my room. Back here, it was beginning to feel like a mad house in my head, the quiet, the lack of breath, and the want of what I do mad it so.

But outside, with the cool breeze that has the green leaves of the old trees swaying and caressing my body, I feel some sort of calm. This is one of nature's many ways of calming my uneasiness.

At this point, I'm beginning to wonder why I'm even writing this. I ask myself, how will this impact anyone? How will it make another life better? What's the message? And this softemy plague have a way of over-amplifying things and having them lose their simple harm. For example, I came out here just to sit and get some air and just nope. But my body had barely touched the seat when I realized I needed to write—actually, I felt the need to begin scribbling. So I walked back inside and picked up this

my 10-in-1 notebook and opened to a new section. And started to write. I wrote the first two words and rushed back inside to change my black pen to a blue one—felt that I think was rushing out too much (say hell to the editor). As I continued to write, I feel myself glowing from the inside. I start to enjoy the process of feeling the therapeutic effect of writing.

And here came the question: why is it so calm from me? I should be able to enjoy writing my thoughts especially if it makes me this calm. I should be able to enjoy the fun of journaling without overthinking. Why this will make a teenager feel better? Should I enjoy taking care of myself.

I know this and some days it comes easy, but most times I let the feather in my hand drift into a futuristic universe of my current scribbling. I'm not enjoying doing so.

But today, I'm going to enjoy this moment and keep on writing. If this journal ever finds a wide audience, I'll be grateful. I'll engrain it into my memory. This day that it gave me relief. Using this ability that God gave me brought me calm and joy.

In the end, I think a message is beginning to emerge. I don't use so. Do you need my help extracting it? Look to the penultimate paragraph, maybe you'll see it.

# LIFE IN HORIZONS

Odhiambo Felix, Kenya



We have forgotten the taste of peace,  
That's the kind of people we are,  
And when nights begin to glow,  
Dressed with a red cinder in the sky,  
We break bones as we sing along,  
Our eyes are burning;  
We have tossed ourselves in fire,  
That is what we are now.

Today, friendship is debauched,  
Happiness is diffused with stone stinky faces,  
It has formed a grey society,  
Our hearts are burning,  
We have tossed ourselves in fire,  
And that is what we are now.



# IN THE CLOSET

Temani Nkalolang, Botswana



In infinity of nothingness I found myself  
Confronted by darkness;  
Threatening to devour my sanity.

Rejection like a naughty cousin played  
Truth or dare with me,  
Peeled off all layers of melanin.

Reality but a speck in a throng of raging emotions  
My mind disintegrated into a million portions.  
Like the 'clash of titans' but worse.

Bitter tears moistened a seed lying dormant  
Amidst chaos it took form and blossomed;  
Perseverance!

Crushing defeat  
Can force a person to her knees,  
But need not choke her in the dust of the ruins.

# OF ADVENTURES WITH SOLITUDE

Deep Martins, Nigeria

Away from the chatter and dance, around the bonfire,  
the night wind brings whispers, mellow and mild;  
Where night has quietened  
the violins in the crop of songbirds, I wander  
As owls sing the requiem of the dying sun.

Solitude ambles by, her tailwind elopes with me,  
steals me through thin draperies of air:

i. To a place the mirror, in the tone  
of weeping mother, calls my name  
yearning to see my scars again.

ii. To a place where black boys frolick  
from the kraal of my head to a thirsty river  
while they wind bamboo flutes on forbidden bush paths.

iii. To a place a ravished maiden  
smears on my virgin canvas,  
muddy sweat from her gloomy face.

iv. On a candlelit table, I slit open a vein on paper  
and the salty Lake Katwe - as Africa's tears - gushes;  
A lake my friends would name, poetry.  
And after solitude, my clingy lover, jealously  
topples off the crown of the candle;  
I return to the place of dance, and merry.  
Searching for tidings in my eyes, my friends,  
nod knowingly, my return with tale, song, and painting.

# O TRAVELLER

Seyi Ojenike, Nigeria



O traveller, through a ruinous waste  
 Squandered upon mirage of redemption.  
 Here's a truce...decorous serenity  
 ... a moment of brilliant silence.

When the mirroring walls invade,  
 Against your heavy shoulders  
 Like the torrid night;  
 Let alone revealing your fright.  
 Shatter with an orchestrated scream, c'est moi!

As darkness of night connives with  
 The strutting sea-sounds  
 And a cloudless sprinkle of moonlight  
 Pours upon the resting sea,  
 Let your thoughts impale your hopes...  
 A serenade.

# THE BIRD



Moshi Noella, Tanzania



There is a bird in the airport food court,  
A sparrow.  
She sails in from the ceiling beams  
landing, hopping, under a plastic table.  
No one else is looking, but I see her.  
She could have been a plastic bag  
fluttering to the ground.  
Is she a figment of my longing?  
I watch her ascend  
as if an invisible breeze  
Is wafting her up.  
I flutter my eyelashes  
to imagine her wings.

# THE MUSIC IN SILENCE

Olaitan Victor Olarenwaju, Nigeria

The moment of silence  
When the honks stop and thuds cease,  
When the screeches and whirs; a deafening silence,  
Where I found music in the inactivity  
of the ensuing silence.

That moment away from a distracting crowd  
Where I could untangle life's tangled thread  
The ears within latching to a melody  
To breathe life to what never was,  
What never is, but perhaps could be.

I can listen to my heart's content,  
Dance in time to the non-existent melody  
Borne upon the waves of the rhythm,  
A parody of colors, creatures, life,  
Of things beyond my horizon.

Alone I found the meaning I never could in a crowd;  
Be who I want to be - a king of dreams to mold  
his domains as he sees fit, into reality.  
Alone I found  
The music in silence.



# TRIENNIAL CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP

**MAY 1-3RD, 2020**

**THEME**

**UNDERSTANDING**

**LITERATURE 101**

## **MODERATORS**

BLESSING BENSON - **NIGERIA**  
OMADANG YOWASI - **UGANDA**  
ERNESTINA AZAH - **GHANA**

## **All times are in GMT**

The modules will be available after the workshop on our website at [www.writersspace.net/learning/](http://www.writersspace.net/learning/)

### **MAY 1**

**9AM:**  
INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING  
MARITA BANDA - ZAMBIA

**1PM:**  
THE ART OF STORYTELLING  
ANTHONY ONUGBA - NIGERIA

**5PM:**  
THE SHORT STORY VS FLASH FICTION  
NEO MASETLANE - BOTSWANA

### **MAY 2**

**9AM:**  
POETRY 101  
BENNY WANJOHI - KENYA

**1PM:**  
ESSAY/ARTICLE WRITING  
LEO MUZIVOREVA - ZIMBABWE

**5PM:**  
ESSENTIALS OF SCRIPT WRITING  
HALJEO MOTANYANE - LESOTHO

### **MAY 3**

**9AM:**  
GUIDE TO PROPOSAL WRITING  
TILDAH MAGOBA - ZIMBABWE

**1PM:**  
UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE  
NAHIDA ESMAIL - TANZANIA

**5PM:**  
ROLE OF CULTURE IN CREATIVE WRITING  
FOMUTAR STANISLAUS - CAMEROON

GENRE: SHORT STORY

TITLE: DOWN AND OUT

WRITER: NYASILI ATETWE, KENYA

REVIEWER: MAJORY MOONO SIMUYUNI, ZAMBIA

**D**own and Out is a short story about a school boy who is fanatical about football. His fanaticism is revealed through his betting on school events, his habit of buying his sweet and stiff blouses for school tips, and eventually his place in the institution. Because his school team made a big mistake, he seemed to have forgotten that while all days are not all days are Sunday. Because this is what happens while we are busy making plans, his team lost at the home ground in the MVM Matasi, his penalty was lost to the closing of the match.

When you read a brief story from the football pitch, where our nameless narrator is suffering a sense of loss and does not know what to do next, you could focus on some of the elements of a short story. A good story usually takes off running and continues to engage your mind long after you've put it away. It is also lyrical, speaking to the reader in a universal language of emotions, using simple situations to explain a complex situation that is much more global than the actual story (Wells 2002). On characterization, Ernest Hemingway is quotable: "The dignity of movement of a fierce bird is due to only one-eighth of being above water. A writer... knows enough of what he is writing about when he may omit things that he knows and the reader... will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them" (Reedsy 2020). The same principle could be applied to the plot of a short story. Unlike the long form, where one does not wrestle against a stunningly big space, a short story is a race against space. Therefore, good ones are compact, with symbolism and imagery making philosophical prerequisites soundly backed up with a brave concept. That's why a well-sculptured story fits in Hemingway's theory. When it comes to a fierce bird, there is little to see with the eye on the surface of the water, but there is so much more fit below, and thanks to literary criticism, we are able to see the big world through a seemingly small situation (Leahy 1961).

Atetwe is trying to depict a universal picture of ambition, success, and failure, using a universal love of football. Instead of telling the reader what he is doing, he elaborates on imagery and symbolism in this work to show his point. Here is a high school boy whose problems should probably be just academic, but he has a girlfriend and has nailed himself to a grown man's responsibility provision. As if that's not enough, he could be regretting his school tip, but he won't. This should come to say that there are times that people overstep their abilities. To be ambitious is a great thing, but to be overambitious is another topic. This boy deposited his eggs into a basket that he had no control over. One would wonder whether it's an act of faith or an act of sheer stupidity. He was counting on the football strike. Matasi is best, so victory is his. He always said, "Even when the coach bawled in for the second half, the boy's exuberance did not

wanted in the evening minutes of the match. A fate would have it, that day fall days Mata fails to score a penalty.

The ball flew inches above the left-hand corner of the goalpost, crushing into the crowd. The whistle blew and that was the end of the story. In the narrow margin with which Mata missed the goal, it is as if he was trying to show the world that there is a very thin line between success and failure. The same formula that always wins could fail, but that doesn't mean we should never try it is better to try and fail than to fail to try. Risk-takers are said to be record-breakers. It is probably why a stupidish-seeming boy betted his school.

The opening of the story is yet another plot device. A full-time hope is a good wind! "Let's go home!" Nato nudged at my ribs'. A good story starts as close to the end as possible. There's no room for that might make the reader slumber. The story begins in medias res and does not end until the final period. The reader is left wondering what happened to the boy, what he would get back, will he drop out of school, will his relationship with his sweetheart continue, what will his parents do to him? How did Mata take his failure to score? Did his fans lose their respect for him?

The title of the story, however, is a complete sell-out, a major literary crime against the heart of short-story writing. Whether viewed from a narrative perspective or a literary sense, it would have done better in that department. A good story is nothing simpler, straight forward, and simplified with the weak title. Because that it does not surprise any reader of good fiction that Mata missed the penalty, it's all out in the title right from the onset, pretty much like getting an orgasm just before the sexual act begins. What is said and done though. Dow and Out's brilliant story worth reading year and over again.

## References

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Lewis, S. (1961). *An Experiment in Criticism*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Welty, E. (2002). *Dr. Writing*. New York: Modern Library.

[www.reedsy.com](http://www.reedsy.com)



**GENRE: ESSAY**

**TITLE: OF A FAILING YET WEALTHY LAND**

**WRITER: LEO MUZIVOREVA, ZIMBABWE**

**REVIEWER: NAMSE UDOSEN, NIGERIA**

In this essay, the author takes a course on the contrasting fortunes of development in Africa. The author begins by presenting development statistics recorded by different African countries and juxtaposes them with the prevalent poverty across the continent. The thesis that "for Africa to grow sustainably, will need to pursue comprehensive methodologies that address the bottlenecked development."

The crux of the piece are the six hindrances the author pinpoints as the stumbling blocks to progress in Africa.

Civil war and terrorism, corruption, education and knowledge gap, health and poverty, geographical disadvantage and international trade are discussed by the author from a holistic point.

The style is simple and easy to read. It is well structured from introduction to conclusion.

However, the points in the body of the work are sketchy. Core statistical and economic metrics. An essay of this nature needs more facts. For example, what are the peculiar geographical features giving Africa a problem in development?

Despite this, it is still an interesting read. The article should push the reader to search deeper.

GENRE: COLUMNS

TITLE: LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

WRITER: UGBEDE ATABOH, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: COLIN KARIMI, KENYA (THE\_POWERHOUSE)

**A**taboh's creative column "Life As We Know It" concerning the writer's engagement of the imagination of the reader by limiting their perception of life. We all know we have different purposes in this so-called life. It is crucial to appreciate that one is above six feet as the writer envisions technicalities of the physical and spiritual domains. It is a bit scary for one to think of the spiritual world, as one would shiver once death comes to play. This is so as the main character represents a childhood that was traumatized with the loss of someone close to such a young age. More so, the mountain dweller could potentially be the uniqueness of the young hiker.

This column speaks more of what one could do when they are alive and distract their destinies with what they are meant to be. In this context, the main character is poised to become something great that is without a doubt beyond their current scope.

The column also incorporates the Bible's Revelation 12:11 that brings hope to the already confused main character. From my perspective, it is a bit hard to think the best of oneself, thus diluting the notion of failure. Nonetheless, the column was quite exciting to read with a few shivers here and there.

**TITLE: A FAILURE'S WORTH**

**GENRE: CHILDREN LITERATURE**

**WRITER: CUPIDO STEPHANIE, SOUTH AFRICA**

**REVIEWER: RACHAEL TWINOMUGISHA, UGANDA**

**S**adness, bitterness, hopelessness, self-hate and laziness are failure's worth. Remedies to this are friendship, teamwork, concentration and hard work as illustrated by Cupido Stephanie in her story, "A Failure's Worth".

Bozo who considers himself a failure because everyone thinks he's one that he failed to find an answer to his homework, sits sadly on a bench in the park.

Buddy the other hand has a new freebie birthday gift from his uncle and he's looking for someone to play with. He happens upon Bozo who is unwilling to join him sad about his homework. Buddy suggests that he help Bozo finish his work and then they can play. To this Bozo agrees.

While Buddy is helping him, he realises that Bozo is actually very smart but doesn't concentrate and doesn't read a lot. He advises him to start reading.

In this very short story, the author tackles a number of themes as earlier mentioned causes/effects of failure and remedies.

It is a beautiful story that parents and guardians should read.

(Maybe our children are just dull. Maybe she needs assistance just like Bozo.)

The author does justice to the theme.

In my opinion though, the author's bit of the story does not affect the plot in any helpful way and if I were a girl, I would have it out. The third character is not a vital character and does not affect the development of the story. I wonder if we don't girls in South Africa play!

I find the title a bit complex for children to understand and doesn't relate smoothly with the body of the work.

Otherwise, it is a beautiful story, literally visualised everything I read. Children will love it too!

**GENRE: POETRY**

**TITLE: FAILURE**

**WRITER: ISIBOR PETER IBANE, NIGERIA**

**REVIEWER: PRECIOUS ADEKOLA, NIGERIA**

The poem 'Failure' is a poem of 7 stanzas, broken into tercets. The poet makes use of the Agamézar as a literary representation of just the struggle of the personality of humanity, as failure is a universal phenomenon. This idea of struggle covers all aspects of the human existence from childhood to teenage/young adulthood.

The poem is highly descriptive and allegorical with the use of the Agamézar to portray a salient truth about humanity: that we must put in the effort to succeed, and do so by luck or divine design.

The poet employs repetition of words like "failure", "determination", "fall", "success". The literary element employed to emphasize the determination towards work is the key to success, however, one may argue that success is a relative term and sometimes we have to work smarter and not harder. This is expressed in line 3 of Stanza 5, "till it climbed and succeeded".

The poet makes use of antithesis in stanza 3 to explain how slowly circumstances make us do this, but this is contradictory to being determined, as it leaves no space for failure to weigh one down.

The poet employs iambic pentameter in the structure of conveying his message. He makes use of visual imagery through the eyes of the teary one on the couch to paint a mental picture and bring the reader to relate to the ideas being passed across.

The mood/tone is first morose, then resilient and optimistic. The tone of finality is didactic as it relays an important message: that success is a product of perseverance and determination. The end rhyme is an artistic substance that is used for the purpose of aesthetics.

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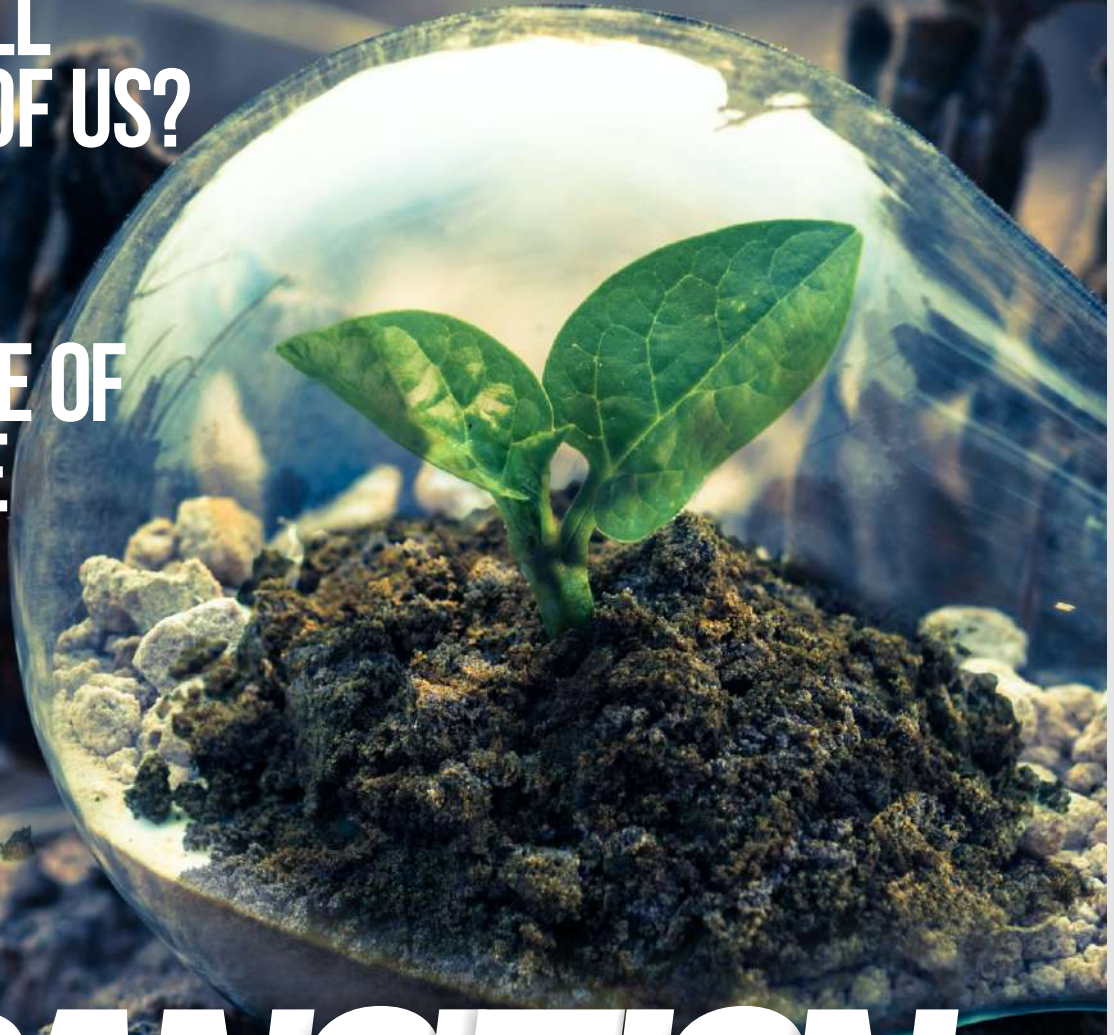
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# WHAT WILL BECOME OF US?

LEO MUZIVOREVA  
ZIMBABWE

# THE DANCE OF SELF LOVE

NDANU JACQUELINE  
KENYA



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BECOMING

VOL. 6 NO. 4



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Writers Space Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for her August 2020 Edition in the following categories:

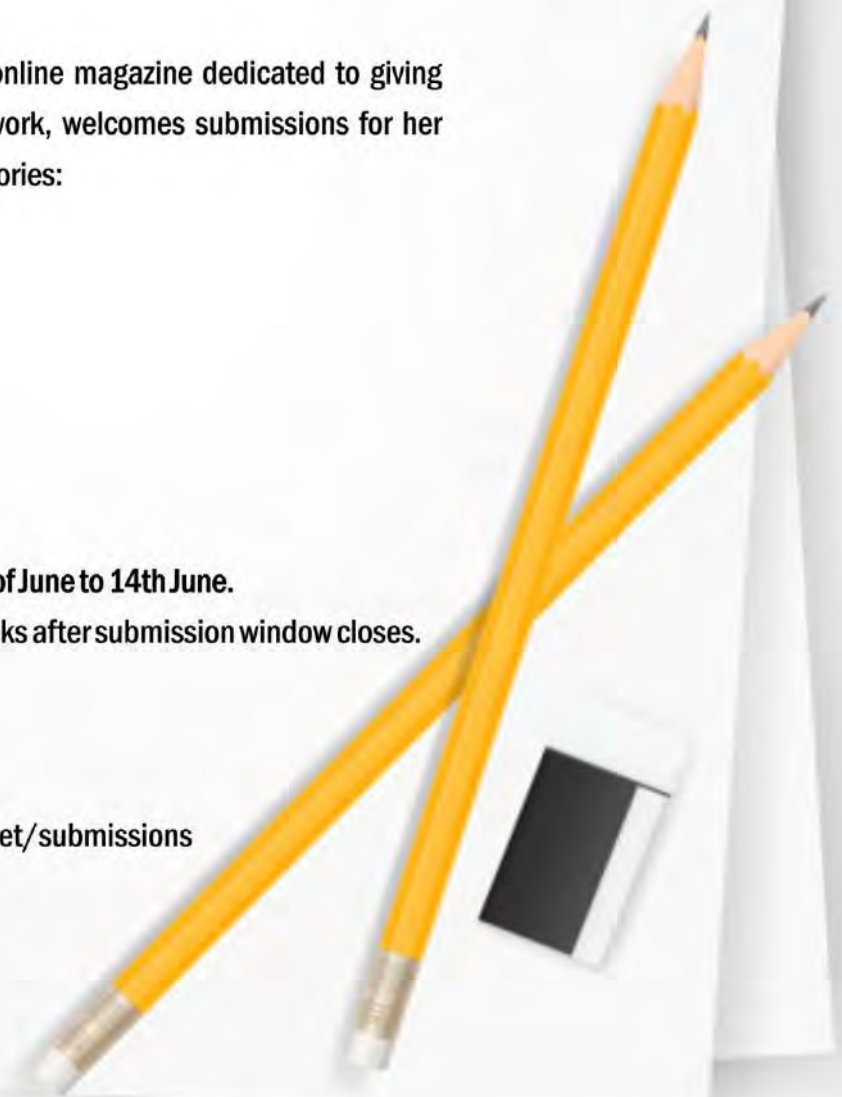
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- Poetry
- Essays
- Children's Literature

The Submission windows is open from **1st of June to 14th June.**

Response time is typically within 4 to 5 weeks after submission window closes.

We look forward to receiving your best.

To submit, please visit [www.writersspace.net/submissions](http://www.writersspace.net/submissions)



# EDITOR'S NOTE

In the various stages of our lives, we are often tempted to believe that we have “arrived” the end of the journey and all things have reached completion. This image is itself a comforting one and I wouldn't mind dwelling in the rest that it brings. However, life is hardly ever that simple. It is interesting to know that no matter how many years you have lived on this Earth, each day you wake up in is a day you have never lived before – every moment is a new moment, one filled with potential.

It is in these days that we find ourselves becoming who we are meant to be. The process of becoming is one we make without ever realising we are making it. Transitions are more times than not, a quiet, uninspiring (and sometimes short-lived) moment.

Maybe these moments are meant to go by unnoticed, maybe they are not. Neither of these matter. What matters more than anything else is our willingness to transition; our desire to become; our audacity to reach the end. All of this can be found in the little things; the ones we hate to do because they are difficult, boring and annoying. These are the things that give us the ability to become whatever we may.

Remember this in your writing, because the keys to a well-lived life can easily be applied to a well-rounded writing career.

Always remember, Ubuntu.

Warm regards,  
Nabilah.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editor's Note	4
Editorial Crew	5
Table of Contents	6
Short Story	7-11
Columns	12-16
Children Literature	17-19
Poetry	19-30
Reviews	31-37

# GABORONE RANGERS

Nkululeko Diteko  
Botswana



**W**e would gather around the common room, listening to him talk about his beloved Gaborone Rangers, how they humiliated Desert Cosmos in the Super Cup final back in 2015 and how Killer Kgosidialwa scored a brace on that day. He narrated the mesmerizing performance of Stanley 'Dog Engine' Mosojane and Bobby 'The Great' Motlhala. Smaller children would listen

keenly, but as for us, big girls with pubic hairs, we came to the gathering not for some football mumbo-jumbo, but to get a whiff of testosterone, for wherever Gaborone Rangers was, so were all the boys.

Mrs Halabi insisted that we should call him by his given name, Lebitso, however Gaborone Rangers was on the tip of our tongues. Since he came to the shelter a month ago,

Gaborone Rangers was all he talked about, day and night, awake and asleep, literally. In his sleep talk, he would imitate Ray 'Papa Action' Sechele, the legendary sports commentator.

His football fascination once got him in trouble with a bunch of hooligans. Young Stars Football Club they called themselves, but there was nothing young about them, their faces were mountainous

with pimples and their calves were hard as rocks. They were not even a club, but a bunch of unemployed jerks that puffed marijuana and drank cheap spirits before they chased the ball in the dusty field near our shelter.

The hooligans had foul mouths.

"It's AIDS that killed your mothers, not us" they would say to us.

Mrs Halabi told us to stay away from them, but that was impractical. Their playing field was on the pathway to both the school and the church.

We were on our way from church one Sunday. Smaller children, bawling of hunger, were walking slowly at the back of the horde, but us, big girls with raised chests, were at the front, trying to keep up with the boys. Not just any boys, but those with deep voices, the ones with broad shoulders, those that got a bulge whenever they saw us in our panties after evening baths. And Gaborone Rangers was one of those.

Just as we passed by the football field, the hooligans' ball went out of play, and came rolling in our direction. We all looked at him, praying he wouldn't do anything stupid. The hooligans did not like it when we touch their ball, but he did not know them as we did, he was a newbie. We stopped, and so seemed everything else around us,

well, except for the ball, and of course, him.

He charged towards the ball, and trapped it under his foot. We thought he would pass it back to them, like Kara once did. No, but not Gaborone Rangers, he had to drive the ball back into the field with his left foot, much to the annoyance of the big, dark skinned guy who came to the touchline to collect the ball. He tried to grab Gaborone Rangers by the t-shirt, but he cleverly ducked away, dribbling around him.

Other hooligans ran towards him, but he dribbled easily around them, one after the other, some of them falling to the ground, until he was left with only the goalkeeper. With his finger, he pointed to the top left corner of the posts, and the goalkeeper followed the finger, diving devotedly in that direction, but Gaborone Rangers kicked the ball softly to the bottom right corner. It was a goal.

He ran to the corner-kick spot in celebration, taking off his t-shirt and spinning in the air two times. It was only on the landing of his second spin that he realised that he was in trouble, the hooligans were already upon him, pinning him to the ground at once. From where we were, we could hear their thumping fists. We thought they were going to kill him, but he was saved by the shrill of a whistle.

"Let him go, you imbeciles" said the pot-bellied man with a whistle in his hand.

"But coach, he...." they tried to protest, but he blew his whistle again. "I SAID LEAVE HIM ALONE!" he yelled, and they did, at once.

Gaborone Rangers did not make any attempt to stand up; he was focused on his bleeding nose. He stared at them one by one, right in their eyes, as if he was recording them in his memory.

"What's your name, son?" asked the man with a whistle, reaching out his hand to help him up. But there was no answer, Gaborone Rangers' gaze and concentration were still on his persecutors.

"Gaborone Rangers" we said "What?" the whistle man turned to us.

"His name is Gaborone Rangers" we said again, in chorus.

The whistle man's gaze went back to Gaborone Rangers, exploring his blue and white football shirt. He grinned at the sight of the emblem.

"He stays in the orphanage too? I haven't seen him before" he said.

"Yes, he's a newbie" we said and the man smiled, again.

"Okay, you can take him home now, tell your matron I'll come by and talk to her later" he said to us, and then turned to Gaborone Rangers

"I am really sorry, son, I'll make sure these idiots pay for what they did to you"



Indeed, the man came to the shelter that evening. He had a lengthy conversation with Mrs Halabi, who seemed not to be agreeing with anything that was being said. After the man had left, we asked Mrs Halabi what he said, but she wouldn't tell us.

The following day, the whistle man came with two other people, a man and a woman. It was another lengthy discussion, in the garden, distant from our eavesdropping. Once

again, after they left, we asked Mrs Halabi what the meeting was about, but she wouldn't tell. Instead, she called Gaborone Rangers aside, and they had a chat, in private.

Later that night, in the common room, with bowls of porridge in our hands, we asked Gaborone Rangers what Mrs Halabi had said to him, but he didn't give us straight answers. He just smiled and repeated the word, Trials.

What were Trials? Was it the name of his new family? Whenever a man

and a woman came to the shelter, it was for one reason only, and that was adoption. But families seldom adopt fifteen year old boys.

When we gathered up for breakfast the next morning, we were twenty eight instead of twenty nine, Gaborone Rangers' seat was empty. We made our own conclusions, he was gone.

Later that evening, we heard a big engine sound at the gate, it was a bus, and there he was. He was still wearing the blue and white colors of Gaborone Rangers Football Club, except, these ones were new. On his feet was a modish pair of sneakers, and he was wearing blue track pants. Gaborone Rangers Football Club emblem was embroidered to the upper left corner of his dazzling white t-shirt, and his initials, L.B, were printed to the upper right. A blue sweater was knotted around his waist and he carried a travel bag loosely with his left hand.

He stared at us, one after the other, fighting back the tears that threatened to escape the corners of his eyes.

It was done, Gaborone Rangers was now a Gaborone Ranger. As for us, big girls who liked him so much, we would only see him on television, not as Gaborone Rangers, but Lebiso 'Great Thy Name' Butale of Gaborone Rangers.



# THE DANCE OF SELF LOVE

Ndanu Jacqueline  
Kenya

The day is slowly coming to an end, sun rays shine boldly into my living room and I take the moment to appreciate the warmth they come with. Filtering through the golden curtains in my studio apartment, they somewhat resemble golden showers and I can't help but bask in the beauty of it all.

Kisumu has always been known for its magical sunsets, but this one seems intent on putting on a show. Oddly enough it's eerily quiet outside, the neighborhood children must have discovered another play spot. To me however, the illusion is not lost, the sense of quietness and peace resembling the stillness after war. Only this time the war was within myself, and I am both the adversary and the attacker. Right now, I'm consumed by a sense of peace, which has felt alien in this body of mine, like an impromptu guest. I have had to try it out and break into it much like new shoes on the first few days.

I leisurely walk to my speaker, select a



playlist and sweet notes of afro soul fill the room. Almost automatically, my hips sway to the beat; a joy that I've only recently acquired. You see, during war, every last available resource is spent on necessities for the sake of survival. I am no different. For me, joy was a luxury I just couldn't afford, always an outlier in the budget of life. In the background, the beats get groovier, interrupting my

train of thought and my whole body is compelled to join the dance, a celebration of life and victory. They say some of the hardest battles to win are the ones within. I had however fought valiantly, learning on the job with more failures than victories. There had been a few lost battles albeit the war was eventually won.





The music fades out as the song comes to an end and I find myself walking to the mirror. I gaze at the tall curvy dark-skinned female in the mirror, skin glistening from my dance earlier. At a height of 5`7, I had always towered over most girls my age. This however was not without fault. I always seemed to attract a wide variety of opinions: “too tall for a girl”, “can` t wear heels”, “maybe if you were shorter”.

My mind goes back to how shrunken the little girl within felt. I run my hands through my coarse hair firmly held in place in a short bun above my head.

Years and years of straightening it had taken its toll. The damage had been almost irreversible save for its resilience, a trait I knew all too well. And this skin, beautiful ebony skin that had housed my body all these years, always glowing in the sun rays. How sad it is, that I spent so long fighting the war within, a completely senseless war.

I`m brought back to the present by the beats to my favorite song, and soon again, a smile lights up my face. My black silk dress swishes one way then another following the span of my curves, as I find myself breaking into

dance once more. The sadness that earlier loomed on my head already vanishing into air, nothing but a distant memory. I can` t help but pride in the woman I have become, the hard work that went into becoming her despite the odds stacked against her. Joy ripples in my chest, this moment is perfect. In the end, I have transformed from that quiet little girl to a confident self-loving woman.

Perhaps what I never anticipated is how much strength and beauty I would acquire in my transition.

# LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

Ugbede Ataboh  
Nigeria



**T**here comes a time in every man's life when he must decide whether to remain stuck or move forward; in this context, Nigeria is "The Man".

I woke up this morning at peace with God for preserving me and my family during this trying period of the Covid-19 pandemic, but angry at

the Nigerian government for neglecting and failing to safeguard and provide for Nigerian citizens at a time like this. All business sectors except the food and drug sectors have closed down indefinitely; unfortunately, prices of food and drugs have escalated. This is a time when the love of and for the average Nigerian has waxed cold. Imagine

me storming out of my neighborhood drug store earlier today after what should have been a mundane purchase...

"Good morning dear, please do you guys have face masks for sale?" I asked the attendant cheerfully.

"Yes we do" She responded, as she lifted her head from the counter tiredly.

Poor girl, these people on essential duties are not finding it easy this period. " Okay then, please let me ha..."

"Good morning! Please what would you like to purchase?" A chubby middle aged man wearing a lab coat asked as he emerged from the consultation room behind the counter, interrupting the ongoing exchange between me and the store attendant with his irritating high pitched voice. He must have noticed my displeased expression but decided to press on, unfortunately.



"What do I call you? Is it Miss or Mr?  
The lower part of your hair is shaved,  
while the upper part is permed.  
Hehehehe"

Some people think they can crack  
dry jokes about trending hair styles  
these days and get away with it. They  
obviously have not met me, I ignore  
him completely.

"My dear, please how much is your  
face mask?"

"Five hundred naira each"

"What?! Are you guys kidding? Five  
hundred naira for one disposable  
pathetic looking surgical mask? You  
can as well join the gang of day light  
robbers currently stripping our  
nation of what's left of it! Bloody  
ripp-off's!" I rant as I storm towards  
the exit.

I totally believe our government is  
the number one problem we are  
facing as a nation, followed by our  
Police force, and then, "We" the  
masses.

Imagine the government refusing to  
properly disburse and give account  
of the Fifteen billion Naira donated  
by Nigerian philanthropists to fight  
the Covid-19 pandemic and cater to  
Nigerians during this trying period.

Imagine the lack of involvement of  
our police force in trying to curb the  
shameful theft and mayhem  
currently taking place in Ogun state  
and some parts of Lagos mainland.  
Neighborhoods are currently  
burning tires on their streets to serve  
as a source of light at night. No  
power supply and people are being  
robbed to make matters worse.

Imagine we Nigerians unable to love  
each other. Active business owners  
inflating their prices instead of  
giving reasonable discounts;  
Restive youths robbing the poor  
and vulnerable instead of  
safeguarding and rebuilding their  
wrecked communities; Narrow  
minded Religious leaders  
misleading the flock with

frightening and demoralizing end-  
time messages instead of preaching  
spirit lifting messages of hope,  
revival and renewal.

As Nigerians, we are fighting  
enemies on every side; We are not  
just fighting the pandemic but the  
fear of poverty. I dare say a time will  
come, not too long from now, that  
Nigerians will come out of their  
homes and resume their daily  
mundane but income generating  
routines; whether the Pandemic  
chooses to vanish or remain "the  
elephant in the room". This is not a  
radical remark, but a realistic  
forecast, considering the current  
state of affairs in Nigeria. Fear of the  
Covid-19 pandemic will keep us  
locked in until the overwhelming  
fear of poverty will eventually drive  
us out; and by "Us", I refer to not  
just average Nigerians, but the  
upper class as well because one  
thing the Rich fear more than  
untimely death is the fear of falling  
from "Grace" to "Grass".

We will get through this, but only if  
we can boldly transition from being  
Wicked unpatriotic citizens to  
Compassionate human beings  
willing to join hands in order  
overcome national challenges...  
and if we do not? We will definitely  
not be annihilated by the pandemic,  
but we may finally give in to the  
impending doom of disintegration.

# WHAT WILL BECOME OF US?

Leo Muzivoreva  
Zimbabwe



**W**here will we be in six months, a year, ten years from now?

I lie awake at night wondering what the future holds for my loved ones, my vulnerable friends and relatives. I wonder what will happen to my job, even though I am luckier than most - I can work remotely. I am writing this from South Africa, where I have self-employed friends who are staring down the barrel of months without pay and friends who have already lost jobs. The coronavirus hit the

economy hard. Will anyone be hiring when most people are in need of work? Being a journalist is like being a boxer, what you write is solely your responsibility just like how what goes down in a boxing ring is to the boxer.

Allow me to air my sentiments regarding what I think will become of the world around me after this novel virus is gone or at least controlled. Already, tonnes of writings have surfaced on the

geopolitical implications of the coronavirus. Most analysts rightly concur that the world changed in those hard-to-pinpoint moments when the outbreak went globally viral.

It is now virtually cliché to refer to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) that causes the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) or simply coronavirus as a global phenomenon. The World Health

Organization (WHO) designated it a pandemic on March 11 after the fact. In other words, the novel coronavirus was global before it was declared pandemic.

What are the implications for Africa? It would help if the whole kit and caboodle of African governments, academics, businesses and civil society comprehended the fact that the world will not be same after the dust settles on the pandemic.

The words of Italian communist leader and scholar Antonio Gramsci uttered in 1929 ring true today: "The old world is dying and the new world struggles to be born". With lockdowns, curfews, conspiracies and moral panics, the whole world has not only dramatically changed but continues to do so before our eyes. The suddenness and fluidity of the pandemic means that political, economic and financial projection and risk assessments for 2020 and the 2020s decade have to be re-analysed given the upended global optics. It is for this reason that rating agency Moody's downgrading of South Africa on March 27 is not only preposterous but also based on a world quite different from the one we knew just the other day.

Economic downturns in places like South Africa caused in part by poor

governance and in places like Nigeria due partly to oil price wars between Russia and Saudi Arabia will have to be revised afresh.

Parallels have been drawn between the current crisis and past crises of all kinds. Because the pandemic is both a health and economic problem, the global financial meltdown of 2007/08 has shown a particularly unnerving similarity.

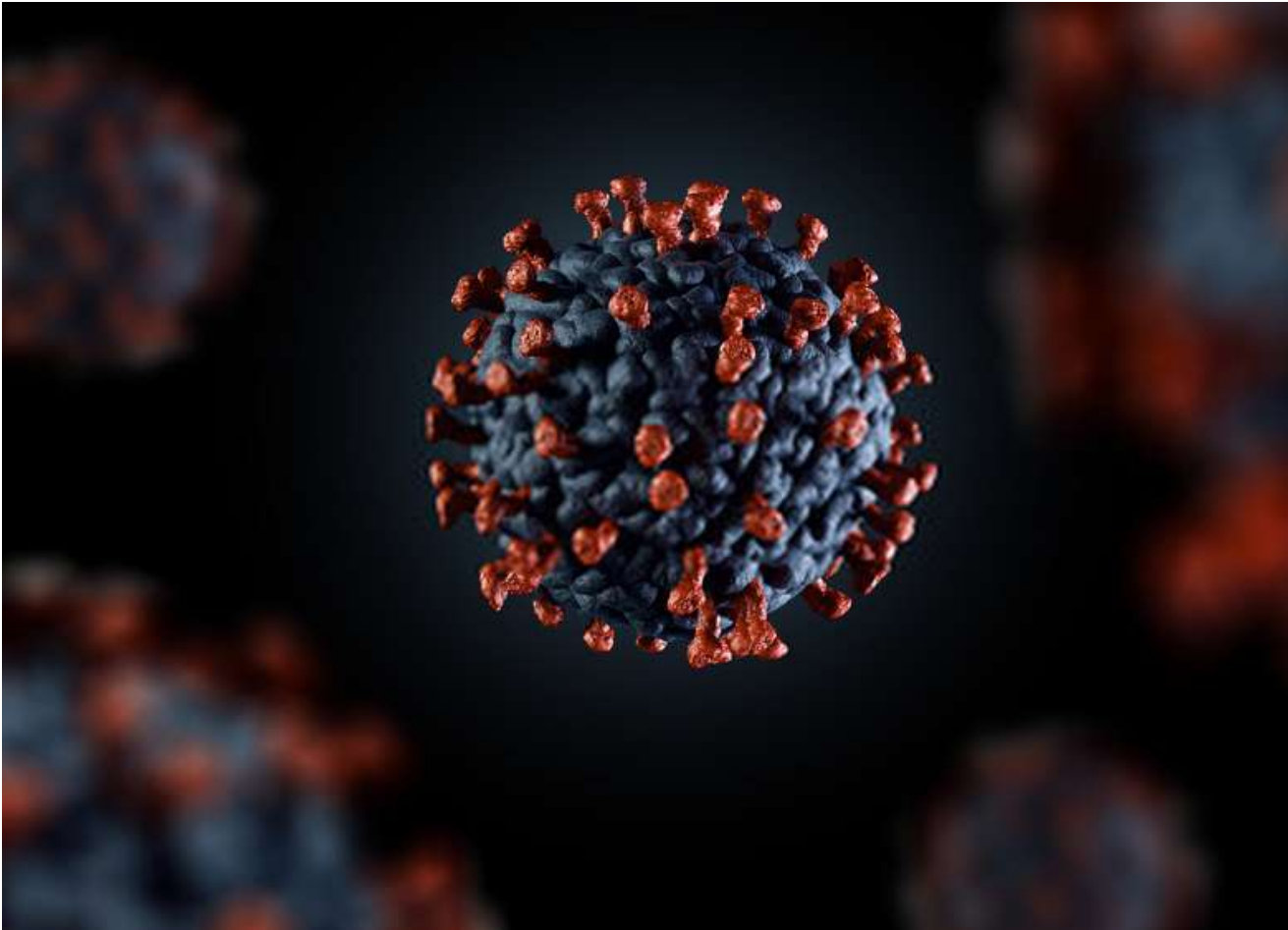
How the big powers in the global balance of power manage the crisis on their shores and abroad will be a major barometer for the new world that we are uncertainly entering. During the 2007/08 crisis, talk of the decline of the West and the rise of what would be referred to as emerging economies was rife. It is perhaps time to revisit the works of analysts such as Dambisa Moyo (Dead Aid, 2010, How the West Lost 2011) and Fareed Zakaria (The Post-American World, 2008) to mention but two authors.

More importantly, the global power-play revolving around the coronavirus-enforced dynamics will signal the geopolitical shifts that African countries will need to consider. One point among others is that the period immediately after the global financial meltdown over a decade ago, saw relations between African nations and emerging powers surging with China as the de

facto leader. What happens now that both China and the West have been hammered by the virus?

The new normal post-Covid-19 might mean that African nations reliant on aid from the global north and some emerging economies find themselves on their own as hitherto wealthy nations – badly hit Spain, Italy and China come to mind – struggle to reconstruct their battered economies. Six years ago when the Ebola virus ravaged Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone; the US, China and the EU stepped in to fill the gap. Today, African countries are virtually on their own as these countries battle the pandemic at home with limited wiggle room to extend a helping hand abroad. The little we have seen in assistance is the \$500,000 support by the USAID to South Africa, the African nation with the highest number of infections on the continent. China, where the virus is commonly believed to have started has been more agile in donating testing kits across the continent. At this point however, the assistance falls short of traditional American and Chinese responses to disasters of the Covid-19 magnitude on the continent.

The foregoing indicates that African countries that entertain the optimism of the world bouncing back to the pre-pandemic times



should better get used to the fact the world is already moving in an entirely new direction. Even though the WHO has been censured for slow action when the virus first surfaced in central China, it would appear that this UN entity is the one that has done the most in providing testing equipment and providing public health information to the continent. Should African leaders therefore lobby for a bigger role for this cash-starved entity – and indeed the UN system in general – in the post-pandemic period?

The pandemic is a live demonstration and consequence of

globalization while at the same time revealing and accelerating its fault lines. Save for selected pockets such as South Africa's fledgling tech industry, Kenya's nascent innovation hubs and Nigeria's tech-savvy Nollywood industry, many of the leaps in globalization have eluded the African continent. For instance, appreciable use of the internet – globalization's enabler – started gaining traction only in the mid-2000s, long after it had become a way of life elsewhere.

Ironically, Africa's late insertion into the heart of the globalization may have been a blessing in

disguise, shielding the region from what would be an early uptick in coronavirus cases. As a demonstration and consequence of globalization, coronavirus has smashed the records in terms of reaching all the corners of the world at supersonic speed. The dense worldwide web of aerial, marine and terrestrial transport systems played a definitive role in the jumping of the virus from China to the rest of the world. These infrastructure that facilitate globalization ensured that the virus could be in one location in one hour and materialise in another location in a couple of hours.

# BEST STUDENTS

Montanyane Halieo  
Lesotho

Leseli had two friends, Letlotlo and Liketso. The trio were the noisiest and naughtiest students in their 5<sup>th</sup> Grade class. They were always the first suspects whenever a pen or book was stolen in the class. That was why their teacher, Miss Lira never bothered to put their names on the list of students who would get a gift on a Friday of Appreciation. In their school, every Friday was an Appreciation day for two students who performed well in class and general behavior.

One day when Leseli was going to school, he found a phone on the side of the road. He took it and hid it until after school. Then he took the phone home and showed it to his father. His father took the phone and studied it. It was an expensive phone and looked brand new.

“So what will you do with it?” His father asked Leseli.

Leseli looked at him blankly. He had expected his father to keep the phone and use it.

“Don't you want it?” He asked his father.

“It's not mine.” His father said

“I don't know its owner. I would rather give it to you than play with it.”

“Tell you what?” His father said, “Take the phone to school with you. Try to find the owner. Give it to your teacher if need be. But if you still can't find the owner,

bring it back and I will use it”

Leseli nodded. However, he knew that if he gave the phone to Miss Lira, he might never see it again. So he decided to come up with a plan with his friends.

When they arrived in school the next morning, Leseli showed his friends the phone. After a long discussion, they agreed that they would wait until the following week without telling anyone about the phone. But later in the class, Miss Lira made an announcement about a lost phone and the owner wanting it. Leseli stood up and presented the phone to Miss Lira. He even told her that it was his friends and him who found the phone.

Everyone was shocked at Leseli's actions. Miss Lira took them to the principal and handed the phone personally to the principal. Leseli and his friends were declared the best students of the month. They were presented with gifts from the principal and the owner of the phone. From that time on, Leseli and his friends became better students and were chosen as students of the week more often.

# FINUM GOES TO THE VILLAGE



**Namse Udosen**  
Nigeria



**F**inum lived on a big farm in Kaduna. He had a big room to himself. All the other goats stayed in the open space next to his room. In the morning, Mr Asake would open the door and lead him and the other goats to the greens to graze. Finum enjoyed tearing up the grass from roots very fast. He would gobble up mouthfuls after which he would go and lie under the mango tree. The other goats would not eat until he had finished. They were all scared of Finum. If any of them came any close to his grazing spot, he would lunge his big head, horns first at them.

One day a group of people came to the farm with Mr Asake. Three men walked towards Finum. He felt something was wrong and made a dash for the pen. The men gave chase. Finum turned left and right in quick succession. One of the men tried to grab his horn and fell. All the other goats shouted "run, Finum, run!" The second man caught his left hind leg. Finum kicked! He made a dash to right but he ran straight into the arms of the third man. The man held his horns and pinned him to the ground. Finum struggled, but the other two men joined in and tied his legs.

Mr Asake smiled and told the men, "tell Papa this is my birthday gift to him."

The men drove off with Finum securely tied at the back of the truck.

Finum tried to be brave. Memories of how Mr Asake used to stroke his head and rub his belly came flooding to his mind. He let out a loud bleat! He couldn't take the betrayal. "So this is how I die." He cried all the way.

The place the car stopped was strange to Finum. They put him down and untied him. He was surprised. He quickly made a run for it. The compound was not fenced. There were bushes all over the place and Finum dashed into one. He was happy he had escaped. He was going to find his way back to the farm.

"Silly you! Where do you think you are running to?"





That was the big brown Bororo goat standing in the middle of some tall grasses. The goat was surrounded by six others.

Finum was shocked! He was also happy. These goats must have escaped from the bad people who brought him. This must be some sort of hideout he thought.

"Good day guys!" He greeted. "I want to escape back to my farm. Don't you guys have a farm too?"

The goats gave a loud bleaty laugh. Another farm goat on a lost cause.

The big brown Bororo goat came close to him, sniffed him over, then nudged him with curved horns.

"Stop that! Just tell me the way back to my farm."

The big brown Bororo, stared Finum in the face and told him there was no going back. He told him the story of how farm goats always tried to escape but ended up dead or lost. Finum was scared. Big brown Bororo told him to be a tag along with him and he would enjoy the village. He introduced him to the other goats.

First of all, Finum had to learn what leaves to eat. This was unlike the farm where he had sweet grass prepared for him. Big brown Bororo showed him grass for

different occasions. "If you have an itchy tongue, eat these wide, hairy leaves and you will be fine" Bororo said as he munched on some.

Later in the evening, big brown Bororo told Finum it was time to go home. Finum was lazing under an Udala tree, regurgitating and chewing the cud while waiting for the master to take them home. Big brown Bororo told him, they would follow the yellow ball in the sky back to the compound. He taught Finum how to follow the big yellow ball and tell when it was time to go home.

They all marched home with big brown Bororo leading the way. Different groups branched off when they got to their compounds.

When they got to big brown Bororo's compound, some women and an old man grabbed Finum by the hind legs. He bleated, asking big brown Bororo to help him. The old man, tied a piece of red cloth around his neck and let him go.

Big brown Bororo smiled at him, "you are now one of us."

# BECOMING

Mwanduka Peggy  
Kenya



It was not expected,  
It defied everything she had planned.  
Things had taken a complete turn,  
She stood, because it was impossible to run.

She knew the only way to deal, was to face it,  
Feel the mixed emotions and go through it,  
She didn't have to like it,  
But she had to do it.

Embrace her fears,  
So that she would no longer be afraid  
Wipe her tears,  
So that she could move forward.

To fight another day,  
For her shoots to unravel,  
For her flowers to blossom,  
For her to become.

Seasons would come and go,  
Change would be unavoidable,  
In moments high and low,  
Her resilience would be unstoppable.

# BLURRED VISION

Chisaka Kevin  
Kenya



My ink is fading  
Hazy state from too much thinking  
Loud silence from too much paining

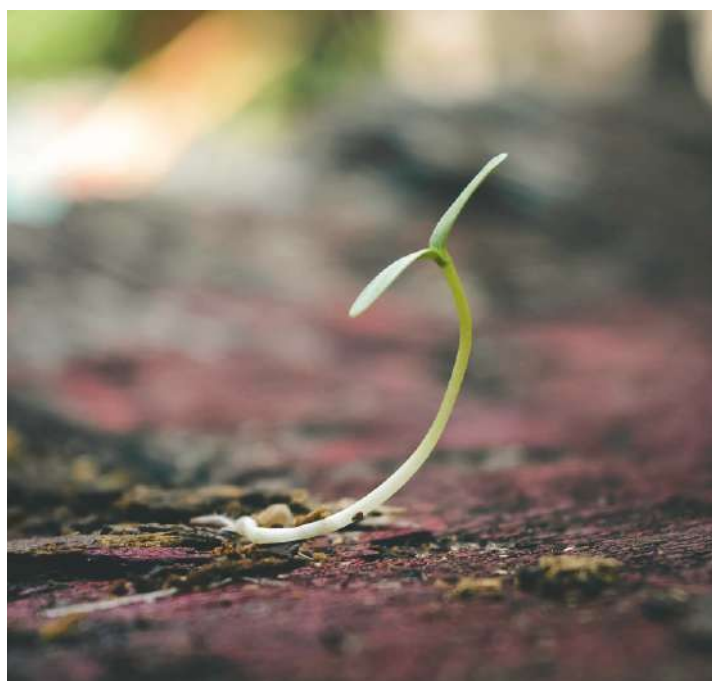
Afraid and scared to trod  
Unsure what the future holds  
I can hear reverberations and screams  
But too late to chide and scheme

Tears won't blur  
My dreamy visions  
Grin will light up my world  
And fulfill my now far-fetched mission  
As I transit from this paranormal night

# BREAKING FORTH



**Temani Nkalolang  
Botswana**



A seed in the ground,  
Takes root, then a new life sprouts.  
Change, the wheel of life.

# BECOMING A SUPERHERO

Tamedou Muhammed  
Gambia

Be the man they say !  
Shoulder the weight of the earth without making a sound,  
Master the art of dying without your soul screaming!  
They say!

Becoming a man, means becoming a superhero!  
Piercing your soul without your skin trembling,  
without your eyes setting tears like a plain desert

They say!  
To be a superhero,  
is to swallow every bit of your grief,  
never letting a wound fester into a scar,  
And be the first to dare the flames,  
Be the first to jump into belly of the beast,  
Be the sacrificial lamb to embrace the demon into your  
soul!  
For those whom you love!

To be a man they say!  
Means growing the stomach to swallow every storm,  
Swallow every tornado!  
bear the burden of being a man,  
dare the blunt knife of a butcher,  
to be a life jacket or die like a martyr for those whom you  
love!

# RECONSTRUCTION

Elizabeth Onyango  
Kenya



Sometimes I wonder, in tears,  
About my own mind and ears,  
Have had them all these years,  
With different songs of hope.

Contradicting songs I play!  
So happy! Excited I may say,  
For all I hear and feel today!  
To prosper, I will someday.

To prosper someday?  
Toiling below the scorching rays,  
Dust to dusk with a pinch as pay,  
Lifetime dreams seem nay.

Lifetime dreams growing cold,  
Of persistent pursuit of the gold,  
The other - "Stop! You're getting old!"  
Unending struggles of becoming bold!

# TEENAGE FANTASY

**Nkoketsang Onalenna  
Botswana**

Nobody told me...

Growing up comes with complications

Adapting to new behaviors

Living up to everyone's expectations.

No one to share fairytales with.

I've always wanted to grow up,

This is not how the television portrayed it

Point a gun to my head if I'm wrong.

Nobody told me;

Becoming a teenager

Came with much responsibilities.

No one told me;

Growing up came with much pains

Insecurities, duties and body shaming.

I never heard, anyone mentioning betrayal

"When are you going to grow up?"

Enquired mother, not knowing...

The agony growing inside me.

Here I am today;

Strong enough withholding the pain

Still learning...

How to deal with strained emotions,

The sorrow engraved in me became...

The perfect definition of a teenager.

# TRANSITION

Alexandra Kukunda  
Uganda



Partially here  
shedding off bits of me  
chip after chip and layer on layer  
my little ones with their little  
immortalizing my temporal being  
pegged where I walked  
silent monuments  
the lonely sojourner  
ultimate blossoming  
of the capsule  
I once was



# THE SUN AND I

Ejang Patricia Peace  
Uganda



The setting sun closes today  
Dusk shadows the known  
And with it my childhood

I wake up to a new day  
New challenges, new fears  
My voice deepens  
I rise, and so does my courage  
I'm ready to leave the nest  
To learn how to fly  
Dawn brings a new beginning  
And with it my youth hood

The setting sun closes today  
Dusk shadows the known  
And with it my old age descends.

# THE TUNNEL SERIES

Mukonya Mukonya  
Kenya



By the river you sat; reminiscing  
 Dark clouds had prevailed, preceding rains  
 Floods! Your gullible soul almost drowning  
 Now a clear sky; you forget your past pains  
 And to the sound of the throbbing river  
 You would hum a melody, rejoicing  
 Danced! Outdated moves you did deliver  
 You had reached where the tunnel was ending;  
 Saw light, and still continued to travel.  
 Down the narrow path you walked carelessly  
 Into another! Narrower tunnel.  
 Still managed to march on confidently  
 For you are a product of such action;  
 Blind thrust that left no chance for retraction.

# DAYBREAK

Ng'uni Simon  
Zambia

The walls are falling down  
The walls are falling  
A lot of what festers beneath  
is rotten with concealment

Kumbuli nikufa komwe  
Ignorance is death itself

When slow motion seems intrepidly rushed

Save for memory, there is no going back to this thing  
All that has been will be  
When all that shall be has been

Will you see the river  
mountain in lilac times

Will you be there  
when the day pleads  
to start over

left field aright and centre  
readjusting course  
the things that go  
beyond appearance and happening with stain, and silence  
thick lipped, dimpled smile tipped to eternity and changing  
when it happens will you be there to see the secret wedge  
night from day  
moon polished, present at noon and fading through stages of  
its course

# THE BECOMING

Joseph Hope  
Nigeria



First I was nothing, then clay  
And if science is right –  
I'm going to be something clay becomes,  
When beaten un-cautious—with a rod of fire

I was something made from clay  
then stone—wood—dust.  
And if science is right—  
I'm going to be something  
everything becomes after they decay—  
an element or less

**GENRE: SHORT STORIES**

**TITLE: ADELAIDE, I WHISPER**

**WRITER: PAUL WAFULA, KENYA**

**REVIEWER: THUTO VANESSA SEABE, BOTSWANA**

**W**hat happens when a writer pulls you into a story and you become a part of it, leaving you with raging thoughts and questions?

There is a need to stew over this intricately written story undisturbed and solve the mysteries.

Adelaide, I Whisper reads like a layered story, pungent with instances of solitude throughout its skeleton. Herein lies a man trapped between reality and memories past. Not only is he searching for a face (Adelaide) from the past, but he is searching for his identity through her.

Who was he before he came to be alone in this place where strangers roam?

The character "Brody" does not remember who he was before, he does not take note of how he loses himself and his memory after every injection.

If he was to remember when he was sober, would his state be any different? Or would solitude still be his portion?

Happiness and human contact are so foreign to him, memories of both emotions are fickle, why is that?

In this moment I ask myself, is the character weaving memories out of fantasy to escape solitude, are they genuine memories or are they memories he wishes he had?

Adelaide represents hope, a light at the end of the tunnel.

He is a man with no past, present and future sense of self, no identity except for the one he must assume, Brody. Even though Brody is newly born, solitude has already managed to find him, in a body that is not his, surrounded by people who know who he was.

Paul Wafula has done this story justice. I rest by saying this, a man dead inside holds solitude more grave than one found in a casket.

**GENRE: COLUMNS**

**TITLE: LIFE AS WE KNOW IT**

**WRITER: UGBEDE ATABOH, NIGERIA**

**REVIEWER: COLIN STANLEY KARIMI, KENYA**

In this episode of Life As We Know It, the Ataboh brings in a new twist by revealing her reflections as a writer and a creative. With the theme being Solitude, she clearly defines the lifestyle and behaviour of a writer. With such a depiction, the reader can - for the first time in the series 'Life as we Know It' - get into the writer's shoes.

Ataboh raises the bar as she champions the independence of being a female writer. In the column, she proudly wears the tag of a hopeless romantic, which is confirmed with her saying she has been in the wrong hands one too many times. In this case, solitude shows its nasty negative side. However, upon reading on, there is a glimmer of hope.

The writer becomes assertive in this episode and she dares a hike. This changes her perspective on a deep spiritual level. Nonetheless, according to the reader, this might be a sign of weakness, as we introverts (Creatives) like being alone and building stuff with our golden hands.

More so, to the adult readers, one can see the transition from young girl to young adulthood in the last paragraphs of the column. The writer finds joy in dancing and admits to planning classes.

A key aspect in this context is that she realized being a hopeless romantic was pulling her imaginative abilities backwards, and with the hike, she realized the world is beautiful. In this episode, solitude reveals its vicious claws of being non assertive. However, the column also reveals being human is in fact a gift from God.

With these new twists, one can only wonder what the writer Ugbede Ataboh has in store.

**GENRE: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

**TITLE: THE WARMTH OF FRIENDSHIP**

**WRITER: IMMACULATE S. AJIAMBO, KENYA**

**REVIEWER: RACHAEL TWINOMUGISHA, UGANDA**

**T**he Warmth of Friendship is a beautiful title for a children's story. Don't all children love to make friends? I love that the story starts in motion. That is gripping for a child's mind. It kept me gripped too.

A brilliant Madge - class five pupil at Baraka Junior School - tells her classmates an interesting story which leads them to finding the source of her juicy stories: Cucu, an elderly woman, living in solitude.

Madge, also tells them about Cucu's loneliness and vulnerability to hunger and old age. The children ask their parents for presents to bless Cucu with so as to get to hear her stories too.

There are a number of lessons to learn from the story, most important of them being sympathy. This, Immaculate emphasises through the kids having to ask for gifts for Cucu, and cleaning her homestead once they've visited.

The other lessons include listening attentively before making a response, and always planning on trips or visits before taking one, and not limiting friendship to age or social status.

In this story, even without mentioning that the author is Kenyan, it is quite easy to depict an East African setting. This is shown through the Kiswahili words, names and phrases used frequently in the story. The story can therefore be placed in Kenya, or Tanzania, or even Rwanda as those three countries are typical Swahili users.

On the other hand however, I find the story crowded with characters. I must confess I got confused along the way.

It may be hard for children to identify who the main character is in the story, or to lose track of it considering the number of characters. With about 10 in this short story, including Cucu's two grandchildren and two deceased daughters, their husbands; who do not serve a very vital subplot.

I advise that if a character is not going to have a vital role in plot development, the writer should not name them. It would have been simpler if Madge's classmates were simply referred to as "one", "another", and all being called classmates in the end, rather than each having a name. It would also have been a smoother read had the writer only named Madge, her teacher, and the old woman.

I applaud the writer for the energy towards this story. Keep penning.

**GENRE: FLASH FICTION**

**TITLE: SOLITUDE**

**WRITER: PROTEUS NAT, NIGERIA**

**REVIEWER: LEOGANG SAMSON, BOTSWANA**

Proteus Nat chose to use the theme for a title which is a good option, but the writer should consider being a little more creative with their title choice

The writer takes us on a lonely ride through Sandra's life which revolves within her bedroom. You may wonder as a reader if the character knows the direction of where the sunrises because she is being presented as someone who is always sad and in solitary - does she ever go out to watch the sunset? She does not have anyone to talk to or laugh with and uses antidepressants to induce a hallucination whenever she feels lonely - something that has been going on for a year.

What may be the cause of her depression? This tablet she uses, the writer calls it Amploxolifimin, did she/he just create a new name for this drug? Maybe the writer is a new pharmacist in the block.

Suspense pops up when the writer mentions that our dear Sandra preferred being an introvert and would watch movies as a strategy to keep her secret, what her father did to her when she was 12. This is the kind of twist that makes a reader's adrenaline rush with numerous thoughts. What secret? Could it be that her father molested her, or did she witness something disturbing that the father might have done like murder or rape, or he is a drug lord?

The writer introduces another character in this fiction, that is the landlord. This registers the protagonist as a tenant. According to the writer, this landlord always has visitors, their laughter seems to mock her, teasing her with what is possible. Whatever it is, it makes her curious. Every time, Sandra feels lonely, she throws in another tablet to dissolve the loneliness away which makes her feel at ease as she hallucinates seeing a cat with wings.

The use of some figures of speech by the writer whips up the reader. For example, the use of a rare figure of speech, Apostrophe, which the writer uses in the line "laughter used to mock her."

Whenever she hallucinates, a cat called Linus appears to her and they start conversing with Sandra expressing how much he misses her. This scene showcases the creativity of Proteus in taking the reader through the mind of a hallucinating person. It also exposes the theme Solitude unambiguously, as the writer illustrates how extreme Sandra's state of loneliness is. This is because of the presence of the cat (Linus) created by the protagonist in her subconscious mind.



Furthermore, Proteus alerts the reader's mind with another suspense in a conversation between Sandra and Linus: " Linus, do you think it's all my fault? Am I a bad person... "

"Sandra you... "

At this juncture, the writer knocks Sandra back to reality before the cat can answer her questions. The reader is left dangling, wondering about the important thing that Linus the cat wanted to reveal to Sandra.

The biggest question now is, what instigated her state of solitude? This brings me to conclude that this flash fiction hits right on the spot as the writer was greatly laconic.

In case you have not noticed, this flash fiction is a rare find, that is why it earned a spot on The Editor's Choice. My instincts tell me that the chief editor chose it because of the outstanding creativity Proteus exhibited. I mean who writes flash fiction with million twists?

Simple diction is used in the story, but it greatly impacts the reader, arresting!

**GENRE: POETRY****TITLE: OF ADVENTURES WITH SOLITUDE****WRITER: DEEP MARTINS, NIGERIA****REVIEWER: NNANE NTUBE, CAMEROON**

**S**olitude opens the door to exciting and novel experiences. It is best spent in nature. A journey with solitude is a cultivation of new skills.

Deep Martins' experimental form of poetry titled "Of Adventures with Solitude" gives the reader a comfortable seat and takes him through different adventures with solitude as the bus driver.

"Of Adventures with Solitude" is a six-stanza poem composed of a quintet, a couplet, 3 tercets (S2, S3, S4) and an octave.

The first stanza is an introduction to solitude at nightfall. Solitude, as the master of the night, is celebrated by elements of nature such as the wind, birds, and its night companions – owls.

Words and lines that project the state of solitude are;

- the adverb "away" that expresses the persona's aloofness to noise or human companions.
- the adjective "quietened" that highlights a place where silence is prioritised.
- "the night wind brings whispers... "
- the noun "requiem" that projects a soulful and solemn musicality.
- 

In this first stanza, the persona announces his journey with solitude when he says, "I wander..." This journey is further announced in stanza 2 as the persona propounds, "Solitude ambles by, her tailwind elopes with me, steals me through thin draperies of air." (S2, L1 & 2)

S3, S4, S5 and S6 portray the different places the persona went to, driven by Solitude.

Firstly, his adventure starts with a feeling of nostalgia where he sees his mother in an imaginary mirror calling his name and yearning to see his scars.

Secondly, he recalls his visit to a river with friends.

Thirdly, he flashes back to his love affair with a maiden.

Fourthly, he takes us to his candlelit table where he pens his experiences in a poetic form.

The persona makes us understand that whilst he was enjoying solitude and writing down his experiences,

his jealous lover broke the silence and hastened his return to the place of dance and merry.

However, he underlines that his return is filled with tale, song, and painting - new skills learned in solitude.

Martins' "Of Adventures with Solitude" presupposes that solitude is well-lived and experienced in nature. This poem like those of William Wordsworth, especially "The Tables Turned", opines that only in nature where solitude reigns, can good skills be learned.

The poem puts forth a major theme; the celebration of solitude in nature.

The use of personification is prominent especially with the use of "her" to refer to solitude, and "Africa's tears".

The mood is solemn. The tone is serious.

I admire the poet's expression of solitude in nature. The use of Roman numerals – i, ii, iii, iv, and v, in highlighting the poet's adventures, used at the beginning of S3, S4, S5 and S6 is original and experimental.



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# SACRED LETTERS

Mary Frances Ibanda  
Uganda

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# JAILBIRD

Geno Mercy Apachi  
Uganda

# FEAR

VOL. 7 NO. 4



JULY, 2020

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# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

THEME: IDENTITY/SELF

WritersSpace Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for the September 2020 Edition in the following categories:

- Short Story
- Flash Fiction
- Poetry
- Essays
- Children's literature

The submission window is open from 1st of July to 14th July.

Response time is typically within 4 to 5 weeks after submission window closes.

We look forward to receiving your best.

To submit please visit [www.writersspace.net/submissions](http://www.writersspace.net/submissions)





# EDITOR'S NOTE

A white blank page. This is my greatest fear as a writer. The question I am asked by the starkness of this page is: how dare you create? The ability of a writer to create a person, emotions, a whole new world is the greatest and yet the scariest thing in the world.

My voice hidden in someone else's story. This is my greatest fear as an editor. The question I am asked from start to finish is: are you sure you haven't altered the author's voice in this story? The ability to write ourselves into someone else's story is something all editors must be aware of and subsequently proceed to cage.

An unfulfilled life. This is my greatest fear as a person. The question I am asked when confronted by the reality of life is: what if I go through life and never achieve anything significant? The possibility of a man living a colourless, birthless, worthless life is a foreign notion that makes absolutely no sense to me; yet it makes all the sense in the world.

Despite these fears, here I am, a writer whose white page is now filled with black and is a little less stark; an editor who has no fear of being in the background because she believes that the best editors are the ones whose lives leave no trace of their existence in a work of writing; a person who lives life one day at a time because all of life is perspective and none matters more than mine.

If you have fear, that is fine; it is all part of the process. The most important part of it all is that you get up and you do – write, edit, live.

Always Remember to buntu.

Warm regards,  
Nabilah.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editor's Note	4
Editorial Crew	5
Table of Contents	6
Short Story	7-16
Columns	17-22
Children's Literature	23-26
Flash Fiction	27-29
Poetry	30-39
Reviews	40-43

# FEAR

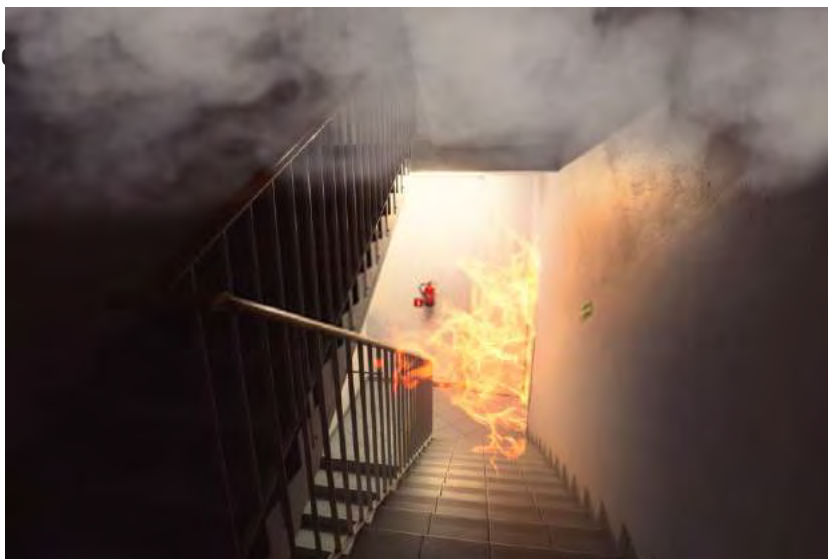
Franklyn Usouwa  
Nigeria



Most people do not know what true fear is. You cannot be afraid of the dark, or of heights. That is not fear. That is caution. You do not know what is in the dark. But someone, or something could be there, waiting for you. So, you are cautious when walking alone at night. I have fears. I am six feet and seven inches tall, weigh two hundred and eighty-four pounds and I am not afraid to say that I am afraid. Trust me, anyone ashamed to admit fear, is not truly afraid.

I am afraid of being stabbed between the ribs with a pocket knife by some dimwit mugger, half my size, who thought he could take me on. I am afraid of

that specific scenario because I have lived it. I know exactly how painful it was, so I know what I am afraid of. As for the mugger, he could not possibly be afraid of the dark, could he? I mean he waits in



a dark alley for people to come through so he can rob them, so that is very unlikely. If he is honest, what he is really afraid of, is trying to mug a six-foot-seven, two hundred-and eighty-four-pound guy who beat him within an inch of his life despite the knife in his side. He can be truly afraid of that, because he has lived it.

Now, I am afraid of Jennifer leaving me. I am afraid of Jennifer leaving me, because Clara left me. I know what you are thinking: "how can you be truly scared of Jennifer leaving you if Jennifer

has never left you before?" Stop being a smartass. The point is, I have had a girlfriend leave me just before I proposed. So, I am scared of it because I have lived it and know exactly how much it hurt. Now that we have that all

cleared up, I am sure you understand why Jennifer is tied to the bed. It is because I am afraid. The gag is because she would not stop screaming. She keeps thrashing, struggling against the ropes. She has messed up her hair, but she still looks beautiful. The most beautiful woman I have ever known.

Have you noticed how when people see a husband or a wife, it is not really over? They remain the person's widow or widower, and the dead person remains their late wife or husband. Until they choose to move on, maybe remarry, in the eyes of everybody else they are still together. They are still a couple. So, when they put out the fire and find her burned corpse with the ring on her finger, they will forever remember her as my dead fiancée. Speaking of which, I have not proposed yet. I retrieve the little black box from the back pocket of my Levi's. I sit next to Jennifer on the bed and take a deep breath. Honestly, I am a little nervous. "Jennifer," I begin, my voice cracking with emotion. "I know we have not been perfect. We've argued a lot over the past three months. You keep saying that I'm a psychopath. I kept telling you that I'm not. You keep asking me to get these weird drugs. I kept telling you that I don't need them. They are for crazy people!" My voice is going a little bit higher than I planned. I stop, realizing I have drifted a little bit off topic. Another deep breath.

"But," I resume, "all of that, the fact that we are still together, despite all the conflict, only makes me more convicted in my belief that we are perfect for each other. We are meant to be together." I place the box on the nightstand and loosen the rope holding her left hand. I pick up the box and open it, revealing the ring. I take the ring out. She tries to use her free hand to loosen the other. I take her left wrist in my hand, and though she struggles against me, she is now where as strong as I am. She must be nervous too. Maintaining my grip on her wrist, I continue my proposal. "I have never felt as complete in my life as when I am with you. I have a lot of fears, but spending the rest of my life with you is not one of them. It is the only thing I'm sure I want to do." She has stopped struggling but she keeps shaking her head and trying to speak, but her words are meaningless, mumbling against the gag. "Please do me the honor of being my wife," I say. "Will you marry me?" More head shaking and mumbling. There must be a 'yes' somewhere in all of that. Still, this is a serious matter, better to be

sure. "Blink if you mean yes," I say. I have never seen anyone open their eyes so wide and for so long before. It feels like eternity but finally she falters and blinks. With that, I slip the ring onto her finger. She continues shaking her head, tears streaming from her sexy eyes. Tears of joy, I presume. She must be as happy as I am. Why wouldn't she be, I made it all perfect. I contemplate popping the question at her office where we have our twice-a-week dates, but her secretary, Sarah, is a bit of a busybody. I knew Jennifer would prefer something more private. That is why I tracked down her house and decided to surprise her here. I resist my own joyful tears as I tie her hands as before despite even more vigorous struggling. By now I can smell the smoke and the room is obviously much warmer. I turn to the door. Black smoke is creeping in through the spaces between the door and the walls and floor. The fire is moving quicker than I planned. I should leave now. I know that I should, but the thought of losing her feels too much to bear. I know, I know, I said death is not final and all of that.



Seriously, stop being a smartass. I join Jennifer on the bed. First, I remove the gag. Her screams make no difference now. I can already hear the sirens outside. But they will not be quick enough. Next are her hands. Surprisingly she does not try to hit me or undo her legs herself. She just watches as I untie them for her. As soon as she is loose, though, she bolts. But she is not fast enough. Halfway to the door, I catch up to her. Wrapping both hands around her abdomen, I lift her off her legs and carry her back to the bed. She thrashes about, hitting, biting, scratching, and screaming all the way. But it is just meaningless sailing. I surround them, its heat forging

On the bed, I maintain my grip on her, putting a little bit of my weight on her. Not too much though, just enough to keep her in place. I distract myself with the smell of her hair as I wait for the flames to turn us into the charred sculptures of my imagination. But the peachy fragrance is quickly overshadowed by the choking smoke. As we both quake from the force of our coughs, I still maintain my grip. But that weakens soon enough. Yet she does not run. She stays there, coughing, choking. The heat is intense now. The flames have come through the door and encircled the bed. The curtains are burning. The heat is almost as intense as our love. This is where we are supposed to be. I cuddle her in my arms. Surrounded by flames, the love of my life in my arms, right there and now, I am not afraid.

# THE PANDEMIC

Thirikwa Nyingi  
Kenya

I am awakened by some noise in the cave, I slowly feel for my flashlight and flick it on in the direction of the sound. A big rat scampers away through a hole in the cave wall. I sigh with relief as I go back to sleep. I wake up again a few hours later to a flood of sunlight streaming in through the opening of the cave. I busy myself with preparing some porridge on the fire I have just made with dry twigs. I ran out of cooking gas a few days ago and I hope will not attract anyone with all the smoke I am making. But a man has to eat and the cave has so far been impregnable. The only access to it is through a drawbridge across a yawning chasm ten so feet wide. I sip on the hot porridge as I recall the horrendous events of the last few months.

It all started when a strange flu we had been hearing about finally arrived at our shores. Two people had already been diagnosed with the disease and put in quarantine. It had been ravaging other parts of the world where it had claimed millions of lives. The government was cagey about the whole thing only issuing directives that people should avoid coming into close contact with people with flu-like symptoms and to report such people to the relevant authorities. In the meantime it was business as usual. But a week or so later, hundreds of people had been infected and a good number of them had succumbed to the disease.

We were discussing these worrisome events in the village kitchen over a cup of tea when we were startled by a piercing scream. We ran out and a ghastly scene assailed our eyes. A woman lay there bleeding from numerous fresh wounds inflicted most likely by a wild animal. One of her hands had been bitten off and a trail of darkening blood followed her all the way down the street. She kept pointing in the direction of the forest but nobody could get a coherent word out of her amid the screams of the frightened village women. She had lost copious amounts of blood and died before she could make it to a hospital. Then new strickles in that the patients in a nearby quarantine centre had escaped after overwhelming the security officers and were attacking innocent civilians. They had killed a number of people before they were repelled by military forces into the nearby forest. No doubt they had attacked the dead woman. There was panic all over our village. People jumped at the slightest sound at night. Dogs howled dreadfully at the pale moon which cast a ghostly light on the country. The trees danced wildly in the wind as leaves skittered across deserted village streets. Our house groaned and sighed as if under the weight of a malignant spirit. We were lucky to be alive in the morning.

The government's spokesperson else had gone to attend to their business. I was not sure whether there was danger out there. I paced up and down the compound as I tried to calm my distraught nerves and think logically. I knew it was only a matter of time before those monsters arrived at our doorway. I was in this state of anxiety when a mouse darted in front of me into a hole in the ground and I hit upon the idea of the cave. I worked feverishly as I packed as much food stuff as my old motor scooter would carry and then I hung around to wait for my mother and sister. It was getting rather late and I was already giving up on them when suddenly mother rounded a corner in a run along the track that led to our house. She was hotly pursued by a multitude of the demons. I made to go and help her but she waved me back frenzily before a tackle from behind brought her hard to the ground sending debris flying all over amid her screams as the monsters set upon her while others advanced menacingly towards our house. My scooter exploded into a deafening roar as I kick-started it which startled the monsters making them to pause momentarily before continuing their forward march with a

came on the television to assure the people of their safety. A strange thing happened as he spoke, a woman who was standing next to him suddenly turned on him and bit him on the neck and would not let go. The scene turned chaotic as people moved in to pull her away from the screaming man on the ground. It was proving hard to disentangle the woman from her victim. One of the security guards pulled out an automatic and shot the woman twice in the head before she let go. I stood there staring at the screen in utter shock before they stopped the live coverage of the horrific scene. I switched to another channel and I was met by scenes of terror-stricken people fleeing in all directions in the streets. Large clouds of dark smoke floated from the nearby buildings. Something knocked down the camera but it continued to transmit pictures from a tilted angle. I recoiled in horror as a hideous-looking face suddenly filled the screen before it went blank. It was now clear that this disease was more virulent and deadly than the authorities had let on. The situation was completely out of control and was all alone in the house as everybody

were safe anymore. I stepped out of the house and looked around. It was about eleven in the morning and the weather was quite pleasant for such a horror-filled day. Our house was tucked away in a wooded hill that overlooked a school and a church. I was still trying to come to terms with what I had just watched on the television when my attention was caught by faint noises in the direction of the school - like screams of frightened children. I ran for my field glasses and zoomed in on the scene below. I literally jumped out of my skin as a horde of creatures like the one I had just seen on the TV ferociously fell upon the children leaving a trail of blood and dead bodies in their wake. I called my sister on the phone but she was not picking. I tried my mother next but the connection was very poor. I shouted to her to hurry home but I did not think she got the message because I could still hear her tinny 'Hello? Hello?' issuing from the handset. I quickly texted both of them to get back home as fast as they could



renewed vigour. I rode out of the scene and up the hill at full throttle in a cloud of dust and a shower of pebbles. I flew across the deep-rutted track and negotiated hairpin bends at full speed with incredible ease – a feat I had only associated with stuntmen before. I came to the drawbridge and quickly disembarked. In the fading evening light I transferred all my cargo to the cave and raised the small bridge. I sat down in the cave forlornly and wept uncontrollably.

It has been three months now since that day and I have not heard from my sister or anybody else. The phone does not work anymore as there is no signal and I only get static from the small transistor radio I managed to grab from the house. Something is stirring in the bush. I conceal myself as somebody emerges from behind it. It is a woman. I discover to my surprise that it is my sister. I call out her name and she starts at the sound. She looks in my direction as I come out of my hiding. I wave at her and she waves back. We approach each other cautiously at first, then we race toward each other. We fly into each other's arms in an



emotional hug. I hold her back to get a good look at her. Her face has surely changed. What is the matter with her eyes? They look funny without whites in them – like two dark pits. She is smiling at me now. Only then do I notice the fangs. Too late. I feel a sharp pain as she sinks her teeth into the side of my neck. I scream and I wake up suddenly and sit upright. I am sweating profusely and my heart wants to break out of its cage. I look around the cave in alarm. My eyes meet the glittering gaze of two tiny eyes of a rat in a

dark corner of the cave. I hurl an object at it but my aim is terrible. It scuttles off into a hole. The sun is almost setting; time to cook my supper.

# SACRED LETTERS

Mary Frances Ibanda  
Uganda

The women, all at different stages of pregnancy were chatting as comfortably as only women can having just met less than an hour ago. There is something about shared plight that draws us to each other; we seem to believe that our feet can snugly fit in the other's shoes. Looking at them, a passerby would imagine they were bosom friends.

To wade off the stifling heat, some of them had casually unbuttoned their blouses or dresses and were fanning themselves with their yellow antenata forms. At this kind of sisterhood meeting, there was no need to play at modesty.

At 8:30 am, a motherly midwife took to the podium to speak to them about HIV and babies.

Matsiko's attention shifted to other things. The roof needed repairing in several spots. If it rained... whoever thought of this shed for pregnant women was smart... must have been a woman... only a woman can understand a pregnant woman's need for fresh air... interesting. Most of us are seated at the back...

It is easy to tune out when one has heard the same old message in song and seen it on TV countless times. It is easy to tune out when billboards of LifeGuard condom lining the sidewalks of the town

like streetlights become an everyday sight. It is easy to tune out when you think you are safe. 'Ho! To go for that test is to court early death!' whispered a new woman.

'Why?' several of the others asked. 'Trauma.'

She pointed to the three rooms on the ground floor of the building in front of them.

'That's where the world as you know it comes to an end. Inside there, you're handed your death sentence. The last time I was here, I saw some women being taken there from upstairs. Soon after, their wails assailed this place like police sirens!'

Conversation ceased like a tap turned off. A man in a red shirt sprinted away as fast as it had come.

Matsiko had decided to take the test because it was the right thing to do.

'Collect your results from third floor, room 002,' the friendly abtech said.

Thirty minutes later, in a room adjacent to 002, a counsellor showed her the results on her antenatal form, pointing to letters on a dotted line. 'See here? This means you're negative. Stay that way.'

Just a few letters! Nothing spectacular like a

doctor's illegible scrawl just an abbreviation!

On her subsequent antenatal visit, while the mothers waited to be examined, they discussed money and men.

'The only time you can get a substantial amount from a man is when you're pregnant, someone declared.

'How?' a neagery young woman asked.

'The only thing they know about babies is how to make them. They don't understand pregnancy and are afraid of childbirth. Take advantage of this.'

All the women, their discomfort momentarily forgotten, leaned in to hear this ingenious money-making scheme.

'How?' the girl asked again.

'Easy! Inflate prices for nappies, baby clothes...'

'But that is wrong!' Matsiko interjected.

'Hmm perhaps your husband's generous spine has fingers made of superglue.'

'Tell him antenatal visits are twice a month but only come once,' she continued. 'Develop complications that require expensive drugs and regular reviews.'

No man wants to deal with a sick pregnant nagging woman. He will do anything. No question asked.'

'Unless he is a doctor!' said the young girl.

The woman sitting next to Matsiko cracked up, her belly bobbing up and down like a balloon on water.

As she made to support it, her antenatal form slipped from her hand and landed at Matsiko's feet, who bent down to pick it up. That is when she saw them, the other letters, the ones that were the opposite of those on her antenatal form!

Abbreviations still, but of a different weight.

That was two years ago. Today she sat on the front bench, several metres away from the sisterhood that clustered at the back of the shed.

This time around things had changed. At this funeral last week, she'd learnt that her husband had fathered three other children, all of them younger than her two-year-old daughter, each one of them by a different woman. The bastard! He was lucky he was dead! Wherever he was, he should thank that drunk driver who had bashed him. After she found out about this treachery, her tears were for herself and her children only. Now, those ugly letters on someone else's antenatal form threatened to pitch camp on hers as well, to hijack her life!

The same midwife from two years back, took to the podium at 8:00 am.

Matsiko datched onto her every word, several times shushing the women who were whispering behind her.

'I hope you make the right decision, the midwife concluded.

Some women fidgeted with their bags. Others became watchful, waiting for someone to set the pace.

But her legs were telling her.

But my child...

Three children by three women, what are the odds? She rose abruptly and ducked into the testing room.

The nurses wabbed her skin then pierced into the vein. Matsiko watched the crimson key to her sanity

inch into the syringe like a disease slowly consuming a limb. Hidden inside there, were the symbols that would mark her for life.

'Collect your results in thirty minutes from room 002 upstairs.'

Thirty minutes of purgatory. She dared not sit down. To sit down was to invite the thought of fleeing to take shape, to enter, to settle. Like an itch, it was tagging at the edge of her frayed mind, so she decided to walk around. At the children's ward it was vaccination day. Several little bodies were flailing wildly in their mothers' arms, straining to escape the terror of the nurse's needle. She quickly turned back to flee their agonized screams.

Ten minutes to go. Time to pray.  
'Our Father in heaven... Lord...'  
Her mind was blank!

'Father! I promise to be good. I'll just be good,' she muttered. 'I'll just be good Father...'  
She trudged up the stairs, repeating her new mantra over and over.

In 002, she found several of the mothers already seated. But for the shortage of space on the benches each of them would have preferred some degree of physical distance to be allowed to ponder a life doomed to be shrivelled down to a few alphabetical symbols in solitude. The room was a pressure cooker about to explode. Matsiko took a seat next to a window where a fly trapped between the window netting and the glass fluttered in a mad frenzy to set itself free.

'Bring me luck,' she whispered. It was gone as soon as she opened the window.

Shortly after, a counsellor came in, called out four names, and asked the mother to follow her into one of the adjacent rooms. The rest of the women sat up straight. Immediately after, another counsellor came in and did the same thing. Now only Matsiko and one other remained.

'We are the sick ones!' the other woman declared, abruptly standing up.

Matsiko's heart plunged into her stomach.

'Be strong,' said Matsiko with bravado that she was not feeling.

That is when a counsellor arrived to call out their names. Her face closed, her tone bland. No clues. And, was she avoiding eye contact?

'Matsiko! Acol follow me.'

She headed toward the stairs. Now she was going down!

Inside there you are handed your death sentence...  
I saw some women being taken there from upstairs...

Matsiko's legs turned into jelly! Some force was moving her heavy legs along. A puppet on strings, she had lost control of her joints and was certain her bowels would follow. Her head reeled. She reached for the banister to steady herself. If only she could just sit down there on the germ-infested hospital stairs and just go limp!

When the nurse opened the door to one of the three rooms, Matsiko bent double over, clutching her belly as if the baby was threatening to escape.



'Jeesuus! Acol waived both her hands flying to the back of her head.

'Acol, wait here on the bench, Matsiko come with me.' She strode into another room. Putting Matsiko's antenata form on the table, she pulled a chair. Matsiko hung back in the doorway.

'Come sit down.'

The urge to steal a furtive glance over the nurse's shoulders at the letters just before the pronouncement of her fate was overpowering, as if seeing them before would somehow make the facts less true.

Let it be the clean letters: Father... the good ones...

Those mere symbols had now taken on a sacred significance. To steel the trembling of her hands, she clasped them together in her lap and her index finger started to mercilessly worry the hangnail on her left thumb.

'Have you ever tested for HIV?'

'Yes.'

'And the results?'

'Negative.'

'You are still negative.'

Her head dropped into her hands.

'Have you ever tested for syphilis?'

'Please give me a moment.'

'Why were you scared?'

'Hmm.'

'Uh, yes. I tested negative for Syphilis.'

'Here, take your form. Stay safe.'

Matsiko managed a nod.

'Please ask Acol to come in.'

She found Acol sniffing and she motioned for her to go in. No eye contact.

Matsiko briskly walked out but barely made it to the deserted shed. Sinking to the ground, she let the tears flow freely. By her feet lay the yellow antenata form, in the corner of which sat her now favourite hallowed alphabetical symbols on a dotted line.

# LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

Ugbede Ataboh  
Nigeria

I have had to let go of a lot of things in life in order to heal and move on; in order to smile

and be the happy thankful soul was created to be. If you know me well, then you know how I have loved naively and lost. Over time, I have been able to build and love my own space, but sometimes, the fear of living through life alone creeps up on me. Yes oh! I have come again with my #ManProblems. The Covid-19 pandemic has actually increased the number of "broken hearts" thank to boredom and extra free time. Please bear with me as I recount my unpleasant episode.

Remember Kay? Yes! He came recently with a very vague proposal. The kind of proposal a guy makes when he says "Babe, give me a few months or years of your life so we can enjoy each other and in return, I will waste your time and move on when I have had enough of you". That's what I interpreted his proposal to

mean after professing his love for me...

"Ugbede you are the main chick. The one I truly love... If only you'll let me explain the type of relationship I'm in..."

"Please don't tell me because I am not interested in knowing anything about the girl you are dating. I thought we had both moved on from all of this? Why are you back with all your drama and shenanigans? I lament as I feel a treacherous flicker of hope in my heart.

"I am back because I am not okay! I have not been myself since you walked me out of your room and your life. Please, I need the joy and laughter you carry with you. I feel warm and happy whenever I'm with you. I love you."

"Yes!!!" I let out an imaginary joyful shout leading to a myriad of fireworks released into the night

sky as our silhouettes merge together.

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I wake up the next day feeling happy but unsettled because of "the elephant in the room". 10am, 2 days later, it lets out its trumpet call on Kay's social media status update. My whole body, mind and soul vibrates as I view one update after another with a montage of "her" pictures and a heartfelt message- HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE LOVE OF MY LIFE, YOU DESERVE THE WORLD.

How dare he play with my emotions so carelessly? I was already getting over him until he came and crept back into my bed. In mad rage, I dial his number and he picks at the first ring.

"Ugbede, I know you hate me right now but just know that I genuinely care about you so..."

"Liar!!! How dare you treat me like a side piece? I have always

treated you right. Why humiliate me in such a manner? I assumed you were going to end things with your girlfriend after we spent time together. Now listen to me clearly... from today, I am neither your neighbor, friend, or romantic interest. Kay, you no longer exist in my world."

"Ugh, please be reasonable, you and I know that we vibrate in a unique way. Can't you keep me in your life? I'm sure we can find a way to figure things out with the passage of time."

"Ah! Kay! You have indeed been wicked to me. I will rather let you go and wait for my own man because this unique vibe you are talking about is trash! I will not waste my life and my time with you. Good bye!" I end the call rather dramatically.



purpose.

Later that day, I ask God why my sinful soul is not content with having him as the one and true lover of my soul; and why let my annoying need for physical companionship override my sense of good judgement every time.

Then it hits me! God is the lover of my soul and spirit but not the lover of my flesh... I am pretty sure He created a man for that

In the absence of a sensible man, should I just have a child through artificial insemination and be content with him or her as my lifetime companion? I know a top beauty queen who delivered two beautiful twin boys through this method and seems content and happy. Ah! But Socrates has a saying - "Know thyself" The "Me" I know will still long for a man to spend my life with. I have met shitty guys but I know there are

still good men out there. There is a man for me and we will not miss each other.

Permit me to quote - "An experienced and kind Man is worth his weight in gold; When you find him, pamper and nurture him for he will take care of you, blow your mind with the skills of Eros and fill your womb with his seed. He is indeed a gift from God".

P.s - This quote came straight out of my heart just in case you are



wondering if I lifted it. If you are a Radical feminist, chill out and accommodate other perspectives. Thank you.

Hmmm. my dear, it is time for me to call on God again oh! If there is a woman to pray, there is definitely a God to answer. I am confident that God will answer me because He has never turned deaf ears to my prayers and He will not start now... is He not still the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who destined Rahab for Salmon and sits supreme on the throne? truly wonder why I had to wait this long before crying out. Anyway, no need for regrets now because I am ready to move forward. So I pray in Jesus name - My dearest God Almighty, please bless me with a Kind, "skillful" Prosperous, hot, passionate and healthy man who will treat me like his Queen and take care of me; One who will

fertilize my womb with healthy sons - the kind of sons who will contend with our enemies at the gate and always emerge victorious according to Your word in the book of Psalms 127 & 128, amen.

Guess what? I am not the girl who gets kicked to the curb, I am "The Girl" who gets The Ring; I am "The Girl" who loves passionately and gets loved back with as much passion and more; I am "The Girl" who gets roses on Cupid Day and has her pictures splashed all over Herman's social media handles! I am a Queen and I will be treated as such. It is either I get it all or get nothing at all... and nothing is not an option for me because My father in heaven created me with a hot, passionate blood flowing through my veins - this means I need a man... a sensible, kind man. I personally believe my

expectations are realistic so please do not even drop the stereotypical "She is too demanding and unrealistic" line so thunder won't fall on you from heaven's arsenal.

Let's get things straight! I will not sacrifice a lifetime of true companionship for an unknown period of shallow, fleshly passions due to my fear of being alone; I am not "that girl". I am "The Girl" who is ready to wait for a period of time (short prayer) in order to get a lifetime companion. A companion who may occasionally want to stray but will ditch the idea of being with another woman and choose to always reinvent and spice up our mundane life with the sweet nothings of life. I know God's plan for my life comprises of prosperity, fulfillment, victory and peace. I will not give up all of this, and more because of my occasional momentary fear of being alone... I choose to preserve my dignity as a woman by not giving myself cheaply to men with the hope that one will decide to stay and build a life with me. I choose to guard my emotional health while I wait on God to bless me with the current desire of my heart... reassured He will do it, so I will not fear. - Matthew 19:26-



# THE POLITICS OF FEAR

Leo Muzivoreva: THE OBSERVER  
Nigeria



**F**ear is arguably as old as life. It is deeply ingrained in the living organisms that have survived extinction through billions of years of evolution. Its roots are deep in our core psychological and biological being, and it is one of our most intimate feelings. Danger and war are as old as human history, and so are politics and religion. Demagogues have always used fear for intimidation of the subordinates or enemies, and shepherding the tribe by the leaders. Fear is a very strong tool that can blur human logic and change their behaviour. Like other animals, we humans are as old as human history, and so are politics and religion. We also learn from observations, such as witnessing a predator attacking another human. And, we learn by instructions, such as being told there is a predator nearby. Learning from our conspecifics (members of the same species) has prevented us from repeating

dangerous experiences of other humans. We have a tendency to trust our tribe mates and authorities, especially when it comes to danger. It is adaptive; parents and wise old men told us not to eat a special plant, or not to go to an area in the woods, or we would be hurt. By trusting them, we would not die like a great-grandfather who died eating that plant. This way we accumulated knowledge.

Tribalism has been an inherent part of the human history. There has always been competition between groups of humans in different ways and with different faces, from brutal wartime nationalism to a strong loyalty to a football team. Evidence from cultural neuroscience shows that our brains even respond differently at an unconscious level simply to the view of faces from other races or cultures.

At a tribal level, people are more emotional and consequently less logical; fans of both teams spray for their team to win, hoping God will take sides in a game. On the other hand, we regress to tribalism when afraid. This is an evolutionary advantage that would lead to the group cohesion and help us fight the other tribes to survive.

Tribalism is the biological loophole that many politicians have banked on for a long time: tapping into our fears and tribal instincts. Some examples are Nazism, the Ku Klux Klan, religious wars and the Dark Ages. The typical pattern is to give the other humans a different label than us, and say they are going to harm us or our resources, and to turn the other group into a concept. It does not necessarily have to be race or nationality, which are used very often. It can be any real or imaginary difference: liberals vs conservatives, Middle Easterners vs white men, the right vs the left, Muslims vs Jews vs Christians vs Sikhs. The list goes on and on.

When building tribal boundaries between "us" and "them," some politicians have managed very well to create virtual groups of people that do not communicate and hate without even knowing each other: this is the human animal in action!

During the first year after my arrival in Cape Town, South Africa, a pan-ethnic group entered a public parking lot to turn around. People were leaving a building in Orthodox Muslim dress; it was a mosque. For a short second, I noticed a subtle, weird but familiar feeling of fear!

I tried to trace the source of this fear, and here it was: my home country is almost all Christian, and the few Muslim people are looked at with judgement and almost resentment. We grew up hearing funny but scary stories of Muslim priests whom people visited when thieves broke into their houses. The thieves, in these stories, all developed funny stuff on their bodies such as goat horns and some would turn into cows.

Having come from a well-educated family that respects all religions and being, and having some Muslim friends at school, I felt embarrassed that still the child within had taken those obviously false stories a bit seriously, only because that child had never met a Muslim.

This human tendency is meat to the politicians who want to exploit fear. If you grew up only around people who look like you, only listened to one media outlet and heard from the old uncle that



fear bypasses logic.

The same narrative is also evident in Africa. Revolutionary party governments embark on reigns of terror particularly during election times harassing and beating up people who are accused of supporting opposition parties. The electorate will obviously tilt in their favour as the people are scared.

those who look or think differently hate you and are dangerous, the inherent hatred toward those unseen people is an understandable (but flawed) result.

To win us, politicians sometimes with the media's help, do their best to keep us separated, to keep thereal or imaginary others just a "concept." Because if we spend time with others, talk to them and eat with them, we will learn that they are like us: humans with all the strengths and weaknesses that we possess. Some are strong, some are weak, some are funny, some are dumb, some are nice and some are not too nice.

Politicians and the media very often use fear to circumvent logic. Looking at the U.S. media,

one would think they are disaster pornographers they work hard on triggering their audiences' emotions. They are kind of political reality shows surprising to anyone from outside the U.S.

When one person kills a few others in a city of millions which is of course a tragedy, major networks' coverage could lead one to perceive the whole city is under siege and unsafe. If one undocumented illegal immigrant murders a U.S. citizen, some politicians use fear with the hope that few will ask: 'This is terrible, but how many people were murdered in this country by U.S. citizens just today?' Or 'I know several murders happen every week in this town, but why am I so scared how that this one is being showcased by the media?' We do

not ask these questions, because

There is a reason that the response to fear is called the "fight or flight" response. That response has helped people survive the predators and other tribes that have wanted to kill them. But again, it is another loophole in human biology to be abused. By scaring people, the demagogues turn their aggression toward "the others," whether in the form of vandalizing their mosques or harassing them on social media.

When demagogues manage to get hold of people's fear circuitry, they often regress to illogical, tribal and aggressive human animals, becoming weapons ourselves - weapons that politicians use for their own agenda.

# BABU

Hellen Owuor  
Kenya

**B**abu was always wetting the bed and then he would blame his younger brother for it. As the eldest, their parents took his word for it. He was 12 while his brother Kabu was only 9. Every morning you would hear Babu quarreling with his little brother on why he wet the bed. Being meek, the brother would reply that he wouldn't do it again. The cycle went on and on until one day, their parents decided that each boy would get his own bed.

"Mama Babu, I will make a bed for one of the boys so that each can sleep on their own. I am sick and tired of all that arguing," Babu's father told his wife. "I agree with that, we should have thought about it a long time ago,"

Babu was scared he was going to be discovered. He was a big boy and big boys don't wet the bed. He had to think of something. The following morning he wet the bed as usual and still insisted that it was Kabu's fault. He however did not quarrel with him. He just told him that it was okay. Everyone was amused at this new behaviour. The new bed was brought on that same day.

Once alone in their room, Babu told Kabu a very scary story and cunningly invited him to sleep on his bed. Kabu accepted and when morning came, the quarreling began.

"I will never invite you to my bed again, look at what you have done!" Babu shouted at the top of his voice.

Kabu walked away silently and went into the kitchen where he found his mother preparing breakfast. He told her how he ended up sleeping with Babu. The mother sensed foul play but did not say anything to Kabu.

During the day, Babu bragged about having his own bed, he knew that most of his friends shared a bed with their siblings.

That night, their mother told them a bedtime story and after they slept, she slowly went back to her room. Babu had been pretending to be asleep and crept out of his bed into Kabu's as soon as their mother was out. Sometime around midnight their mother came back to check on them. Babu's bed was empty! She carried Kabu into Babu's bed and left Babu on Kabu's bed. In the morning the truth would come out.

Babu woke up very early and on a wet bed. He searched everywhere for Kabu and finally spotted him on his bed. He was furious. He quickly removed the wet clothes and put on clean ones. He knew that he had been found out. During breakfast he was very quiet and his parents knew why. They sent Kabu out to play as they wanted to speak to Babu.

# KANTO AND THE BEAST

Grace Tendo Katana  
Uganda



Kanto breathed and panted like a dog then stood up to go. He got into his car and walked away quickly. Up the hill he climbed trying to get away from him. In his senses, he thought that he would reach home where he would get rest and at least be at ease from his nightmare. His legs grew weary but he had to go faster. Kanto just didn't know why the man was following him. He returned to face him and warn him.

"Please, Mr, I ask you for the last time. Stop following me!" Kanto said looking serious.

The man didn't say a word and when he raised his little hand to hit the man, the man also raised his hand. This made Kanto confused, he panicked and began to sweat profusely. Like someone had poured a bucket of water on him. Whatever move he tried out, the man also did that exact thing and continued to follow him closely. Kanto then decided to walk as fast as his small legs could carry him without looking behind.

He only glanced behind to see how far the beastly man was! At least that was what he thought since he had read a story about a man who was very huge, very dark and looked fierce and was always on the lookout for children who were left alone or

those who played far from their homes. He prayed that this wasn't the man that he had read about.

He got home after a while and screamed but for help,

"Mama...mama...please help!" He shouted.

His mother rushed to him.

"Why are you shouting like you have seen a ghost?"

His mother asked

"Mama that man has been following me all along."

Kanto said panting and pointing to the dark man.

"What?" His mother scoffed, "It is only your shadow, you silly boy!"

"Huh!" Kanto said looking over his shoulder. "Mama, are you sure?"

"Yes, my son." his mother said. "You know what, I have always told you not to play too far from home. And look what scared you! From today onward, if you ever go far from there," she said pointing to the jackfruit tree in the compound, "I will have to punish you."

From that day onward, Kanto learned to never play far from home. He even decided to invite his friends from nearby such that they played together near home.

# NOSI THE FIG TREE

Benita P. Magopane  
Botswana



**A** long time ago, in the land of Bechuanaland, when fig fruits were still popular, there was a beautiful orchard of fig trees. It belonged to a rich young master named Nosi, and he loved it dearly. His were the sweetest figs that even Kings and Princesses would come to buy. They were his source of wealth. In those times, whenever a tree would reach maturity or fruit-bearing stage, it would gain the ability to walk and

talk. However, no human being was to ever find out, for even on account of one tree discovered, regardless of its type, a great curse would come upon all trees. They would lose the ability to walk and talk, therefore, they all lived under strict rules and the constant guard of their caretaker birds. Well...no one complied.

“Nosi!” Kidi, an elderly fig tree thundered. She’d caught Nosi, a sly young fig tree sneaking into the orchard at night. “What did I say last time?”

“That you’ll loosen up and stop being such a bore.” Nosi grinned and Mabobo, her Green Twin spot caretaker bird, hid her face with her feathers.

“Obedience is fear, try not to forget that next time.” At that, Kidi walked into the orchard with Lefofa, her owl caretaker bird frowning at Nosi.

“What does that even mean?” Nosi mumbled.

“If I tell you, will you listen?” Mabobo asked, “Because I know you’ll hear me, but will you listen?” Nosi rolled her eyes. “You never listen!” the bird thundered. “Did you listen when I told you not to leave the orchard because it’s almost fruit-bearing season and ALL trees need to stay put? No! No, no!” Mabobo flew away frustrated.

Nosi returned to her position frustrated too

Mabobo didn't understand. She couldn't stay put. She had to find that secret well of life. And the strange bird that had told her of it said it was in the city of Moseja. Nosi was the most beautiful tree ever, birds of the sky sang of her beauty and even the young master worshipped her. She feared losing that adoration, the winter season that would rip her naked of her leaves and her chirpy friends too. She feared that maybe someday her leaves wouldn't grow beautifully back and she'd be as ugly as the other trees. What would become of her feathered friends and master's love then? She would find that well of life and drink of its water, then she'd be eternally evergreen and beautiful.

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In those days was also a great man in the land, who performed astonishing signs among the people of Bechuanaland. And Osi, searching for an answer on how he could live forever and not die, visited him. Instructed to give up his possession and follow him, Osi left and went away downhearted. He feared losing his treasure and possessions.

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One night after tree pruning, Nosi snuck out and left for Moseja. Mabobo's echoing yells after her died slowly as she scurried into the nightfall. Upon arrival, she searched and searched fruitlessly. She searched desperately till daybreak such that she was not mindful of a poor old man who'd seen her. Exhausted, she rested by the wayside, thinking to herself to continue later again. But that morning while she slept, the great man, with his friends, happened to pass by hungry. And seeing Nosi, he went up to her in search of figs, but finding none, he cursed her saying,



"May no fruit ever come from you again!" And at that, Nosi withered forever.

Her greatest fear had come upon her. For many days, birds sang lamentation over her, and because she'd been discovered, all trees, in all the earth, lost their ability to walk and talk. Fig trees couldn't be as fruitful as before and even lost popularity. Therefore, Osi lost business.

"Are you ready to listen now?" said Mabobo as she rested on Nosi's bare branch.

Nosi finally understood Obedience's fear, meaning respect. She'd feared selfishly for herself that she'd failed to fear instructions.

# FEAR

Christiana Agboni  
Nigeria

“Why are you sweating?” I asked my younger sister, Rose, with rising panic in my voice.

“What if it comes here, Lily?” she asked me, her eyes so huge in her face I was afraid they would pop out of their sockets.

Uneasiness was beginning to creep into my throat and my heart felt heavy.

Everything about Rose was infectious and I was fast contacting her fear about the stupid faraway virus I could taste bile in the pit of my stomach.

The day we heard that it had gotten into the country, my mother's breath turned ragged and harsh. Instantly, I turned into a nervous wreck. I trembled with

cold from within. I wrapped my arms around myself and rocked my body from side to side to ward off unseen chills. I was instantly cloaked with dread. I literally felt



my blood pressure skyrocketing and my glucose clinking as it dropped to an abnormal rate.

Nightmares serenaded my sleep; my body broke out in hives riddled with stone cold goosebumps. Staying put was not helping but going out was murder. My throat was always dry and my hands clammy and cold.

This was torture—this elevating primal fear that had forever logged in my chest swamped by rushing bile and weakened my muscle. I have been frozen in

place looking helplessly as the numbers increase, watching it steadily making its way to me, to us.

My heart lurched at the slightest thing. It was unnerving. We followed the safety rituals to the T. My palms were

now tender and white, and the slightest spot on my face turned my skin ashen grey.

I cringed and waited for the inevitable while my mind played a sickening game with me; will it come? Lily, you've got it already.



# HOME ALONE

Juliana Sam  
Nigeria



**T**hat cold moonless night is one you can never forget. The cricket had creaked slowly and you whimpered, 'who is that?'

Your parents had travelled for a meeting leaving you alone at home. The cricket had increased their cacophony and you strained your eyes but could only see a dim image with dark eyes.

Around 8:40pm, the Power Holding Company interrupted the electricity and darkness filled the room. Your heartbeat had already tripled and sweat broke out from your forehead.

The symphony of chirping crickets and croaking frogs were the only sound in your room as you dozed off to sleep. You felt pressed and before you knew it, liquid droppings had messaged your bed.

As the night darkened your door As you reached out for your flashlight which was on the table,

a cold hand grabbed you and you shrieked in horror.

'Help!', you screamed but your voice echoed in the room.

And suddenly you felt a sharp object near your neck, 'shhh' the masculine and deep voice whispered to you.

You felt as if your heart was ripped from you as it raced faster than a horse and it's rider.

Will they rape you?

Will they kill you?

Will they rob you?

All these filled your mind and miraculously light flooded the room.

Staring at the intruder whose knife glinted in your eyes, you passed out in shock.



# THE MONSTER

Ogechukwu Peace Egwuatu  
Nigeria



**M**y heart beat rapidly. I wasn't sure what was going on, what I was hearing. I could hear heavy breathing but with my heart pounding in my ears, I couldn't tell if it was mine or if the monster had finally found me.

"Why, there you are," a voice so soft I was surprised I could hear it amidst the pounding in my ears. I froze, it's iciness spreading a chill through my body. It had found me and it would take me far

away. I would never return. The thought of this made me tremble. "Now don't be afraid," the icy silk voice continued. "Let us go," it said picking me up. I screamed. "Chioma Chioma, the voice of my sister Nnenna pierced through my scream.

I opened my eyes to see wide brown tear-filled eyes staring at me. I breathed a sigh of relief. It hadn't taken me away. The beep of the machines reminded me that I am in

the hospital! "It wanted to take me away," I choked out as soon as I caught my breath enough to speak.

A tear spills from her eyes. "It... it won't. I won't let... let it," she stutters. Her eyes doubtfully. "You won't die, Chioma! Promise," she tries again.

I wish I could believe her but the stark fear in her eyes won't let me.

---

# FEAR

Katsala Joseph  
Malawi

I know you, yet i don't  
I want you gone, yet you won't  
I've seen you, yet you're unreal  
Is there a cure for what i feel?

Driving me through uncertainty  
Between dread and anxiety  
Illusion yet real  
Some unsettling chill

Without you there is no fall  
Without you I could soar  
While crossing the wild sea  
Life's breeze beneath me

To Walk with grace and poise  
Facing you is the only choice  
I'm yet to defy thee  
Of courage I shall be

---

# A CODED CAVE

Eunice (Shera) Muthoni  
Kenya

She looks into the mirror,  
Her oversized bed stares back at her  
Her box of jewelry too,  
Her closet of shoes in the far end, not left  
behind,  
The only true witnesses to her wounds,  
Wounds healing underneath her concealer,  
And priceless gown.

Her two years in nursing school pay off,  
He hit her cheekbone well this time,  
But it doesn't hurt anymore,  
It feels familiar even,  
The warrior, lest they see under her face  
The smile, rehearsed to perfection, a blind man  
will follow.  
The blood, a cheap price for her place in  
society,  
The woman who holds his hand in public.  
The hand in private, that will turn on her so  
hard her world spins.

The cost of speaking out? Her witnesses. Too  
expensive.  
And that of friends? A slap or two.  
So she bravely retreats into her coded cave,  
Holds on to his hand a little tighter,  
"It is all you got," Fear whispers.

# AHWENEPAN NKASA

Asamoah S.  
Ghana



Silence is a bang—  
my ears bleed like a hole guns make.

A clock is dead for ticking  
The time keepers keep day and night still.

Every word is blood from my slit throat—  
kind I wear plenty concealed to decorate.

Mother's tongue drags a wet piece of shore up a  
ladder  
through a door that opens into a hole guns make.

My grandmother's womanhood is a silent shot on  
a coast.

It strays into mother—I'm never born.

In a true story a girl is taken  
and her tongue circumsised with a manhood.

Today put the window sill,  
Two crows tell me of revolution

Yet, here in my corner room,  
It's still yesterday's dust chatter in air.

When grandmother was taken for DTP,  
I did not mourn,  
I was not born.

# BAD OLD FRIEND

(A SONG OF WOE)

Chunke Anasthasia Mbarn  
Cameroon



Forth, he surged from hades' shore  
Frail, haggard and starved to core  
Flaunting, undaunted, a ghostly visage  
Far hideous in figure, even wilder in rage  
Fear became earth's only sage

For ages he's prowled through encumbered  
hearts

Fending off buds of valor with poisoned dart  
Frenzied to halt man's courageous leap  
Freely he sows, more patient to reap  
Frozen nectar, sweetest, to sip

Fiendish to man and all his ends,  
Fire holds less wit than this hades' friend  
Foolish we string up in his queue of shame  
Fighting within with naught but us to blame  
Fortunate however, for fear's fleeting fame

Fear became earth's only sage  
Even while we watched on enraged  
Anchored in hearts as old adage,  
Rigor beguiles us to rise from the cage

---

# DO NOT ASK ME

Ruth Ongaga  
Kenya

Donotaskmetosleepalone,  
I begofyou  
Therésa ghosin thedark  
Andit seeksto havemyblood.

Donotaskmetostayawakæalone  
Formyskeletonsauntme  
Remindingneofmymisdeeds,  
Andmakingmeregretbitterly.

Donotaskmetowalkalone,  
PleaseI begofyou  
Theræarevoicesinthewind  
Andtheytellmel shoulddie.

Donotaskmetositalone  
Fortheræareimagesinmyhead  
Thatonlya warriorcanbear  
AndI amnowarrior.

Donotaskmetosleepalone  
LestI runawayfrommyself.

---

# AWAKE AT NIGHT

Faith Chepchumba  
Kenya

The night drags on  
As I stay up staring  
With the cold biting my skin  
And the silence deep

As I stay up staring  
My mind is in turmoil  
And the silence deep  
With my chest feeling heavy

My mind is in turmoil  
I am afraid to go to sleep  
With my chest feeling heavy  
For I may sleep and not wake up

Afraid to go to sleep  
I stay up wide eyed  
For I may sleep and not wake up  
As the night drags on

---

# FEAR

Jide Badmus  
Nigeria

The eloquent grope in  
the dark of incoherence  
like fidgeting statues.

the wind shivers,  
pavements break  
into sweat &  
heartbeats crawl  
like furious waterfalls




---

# CALLS FROM THE HINTERLAND

Popoola Damilare  
Nigeria

The whispers of fear is akin to calls from the hinterland  
Vague, eerie, desolate and dark  
When you lend them your ears, you forget who you are  
What's not yours becomes yours  
You chase freedom though you possess it  
You pine for hope when you need none

I'm River; that's what my mother — who is Nature — christened me  
And I should flow; forgetting my past glories  
Renewing myself as I listen to the voice within  
As I teem with flora and fauna

But I hear these calls from the hinterland:  
I ripple when teased by a pebble; creating circles that wind into  
oblivion  
And when I get the chance to hop on a storm, I get frivolous  
I throw myself in the air if perhaps I could fly like a sparrow  
In those moments, I forget I was born to flow  
Till mother calls my name and clears my uncertainties

Perhaps I need to hear these calls sometimes  
As they amplify my vanities and uncertainties  
They hold me down so I could see what lies ahead  
They give me a chance to hear mother call my name  
But I fear that someday, my ears would no longer hearken to  
mother's call  
Therefore, even though I constantly hear calls from the hinterland  
I rise daily at dawn only to listen to mother call my name.

---

# IN DARK WE REST

Zerida B Claire  
Uganda

Things I never understood, I appreciated.  
Abandoned mansions!  
With ghosts, blood scars on walls,  
Broken pale bath-tubs, cracked floors, Silence!

They tell deep stories  
Peeling walls, dark corridors  
Faded rugs hold lost feet  
Thoughts and teardrops conceived in worn-out  
sheets  
Scattered books- lost souls return to search  
themselves  
Through the shelves and pages

In the dark... my crooked ray of light lives  
Life's dark. Light, an illusion.  
In dark we rest. No way of breaking free.  
If we appreciate our pale, we ease the pain

---

# FEAR NOT

Nnane Ntube  
Cameroon

Ah!Where shadows  
Crawl down the dark bushy road,  
Rasp of breath wince,  
Ignite pulse  
Mounts faster faster,  
Over and over again,  
Needling pores  
Yawping for sweat.

Fear dying for fear: flight,  
Eyes glassy with eerie,  
Anxiety Addled?  
Relax Don't run!

Num not!  
Outsmart!  
To fear, you're the foe.

Fear is an angry ghost and  
Enemy to watch out for,  
A hack to keep out of reach.  
Ruine plans and stay strong.

# CAN WE?

Henry Nuwamanya  
Uganda

Can we not shudder in tears?  
When the gullible are becoming a mess?  
When the ashly and edgy are less curvy?  
When the "thieves" are smiling at a glance?  
With our little give-aways in their dirty pockets?  
Like notable criminals?  
When our "starve" is their fortune?

Can we not fumble in fear  
When the whole world is frozen?  
Leaders stuck malignantly with thoughts?  
When "us" and "them" are, but miles apart?  
When the "religious" are hiding and the "scientific"  
are grappling with resumes?

Are we not, but the experiments?  
The experiments of hunger and despair?  
Standing in the face of the moody vultures,  
Ready to strangle and divulge  
On our faith and hope?

Aren't we the needy?  
Is this coming to an end?  
Can we rather breed  
the last humanity in our pockets?  
Can we rather not hide our cries and hunger?

# GENITAL TALE

Nzere Chinedu  
Nigeria



it creeps in on me like the paws of my deranged  
uncle  
peeping beneath my purple coloured skirt  
making way for his rage  
leaving lethal patches on my fragile heart  
reminding me that my mother was bought for a  
token  
on a market day  
it reminds me of how Rinji was shot at close  
range  
by trigger-happy uniform boys  
that night, Abuja slept in whispers  
it reminds me of how papa died  
on his death bed he said; Ada, the world is a  
horror thriller  
read only under the watch of the sun  
for the moon steals your voice with it's stigma  
if i die in this poem  
will you bury me in the words of my ex?  
will you teach me the tricks of loneliness?  
or will i become another genital tale on the  
pages of the newspapers?



# I KNOW A FRIEND

**Adedamola Adedayo (Jones Phoenix)**  
Nigeria

I know a friend who sits by the riverside of tears  
To develop lyrics from the noise of silence  
Whenever the track of a night is remixed in the records  
of time  
Then her fate begs for that night to be devalued too soon  
So that morning may profit in its trade of hope

I know that the heart of my dear friend  
Expels the aroma of derision  
Because it has become a dumping site for leftovers of  
fears  
Manufactured by an industry of adrenaline  
In response to the promising dosages of a stepfather's  
semen

Although my friend's clouds may be remote colonies  
Under the aegis of a discourteous sky  
I know they will, someday, find their voices  
In an emancipation of downpour

Dear friend, do not think that only the howling owl  
Brings you empathy amidst the fears you laud  
Whenever your eyes are drowned in the candled  
darkness  
And the irony of a sequel waters your dreams  
But I am also a composer of songs that feature mild  
hopes  
From the studio of dwindling fears

# Y.O.L.O.

**Temani Nkalolang**  
Botswana

What will people say?  
It's a chain of bondage!  
It's a high price to pay.  
Living life like a used bandage.

It's a chain of bondage,  
Living life in fear.  
Living life like a used bandage,  
Isn't it too much to bear?

Living life in fear;  
A life not worth remembering.  
Is it not too much to bear?  
Live life and stop wondering.

A life not worth remembering?  
It is a high price to pay.  
Live life and stop wondering  
What people will say.

# HELLO FEAR

Himi Asulu  
Nigeria

I'm not talking as a friend  
For you are only a counterfeit  
A liar to a truth

You block doors to entrances  
A shade to the light  
Obstructing, blinding  
You are mud on a path

How I wish I never knew you  
Cause the virus you infected me with, has been  
loads of regret  
Killing so fast the courage inside of me

I want a change  
I have been sick of hiding in my shell  
I want to stand the crowd..

# JAILBIRD

Geno Mercy Apachi  
Uganda



I want to write a political poem

One that shall march down the aisles of history like  
a bride and groom  
A petition that the optimistic citizens shall ride all  
night like a witch's broom  
A gift that shall be Uganda's heirloom

'Bazukulu' shall adopt it with new rhyme and rhythm  
For its syllables of justice shall be as clear as prism

But every hour my ink starts to threaten  
I hear the song of the jailbird and I hearken

Sell thy ears to me blooming writer

I once swirled the truth at my finger-tip  
Voiced my heart out at the weekly Stand-up

Paid my dues from the audience's standing ovation  
Fed from the empty tables of the pleased opposition

Stripped my "Kitenge" and bore my feminine chest  
to chauvinism  
Published my chapters and name with utmost  
professionalism

Yet here I sit crooning deuces to the wind  
My wisdom and truth mercilessly cuffed

Sell thy ears to me blooming writer  
Bake your cake in the oven of venom  
But save it for the winter you can never fathom

# TRASH IT

Oluwasina Gbemisola (ElegantInk)  
Nigeria

We face it, right from childhood.  
Some were scared of heights; others of the dark.  
It's a wonder if it does us any good.  
Perhaps, it blesses us with the restraint we lack!

But, it has also crippled many  
And limited the expression of the best  
That quietly resides in men.  
Fear could be seen as a test

Of our determination to go through  
With whatever we want to be.  
It's a subtle referee; informing us too  
That we can be more than we see.

The best way to deal with it  
Is to look it undauntedly in the eye  
And, fully armed with grit,  
Reach, rise and soar really high!

Let your fear fear you!  
It can't get any realer than you let it!  
It's limiting and frustrating, too.  
Do well to trash it in a pit!

# FEAR

Carol Nderitu  
Kenya

I don't know how to chew at the table, I'm afraid,  
"Close your mouth when you eat!" she shouts,  
I am only five, breaking down, and sad,  
"Don't act like a child, you brat!" she scolds,  
Since dad left my spirit died,  
"You are just like that useless man!" she retorts,  
Since the separation, I stutter and wet my bed,  
"Shut your beak and go clean yourself!" she yells,  
My grades suffer because I barely read,  
"You will never amount to anything you stupid!" she screams,  
I struggle moving her heavy body when she is intoxicated,  
"Hold me up!" she shrieks  
I'm afraid of my mum, she is always mad,  
"You'll be a mum soon," she whispers.

---

# THIS THING CALLED FEAR

Abigail-Tydale Bassey  
Nigeria

This thing  
called fear  
is as fiery as Hell;  
burns strength to weakness  
and grinds confidence to tears,  
wears the aura of a home  
but nurtures a net of death.

This thing  
called fear  
is deadlier than death;  
dresses like a manager  
but smells like a toll,  
its face is hid  
yet it preys for souls.

This thing  
called fear,  
is a license to failure.

So ladies and gents,  
belike the good old man  
who walks away in the dark  
with a pipe  
and a half drunk bottle of whiskey\_  
watch fear amazed  
how you do not care at all.

---

# THE NIGHT RACE

Nwobi Chidubem Valentine  
Nigeria

On a moonless night,  
My heart raced  
My feet grew cold and weary.  
I jumped mountains,  
And flew across oceans.  
I ran faster than an antelope  
My speed was in meter/second  
My shadow pursued me like a hen,  
Whose chick was stolen  
When i ran out of breath  
And was ready to accept my fate  
Only then did i realize,  
That fear had created an illusion  
And had set me up on a race

---

GENRE: SHORT STORY

TITLE: THE DANCE OF SELF LOVE

WRITER: NDANU JACQUELINE, KENYA

REVIEWER: FUNMI RICHARDS, NIGERIA

**T**he title *The Dance of Self Love* tells a story of learning a dance, failing and trying again to perfect the steps, then, learning that perfection is not in the dance but the practice of it.

The title, itself, is its own story but when merged with the story beneath it, it becomes a world of its own. A person a world that is unique to the storyteller.

When the writer begins she begins by creating an atmosphere where this world is meant to exist. Then, she proceeds to describe the emotions behind the dance- transition phases if you could call it that, all of which she likens to war with herself (introspective in other words) This build-up follows through with a conclusion that self-realization and self-love as it were comes with its perks.

However, the reader experiences a slight disconnection within the story because there is a not so tight delivery of events and some inappropriateness of articles, collocations, determiners and preposition in some sentences:

“Another playspot- another spot to play

Breaking into dance once more- breaking into a dance once more.

Loomed on my head- loomed over my head

I can't help but pride- I can't help but take pride”

All in all, the settings backdrops as it does not directly affect/influence the story; the imagery captured in the progression of the story is descriptive so that it creates a picture that allows the reader connect to the allusion and relate to the ever similitude and transition of the story's character.

---

GENRE: COLUMNS

TITLE: LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

WRITER: UGBEDE ATABOH, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: COLIN STANLEY KARIMI. (THE\_POWERHOUSE), KENYA

This episode of 'Life as We Know It' is raw unlike previous ones. It is large enough to incorporate the Nigerian government and also its citizens. With the ongoing pandemic, the articles show the rot in morality in the country in the sense of service delivery and patriotism of the Nigerian person. This episode is more alive as the writer, Ugbede acts in utmost regard by purchasing a mask from a local chemist. Nonetheless, despite the rot in the Nigerian government, it is evident that Ugbede Ataboh is a staunch Christian.

The article further reveals the writer conversing with the attendant at the chemist. It is clear that the writer is cheerful with her environment as it would be casual behavior for any sick individual seeking assistance in a medical facility. However, disappointment draws in as even the attendant is showing signs of weariness primarily because of the crippling Covid-19. More to this, another attendant described as a chubby and middle-aged man in a lab coat appears and rudely interrupts the conversation between the two. He first notices the trendy hairstyle rocked by the writer and goes to an extent of asking her gender. This rubs the writer the wrong way but she decides to be the bigger person and ignores. She continues to ask for the mask from the first attendant. The price is ridiculously high and pushes the writer into a quick spasm of anger having realized she goes for five hundred naira. This sets off a series of questions on what the Nigerian government did with fifteen billion naira collected from well-wishers. Having reached such a point, one ponders on the functioning of the government structure put in place to protect its citizens from the deadly virus. More questions arise as to the competence of the elected leaders in their various positions.

Nigerian culture presents itself as it highlights the poverty level amongst the larger population of the nation. With hunger pangs likely to nudge even the wealthy, new would realize vanity is around the corner, and learn to appreciate the true values of being African, sharing and assisting each other to reach our goals straight. Maybe this pandemic should be an eye-opener for us Africans to unite and share our wealth and resources with other great nations. As a reviewer, also look forward to the end of Covid-19, and may be a much more considerate African leadership.

GENRE: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

TITLE: FINUM GOES TO THE VILLAGE

WRITER: NAMSE UDOSEN, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: NGALIM JUSLINE VEEYEENYUY, CAMEROON

**F**inum Goes to the Village is a fable or an apologue that describes the life led by goats in a farm. The main character is Finum. The story opens in a farm in Kaduna owned by Mr Asake. Finum is introduced and is said to live in a big room unlike the other goats that live in the open space. Mr Asake takes good care of Finum, obviously one of the reasons he sends him to the village as his father's birthday gift. An act Finum interprets as betrayal and he fears she is surely going to be killed.

Finum is taken to a strange village where life is completely different from the one he left in Kaduna. While there, he first attempts to escape but falls into the hands of a great companion called Big Brown Bororo. He discourages him, saying that escaping is dangerous for some have attempted and died or gotten lost. Big Brown Bororo also teaches him on the kinds of leaves to eat and where to eat them.

Life in the village farm is completely different from life in the Kaduna farm. They are reserved with sweet leaves in the farm in Kaduna while in the village farm you just have to select from the many types which are edible. Also, in Kaduna, he is even in the master's lead to the goat's home but in the village farm, Big Brown Bororo informs Finum that they follow the yellow ball to know the time to go home.

Big Brown Bororo leads the other goat's home and each group stops at their compound. When they arrive, their destination is typical of life in a rural setting by kids from different homes or even adults after carrying out daily activities together and it's time to get back home. As they arrive home, an old mantie, a red cloth round Finum's neck which marks his initiation as Big Brown Bororo says: "you are now one of us."

Namse's apologue is quite interesting and good for children. They will enjoy reading or being told the life led by goats in the farm which behave exactly like humans in their daily activities. Not only do the goats talk, they eat, walk, and do other activities daily like humans. The magazine's theme of transition (becoming) is quite glaring in the story through Finum, our major character, as she changes environment, lifestyle, and becomes a member to a different family.

Themes such as transition, membership, companionship, love, fears are vivid in the story.

The contrasting getting ends credibility to the story and provokes reality.

There are also moral lessons kids can learn to adapt in any environment and in any conditions.

Kids can also learn to be one another's keepers through the relationship between Finum and Big Brown Bororo, the differences between city life and village life; these and many others abound in the fable.

Namse's apologue is quite interesting and relatable and reminds me of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* read at a surface level.

---

GENRE: POETRY

TITLE: BREAKING FORTH

WRITER: TEMANI NKALOLANG, BOTSWANA

REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA

**T**he Biblical paradox, "a seed grows unless it dies" has left many believers confused as to why one would die and live, forgetting that Jesus died and continued to live. Death brings about resurrection. Let men not preach...

The poem BREAKING FORTH by a Motswana poetess Temani Nkalolang is written in a traditional haiku form. It is metered as 5-7-5.

Line one has five syllables, line two has seven syllables and line three has five.

In this haiku, the poet clearly uses a natural image (seed) to tackle the theme of Transition (Becoming). She figuratively kills "the seed" to germinate into a seedling, thereby giving life to a hitherto "dead" seed.

This haiku brings to reality the truth about reincarnation. In order for the old to come back to life, they must die and their names be given. This brings out the themes of death and reincarnation.

The poet uses concrete imagery, "seed, ground, root, and wheel" all to create a visual image with significance and relevance.

Understatement is also well employed in line one. "A seed in the ground. It's not in the ground by mistake or chance but it's "buried in the soil" so that it grows with favourable conditions.

The "wheel" in line three symbolises continuity of movement/life. Life has to go on as long as change is still part of the equation for man's existence.

The diction is appropriate. The tone is formal.





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# Duchau

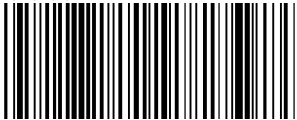
Charles Duncan  
(Malawi)

# The Father I Loved

Onwubiko Okem  
(Nigeria)

# RESOLUTION

VOL. 8 NO. 5



AUGUST, 2020

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# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

## THEME: FATE

Writers Space Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for her October 2020 Edition in the following categories:

- Short Story
- Flash Fiction
- Poetry
- Essays
- Children's Literature

The Submission windows is open from 1st of August to 14th August.

Response time is typically within 4 to 5 weeks after submission window closes.

We look forward to receiving your best.

To submit, please visit [www.writersspace.net/submissions](http://www.writersspace.net/submissions)

# N Editor's Note

## Reconciliation

root word: *reconcile*

definition (Merriam-Webster):

**1a:** to restore to friendship or harmony

**b:** settle, resolve

**2 :** to make consistent or congruous

**3 :** to cause to submit to or accept something unpleasant

To speak to the first definition listed above would surely come off as singing to the choir; we are too well acquainted with that face of reconciliation to learn anything that is truly new; as such, I leave it to you to think on the things many have said of living together in harmony.

In moving on to the second definition, I am provoked to consider that for any individual to make it in their journey of life, that person is expect to reconcile their expectations with their reality. This act of reconciling is one that we are destined to repeat many times before the end. The one who can master this is one who is true to themselves and has been able to understand half of what life is about – What is the other half of life? If I had the answer to that, life would lose its mystery and would no longer be worth living.

As for number three, who ever wants to submit to or accept anything unpleasant or difficult in this thing called life? Show me such a person and I shall concede that we are closer to discovering that other half than I first imagined.

Always remember, *Ubuntu*.

Warm regards,

Nabilah.

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# Table of Content

Editor's Note	4
Editorial Crew	5
Table of Contents	6
ShortStory	7-16
Columns	17-24
Children Literature	25-26
Poetry	27-31
Reviews	32-36



I woke up with a start. There was that sound again, the creaking of a poorly serviced wheel, filtering in through the door to my room. Looking up from my bed I could see the vague outlines of moving shapes through the translucent window that made up the top quarter of the door; some people were pushing a gurney.

I quickly scanned my surroundings. There were a number of machines connected to me in some way, beeping steadily, fed by the tangle of tubes and wires that radiated out of my skeletal body. There was a table beside my bed, buried under a heap of rosaries, bibles and get-well-soon cards.

*Damn it. I'm back.*

It all came rushing back, waves of realization battering the shores of my consciousness. I had been alive, but life felt like death, so I took matters into my own hands. I

# Redemption

**Ohanyere Ugoada  
(Nigeria)**

could remember the pills, the pain. I could remember the pull into darkness, the display of memories, the joy at the fact that it was finally over and then, THE BLACK. That was what I liked to call it. The destination I had chosen over being damned for a lifetime. But here I was, pulled back into the light. I hated it. And every time I was brought back, I hated it more. It wasn't worth it. No matter how many times they pulled me out, treated me, counselled me, I would always crave THE BLACK. I would always run back. I would always be, in medical terms, “psychotic and depressed”.

In the search for a “cure”, I had been forced by the woman I was supposed to call “Mother” to attend prayer sessions, midnight services, fellowships. She was the reason why I went for morning and evening mass *every day*; the reason why I went from Catholic churches in the morning, to

Mountain of Fire parishes by night; only to pop up at the Overcomers Chapel the next day. She was the reason why I went to churches where I – or better still my money – was welcomed by the faces of greedy pastors. Why I had demons and witches cast out of me. Why I was pushed and shoved in the name of deliverance. *She* was the reason why I kept my mouth closed when I was told that it was my mother's brother who had cast a spell on me, even though my mother had been an only child. I just wanted her to be content before I passed on.

I hated this. All of this. Life, myself, people. I wanted it to end. This never-ending pain that I couldn't explain to anyone else. These were my last thoughts before I drifted off to sleep once again.

\*

It was like a flash. I woke up with a start, wondering where I was. A heart monitor was beeping frantically somewhere in the room. There were doctors all around me, shouting out medical terms and issuing commands that sounded like gibberish. I was still in the hospital. I had never heard the heart monitor beep so fast,

and yet I felt so calm and relaxed. My heart was beating out of my chest, but I felt so serene, tranquil. There was no pain. For a time – seconds – I could feel nothing at all, and then I was engulfed by The Black.

\*

My eyes opened once more. This time, to my utmost surprise, I was in my room in my house. Not in my foster mum's house where I lived in now, but in my childhood home where I had lived with my *real* parents before their demise. The demise that I had caused. How was I here? This house was no more. But now the room was exactly how it had been ten years ago. Nothing had changed. My toys were still piled in the “play corner”. My silly childhood drawings gazed down in that corner from the places on the walls. I looked at my bedside table, and saw the picture frame that held the picture of my little family on a vacation to one of the Disney World parks. That should be the one in California. I remembered it clearly because it had been our last one.

I walked to the door, treading carefully. I hesitated before I reached out to open it. I braced myself and turned the knob,

causing the door to open with a creak. I walked cautiously to the only place I could think of. The kitchen. Once I got there I stopped in my tracks, too shocked by the sight before me. Standing at the sink, bathed in the sunlight that poured in from the windows, was my mum, my *real* mum. Her chocolate coloured skin gleamed in the sunlight. She seemed to feel my presence as she stopped what she was doing to turn towards me. For a moment, she seemed shocked to see me too but she quickly composed herself and flashed me that wide smile I remembered so well. I could feel my eyes tearing up. She walked towards me as I stood still, too shocked to move and enveloped me in an embrace that I hoped would last forever. But she pulled out from the embrace and wiped away my tears.

As if on cue, my father strolled in. He too seemed quite shocked to see me, but like mother, he quickly composed himself. He rushed to give me a hug. But suddenly he pulled back. With a questioning look, he asked, “Kammy love, what are you doing here?”

My mum concurred, “You're not meant to be here. Your time hasn't

come. You have a lot of things to achieve and fulfil. Carrying our name on, making us proud, things to do for the world, feats to achieve; we are waiting, watching and smiling”.

I suddenly felt guilty. Mum continued, her tone getting angrier by the second, “So, tell me Kammy, why are you here?” Now, she was shouting and screaming. “Tell me Kammy, why are you here?”. I had never seen her like this before. My calm and collected mother. Even in the face of death, never was she this *mad*. My dad looked up from her and at me with an expression of pain, of sadness. “Why? Why would you do this to us Kammy? Why would you take away our last chance at life?”

I mustered a little bit of courage and muttered meekly, “I missed you people”.

“And...And...I killed you. I couldn't live with the knowledge that I was the reason you guys were *here*. I missed you. I missed you people dearly”, I cried. Now my father looked truly angry as he said, “What do you mean by you killed us? How? When? Because I sure as hell don't remember it like that.”



Suddenly, I was pulled back to that day. My seven-year-old self, whining about how I couldn't get ice cream. My dad driving with my heavily pregnant mum right beside him in the passenger's seat. My mum and dad turning back to me to warn me. The drunk driver appearing out of nowhere. My mum's scream. The impact of metal on metal. Then, THE BLACK.

I opened my eyes and saw my dad and now composed mum looking at me intensely. My father spoke up first, "Now, Kamsisochukwu Jessica Onyemaechi, tell me how you killed me".

I spoke up, "I made you lose attention". And then they laughed.

"Kammy," Mum now, "We wouldn't have been able to swerve in time, he was way too fast. And he came from the side, we still wouldn't have seen him early enough. Our time had come, but yours hasn't", she ended with a scowl. My dad continued, "And you seem to have forgotten that you are the reason why we cherish the years we spent on earth. You made it all worth it. You're the reason why we aren't miserable souls because anytime we looked

down, we saw our little angel. And through your eyes we saw, by your life we lived. If you ever thought you killed us, then you just did it now, by killing yourself." I was shocked. I was too busy gaining revenge for people who were at peace. And in that quest, I had done more damage.

"We miss you too darling, more than you could ever imagine. But the world needs you more, to fulfil the destiny Almighty God has apportioned to you."

"Goodbye my love, until we meet again," my mum said, and my dad chirped in: "At the right time".

We all chuckled lightly and then I was pulled into a hug. When they pulled away, I looked into my left palm to see her favourite hairpin which I used to admire when I was younger before they both engulfed me into a bone crushing hug. Once again, the black blotches returned, and once again THE BLACK engulfed me.

\*

There was a knock. My eyes shot open and I recognized the hospital room. I looked towards the door and there stood my *other* mother holding the door ajar. "Hi mum", I said to her with a smile.

With all sincerity I told her, "I am sorry, mummy". She stared at me in a loss for words, too shocked to form a coherent sentence. I wasn't sure what had surprised her more. The fact that I called her mummy or the fact that I had used the words "I am sorry". So, I continued, "I am so sorry, mummy. For everything. The worry I caused you, the pain, the money, the stress, the emotional trauma, everything. I am sorry, mummy. You deserved so much better, mummy. Now I promise you, mummy, with each passing day, I'll be striving harder to be a better daughter to you". I didn't even know I was crying until I felt the moisture on my lips and tasted the salty liquid. Before I knew it, I was engulfed in a tight bear hug by my mother. But this time unlike other times I didn't lie stiff, I hugged her back so tight with strength I never knew I was capable of. I suddenly felt something pricking my left palm. I opened it to see my mother's favourite hairpin.

# Smiling in the drought

**Thatho Katiso  
(Lesotho)**



Resolution

**B**y all appearances, things were bleak in the savanna. The grass had become dry and brittle while the ground hardened to the point where it had begun to crack as it gave way to the smoldering heat of the overhead sun. The dry season had tightened its grip on the veld for much longer than expected, and with each day, it took a little more life out of the savanna. Even the animals had grown sluggish. None of the usual flurry of beasts galloping across the veld could be seen. It was indeed a time of great despair for the savanna and her inhabitants. Well, most of them at least, save for a young lion cub named Thokozile. She seemed rather cheerful considering the circumstances. It wasn't because she found joy in the desolation brought about by the drought as most would've expected of a predator like herself. Her joy was the result of

a promise, a promise that her mother had regretted making ever since they had set off on their journey to the great lake. It was this promise that caused her to hop and skip around her exhausted mother's feet throughout the whole journey. The promise that she would get to play with all the animals of the savanna.

When she wasn't frolicking around her mother, she hurled an endless barrage of questions her way, which proved to be equally exhausting. She tried her best to dismiss them with a growl or simply ignore them but her actions were in vain. Most of the questions revolved around the size of the lake and the kinds of animals they'd get to see once they got there.

All the other animals looked at her rather curiously. She didn't really care for it,

especially since all of attempted to interact with. Although she had been the best idea. In an attempt to console her cub, she playfully nudged her with her nose and tickled her belly with her whiskers.

They were quick to avert their eyes whenever she turned her gaze towards them. She didn't mind that either - it was fear. Seeing fear in those around her was an all too common occurrence in her life. Still, said fear would typically be followed by flight. Typically, but not that day. That's how dire the situation had become. Death by predator or death from thirst, neither option seemed desirable to any of the animals hence they braved the journey to a place that would surely be rife with carnivores. The trek was mostly peaceful, with a few scuffles here and there as a caravan began to form.

It was the most beautiful thing Thokozile had ever seen and was perhaps part of the reason behind her jubilation. The only thing that dampened her spirits was the fear and apprehension in the eyes of all those she attempted to interact with. Although she had become accustomed to it, it still saddened her, especially since she could not understand why. All the other animals were interacting with each other save for herself and her mother which she found disheartening. She still had a few months left before she could start learning how to hunt so she was yet to become aware of the pecking order in the savanna. The journey was nearing its conclusion with the destination almost within view and she was yet to make a single friend like she had wished. Suffice it to say, the journey was not at all what she had hoped it would be. Even other predators were quick to hide their cubs the moment she approached. Never had she cursed being a lion like she did in that very moment. Her mother could see the sorrow in the eyes of her young one, she realized that perhaps making that promise may not have been the best idea. In an attempt to console her cub, she playfully nudged her with her nose and tickled her belly with her whiskers.

"I will always be your best friend." she whispered.

For a moment she managed to make Thokozile smile once again, but as much as she appreciated the gesture; it just wasn't the same coming from her mother - a lion. She was a bit more composed for the final stretch of the journey, which came as a big relief for her mother. As much as she hated seeing her daughter unhappy, she knew it was only a matter of time before she discovered what it truly meant to be a lioness in the savanna. She too had once been young and idealistic, but nature isn't something that can be easily swayed by the whims of a naive little cub. It was a lesson she had learned the hard way and one she intended to pass down to her daughter over time.

Thokozile came to life once more after noticing a change in the landscape. The grass slowly faded away, until they found themselves treading over coarse sand that had been heated by the sun to temperatures that her tiny paws just couldn't bare. She ran ahead of her mother until she got to an area that was a bit cooler and moist. The earth looked very smooth, almost slippery, but when she stepped on it, part of her paw sunk into the mud and caused her to leap back in fear.

"Welcome to the great lake." her mother declared.

Thokozile looked around and all she could see were a series of puddles scattered across what looked like an ordinary concave patch of land. She looked at all the

animals that had traveled off. Packs of hyenas with them as well as those cackled maniacally as they found already there, they lorded over several not to mention the scores puddles. The leopards that kept pouring in after and cheetahs were almost them; she couldn't indistinguishable as they fathom how they would shared a drink side by all be able to drink their side. Birds of different fill, or even drink at all. species fluttered joyfully She then noticed that as over the lake and would soon as her mother occasionally land to take entered the lake, all the a sip. Others perched other animals cleared a themselves on the backs path for her and none of the majestic elephants would dare drink from as they dipped their the same puddle. Though trunks into the water and an unspoken truce had hosed it into their been formed, it was also mouths. The young an uneasy one and many lioness found it rather still chose to err on the amusing to watch the side of caution lest they giraffes as they spread get killed by the their long legs and bent predators. But of course, their slightly longer necks the fear of dying of thirst to drink from the shallow was still much greater. waters. She was in awe of

all the variety of life in front of her but at the herbivores' fears, the same time she felt as predators only had one though an invisible concern at that point in barrier stood between time - water. The her and this exciting new crocodiles basked in the world. It was a barrier sun in long files a short that repelled everything distance from the lake and everyone around her after having drunken save for other lions as it their fill long before the turned out. other animals even set

## Resolution



As her mother reunited with the rest of the pride and drank alongside them, Thokozile ventured off on her own to find some other place to drink. She would've loved to join any of the other animals but at that point she was certain they'd flee at the sight of her. She found a small unoccupied puddle shortly after her departure. It wasn't before long that she discovered why it had been unoccupied. Of all the puddles in the lake, it was by far the smallest with most of it consisting of dirt and tiny little tadpoles. Despite all of that, Thokozile still thought it a better option than drinking with the pride, who were constantly looked upon with fear by the other animals. She sipped the water slowly, all the while keeping her teeth clenched in an attempt to filter out the dirt and tadpoles. Over the slurping sounds she made while drinking, the young lioness heard the pitter-patter of footsteps approaching her from behind. She simply assumed they were her mother's - she always made sure they weren't too far apart. She continued to drink from her tadpole infested water until the sound of footsteps ceased, prompting her to turn and confirm if they did indeed belong to her mother. Much to her surprise, they belonged to a tiny elephant calf. Of course, tiny by elephant standards was still much larger than she was. He dipped his trunk into the puddle but unlike his lion counterpart was unable to filter out the tadpoles. It was only after feeling them swim around inside his trunk that he blew out all of the water in a panic. Thokozile, who had been watching the calf in silence, suddenly burst into laughter over the embarrassed calf taking another swig but this time aimed his trunk at Thokozile and gave her a good hosing. Now it was his turn to have a laugh at her expense. Much to his surprise however, she broke into laughter as well. She then began to splash the water on him with her paws and thus, the two began to chase each other around the puddle. Their mothers watched on from a distance, lion and elephant side by side. They knew that the rains would soon come and break the tentative truce. In that moment they dreaded having to one day teach their young ones that a day would come when they would meet not as friends but rather hunter and prey, as nature intended. It was far from an ideal setup but alas, nature is not so indulgent as to bend to the whims of doting mothers.





I must have been fifteen years old when I walked out of the door on a sunny Saturday afternoon without sparing a glance backwards to see how my actions were breaking my mother's heart. How could I? I knew that if I ventured to turn, even if it was only for a second, that I would lose what little nerve it was that I had.

Father was a difficult man to live with but I would admit that it wasn't any excuse to justify how I was inadvertently making Mother feel by my actions. I was an intelligent chap albeit a young and inexperienced one and Father thought that he could control my actions but I refused to be a tool in someone else's grasp merely existing for their amusement and self-absorbent desires. Father fancied himself my self-acclaimed mentor and thus, he thought it within his purview to decide what course it was the ship of my life took. I would not stand for it which was why we were fighting again.

My results had just come in from the West African Examination Council and as expected, I had excelled admirably, scoring top marks in almost every subject that I had sat for. My parents were avid intellectuals and thus my results were a source of pride and joy to them and that was when my troubles started with Father. It was not so strange that I was embroiled in conflict with Father as that seemed to be somewhat of the norm since I hit puberty. I think it was something in my DNA that just refused to be told what to do, then again I didn't really have any problems following Mother's instructions without questioning so I assume that it was just a matter of Father's directives rubbing me the wrong way.

Father wanted me to apply to study Engineering at the premier University of Engineering in the state,

# The Father I Loved

Onwubiko Okem  
(Nigeria)

Crutech. I was okay with studying Engineering, truthfully I had never given much thought to what I wanted to study after graduating from high school and I was fairly confident that I would excel regardless of what my choice was, but there was no way that I was going to Crutech. Crutech was a stone-throw from where I lived and schooling there would almost certainly ensure that Father would try to manage my life (like he tried to manage every other thing about me and failed). I wanted to go off to the far west and study at U.I., miles away from Father's reach, and because in my mind Crutech and Engineering were indelibly linked together, I was also fighting him on studying Engineering, rebellious as I was at such an age - I did say that I was inexperienced. The dilemma that I invariably faced was that Father had been my sole sponsor for as long as I could remember and I had no way to pay my way through school if I decided to go off on my own. We didn't exactly live in a country that encouraged self-sustenance until you were at least twenty-five and had a degree firmly under your belt or at least that was what I was raised to believe and so Father had always had a medium to control me and make me do

his bidding. But I was slowly getting fed up and the day I left marked a point of no return.

I had just returned from playing soccer with some of the guys from our street and I was feeling downright jovial having scored three times. There was nothing that could ruin my mood - or so I thought. The moment I stepped through the door of our modest three-bedroom bungalow, Father launched into one of his diatribes, berating me rather forcefully. It was a speech that I had heard a hundred times before and it mostly consisted of him rebuking me and calling my paternity into question. Don't get me wrong, it wasn't that he suspected Mother of foul play - some would go as far as to say that I was Father's spitting image - it was just that he didn't approve of some of my choices in life - in this case, my decision to go out and play soccer rather than stay at home to study for the upcoming post University Tertiary Matriculation Exams being the bone of contention. You couldn't fault me for wanting to loosen up a little and blow off some steam. In my defense, I had been cooped up indoors for weeks studying intensively and I needed the break that the physical exertion would afford me. You know what they say, "all work and no play makes Ikenna a dullard", I think. And so I had gone out to play a little and Father seemed undoubtedly miffed. Hearing him rant about how I was wasting my life and potential, I could feel something snap on the inside of me and I just knew that I couldn't do it anymore. I had decided to go along with his plans and attend Crutech, not because he had changed my mind but because I knew how much our fighting affected Mother, but something had to give. I couldn't live my life in fear of following my own path just because I was scared that Daddy wouldn't be there to protect me anymore and so after taking a

long hot shower, I walked out of the bathroom, packed what little belongings it was that I had and walked out of his house without a backwards glance.

I knew that my actions were breaking Mother's heart but I could not turn back, not even for an instant or else my resolve would falter.

I was twenty-five with a great job, a fiancée that adored me and a more than comfortable lifestyle but my actions on that day still haunted me and so I was back home to fix things before it was too late. I raised my hand to knock on the door but it flew open and I could scarcely breathe as I saw Mother standing there. Without a word she took me to where Father lay on the bed, dying. There was no time. Father had been sick for a while. I felt responsible. I was an only child and the strain of my departure must have been too great on his heart. He would never admit it because of his pride but that didn't matter in this instant. All that mattered were the unspoken words that we had between us and the feelings that we had never admitted to each other. I was young, foolish and impulsive. Father was old, stubborn and controlling. We had lost so much time to our prides and ego and we had both paid dearly for our mistakes. Father must have noticed the presence of a newcomer in the room because his eyes flew open and he glanced in my direction. He broke out in a thin wispy smile that did nothing to hide the strength that he must have once possessed in his youth.

"Son" he said.

"Father" I replied.

The prodigal son had returned home.

# Life as we Know it

Ugede Ataboh  
(Nigeria)



Many of us have unsettled issues from our past, while some of us have existing issues we have to live with that may remain unsettled till we draw our last breaths. This month has been super crazy for me on different levels because I came face to face with a part of my life I cautiously avoided for so long. I came face to face with my mother.

The month started out like every other month, except for the silent presence of Covid-19 our society is currently learning to live with which is not only sad but unfortunate; Covid-19 has literally become the Elephant in every room. I was at work on a typical Monday morning adjusting my face mask when I received a call from my brother...

*"Bro what's up?"*

*"I'm doing great, ugedede. Are you busy? Can you talk now?" Frank asks.*

*"Yeab... hold on for a second so I can go to the kitchenette... what's up? I hope Isi is fine? Is daddy okay? Where are the kids? They should be at home for the..."*

*"Ugedede calm down... what I want to talk to you about is deep but not that deep. Calm down" He chides and chuckles at the same time. "Hmmm... Someone called claiming to be our mum's friend"*

*"Oh my God! Is she dead?" I wail.*

“Ugbede! Calm down, she is not dead! Just keep quiet and listen to me okay?”

“Okay, my bad...carry on” I respond. Feeling rather pensive at this point.

“...okay, so the lady who called introduced herself as Jumai and said our mum is in a state of depression because a major consignment she was expecting from abroad got lost in transit because of the Covid-19 unrest. She seems to have gone off the deep end. The Jumai lady also said our mum is of the opinion that her children have abandoned her and don't want to have anything to do with her”

“Bro, I honestly feel bad about the downturn in her business, but I don't think it is nice of her to give a random lady your number. The last time I checked, she had your number...why didn't she just call you directly?”

“Sis, you and I know I stopped picking her calls since she returned the set of wrappers I gave her on her birthday 5 years ago.” He replies.

“Wow! Time flies...5 years already? Feels like yesterday. She never really liked me much but she was always all over you being her first and only son. I didn't even know you stopped picking her calls...that's a bit harsh bro”

“Ugbede please! I went out of my way to get her a set of wrappers and she tossed them back at me saying they were below her standard. Do you know how bad I felt? Anyways, you stopped trying to get her attention a long time ago so I'm pretty sure you can't imagine how I felt. This is a woman who left us when you were just a year old and showed up 19 years later only to disappear and resurface intermittently. We never even for once called her out on the way she let her fight with dad affect her relationship with us!”

“Calm down bro...I may not express myself all the time, but I know how you feel. She left me too. We experienced this together remember? Do you know how bad I used to feel whenever she showed up briefly only to shower all her attention on you? She never really had time for me and Zee. It was always “Junior this” or “Junior that”...I got so sick of all her shenanigans and eventually blanked out. I honestly thought you guys had gotten over that wrapper episode and made up so I never bothered asking.”

“That's not an excuse Ugbede. You should have asked, you should have told her how you felt about the way she treated you...you always get so wrapped up in your cute little world and forget you have a family. Stop wishing uncomfortable circumstances away Sis, face them” He scolds.

“I didn't know I gave off that kind of vibe, I'm so sorry. I just kept silent on some issues for the sake of peace but I guess some issues are better off trashed than stashed away.”

“Yeab...no wahala. I told the Jumai lady we would reach out to mum, but Sis, I'm honestly not ready for drama right now; I have a family and a very busy work schedule. I need only good vibes right now, not “mama drama”.” He complains.

*“So what do you suggest we do? I'm honestly not ready to have my heart broken by her again. Few years ago, I silently made peace with the fact that mum will remain a missing piece of my life's puzzle. I don't really think that was a rational decision, but it helped me emotionally and psychologically...I think.” I chuckle nervously.*

*“Sis, let's just call her on a group call... we can add Zee when next we call her. Zee has a lot on her plate right now so I do not want to bring this to her now. She is our baby sis so we need to be sure the coast is clear enough for her to deal with. You and I know how unpredictable mum is...some days she is happy and some days she is just...a stranger.” He states, sounding so sad and confused.*

*“Okay erm... let's agree on a date we can call her on a group call. Abi what do you think?”*

*“Sis abeg let's just call her now and get it over and done with. I don't want this call hanging over my head...Let's just do this abeg. I can't deal.”*

*“No wahala...although, I don't think I am mentally ready for mum right now. I haven't spoken to her in five years and I really don't know what to say to her. At least, she randomly reached out to you but she never bothered checking up on me. Imagine wha..”*

*“Ugbede! Sometimes you need to let go and let life flow. Are you interested in being right or being in functional relationships?” He scolds softly.*

*“That's not fair, you and I know I've let a lot of things go where mum is concerned.”*

*“You have obviously not let things go, you just swept them*



*under the carpet. Sis, I know things are a bit weird in our family, but we also have so much to be thankful for. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding our upbringing, we seemed to have turned out okay. Not perfect, but okay and that is more than enough for me. We cannot undo the past and we cannot discard our mother...the last time I checked, traders do not sell mums in the market.” He adds.*

*“You should have given me time to prepare mentally for this call at least bro” I wail.*

*“You and I know mum is not one to be prepared for, you just take her as she comes dear. You know this”*

*“I guess you are right, oya na, let's do this!” I urge in an abnormal high pitched voice. Here we go.*

*Her end of the line rings for what seems like eternity, I release a sigh of relief but stop midway when she suddenly picks.*

*“Hello?”*

*I pause for a second, hoping Frank will respond but he doesn't. The devious fellow!*

*“Hi mum! This is Ugbede!”*

*“Awusubilabi! Baby girl! How are you?”*

*“I'm fine mum...it's been a while since we spoke. I heard about your goods...I am so sorry.”*

*“Hi mum...” Frank speaks up, finally!*

*“Awusubilabi! Junior! You are here too? God has answered the prayers I offered in the holy month. Who is that person that lied to you people? Who told you I am a witch? My only son refusing to pick my own calls...it will not be well with that person!”*

*“Mum calm down, no one told me or Ugbede anything. I guess we just needed space...I heard about what happened to your stuffs. Sorry...How are you doing?” He asks.*

*“I have been depressed for a while but I am fine now that I have heard your voice. Baby girl, How are you? I am so happy to hear from you... the last time I spoke to you, you yelled at me and I decided to leave you alone. That was so wrong of me, I am so sorry. A mother should always be there for her kids no matter what. I haven't been there at all. Please forgive me my baby girl”*

*“It's fine mum...I love you” I respond in a broken voice.*

*“I love you too babygirl...What of Zee mama?”*

*“I will add her to the call next time mum” Frank responds.*

*“Okay then, Please pick my calls I beg! Please don't lock me out...everything seems to be falling apart in my life right now. I need my children around me please” She pleads.*

*“It is okay mum, we are both at work right now. We will probably call you tomorrow with Zee. Is that fine by you?”*

*Frank asks.*

*“Sure! I will be expecting your call. My babies, I love you guys so much”*

*“We love you too mum” I respond excitedly.*

*“Take care mum” Frank responds.*

Both ends go dead and I am left alone staring at the microwave in my office kitchenette. Surprisingly, I feel warm inside. Sometimes, we just need to let go of the past and move on; we also need to make peace with our reality to stay sane. I do not see my mum and I ever becoming best friends or even going on a vacation together, but I believe we can call a truce “to live, and let live”. My mum may not be a “perfect mum”, but she is my mother. The moment I heard her voice, all past grievances washed away and I now know for a fact that I was wrong to have stayed away from her. She may never be the warm and affectionate mother I expect her to be, but she will always be my mother. I cannot wish her away, neither can I throw her away. I choose to make peace with our past, I choose to make peace with her and I choose to accept her for who she is.



# Reconciling Reconciliation in Africa

Leo Muzivoreva  
(Zimbabwe)

1994 was a significant year for Africa. South Africa made a peaceful transition to democracy. But on a darker note, Rwanda experienced a tragic and violent genocide. Both countries initiated national reconciliation processes that captured the world's attention. South Africa had the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Rwanda set up the Gacaca Community Courts.

The TRC was tasked with bearing witness to, recording – and in some cases granting amnesty to – the perpetrators of crimes related to human rights violations during apartheid. The Gacaca Community Courts, based on a pre-colonial Rwandan approach to justice, were asked to establish what happened to the Tutsi during the genocide. Their job was to expedite the cases of those accused of genocide-related crimes. Both processes were meant to contribute to interpersonal and national reconciliation. But in both countries it's become clear that the road to reconciliation doesn't begin or end with commissions or trials. It is much more complex. Reconciliation goes hand in hand with many other factors and generates many difficult questions. Who needs to be reconciled with whom? Who should initiate the process? Who should facilitate it? What should it look like? How do national and interpersonal movements towards reconciliation intersect, if at all? Can you reconcile when there's no freedom? Justice? Equality? Redress?

On one hand, post-Apartheid South Africa's reconciliation process began with an unusual generosity of spirit on the part of those who could rightly have been classified as victims. Telling the story of what happened as truthfully as possible was the central tenet at the start of South Africa's post-1994 reconciliation journey. But early on, concern was expressed that the country was trading justice for truth. In response to those criticisms the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, an organisation that grew out of the work of the TRC, began focusing on equity and fairness as a central component to reconciliation. Through its annual “reconciliation barometer”, the organisation found that economic justice has become increasingly important to South Africans. You only have to pay attention to current affairs to see the truth in this finding. The Economic Freedom Fighters - an opposition



political party - are calling genocide crimes. Many for land and resources to be redistributed. Students have also protested about equal access to education. What seems to be coming out clearly is that truth-telling is just not enough. Social justice and equity must remain front and centre of the reconciliation agenda. The TRC was very important, but very little follow up work was done by the government. And the policies it pursued left many South Africans feeling cheated. It has been argued, however, that a rigorous land redistribution will see South Africa falling into the same economic cesspit which neighbouring Zimbabwe is yet to come out of 20 years after land redistribution.

On the other hand, Rwanda took a different path. It focused on establishing individual perpetrators' accountability for quickly as possible - with evidence was lacking, it the relationships became one person's word against another and some people were wrongly accused. Judges were not always impartial and the record of events was sometimes inaccurate. Moreover, the reconciliation process has been criticised for being a top-down affair that was micromanaged by the Rwandan government. Because of this, non-governmental and religious organisations have been anxious not to criticise the government's reconciliation agenda. This has limited their impact. Rwanda is often lauded for the incredible progress it is making in terms of development. But this progress seems to have been at the expense of political freedom and citizens' participation. The question remains whether these are necessary for reconciliation to take place.

Many were unsettled by this rigorous quest. There were calls for Rwanda to mimic South Africa and take the route of amnesty in exchange for truth. That would have assumed the wounds of the violent massacre of possibly a million people in three months were identical to the wounds of apartheid. It does not sit well to suggest for a moment that wounds left by Rwanda's genocide were harder to heal than those left by apartheid. But it is critical to understand that they left behind different kinds of devastations.

In Rwanda, once the genocide ended, the entire country had been stripped of all of its resources. Dead bodies littered the streets. Perpetrators and survivors had to start rebuilding their lives side-by-side. The compulsion for revenge was strong, and there was an urgent need to deal-as

At grassroots level, one begins or ends with the challenges every commissions or trials. It reconciliation initiative requires change and faces is the struggle to transformation at the understand where and systemic level. Parallels how national and can be drawn with the interpersonal interests Zimbabwean genocide, intersect. Reconciliation Gukurahundi, which is is about restoring still a delicate issue in relationships between Zimbabwe as it was never wounded people and given the redress that its communities. It also victims and survivors extends to the healing of need.

entire nations. Almost thirty years after After all has been said apartheid ended in South and done, governments Africa and Rwanda was must commit to policies torn apart by genocide, it and strategies that bring is clear there has been about greater freedom some healing. Often, this and equality. And is most visible in the individuals and interpersonal communities must relationships between commit to the hard work victim and perpetrator. of building and rebuilding relationships

In Rwandan context, this every day. is evident in the way in which widows from both sides of the genocide divide work together on entrepreneurial projects or in self-help cooperatives to build a shared livelihood. In these glimpses, we are reminded that reconciliation does not

# Let's Teach for Change

Immaculate Ajiambo  
(Nigeria)

**M**y name is Madge and this is my story. One chilly evening, Mum had just returned from work when she heard sobs coming from the house. She could not tell which of her three daughters it was. Hurriedly, she opened the door and went in the direction of where the noise came from.

The dining room was dark; the curtains were already drawn making the room pitch black. In the corner sat someone with her face buried between her thighs. She must have been there for some time.

“Oh no! Madge!”

Concerned, Mum pat me on the back startling me from my sorrowful moment. I increased my crying voice as I gulped for air in between. We tightly hugged.

In a low voice Mum whispered to my ear, “It is okay dear. I am here.”

All I could say was “mmmh mmmh.”

Mum sat down and allowed me to rest my head on her laps.

“Darling, you know I will always be your sunshine during the day, your moon through the night and your warm blanket...”she paused to allow me to finish her everyday kind of you-know-I-am-your-mother-you-can-always-talk-to-me statement.

We said in unison, “during storms.”

I went first, “So mum they are now making fun of my body. Today during the science lesson on respiratory system, the

teacher brought balloons to demonstrate how the lungs work. Then I heard someone at the back of the class shout

“That is how Madge works, one day she is piggy inflated, the next day she is slimy deflated.”

“That was mean of them. I am sorry Madge.”

“Can you imagine the class resounded with laughter and jeers?” I said. “Mum why do they have to make fun of my body even when the teacher canes them?” I emphasized how sad it made me feel.

Going to school felt like punishment. My confidence was at their mercy. I wanted to transfer schools but my sisters did not want us to be separated. I always cried every night and had a lot of wish diaries where I wrote my wishes.

There was a long silence. I am sure Mum was searching for the best words to comfort me. In a minute, she smiled at me sending my mind into 'so what next?' thought.

“I have an idea. Do your classmates know about anorexia?”

“No. I have not told anyone about it.”

“I suggest we teach your fellow students about anorexia because it could affect anyone.”

“Yes mum. In fact, I will tell them that I developed the eating disorder because they teased me about my big body size.”

“Good. But remember that we are not fault finding but creating awareness on anorexia. It is the fear of getting fat. Its results are devastating too.”

That evening was the beginning of the end. I had long desired to be at peace, healthy and have friends. I reconciled with my mind to start over again with my schoolmates.

# Duchau

**Charles Duncan  
(Malawi)**

I now know what Dachau was like:

A parallel war waged on a wretched race.

Masses of mangled remains marring grisly gas  
chambers.

A plethora of ill-fated souls butchered  
and smouldered to evaporative ashes.

They perpetrated a holocaust more savage than the  
much minified Kigali genocide.

A callous bunch as merciless as killer robots.

Yet, even them, the Lord forgave without trial.

His wings gathering them safely back to his flock.

Even I, though my heart had hardened with your betrayal;

Even when hatred filled me with a vengeance

That far out-matched the cold bloodied Dachau butchers.

Unlike in Dachau, where pure madness ignited the massacre;

Your treachery set alight a loathing my heart has never felt

Yet, who am I to remain hardened on this path!

Come my sweet dumpling, come again to papa;

Dust yourself, call the Priest and let's renew our vows.

# Love and Reason

Akinfolami Oluwafisayo  
(Nigeria)

The mother's eye holds something;  
The sunrise, the night sky?  
Perhaps the stories that held my nights.  
Her eyes; they speak to me of reason  
Something I yearn and miss  
Maybe a time, left behind.  
I find myself in the reflections of time;  
in the walls of my father's name  
and in the fragrance of my mother's prayer  
When the existence of my individuality persisted.  
So I wear these moments as a pendant;  
an emblem of my love, a state I dwell.  
A time when our dreams were different .  
when everything was alive and nothing dead,  
And the child was a child.

# Things we didn't say

Abigail-Tydale Bassey  
(Nigeria)

If  
Tonight  
You sit up  
With memories  
We had together;  
Tears rushing down your eyes,  
Quickly breaking you apart,  
I hope you know the time is come  
To let go of the deep hurting past  
'Cause the things we didn't say hurt me too.  
But I'm sorry about everything now;  
The thoughts, words and imaginations,  
Hopes aborted from yesterday,  
Decisions turned round about,  
Wounds of the body and soul,  
Things we didn't say\_  
Please, come to me  
I'm sorry,  
I need  
You.

# To my Dear Child

**Victoria Edidi  
(Nigeria)**

Child,  
why have you chosen  
to linger in the past  
and lose sight  
of a love that's yours?

Don't you think  
it's time  
to melt your frozen heart  
and allow it  
love once more?

Not a day passes by  
that you're not missed.  
Father longs for you  
he hopes  
that you'll look  
past your anger  
to see his love  
and forgive him

Dear child,  
shake off the anger  
that seeks to consume you  
and open your heart  
to love once more.



# When the wave meets the Shore

Anthony Yormesor  
(Ghana)

When the waves meet the shore,  
it isn't as though it is their will to  
It is because they are willed to  
The turbulence afar calms at its destination  
and a long-time friend gets to say 'hi'  
When the sea gets to see the land  
and both fall into each other's arms,  
what an embrace that is!  
When the troops come to a truce,  
it is no miracle;  
that's where it is to end  
They were only carried away by their weapons  
When the sinner recognizes his sins  
and asks for remission with a heart of snow,  
is it not with warmth that he is received?  
When the prodigal son deserts home  
and in his wanderings,  
remembers where his umbilical cord was cut,  
is it not a feast which is prepared for him?  
When the waves meet the shore  
and the chaos succumbs  
and the undercurrents kiss the sands,  
the sailing winds carry the vibrations  
to brew a soup of serenity

**GENRE: SHORT STORY**

**TITLE: SACRED LETTERS**

**WRITER: MARY FRANCES IBANDA, UGANDA**

**REVIEWER: PRECIOUS ADEKOLA, NIGERIA**

**C**ontrary to the general notion of women's inability to get along easily, we are presented with a scenario that brings the female folks together. Shared plight and predicament (as pregnancy) is perceived as the centrifugal force binding these women.

Some of the matters that become of interest in the gathering of typical African women is the talk of husbands and how to get money from them as we can deduce from the use of sarcasm 'hand made of super glue'.

The inflation of prices during pregnancy by these women and other ridiculous ideas come up as matters that affect these women differently. Perhaps the author uses this to reveal ideas of morality through one of the female characters.

We find the death of Matsiko's husband symbolized as it exposes her to the truth of her husband's affiliation and flirtation with three other women who have one child each younger than her two years old daughter. This emphasizes the idea of polygamy and patriarchy.

As a result, Matsiko must take a test for HIV which result is referred to as a death sentence which is a hyperbole that underscores the stigma attached to people living with HIV/AIDS. We can also deduce the idea of fear from the vivid description of Matsiko's reaction to the idea of testing positive.

The author makes use of symbolism in the portrayal of the fly trying to escape from being caught. It is significant of the inner struggle attached with collecting a result at 002 and deciding to accept the fate of a negative or positive result.

The release of the fly can be compared to the freedom which the woman feels when she finally receives a negative result.

It is poignant that Matsiko, like most Africans, is religious as a result of fear. Troubling times automatically call for prayers whether the prayer changes anything or not. Religion is a tool for gratification as portrayed in this short story.

The character of Matsiko is a typical representation of the everyday married woman/mother. In the story of women, there is always a Matsiko.

**GENRE: COLUMNS**  
**TITLE: THE POLITICS OF FEAR**  
**WRITER: LEO MUZIVOREVA: THE OBSERVER, ZIMBABWE**  
**REVIEWER: NAMSE NAMESTANG UDOSEN, NIGERIA**

**L**eo writes on the politics of fear with a pen soaked in emotions. It projects fear as the source of discrimination and oppression by demagogues. It presents different human experiences of fear such as fear from experience, fear from observation and fear from learning from members of our species. The role of tribal identity as the source of a common labelling building. I guess on the saying “birds of a feather flock together. This tribal identity is described as the source of emotional dissonance in society. He uses the term “tribalism” in a generic form, not as the term that refers to a group of people of common ancestral descent. That having been established, he goes on to explain how politicians play on the fears of their citizens to their advantage.

He describes tribalism as a “biological loophole capitalized on by politicians”. A rather strange claim to make. We are not very sure if “fear” is exactly a biological factor. Fear is a construct that science still doesn't have a full explanation for. He should have done some contextual definition of the terms at the beginning of the piece.

I think the word that matches what he is trying to describe is prejudice. Then another question arises; “are prejudices a product of fear?”

He makes a valid point in alluding that our brains can create and assess “in-group” and out-group” membership within a fraction of a second. This ability, once a necessity for survival has now become a problem. He makes a good case about manipulations of primordial sentiments by the elite and ruling class.

The article is topical and timely.

**TITLE: KANTO AND THE BEAST**  
**GENRE: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**  
**AUTHOR: TENDO GRACE, UGANDA**  
**REVIEWER: RACHAEL TWINOMUGISHA, UGANDA**

**H**ehehe! This is the best children's story I've read all my life. A flash fiction for children, an idea so wonderful! Kanto and the Beast is a smooth read that introduces children to what I'd call "new language skills, suspense and tension."

Tendo Grace holds suspense so beautifully till the end of the story when we learn that Kanto has been scared of his own shadow, and not a beast like the title suggests.

Brief and hilarious read. Kanto's shadow teaches him to always listen to his mother who had always cautioned him never to play away from home.

Later, he learns to converge friends at his home and play there. What a beautiful lesson!

With such suspense and tension employed, it is obvious that Tendo kept us on our toes, and evident of our hearts and faces was fear.

It's a beautiful read, and will be memorable to children, I believe. (We have been scared of our own shadows as kids, haven't we?)

The writer uses simple diction which should enable the kids to read this independent of parents/guardians/elders, but of course not at night... Hehehe

**GENRE: FLASH FICTION**

**TITLE: FEAR**

**WRITER: CHRISTIANA AGBONI, NIGERIA**

**REVIEWER: MAJORY MOONO SIMUYUNI, ZAMBIA**

One of the cliché figurative definitions of fear has been “False Evidence Appearing Real.” But maybe this definition is not so cliché after all! Considering the era of Corona we are in, fear can be said to constantly yank to life all things imaginary and Agboni depicts this reality in her flash fiction: Fear.

Lily is quick to notice her younger sister is perturbed. One would wonder why the swiftness in recognizing her sister's moment of fear. They say 'send a thief to catch a thief'. Because they use similar tactics, a thief will catch another thief more easily. Is Lily able to tell something is wrong with her sister because the same fear is what's constantly pricking the balloon of her serenity? As the story unfolds, we realize the answer to the foregoing question is a resounding yes!

When Coronavirus started, it was thought to basically be a Chinese virus that would end in China, just as it had bred right there. To our dismay, it spread across the world, but for a while, did not touch the African continent. Just like Lily, we all probably thought it was some 'stupid faraway disease' until it wasn't, because it had mastered its way into our continent and quickly into our countries. Having seen death tolls rise on other continents, and eventually in our own backyards, who didn't fear for their life?

'Stay home,' they advised. Lily and her family obeyed the health precaution as did we all, but we see her mother's tone hardening from the inception of the quarantine. Everybody is afraid! Fear knows no discrimination; it clutches us all. And in the boredom of quarantine, it's not so difficult to lose one's mind to false evidence appearing real. Every other cold, as if we've never suffered colds before, makes one fear they have finally contracted the virus, just like Lily. As her palms turn pale, probably from the chills of the weather, she loses her calm and doesn't hesitate to see death approaching, for she is certain she is sick too.

'Fear' is a very relatable story, unless one lives in a world different than the one we live in today.

Cheers to Agboni for reminding us that though we have moved on somehow and now 'reside' in the new normal, constant fear for our lives has also since become a new normal.

**GENRE POETRY****TITLE: GENITAL TALE****WRITER: NZERE CHINEDU, NIGERIA****REVIEWER: NNANE NTUBE, CAMEROON**

"If I die in this poem  
Will you bury me in the words of my ex?  
Will you teach me the tricks of loneliness?  
or will I become another genital tale on pages of newspapers?" (L14 to 18).

Fear is established when the society we live in is void of security. We know not where to hide or when our end will come. Fear of the unknown gains a physical form as its paws keep the persona frozen with a lifeless heart.

"The Genital Tale" by Nzere Chinedu is not only an outcry of fear of the known in the dark world of today, but a portrait of the highest level of immortality, absurdities, wickedness and injustice. It paints an image of a society that has tagged human life as being 'cheap'. Hence, the meanness and scary deeds such as rape; "peeping beneath my purple coloured skirt making way for his rage" (Lines 2 & 3).

The thought of the persona's mother being bought for a token projects the negative view of men about women. It reduces a woman to a state of nothingness and places her as a vulnerable being in the hands of vultures. This prompts a review of the Nigerian society in the last six years that brought us to a collective sad and frightful stories of rape. For example in March 2014, news of a 17-year-old boy who allegedly raped his mother and 4 young children in Ebonyi State made a "genital tale" on the pages of newspapers. Last June 2020, a man was reported to have raped a three-month-old baby in Adogi village, Nasarawa and everything became a "genital tale" on the pages of newspapers. Why? Because "the world is [now] a horror thriller" (in the persona's father's voice).

The persona, through analepsis, brings up earlier occurrences as if to create an analogy between the "genital tale" and other tales. In an embedded narrative, the tale of Rinji Peter Bala, a 20-year-old level 300 student in Nigeria who was shot by Nigerian Army Operation on May 12, 2020, is recounted. This culminates in instilling fear in the persona's mind as there is no safe place in this world – danger looms everywhere.

Following the advice of the persona's father, one needs to be careful and watchful.

In this 18 line poem, Chinedu calls us to be watchful because we are all in danger, for we do not know when and where our own unfortunate stories shall trend in newspapers.

The tone of the poem is firm as it expresses what is real of the world today.

The mood is gloomy filled with scary notions like rape, death, danger.



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# WHO AM I?

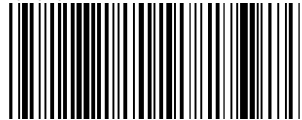
Lebogang Samson  
Botswana

# CHOICE

Heidi East Motanyane  
Lesotho

# IDENTITY

VOL. 9 NO. 4



SEPTEMBER, 2020

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- Flash Fiction
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- Essays
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We look forward to receiving your best.

To submit, please visit [www.writersspace.net/submissions](http://www.writersspace.net/submissions)



# EDITOR'S NOTE

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**W**ho am I? What am I? These questions probably sound cliché, but that's because they have been around for the longest time, and to ask such questions is a rite of passage for all of us.

Identity is an interesting thing; it is dynamic in many ways and if we are not conscious of it, we miss who we are in the moments unique versions of ourselves are expressed. Are we defined by what we do or by the family we are born into or by the attributes we possess? How do we refer to ourselves in a room full of people? A mother and a diplomat, a friend and a husband, selfish yet caring, greedy and humble...

Today, we live in a world where the struggle of realisation is even more pronounced; the pressure to identify with a group or as something is so strong that many times, we live our lives untrue to ourselves. We are also caught in a place where we are critical of the identity of others to the point of hate and discord.

Who are we? What are we? Collective identity is just as important as individual identity; they are more intertwined than first glance would have us believe. Publius Terentius Afer, an African playwright in ancient Greece, once wrote "Homo sum humani nihil a me alienum puto" which translates into: I am human, and nothing human can be alien to me. Dr. Maya Angelou said of this statement that we recognize bits of ourselves in other people and as such, allows us to be more understanding.

The writers in Identity speak to a search and discovery of who they are as individuals, and who we are as Africans.

On a personal note, I think to be one thing and one thing alone would be boring, but if I had to choose, I think I would be the most basic component of our existence: human.

Always remember, Ubuntu  
Warm regards,  
Nabilah.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Editor's Note	4
Editorial Crew	5
Table of Contents	6
Short Story	7-10
Columns	11-13
Children Literature	14-15
Article	16-18
Poetry	19-22
Reviews	23-26

# CHOICE

Heidi Last Motanyane  
Lesotho



In the bathroom, Lefa lets water run and washes his hands. He looks up and meets his reflection in the mirror. For the first time, it registers how handsome he looks. His neat buzz cut matches perfectly with his fine light face. He can see needle lines by his eyes, the inheritance from his father who got it from his grandfather and down goes the line. The men in his family have a long reputation of being players. A bonus to his success in popularity amongst girls. Yes! Indeed he is handsome. Surely

someone like him does not deserve to leave the game as yet. A man enough is determined by his ability to stay in the game, his grandfather would say.

“Are you going to wash your hand the whole day, Dude?”

Lefa closes the tap. He murmurs an apology as he rushes out of the bathroom. Since the beginning of the week nothing has been same at work. His colleagues have been avoiding glances with him and being jumpy when he tries to

create a conversation. He has never been a friendly person to start with. Everybody in this office is a computer freak and he hates the job, but his mother forced him to work with the promise of giving him a managing position in four months time. But the news of his girlfriend being pregnant has really messed his life up. Even the fluffy spectacle-girl who sits by the door never throws him flirty glances anymore. He dragged towards his chair and drops involuntarily. His mind drifts to the conversation he had with his father last night.

“What are you going to do with the baby, Lefa?” His father sat on the big couch in a spacious living room.

Lefa sat across him. They both had glasses of whiskey in their hands. He shook his head and took a gulp.

"Having a family is no child's play." He continued, "...Look at your situation right now: he is working for fun, playing games every night and changing girlfriends like underwear. You cannot simply think you're up for the responsibility." Lefa took the last gulp and put the glass on the set table. He stood up.

"You have no idea what you're talking about, Dad. Just because you feed off Mom's money doesn't mean every man in this household is useless. I do have my own dreams."

With that, he stumbled out to his room.

"I know you, Son. The men in this family are eaters not feeders. His father called after him.

"Lefa?" The manager's voice echoes in the big room, making everybody look up.

Lefa raises his head and sees the manager waving him over. People now seem to recognize him as he passes. If it was on another occasion, he would drag his feet and irritate everybody with the noise. But

because of hushes and whispers he hears as soon as he passes them, he hurries away without looking anybody in the eye.

"You mother is on the line." The manager says as if he wants to invite others in. Lefa ignores him and enters the office and closed the door.

"Hello Mom, why did you call me here?" He sits on his chair and places his feet on the desk.

"I wouldn't have to if you had answered my calls."

Lefa grits his teeth. He has been ignoring his mother's call since morning. Because of the dilemma, his mother was the last person he wanted to hear from. He can almost hear her fuming.

"Ooh, I put it on silent mode while in a meeting this morning. He knows his mother is not going to believe him. Which meeting? He's only a minor who receives commands.

"What is it I hear about you

impregnating a girl? What did I say about you and your games with girls? Didn't I tell I don't want to see a poor girl at my doorstep claiming to have your baby?"

"Calm down Mom." He places his feet on the floor and sits up.

"How can I calm down now? For Heaven's sake, you had to go and impregnate Ma Lucy's daughter? The biggest witch in the village?"

Lefa sighs. He knows the hatred between his mom and Lucy's mother. They have always spoken ill of each other. His father said the feud was from dating Ma Lucy before he married his mother.

"Can you not bring your hatred in my situation?" He hears her take a deep breath.

"You have two options. One: make that girl do an abortion and forget all this. Two..."

"What? She's eight months pregnant." He stood up and starts pacing.





"Two: deny that the child is yours I will stand by your side."

"I don't believe this is coming from you. You always lecture me about taking responsibility for my actions. Today you're encouraging me to abandon my child?"

"If you had chosen another girl, it wouldn't have come to this. This situation is unacceptable."

"Mom!" A lump forms in his lungs and tears pile up in his eyes. Even if he has not made a decision he had hoped that his mom would surely stand with

him if he decided to take Lucy and the baby.

He hangs up the phone and sets it down as he appears at the door. Obviously, they have been listening. But he decides not to care. He walks to his desk and

sits down. At the situation like this, he would normally just take his backpack and leave, even if it's still 11am on a

Wednesday. Spending a day at the bar drinking has never been a problem for him, but he prefers company of his buddies. He takes out his phone and texts in WhatsApp group.

"Anybody up for a drink?" He waits.

"Not me. But I'm in if there's a meet-up for AFCON semi-final tonight. Khotsi types.

"I'm also in for tonight. Who's bringing drinks?" Thabo replies.

"I will. With meat." Lefa sighs and sends the message. Another message enters and he slightly jumps up when he sees Lucy's name. Reluctantly, he opens it.

"Your mom wants nothing to do with me and my family. Here's my question to you, are you in for this baby or not? If not, don't come to me after it's born. Never try to be part of its life."

"Can we talk about this later?" He sends the text.

"I don't have later in my schedule. We had seven months to figure this thing out and you kept ignoring it. I might have a child any day now. I need your decision before he arrives."

More messages from Lucy. Lefa puts the phone down and stands up to the bathroom. He opens the tap and lets the water run. He looks at himself in the mirror. Somehow, he looks quite different from the image he saw earlier. He now has a few lines piling across his forehead. His younger sister likes to call them worry lines.

"Worry lines are for responsible people like mom and me. As for you and Dad, Playboys like you don't fret over things." These words always make Lefa sad. But he acts as if he doesn't

care because that is what is expected of him. His fine and light face now looks like a man who will never grow out of his mother's scare, even if he will marry one day. He will force his wife to work for him, claiming that he has opened opportunities for her to run a big family business.

He splashes the water on his face. He shouldn't have to be like his father and others before him. It always breaks his heart to see his mother working hard and giving the money to his father. It is not the life he would enjoy living for the rest of his life. And it is definitely not the life he wants to keep witnessing. The door opens and the man from earlier enters and gets in the toilet. Lefa turns off the tap and heads outside. Water is still dripping from his face.

He checks his phone and finds an answering machine message. "Why are you not answering?" "I see you must have already made your choice to ignore me. Well, have a nice

life Lefa."... "You know, I seriously thought you were a man capable enough to make right decisions, I see I was wrong. I will never bother you anymore." "One last thing, you

are a sissy boy."

Lefa laughs at the last message and types,

"I will see you tonight. I will be there for our child. And for you, forever."

Just as everybody starts going out for lunch, Lefa puts down his phone and looks up at the sheet of tasks he has to do for the day. With the way things will be now, his pay should be deserving and meaningful. He is creating the new him in the old sissy Lefa.

# THE WRITER'S SPACE

Leo Muzivoreva: THE OBSERVER  
Zimbabwe

As people in general and Japanese, Italian Canadians with layers of declared knowledge facts, theories, that Africans in particular, during the First and Second World war, our turning away boats of were designed to confirm the diversity is our strength, war, our turning away boats of humanity and worth of the culturally, politically and Jewish or Punjabi refugees pursue creators of such alleged economically pathways to such own history of slavery.” That series of lapses in our knowledge at the expense of an aspiration a goal are fraught That series of lapses in our knowledge at the expense of those allocated to the labels. The with difficulties to overcome and intention must also be contrasted those allocated to the labels. The our history is littered with such with those successes where our invention of differences between examples. Our indigenous aspirations have—and still ourselves and the imposition of values placed upon such peoples illustrate our past and do — bear fruit. variances, has a purpose argues still current inequities in the Ta-Nehisi Coates, a formidable Coates and is developed further provision and defense of basic Black American intellectual and by Morrison. human rights. commentator on the lived by Morrison. In 2015, Canadian Prime Minister, experience of Black people of What is generally accepted as the Justin Trudeau gave a speech in African descent in a foreword to meaning of being part of a London, United Kingdom, titled Toni Morrison's *The Origin of cultural group and there being a Diversity is Our Strength*, stating Others in 2017, talks about the cultural gap between yours and that “Canada has learnt to be wish to belong. The book itself is another is not as clear as one may strong not in spite of our about themes of race, borders, think. Culture is one of many differences but because of them, vast movements of people, what groupings we may align and going forward, that capacity motivates people to construct ourselves to voluntarily or be will be at the heart of both our others and the use of terms such as assigned by others. Essentially, success and of what we offer the as racial divide, racial chasm, what is needed foremost is a clear world,” he said. racial profiling, racial diversity, vision incorporating what we The prime minister continued: “as though each of these ideas is wish to aspire to, and to whom we “We need to acknowledge that our grounded in something beyond wish to belong to, together with history includes dark moments: our own making.” reasoned understanding of why The Chinese head tax, the We created such categories of where we are together. True belonging in internment of Ukrainian, race then underpinned our labels a d i v e r s e ,

equitable and inclusive society—the Dreamas espoused by Justin Trudeau outlined earlier—mean being treated as equal to anybody else. Having similar opportunities to aspire and achieve what you set out to claim. Having no imposed restrictions that fetter development based on spurious notions of origins and perceptions of difference. Acknowledging that due to societal constraints those with imposed restrictions to acquire the tools necessary to achieve identified goals are given the opportunity and the resources to possess them.

Martin Luther King Jr. in his 1963 Letter from a Birmingham Jail stated that “all men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be... This is the inter-related structure of reality.”

This connection, this co-dependency, is difficult for some thought-leaders and decision-makers to understand and accept, let alone work to deliver on. Novelist, playwright and activist

James Baldwin understood this by advising us that as Black people of African descent, “Our energies should be devoted to understanding the way that a country and its society works. How to find my way around it, not get lost in it, and not feel rejected by it.” This demands that we have



an awareness of our context—identity, the social location within which we are currently and the impact it has upon us. The next step is to work out how we can forge some sort of approach to deal with it. Our sense of belonging is conditional, reliant on how we play our cards. We

decide, we choose, weighing up the pros and cons of how to play this, at times, lethal game. I did not become part of the Writers Space community by choice. Someone introduced me to someone who then introduced me to Writers Space. I really want to thank the founders for creating a space where something like this could happen to somebody like me. Writers Space is arguably an imagined community. An imagined community is a concept developed by Benedict Anderson in his 1983 book, *Imagined Communities*, to analyze nationalism. Anderson depicts a nation as a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group. The media also creates imagined communities, through usually targeting a mass audience or generalizing and addressing citizens as the public. Another way that the media can create imagined communities is through the use of images. The media can perpetuate stereotypes through certain images and vernacular. By showing certain images, the audience will choose which image they relate to the most, furthering the relationship to that imagined community.

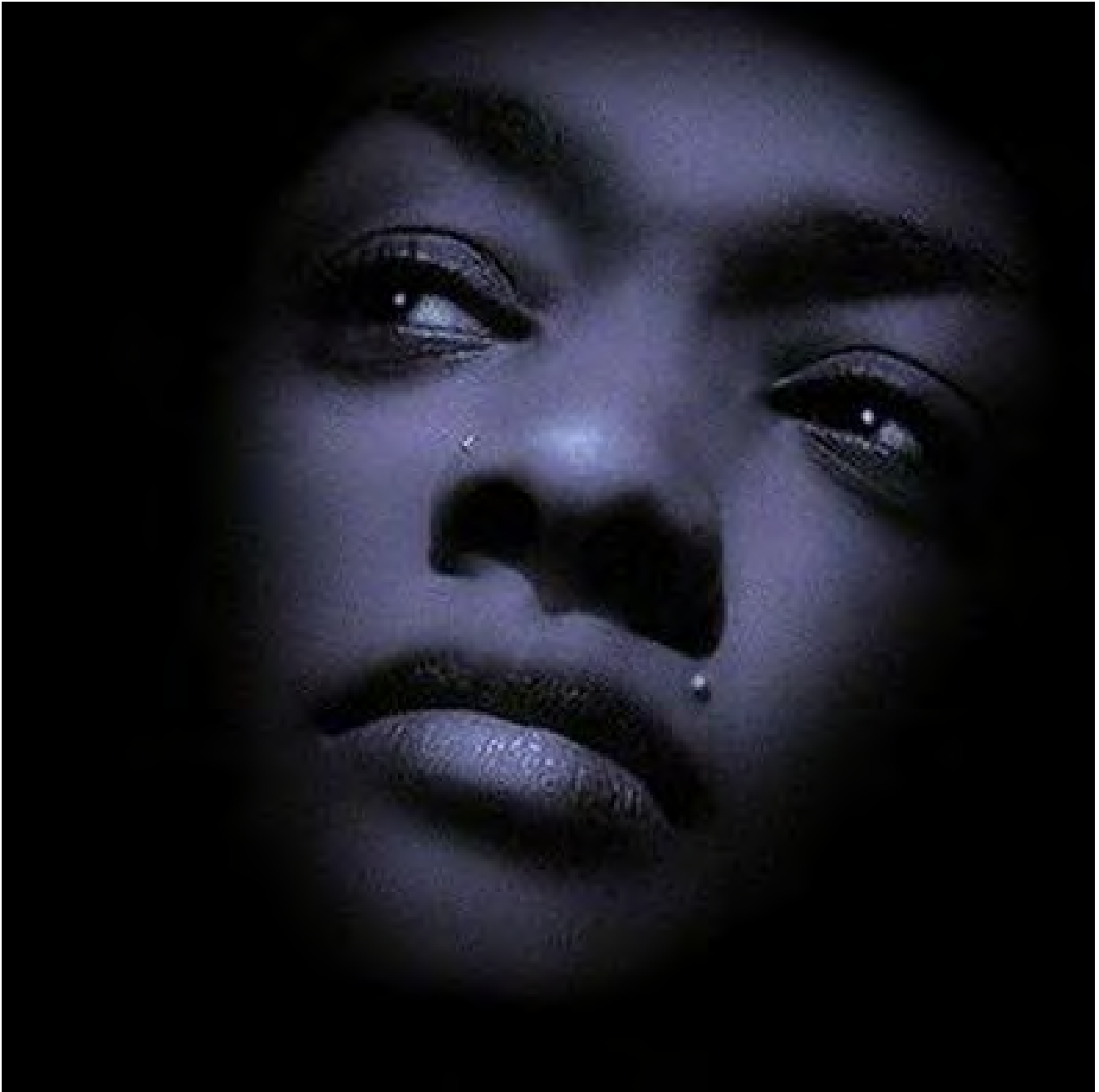


As Anderson puts it, a nation "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion". Members of the community probably will never know each of the other members face to face; however they may have similar interests or identify as part of the same nation. Membership in their minds a mental image of their affinity for example the nationhood felt with other members of your nation when your "imagined community" participates in a larger event such as the Olympic Games. Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that has made it possible, over the past two centuries for so many millions of people not so much as to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings. There you have it, by virtue of being here, you are part of the space. You are welcome to expand the comradeship by sharing this post, following the site and telling your friend to tell their friend about this imagined nation.

# GOMEZA NEEDS YOUR HELP

**Nabossa Dianah**  
Uganda

Gomezais a happy girl Gomezahasfivebestfriendsat askher." But she is often schoolandthesaysheis fat. confused. Her four "Gomezais, you're the fattest Gomezaneedshehelp,issheplayful older siblings won't stop amongus, you take up more ornot? teasingher, they say she is space on the desk!" they verylight-skinned. complain. Gomeza gets SometimesPapaGomezærgues confusedagain, "Am I thin or withMamaGomezasuggests The confusing part is that fat, someoneplease,help me they cut off Gomeza'shair, they Gomeza'sclassmateoftentell knowwhatlam!" both think it is somebig coiled her she is verydark-skinned, trouble. But Mama Gomeza andtheysuredo makefun of Gomezais not a TV-fan,she doesn'twantherlittlegirlto have her dark skin. Please help prefersto play with her five a baldhead.Problemis, mostof Gomezaknowif sheis darkor friends.She loves to play a Gomeza'sclassmatesfind her light-skinned. whole lot, which makes the haircool.Manyofthemwishthey teachercomplain,"Gomezas hadhairliketheoneGomezahas; Gomezadislikesvegetables,as playful as a puppy." Yet shecan'tget herfriendsto stop hermotersaysthat'swhyshe MamaGomezakeepsworrying,touching or playing with it. is thin. They say she is the wonderingwhyherlittlegirlis Gomezaneeds toknowjsherhair thinnesin the family,withthe too quiet.Maybeit is because reallycoolandfun,oris it indeed smallest bed, the smallest Gomezahas no age-mateso somebigcoiledtrouble? shoes,the tiniestclothes,and playwithathome. she'sthe one to be carriedon ItisfrustratingobelikeGomeza, thelapwhilein thefamilycar. One time, Mama Gomeza notknowingwhatyoureallyare. Her siblingskeep telling her arguedwitha teacherwhohad Butguesswhatis notfrustrating that by her age, they had all complained about Gomeza's or confusing:choosingto be a already put on some good playfulness,"I know my little goodpersorfromtheinside. weight. girl."MamaGomezæaid,"She is veryquietand humble,she Anotherconfusingpartis that won'tmoveaninchif youdon't



Both Mama Gomeza and the child, she loves to help others. Gomeza is a generous girl, she loves to share with others. She respects her elders and she is very hard working at the same time, improving her grades every year and helping with the housework so that she doesn't get too tired. All of us, just like Gomeza, might be the shortest person in a certain crowd of tall people, but you are the tallest person in another crowd of short people. Still, you might appear to be the darkest skinned person among dark-skinned people but at the same time the most light-skinned person among light-skinned people. You might not be able to choose where you sit in every place, but you can choose to be kind, to be helpful, to be respectful in all places. Choose who you want to be on the inside, that will not change no matter where you are or who you are with.

# TEAR OFF YOUR MASK

**Marita Banda**  
Zambia

**A**s little girl growing up in Lusaka city, I often used to hear about the Nyau, masked spirit dancers. The tales were terrifying and were used to keep us, the children, from mischief. However scary the stories were, they seemed like a far-fetched idea from my reality, until one day I came face to face, unexpectedly, with these fast-moving grotesque-looking monsters. I could not run fast enough. I peed in my pants.

In the Netflix movie, *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, we get a few glimpses of these masquerades during the funeral rites of an elder. Nyau are members of a secret society among the Chewa ethnic group found in parts of Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. The art of masquerade is a worldwide phenomenon and exists in every society. It is all about pretending, hiding and concealing of true identities by using a form of cover-up. The year 2020 will go down in history as a



time when mass masking, for health and hygiene purposes in public places across the globe became mandatory in many countries. Our identity is a primal part of who we are. Identity is what sets us apart from others as individuals or a collective. When we are born, one of the first things that happens is to be given a name, which many carry to the grave. Some along the way change their name or acquire new identities by choice or circumstance which becomes the new way of being addressed.

This may happen by initiation through a rite of passages such as baptism in Christianity or for many women they acquire a new name by marriage.

From the foregoing we have established already that identity is not static. Sometimes the labels may remain unchanged but the physical appearances, mental states and consciousness of our being are constantly evolving because of circumstances, experiences, time and place.

Throughout recorded history, mankind has had a need to mask, both literally and metaphorically, thereby presenting false identity to the world.



Focusing on the metaphorical, at the core, we are all spiritual beings having a human part, this assumed identity is supposed to make one appear 'good, conforming or normal.' It comes from a fear that has its basis in what is known as the 'Myth of Inadequacy' in psychology. Presenting our true and honest selves to the world can be a very vulnerable act, which many avoid for fear of rejection and/or abuse. The truth about the reality of life is that everything in the universe has its particular unique signature that cannot be replicated. Not two snowflakes or raindrops are alike. We all have our specific fingerprints.

At the core, we are all spiritual beings having a human part. We are made up of mind, body and spirit. The mind is made up of the will and emotions, while the body is made up of the physical expression and the spirit is our eternal self. In a matter of speaking, who you are is far greater and more humanly speaking and the spirit is our eternal self. In our wasted effort to be seen as 'normal,' we deny ourselves and these things because the paradox of the world of our amazing, is that if you deny or reject these beautiful and awesome signature aspects, your signature is incomplete. By all means reach for them. Remember you are here normally, you will never know how amazing you can be." creative expression. You are not your body, your name, worthy of all your desires and your talents, your nationality, expressions, your religious inclinations, your



Many societal institutions, personalities which we project to particularly religious and others at different times to suit educational ones, hardly ours specific point of attention. We encourage overt manifestations become masters of the art of of unique character and pretending. Our teacher tells us, 'Colour within the lines,' and we heed. Of course, this discussion is not referencing malevolent expressions that denigrate others. Individual signature expressions are many times a threat to the patterns that have been set and upset the proverbial cart. Many rules, regulations and doctrines are a control mechanism used to suppress and make many wrong for simply not conforming. Followers, especially of religions, are held captive by making them subscribe to senseless superstitions and ideas.

Think about your own life. How many identities do you have? Which ones are there really you or are they all masks? In his book, *The Mastery of Love*, Don Miguel Ruiz talks about how every individual has created personal mythologies about their life. These mythologies are populated by various entities including angels and demons, heroes and villains as well as kings and commoners. Further, we construct for ourselves multiple

In this life, it is the bold and the brave that make a difference. But they never have it easy. They have to come against many obstacles and often, their contribution to society is only acknowledged after they are gone. Some, sadly, end up committed to mental institutions or committing suicide because they cannot stand the pretence. Others yet become deviants as they find it easier to have a negative outlet for their expressions because they have been made to feel wrong anyway. For the majority of humanity we settle for 'normal.'

We realise early on in life as children that being a good girl or boy is the most important thing as we don't want to offend or disappoint our parents. Our creative harmless mischief is nipped in the bud. Experts say toddlers 18 months to 3 years old, hear the word 'no' an average of 400 times a day from their parents or caregivers. This message translates that they are not good enough and invalidates their humanity. At this point the mask games begin.

Our identity, which the world sees, is a collection of masks and often we are not even aware because we have become so adept at pretending the masks come on automatically. But who are we without them? Only you have the answer. Rumi, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Persian Sufi mystic advises and rightly so, "Tear of your mask. Your face is glorious." Let me end with a quote from Emily McDowell: "Finding yourself is not really how it works. You aren't a ten-dollar bill in last winter's coat pocket. You are also not lost. Your true self is right there, buried under cultural conditioning, other people's opinions, and inaccurate conclusions. You drew a kid that became their beliefs about who you are. 'Finding yourself' is actually returning to yourself. An unlearning, an excavation, a remembering who you were before the world got its hands on you."

Go on now, let the world behold the magnificent signature expression called you.

# AFRICANISM WHO AM I?

**Abigail Bassey-Tydale**  
Nigeria

Africanism will not die  
now, later,  
never,  
while history and tradition live together

this kinky hair of mine  
just as that person's blonde  
is lovely  
on its own,  
on its people.

So, enough of people whispering;  
'What relaxer do you apply to your hair?  
Only curls make you look classic.'  
None of my children would know where I come  
from  
if even the hair of my head is a false identity.

Colour  
is the only way  
you can differentiate  
a Black man from a White.

I am Black, too.  
I have pride in where I come from  
just as you do.

**Lebogang Samson**  
Botswana

They say...  
I am a Motswana,  
Originally from Botswana  
But it doesn't mean we'all Tswanas.

Telephonically, I'm British  
I imbibe my Afrikana with delicacy  
"Scottish!" a few conclude; my copper skin...  
Certified copy of an African,  
My figure - AfricanTswana origin.

Rumour mongers...  
Of Malawian traces swimming in my veins.  
No wonder I'm very rare with petite virtues.

Rest? I won't, lest I place my feet on my ancestral  
grounds.  
Malawi-Botswana, what a combination!  
Clash of ancestral spirits;  
Spirits making me lose coordination!

Who Am I?  
Am I, African Tswana or African Chichewa?  
Eastern or Southern Africa...  
Where do these roots emanate?

I feel... Like a tree in a forbidden forest,  
Branches to sprout from it's trunk...  
Will demand to plug to its roots;  
Roots that lead me to deadends.

Am I truly an African Tswana?  
The Kalanga supposed to be in me ain't my roots!  
The Ngwato in me ain't my roots at all!  
Certainly I'm African but where??

# WHO AM I?

**Oladeji Olowajooba**  
Nigeria

So, when they ask  
Who are you?

I want to say  
I am as volatile and random as water  
I change just as the wind  
sways the leaves of the trees

Most days,  
My mind is never made up  
just as the fly, who loves to perch  
on everything.  
While on some days, I am picky.

So, when they ask  
Who are you?

I can't fit myself in a box  
and present that to you as a Christmas present  
cause I am the whole store.  
All I want to say is 'I am who I am'.

No definitions nor precisions  
just infinite discovery.

# I AM A HEALER

**Temani Nkalolang**  
Botswana

When life taught me  
How to walk, I fell, stood again and walked.  
Incoherent I stammered and talked...  
Smiled I and marvelled, little did I know a soldier  
I was, being trained for battle.  
Life I blamed when with my panties, uncle  
Played hide and seek, sneak a peek between my  
thighs.  
Why me? I wailed but life...life watched me bleed.  
Time calibrates life into seasons, I learnt  
My response determined my next season.  
Bite the bullet or decorate the battleground?  
My broken self from the ground I picked  
And walked again, like she taught me...  
I cried, not for milk but to break the silence!  
My voice, the beast of abuse, castrated.  
My words disarmed the enemy.  
Bruised, broken, burned, I healed  
Now those bruised, broken, burned  
The touch of my words heal.  
I'm a healer.



# I AM

Junior Gabriel  
Kenya



Beyond the perceptions of me  
An emptiness lies that nothing could fill  
A void that governs my-self  
Denying me the pleasure of becoming a thing  
I am no-thing, you see  
But a space within a vastness  
My emptiness is a stage  
Where anything of everything may manifest.

# I AM AN AFRICAN

Nahida Esmail  
Tanzania

I am an African  
In my home country I am called an Indian  
In India I am called an African  
But I know who I am  
I know where I belong

My grandfather came by dhow  
from a place called Gujrat  
Months in the Indian ocean  
To arrive in Zanzibar  
Ruled by the Omanis

I was born in Africa,  
My father was born in Africa,  
My grandmother was born in Africa  
Yet, because of my skin I am not considered one

My ancestors have left a legacy  
They are part of making history  
Of this great nation  
History books may not have noted all their names  
But reality cannot be scrapped

This is the only land I know  
The only soil I love  
And consider home

Don't discriminate on the color of my skin  
Call me what you like  
Afro-Indian or Afrodian  
I know who I am  
I know what I am  
I know where I belong  
I know my identity

I will always be an African  
This is my home  
This is my home soil  
This is who I am

# BLIND MIRRORS

**Williams Grant**  
Nigeria

A thirsty, wild, child  
That was once gay,  
Still as steel, steals a gaze.  
For Mirror is water.

And this wild child stirs  
The ripple to wash his face.  
Stares with each reflection cold,  
Mocking him —

Ragamuffin:  
The street's hymn for him.  
Do not forget your clothes,  
As worn as your soles.  
You'll never be better.

Puny:  
Your father's greatest effort  
Is a milestone weighing you down?  
You carried his face and hands.  
People saw the gravity,  
Till they declared you were down-to-earth.

Thirsty, wild, child,  
Work your hands to cowries' wealth  
For the mirror isn't identity.  
The mirror is future blind.

# WHO AM I?

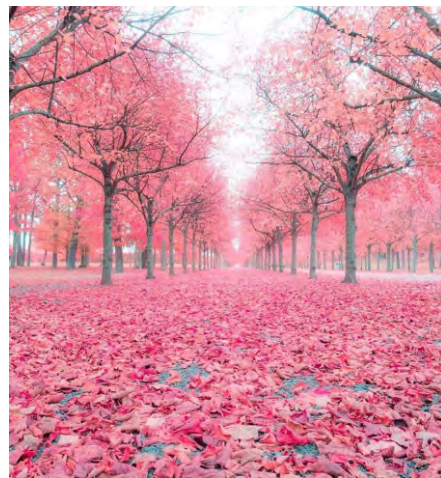
**Botlhe Motlamma**  
Botswana

I am the chosen one  
Some say I'm still young,  
But I am the reason for the change  
That takes place day by day.

I am tomorrow's future,  
I'm not a failure  
I am a game changer  
Born to live this life of danger.

I am art,  
Painting life in poetry  
Or to express my heart  
Using my words as symmetry.

I am a poet in disguise....



GENRE: SHORT STORY

TITLE: REDEMPTION

WRITER: OHANYERE OGOADA, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: FUNMI RICHARDS, NIGERIA

**R**edemption is a short story with themes across guilt, suicide as a vehicular expression of issues with mental health, surviving loss and false altruism. It is written in a first-person narrative and interestingly in such a way that the sex/gender of the character is unknown until the character is willing to be identified.

The writer skillfully transitions through the story using foreshadowing and flashback, both of which are embodied and expressed in the form of symbolism, imagery and paradoxes. The writer uses 'black' to symbolise nothingness, that is the oblique afterlife moment where your fate is yet to be decided but you are not really alive. Also, the 'vision/revelation' represented as that moment where resolution comes and reason for a future is given; hairpin represents a

The imagery on the other hand, is quite tangible such that you start to feel the scenes are not only figments of the imagination of the writer but moments in time of an actual human. All of which could imply that these scenes have been relived repeatedly, so that it is familiar and tangible.

Though the story touches across multiple themes, the one that seems understated but follows through the entire story is altruism or in the real sense, false altruism. From the onset, we see results of the character's blame-game with herself causing her to attempt suicide repeatedly, we also see how this 'altruism' makes her spend resources on religious intercessions she doesn't believe in and know to be false in a bid to 'comfort' her adopted mother.

Furthermore, we see how this 'altruism' in actual fact is baseless because she really didn't cause the death of her parents as she had thought. Finally, we see how she eventually accepts her adopted mother and refuels her altar of altruism with a new allegiance which could very well be thwarted again if she were to lose her adopted mother.

In conclusion, the story is a call for awareness of possible or potential causes of depression – situational depression in this case as it is brought on by the loss of her parents. It also exposes the interdependency between people and the desire to please others and own burdens that are not ours to carry. And finally, it reminds us how powerful our minds can be when it has a purpose.

GENRE: COLUMNS

TITLE: RECONCILING RECONCILIATION IN AFRICA

WRITER: LEO MUZIVORERA, ZIMBABWE

REVIEWER: NAMSE KHOTSO UDOSEN, NIGERIA

Leo strikes a strong chord with this piece. Peace and reconciliation has been a thorny issue for many African societies. I am particularly interested because the issues raised in this essay can be related to my home country, Nigeria. Many years ago campus gangsters, popularly called 'cultists' were pardoned after a public show of renouncing cultism. Their past crimes were washed away; then we had militant blowing up oil facilities, kidnapping, raping and maiming citizens. A bogus amnesty deal wiped all that away. They were sent abroad for studies and paid monthly allowances. Recently, members of the dreaded Boko Haram sect, were rehabilitated and reconciled back to the societies they once terrorised. All this in a bid for reconciliation.

In this essay, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission along with Rwanda's Gacaca Community Courts are x-rayed. As I read the article, my mind wandered to Nigeria's Human Rights Violation Investigation Commission, popularly called Oputa Panel (it was headed by Justice Oputa). The panel was set up by the leadership of the 4th Republic to heal Nigerians of decades of military brutality. The result at the end was similar to what Leo presented in his essay.

He points out that reconciliation goes hand in hand with many other factors and generates many difficult questions. One of such questions is whether reconciliation is trading justice for truth "as was the case in South Africa?"

He notes that the trading of truth for justice is one of the low points of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He points to the calls for economic justice as a pointer that truth-telling is not enough. Unfortunately, Nigeria's truth commission suffered the same fate. As Leo states "very little follow-up work was done by the government and the policies left many South Africans feeling cheated, ditto Nigerians."

The article points to the opposite direction Rwanda took. Perpetrators of genocide crimes were tracked and punished. He describes the community courts where justice was swift on those found guilty of the crimes. That was the only way the wounds of the victims could be assuaged a bit. There are wounds that are never completely healed. This method also has been questioned by neutral observers. They question the objectivity and fairness of those trials done in the Gacaca courts.

The column concludes nicely with some words for leaders with conflict in their domains: "Reconciliation does not begin or end with commissions or trials. It requires change and transformation at the system level. This would be evident when victims and perpetrators are willing to work together to erase past hurts."

This is an apt and timely piece for our troubled times in Africa. I recommend further studies into reconciliation using a combination of the truth commissions and community courts to dispense justice as a tool for reconciliation.



GENRE: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

TITLE: LET'S TEACH FOR CHANGE

WRITER: IMMACULATE AJIAMBO, KENYA

REVIEWER: ANTHONY NWAGBAOSO ONYEADOR, NIGERIA

The story is about Madge and how she became a taunt owing to her body size which was the primary objective of the story. The story began in a setting a dark, pitch black dining room. Her mother at first, was scanning which of her daughters was wailing before tracing her to the room. She found Madge's head buried between her thighs. Then a conversation ensued as Mother sought for a solution to repair Madge's broken confidence. After a tight motherly hug, Madge recounts how she became a mockery of her size at different occasions. Finally, Mother came up with a solution to teach about Anorexia which became a second objective: Anorexia as a teaching object of change.

What is Anorexia?

This is an eating disorder characterized by low weight, food restriction etc. Mother requests her to use this disorder in a teachable way so as to impact change on the person and correct an ill done to her. So, Madge will eventually learn how to use anorexia as a tool of joke in reply. So she can reply the person is 'A figure one'; 'Kpanla', or 'A thin stock'.

What lessons does the Author map out for us?

First, the story presents a two-fold scenario: the reaction displayed by Madge. Her character was in shatters because of her size and age as well as adolescents who are trapped by how to react effectively to this and the person who made the statement. A better approach to deal with such a situation and the reason why such comments, mockery or taunt was made it varies across situations but shouldn't be read out of context.

This, Mother studied before giving Madge a great reply and thanks to Mother, she can return to school to reassert her confidence and reply well to her friends, teachers and other pupils.

The writer did great justice to role-play Madge's story as a tool for using teaching as an epitome of change. The story's settings, mood, plot and diction which became the third objective of concern were neatly interwoven.

GENRE: POETRY

TITLE: DACHAU

WRITER: CHARLES DUNCAN, MALAWI

REVIEWER: TEMANI NKALOLANG, BOTSWANA

Something has to go wrong (disorder, discord, division) for there to be a need for reconciliation. Thus the prefix 're' meaning 'back/again' and 'conciliate' meaning 'bring together' suggests things:

- the status quo (calm or harmony)
- disturbance of the status quo
- the need to restore the status quo

The poem 'Dachau' as it tackles spousal betrayal brings to light the aforementioned three things and thus stands as a locus classical.

The first line of the poem starts on a note of realisation as it presents both the persona's previous emotional calmness (status quo) and then now sore emotions that soar high with bitterness in the subsequent lines.

The diction employed throws the reader right in the middle of a concentration camp where the persona's raw emotions are let loose – anger, bitterness, vengeance, murderous rage – creating an emotional thriller. A heart betrayed is a heart capable of killing.

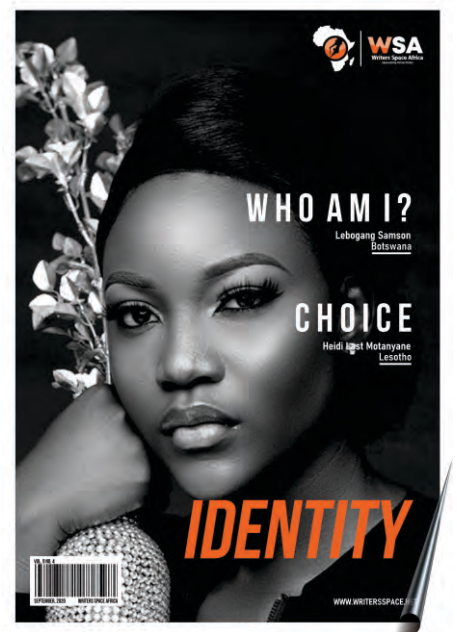
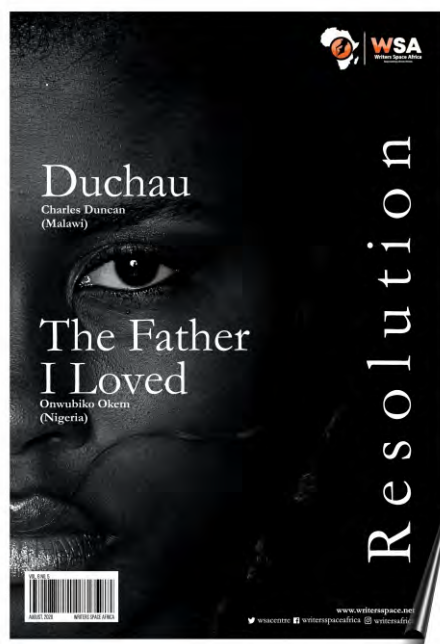
Skillfully weaving symbolism and imagery, the poem not only marries the persona's fire of vengeance to the worst kinds of genocide to ever plague humanity but exalts them far above the Holocaust and Kigali genocide (S3, L3). Only when the reader reaches stanza 2, line 5 does she realise emotions got the better of her, it's not real, phew! But are they just lines in a poem? Look at the world around, the destruction, vengeance gives birth to; the statistics are alarming, broken families, abandoned children, passion killings and we are still counting.

The poem draws a line between the persona's vengeance and the Dachau killers, citing provocation (S3, L1 and L5). Does this mean provocation justifies vengeance? Definitely not! As the persona introspects, she chooses forgiveness over vengeance (S3, L3–L8). The realisation that God forgave even the worst kind of sinners is a turning point and leads to the restoration of the status quo (S2, L3 and L4).

Thus, the poem which started on a bitter tone caused by spousal betrayal ends in a harmonious chord of reconciliation and leaves the reader in a pleasant mood of accomplishment like one who just solved a puzzle.



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# IS FATE REAL?

Imou Esparis  
Uganda

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# A TWIST IN FATE

MaryCynthia Okafor  
Nigeria

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# FATE

VOL. 10 NO. 7



OCTOBER, 2020

WRITERS SPACE AFRICA

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- Flash Fiction
- Poetry
- Essays
- Children's Literature

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Response time is typically within 4 to 5 weeks after submission window closes.

We look forward to receiving your best.

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

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**W**hat is fate? A big hand in the sky? The deliberate guidance of mystic beings? An interference in what life would/could have been? A bunch of nonsense that gives us comfort when we convince ourselves that we are helpless? A finality. The end of a chapter. An acceptance of what is/what will be.

There are many things we believe and of these many things few are a constant in all our lives. Some of us do not believe in fate, some of us believe we can influence fate and some of us feel fate is unchangeable destiny. Whatever the case may be, there is a life each of us must live and it is one that is not lived in isolation. These circumstances make that there are choices you and I must make - whether by our own machination or by pure happenstance which will collide, positively or negatively with the choices of another. It is these collisions that we term 'fate'.

Our single choices in isolation are hardly enough to determine the course of our lives. Going by this, what I am saying is simply that we must take our lives and make the most of the situations we find ourselves in. We must participate in this thing called Fate and we must do so with all that we've got.

It is my hope that you enjoy the entries in this edition as much as the team and I did.  
Always remember,

Ubuntu.

Warm regards,

Nabilah.



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Editor's Note	4
Editorial Crew	5
Table of Contents	6
Short Story	7-10
Columns	11-12
Children's Literature	13-14
Article	15-21
Flash Fiction	22-24
Poetry	25-31
Reviews	32-35

# IN THE EYE OF SILENCE

Obinna Gabriella  
Nigeria



Fate is destiny. Or, maybe destiny is Fate. Whatever Fate is, I'm sure she is a sadist; twisted like branches of yam tendrils around a cassava stalk in an unattended farm.

She? She because when I think of Fate, I think of Nne, the old woman who had lived behind my father's house in Enugu. For some reason, everyone was afraid of her. You could see it in the way their voices trembled around muffled greetings of 'nnendewo, and the way their hands shook when she walked past. I too was afraid of her, but I could not stay away. I would stare at her from a distance and attempt to count the veins crisscrossing goldily across her limbs; the green coloration stark against the skin which had yellowed with age.

For me — us, Muna and I —, fate nothing definitive or substantial. Maybe we are fated to be alone and have no home, to stay out at

sea without anchor, to have nothing but each other and learn the virtues of long-suffering.

It's like a raffle draw where you dip your hands in and select a number. Only in this case, every time we put our hands in the box, we come out with misfortune's definition of a joke. My story started when I was six years old, too young to understand and too old to leave the memories behind.

July, 1967

I woke up to sounds of argument coming from Papa's ubi. This was not new, in fact, it had been an almost routine occurrence since the independent state of Biafra was declared.

The only difference now was in the tone of the gatherings. At first, in the days following the declaration broadcast on radio, everyone had been happy. They gathered in the evening and drank father's palm wine—fresh from the gourds.



They stretched greedy palms whenever Mama came bearing her big tray laden with smoked meat. It was a continuous celebration; gather, eat, rest, repeat.

One day in July, the men had gathered slowly, raising dust as they dragged their feet with somber expressions. That night, there was no palmwine or spice. They smoked it in near-silence, whispering about war and Biafra. After that night, their gatherings had ceased being nightly celebrations. Sometimes they were heated arguments—with voices raised loud enough to wake the dead—and other times, they were sad silences broken intermittently by sadder monologues.

I was too young to understand these changes, but I grew accustomed to the hoarse bellows of men bearded so thickly that they had earned the right to be inconsiderate of such mundanity as a youngster's sleep.

"Ikenna"

Muna sat up with her right hand stretched towards me from her

mattress which lay parallel to mine. I took her hand rather roughly, smiling to myself when she winced in pain. I hated having to get up just because she needed to use the bathroom. "What do you think they are talking about?"

I could not hold back my curiosity. I walked through the corridor that led out to the lavatory and Muna followed closely behind me. Her fingertip barely grazed the palm of the guiding hand I stretched out behind me.

"It's war, Ikenna. There is war and you will have to fight. All the boys will. Papatoo..." she lowered her voice and went on, "Maybe you will die there..."

"No!" I yelled and yanked my hand from hers, rattled by her teasing.

She quickly found the wall with her hands and her laughter followed me down the hallway even though I had my hands clasped tightly over my ears.

September 1967

"Come out of there Putakita!"

"Ikenna"

Papa's voice was angry and I could see the disappointment that coloured his expression. My legs

felt like sticks stuck in plaster; I could not will myself to leave the safety of the cupboard in which I was hiding.

Muna was standing at the other end of the room. Her face was drenched with tears and she was trembling like she did whenever she was afraid and needed to hold somebody. Somehow, I found the strength to crawl out on limbs that felt like rubber. I dragged myself across the room and knelt beside Muna's trembling legs. The relief that ran through her when our bodies made contact was palpable. She dropped down to the floor and put her hands around me.



Forsomedays,Papahadtakento torndress,tryingtodrowrutthe organizingdrills.Hestartedafter sounds of exploding mortar. we beganhearingthe boom of Mama.Papa.I donotrecallhow gunfire afar off —these didn't long we sat and waited —for scare me. The echoes we had nothing in particular. Muna heardwerelikeoldcarsstarting nudged me gently. She stood, grudginglyWhatI wasafraidof pullingme up. Her knees must was Papa. These drills, he havehurtfromkneelingsolongto claimed, would test and hone

readinessfor attacks.He would weara maskand swinghis big I triednottolookatthefarcorner machete—theone he onlyused oftheupturned,sootykitchenbut forcuttingdownpalmfruitsfrom like a moth drawn to flame, I thebigtreesinthefarm.The drills couldn'tfight the pull. I looked, alwaysendedin tears because reallylookedI staredntohisstill Papawouldfindus whereverwe openeyesPapaHisstomachwas hidin the compoundandthenhe split open and his innardsspilt wouldyellfrighteningly.Hedidn't over the now slack flesh-like think we were getting preparedfferingto the gods of war. A knowthatthemusthavebeen chokedsob escapedme. Muna's veryafraidForhimselfForus. griptightenedas we walkedout; she couldnot see him. I do not

I canswearthat in the weeks know what became of Mama. The beforethewarcaughtupwithus, soldiershadbeenmeanadamant thesundidnotriseovermypiece to my pleas.Theyhadpulledher of Biafra.Therewereonlyclouds, outsideandhercrieshadrungfor dark and sad. There was also onlyashortwhile. wind;coldwindthatwentthrough ourclothesandrattledburbones. I rememberMuna's stumbling October1967. progressSheneededmyhelpasI needed hers. She'd always

I sat on the old kitchen stool, needed help, my Muna. I sobbing silently; my shoulders rememberthe cold, the hunger, shakingviolentlyI shutmyeyes andthe long, longtrek.I wassix as tears slid down my cheeks, but,I remember.

markingmy darkskin with their heat.I buriedmy face in Muna's

1976,Lagos.

I was older,still I did not know howto reador write.Childrenin bright uniforms hurried to school as fast as their stubby limbs allowedandI couldonlywatch.I wascaughtin a worldofsilenceI didnotspeakNo,I couldn'tspeak. Everytimel tried,a cold,deathly fear cameupon me and I broke intoasweat.

Afterthe war,we'dcometo live withourAunt,Ifechi,butshewas hardlyhome.Her businesswas more important than her handicappediece and nephew. One day, I'd been sitting beside herwindowin silenceandI heard her tell her friend, Philomena, thatwewereburdens.

Michael,Aunt Ifechi'sboyfriend was hurtingMuna.I heardandI saw; everytimehe hurt her, I heard.He snuckinto her room whenever Aunt Ifechi wasn't aroundand clawedat her. My Muna. He pulled her hair and made her cry. I cried along becauseI feltuseless.

Thepastorvisitedsometimeand I wantedto tell him. He said I couldn't talk because I was possessedItriedtotellhimabout Michael but my lips quivered wordlessly, my eyes wild in desperation.



He took this as a manifestation of evil and prayed louder, twisting my neck about, sprinkling holy water in my face and commanding the demon to 'die by fire!'

One night, I swore to end all of it and I hid behind the curtains. Michael came in drunk and undressed in a haste.

He reached for Muna and she cringed her unseeing eyes darted around in fear. Briefly I hated her for letting him hurt her; for being silent when she could choose to speak. In anger, I charged soundlessly and sunk the blade

into Michael. He fell off Muna and his blood trailed down onto the floor.

Muna called my name; reached

out blindly I knew she was scared so, I took her hand and pulled her off the bed. We left. Again I felt no remorse. It was inevitable, orchestrated by Fate and we are all subject to her will after all. Aren't we?

# LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

Ugbede Ataboh  
Nigeria

To the best of my knowledge, fate breaks down social and cultural stereotypes to achieve a divine purpose or goal. I had two weeks of my life. It was really special for me because there was nothing carnal about what we had; we didn't even kiss! We held

everyday. Whenever we had the opportunity to chill indoors, we just held on to each other and talked about our individual plans and dreams.



Oh! If wishes were horses, I'd be the first to ride over and over again; this guy made plans with me in it, but I remained silent the whole time and could only imagine the possibility of all our dreams of being together in a world free of social stereotypes; the kind of world that will not raise an eyebrow as a young man and an older woman walk romantically on the street; the kind of world where a mother will not prevent her precious son from marrying the love of his life because she has long been plucked from the proverbial tree of innocence; the kind of world where a woman will not lose her confidence as a sage begins to catch up with her, while her man is just beginning to bloom.

do not believe in fate, but I believe in destiny which can be altered by the dogged will of man backed by God, the Supreme. Last month was crazy for me. I fell in love and had the most magical

hands in the evenings and took long walks together, talking about anything and everything under the sun. It was amazing! I even stopped sleeping early because we talked on the phone late into the night

Yes! I am almost a decade older than the current love of my life, but before you run off on your high horse pointing fingers at me, just know that he is a different kind of man with a strong air of maturity around him.

I honestly knew he was younger, but I didn't know the gap was super wide until he mentioned his age in a conversation and I caved in. Why now? Why him? Why me? Was all I could ask God as I tossed and turned in my bed during the early hours of the last Sunday morning in September. After a few days, he noticed my blue mood and asked for us to meet... "Mon amour, you have been so distant lately and you have not responded to my request. Please be official with me so we can plan and build a future together." He cooed & versed lovingly. "I really need to come clean about something... I really like and... I am way older than you! I don't look my age but I am way older than you. The worst part is that you look older than your age" I wailed petulantly.

"Mon amour, so what do you suggest we do now? It seems like you have already made a decision" He responded in his

usual mature manner.

"I think we should honestly just remain good friends. Thankfully, we have not been intimate in any way. You still have many experiences to enjoy and learn from... many more people to meet... many more hearts to break! I cannot stand in the way of all the adventure life has in store for you. God knows I want to be yours and I want you to be mine but..."

"But what mon amour?" He asked impatiently.

"But, there are several obstacles on our path. Obstacles we cannot ignore even if we want to."

"Seul l'avenir nous le dira" He responded... oh yeah! I forgot to mention that he grew up in France and occasionally switches to French unknowingly.

"You just spoke French and it literally sounded like "French" to me" I responded with a blank look on my face.

"Oh shit!!" mso sorry I keep doing this... it means - Only time will tell. So, let's give ourselves time"

I really cannot believe his

response. Time? Time is literally what I don't think I have. Am I supposed to wait for him to grow into a man?! Na wa oh! On these streets I have seen a lot, but this particular one, weak me wella. Chai!

We still talk, but our conversations only reopen my fresh wound - I feel so blue. Does love truly exist? Is it a feeling people build after confirming their matches meet almost all or all social and cultural requirements?

For the first time ever, I wish I can go back in time and be born the same year with my love or even be a few years younger. I wish I can come face to face with Fate and align my romantic star with his. I know life is way bigger than romance and has many other branches that can fill and satisfy me, but oh! How I wish!

In all of this, I am still grateful to God because I totally stopped believing that purity and love can be found in romance, but I am happy my Love made me unlearn all I have learned over the years just so I can learn again. We were destined to meet and we have, we were destined to love each other and we have... and the rest? I do not leave to Fate. Time will tell.



# KUBO AND THE BAOBAB TREE

**Bernard Ewhomazino Glory**  
Nigeria

"Help!"

Kotuyelledntothethickforests  
he wasliftedfromtheground by  
someoddlookingmen.

He'dneverseenthemin his life  
beforeandtheyhadaccostedhim  
onthelonelypathtothestream.

Theyweredressedn Raffiaskirts  
and had large afros. Their  
hairstyleandmannerof dressing  
wasstrange.

Butwhatdidtheywantfromhim?

Kubowonderedashebouncedn  
theirshoulder\$fromleftto right.  
The ricketyroadinterceptinghis  
thoughtsHe thoughtof his poor  
mother back in the village. It wa  
duskalreadyand she wouldbe  
standingoutsidewaitingfor his  
returrfromthestream.



She wouldneverknowthat he'd  
been abductedby strangemen  
justas he wasreturningfromthe  
streamwitha bowl of water on  
hishead.

She'dstandunderthe moonand  
strainer eyesat the roadfrom  
timetotimewatchingforherson.

Maybeaftera whileshe'drealize  
that something was indeed  
wrong. Kubo was not like the  
otherboysinthevillagewholiked  
to make their parents worry  
unnecessarily. She'dbe able to  
tellsoonand reporttothevillage  
elders. They'dcomelookingfor  
him with the strongestwarriors  
ofthevillage.

"Hey!..put me down,I have not  
takenanythingfromyou,neither  
havel stolenyourfruits.Whatdo  
youwantfromme?"

"Watch it boy!, you'll awaken the spirits that sleep in the forest" The biggest man in the group thundered with a menacing scowl.

"But I don't want to be here, please I want to go back to my mother, I've been a good child, don't take me away"....Kubo begged profusely, his voice shaky with fear.

He'd heard sad tales of what happened to little boys in the forest at night.

He only hoped the warriors from his village would come looking for him soonest, before these strange looking men did something dreadful to him.

Suddenly, they stopped as if they'd been quietly commanded to.

"Huboo"

"Huboo! They men suddenly began

to chant in unison at the top of their voices.

As they chanted the strange words their body brightened with an invisible light. The huge hair on

their head seemed to shrink, and the wind hollered in rebellion.

Kubo began to cry, everything was strange, he could not understand anymore.

What did these people want to do to him?

As if on cue, the strangest thing happened, the Baobab tree before them began to take shape, and Kubo could see eyes and mouth on the tree

"Is this the child?" The tree thundered.

The leader of the group nodded.

He looked different with his shrunken hair

A speaking tree? Kubo shook with fear, and his legs wiggled uncontrollably beneath him.

The baobab tree as if reading his thoughts, suddenly turned and lunged for him. He was to become a sacrifice to a strange tree.

Kubo peed his pants almost immediately and screamed! He did not want to die....who would

save him?

Suddenly he heard his name being called far away.

"Kubo Kubo! Wake up!"

Kubo opened his eyes. He was in the real world. He'd been dreaming.

It was his mama prodding him.

"Oh mama, I was so scared!" Kubo said as he noticed he'd peed himself physically.

"It was just a nightmare could you hurry to the stream before it turns dark, I want some fresh water." Mama asked stroking his head.

"Never Mama!" Kuto suddenly retorted.



# ARE OUR CHOICES MEANINGFUL?

Oluwadamilola Yusuf  
Nigeria



Humans can only decode actualities that are within the structure of time and space. With this, the whole idea of fate that exists outside time and space may be difficult to visualize. Many a time, it is up to you to make the choices you want. Imagine, for a minute, you find yourself in a sinking boat and for you to survive you need to get on a lifeboat. Inevitably, you have two fates in front of you. You either choose to take the lifeboat or choose to stay on the sinking boat reasoning that perhaps, destiny wants you to be on a sinking boat. As status quo detects one is caught in a thin line between fate and choice. The former provides alternatives for you while the latter determines whether you make something out of it.

People often misinterpret trust in fate to mean not acting. Indeed,

our actions are significant considering that they are motives for transforming life's proceedings. For instance, a person may not follow the guideline for using his car or any other gadgets thinking that it doesn't have an effect on what fate has ordained for him.

Truthfully, the reality is in between our actions and what lies ahead. In other words, our actions without fate is nothing, yet they are necessary for life and its goodness (fate can either shed or unshed life purpose). It is that principle or idea by which every event happens beyond the scope of a person in reference to being directed by a supernatural power. One may then think; why do we need to toil if everything has already been predestined? Humans are however special mortals with purpose. Thus, the free will to direct our own lives is

present.

Over the years, the idea of fate concerned most theologians and philosophers. In Book III of Nicomachean Ethics, the saying, "Unlike non-rational agents, we have the power to do or not to do and much of what we do is voluntary such that its origin is 'in us', and we are 'aware of the particular circumstances of the action'" is the idea of Aristotle, which clearly tells us that we have free will. Personal judgment about fate, exerts a part in our perception of the world and day-to-day activities. Since we are often unaware of the future, our decisions are rooted in our perception of the way the world around us exists. Therefore, man is subdued by the pressure of two realities: the world of fate, which is unalterable and its immediate free will.

Our African predecessors also



understood that whatever came to be, either good or bad, was fate plotted by a vital force. An in-depth elaboration about this is traced in Placid Temple's Bantu Philosophy where our ancestors believed that everything that transpires in the world usually finds root in fortune Fateserved as a definition of human norms and practices obligatory for a culture to adjust to a given environment. For instance, the sole belief of the Hausa people of Northern Nigeria is that fate finds its way to find a man even if he does nothing to strive for it. Such as, a person who sits at home all day still has fate in store for him. This belief is held in their adage which says, "The toad's luck does not go up, even if it goes up, it must surely come down because the toad does not climb".

Eastern Nigeria has a different view of fate. Here, palmistry which is known as the hand's fate is a general practice. It was believed that each person's hands are different, which has an effect on a person's current life and future. Thus, the outcome of a person, either good or bad is ensured by three main components: First, the blessings of his chi (god); second, his endeavor and choice in life; and third, customs that are inculcated by the community.

Osuagwu confirms that Africans have assumed direct and immediate responsibility for all their African and human destiny. With full consciousness of moral demands and expectations, they demand to take up their place as authors, architects, masters, custodians, and advocates of their existence (Osuagwu 1999, 211). However, fate is a conundrum on account of human's restrictions from understanding the structure beyond time and space. But if a person is destined for greatness, he has to work to achieve it. To put it simply, a man's destiny is right in his hands.

# IS FATE REAL?

Imou Eparis  
Uganda

You miss your morning bus by a few seconds and have to wait for the next one, that's taking longer than usual to arrive. Amid your frustration a handsome stranger says hey to you. In that moment you forget all

to your workplace. You two really hit it off and now he has your number and is already planning to see you again. Five years later you and him are married and expecting your first child. You look back and see that it was fate

about in a fiction movie, yet it's talked about and believed by many in our world. Fate, as it is termed, is an event or course of events that will inevitably happen in the future. Fate tells us everything in our lives is already predetermined. But, is it true?



your troubles and smile at this fine-looking man and hope he is going to get into the bus you are getting into. He does and that's not all, he sits next to you and to your luck, he is a chatty Cathy! The conversation lasts the entire ride

that brought you together that day.

The existence of a supernatural force controlling or predetermining our future sounds like something you would hear

There are some things I agree are predetermined; for instance, your family was predetermined, the environment you were born in was predetermined, way before you were born, your school, your culture, your tribe, how ugly you look on your national ID, all of these things are predetermined and you cannot do anything to change them (you could try asking for another ID photo but it will turn out the same, trust me, I have tried ooh!). I will say, these situations described above are fate.



The things that are not predetermined however are plenty. Things like who you will marry or how well you will do in your exams or who you will vote for in the next election.

These things I have mentioned are only determined by yourself. You decide who you will date or marry. A handsome stranger won't meet you at the bus stop and confess his undying love for you. He doesn't know you, you creep! How well you do in your exams is determined by how much you care and put into your academics. Who you vote for next is determined by the company you

keep, the conversations you have been having, where you live and what you read. All these situations are all based on the choices you make or have been making.

Choices guided by your convictions rather than chance, determine your fate. How wise were your decisions in the past? Have you dated just anyone who showed you interest? Have you prayed for help to succeed in your exams without actually studying for them? Have you let your past failures dictate your future? Well, I am telling you now that that isn't the end of the story, you

shouldn't just willingly take whatever life hands you on a plate; throw the plate away and make your own meal!

You may have been a victim to chance, but it's not too late to change your story. Your present choices will determine the rest of your life. I will conclude by saying we are all masters of our fate, nothing of our future has been written yet because we are the ones writing it, through our choices.

# TOMORROW NEVER COMES

**Kenneth Minishi**  
Kenya

In our beloved continent, it is customary to cast a blind eye on posterity. Maybe you could conclude that we view posterity with some sort of trepidation! I mean how else would you explain the chronic inclination to live in the here-and-now with close to little or no regard for the future? As inevitable as death is, so too old age; these two are given a wide berth when it comes to planning. You only have to look at the number of people who regret not saving up towards their pension. You only have to look at families embroiled in messy tussles over land, property and wealth, because their deceased patriarch left no will.

Politicians supposedly the bane of our existence are actually the few who espouse the value of providence. No sooner has your average politician assumed office than he is already thinking ahead; incredulously spending the bulk of his present term in office

campaigning for his next term. That's what you call bona fide forward-thinking.

Just this week in fact, I was compelled to do some forward-thinking of my own. At about quarter past four on Tuesday, I was aboard a bus headed to Nairobi's City Center. I sat beside the window, rapt in thought, typical of any introspective introvert. The window afforded me a vista of the city's changing landscape. My chief concern was that traffic would not be very bad. I was making a jaunt to the center of Kenya's capital for two reasons. I was hoping to buy a grey tie for the throw-away price of one hundred shillings and the City Center was just the place to get it. The other reason was to pass by the Post Office to check if my family's rental box had any mail.

Upon the completion of those tasks, I was to head to

Kawangware to purchase a sweater, also at a throw-away price. I am no sapeur by any stretch of the imagination. The exuberant suits I leave to others elsewhere. I go for the comfortable and bespoke at cut-price deals in the market on the streets.

All these activities being completed, I planned to workout, doing a couple of bodyweight exercises. Not that I needed calories burnt or weight reduced. It's just to keep fit and maintain my soon-to-behisele physique. In all fairness, I could have done these things earlier in the day, but you know us Kenyans, we follow in the legacy of our long-distance runners, we have that final-kick in us. We dither about for a while only to spring into action at the last possible minute.

Shortly into my commute, a light drizzle broke out. My fear was that another Gradually, it increased to a torrential downpour that had people scampering to the onset of rain for some unknown reason, elicits discomfort among our drivers, resulting in epic traffic gridlocks. I was fervently praying that this was not to be the least of my worries.

The bus hurtled down Valley Road, inching ever closer to my destination. By then, the rain had rendered the windows misty, obscuring our outside view. To my surprise, the bus turned right into Ralph Bunche Road. This was completely out of the norm. Normally, buses would turn into Ralph Bunche

Road when leaving the City Center, never when going toward it. A few seconds later, I realized the turn was anything but intentional. A thumping noise from the back of the bus ensued by a crashing sound of broken glass, threw us into a panic. The bus had rammed into something or something had rammed into it. It was hard to tell. The bus was now

careening across the wet road. My fear was that another vehicle would send the bus toppling over, falling to my side and squishing me to death. Understandably, everyone had lost the plot. Screams of panic-stricken passengers engulfed the bus. Women shrieked hysterically! I heard one cry, "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" I couldn't believe it. Was this really happening? My mind, like the bus, was spinning wildly out of control. I was powerless to do anything. Was another more fatal collision imminent? Thankfully, the answer was to be no. The driver managed to slowly steering it towards the curb on the left side of the road, before grinding to a halt.

people out of the bus. Another man at the back was trying to usher an injured passenger out of the bus. You never imagine you will be in an accident. Well, I had been smack in the center of one. Passengers began filing out of the bus, fearful and relieved at the same time.

It seemed the passengers at the back were worst affected, a few nursing some cuts and bruises. Most of the passengers had just been shocked from it all. Looking around, it didn't seem that there was a passenger who had lost his life, nor was there one who was unconscious. Most of us came out virtually unscathed.

I dismounted the vehicle, slightly disconcerted, but the next bus-stop still intent on completing my objective for the day but obviously still reeling from the accident. I could have died. Just like that. I could have been in a body-bag, being whisked away to the mortuary by first-responder in COVID-19 PPE kits.

Gingerly, I rose from my seat. "Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus!" A lady in the back repeatedly uttered. Beneath me were shards of glass strewn across the floor, the windows now just mere frames. There were small streaks of blood on the surgical mask of the passenger who sat across me. Yet, he was selflessly commandeering



I dismounted the vehicle, future.

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mortuaryby first-responder's

inCOVID-19PPEkits.

Theincidentsoberedme.Lifeis

brief,tomorrow'sn'tactually

guaranteeLiketheladyin the

bus,I wasthankingJesusI was

thankful to Himthat I escaped

the accidentwithoutas much

as a scratch. It got me

wonderinghowmuchtimedol

reallyhaveleftonearth?

WhenKenya reportedits first

case of COVID-19,I will be

honest to admit that I

anticipatedto be amongthe

virus'casualtiesI didn'tsee a

future.

To my dismayI reckoned,"I'm

goingtodiesoyoungI'mgoing

to die without starting a

family."I'm going to die only

havingknownthe friend-zone.

Bummer.Okay I didn't think

'Bummerbutyougetthepoint,

don't you? It was just

disappointingbutnotenvisagæ

For most of my 31-year existence, life has been lived with a presumption of tomorrow. The inclination has been to believe I will eventually overcome this quarter-life malaise, settle down, start a family and so forth. This accident and COVID have made me do a rethink.

The accident put things into perspective. The gift of life is undeniable. It could be taken from you at any time. Jesus, gives me the gift of life, of today and it is one I should gladly receive. One that I should exhaust not in frivolities but in purposeful activity, because one day, tomorrow will never come.



# A TWIST IN FATE

MaryCynthia Okafor  
Nigeria

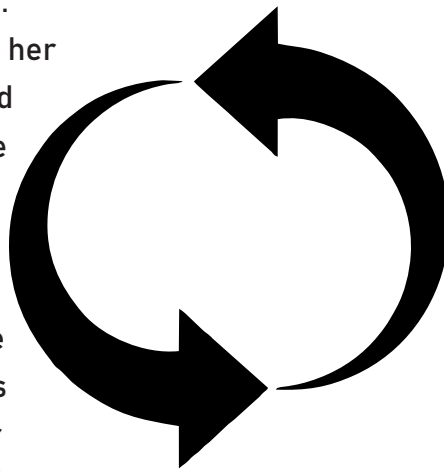
Ezimme had wanted a child and she pleaded her plight to the very first season after them. Her marriage rites were completed but she couldn't have any, and even more than ten planting seasons after, she still couldn't bear a child.

Though her husband tucked by her, his family was another matter. Asili was that she had traded her womb for beauty—her sex exceeded that of every woman in the whole land.

As was usual, she went to the shrine of Akaraka, the three agbalathat wrote down a child's destiny from birth. After her sacrifice she lay at their feet and cried herself to sleep. And she dreamt.

She was in a meadow and before her were three women She knew at once they were the three fates

They sang, "Your tears have granted you audience with us. We've written nowhere in your tale will you birth a child as you—and your chi—decided that you'll never have a child, but



destinies can be twisted. Today, we went with yours with a child's." "Anyanwu tutu you shall call her, for beautiful, she shall be," Mbido—kind—said. Ezimme gave a joyous cry.

Etimi—solemn—said, "She shall live strong and long and bear many children."

Ezimme prostrated in gratitude. " B u t , " Mgwucha—apologetic—added. "She will break your heart for the wife of an alusi she shall be when you choose to do the will of the gods. At eight, she shall be taken to live—until her death—in Agbusu's house and never again shall she call you Nne."

Ezimme awoke with a start. The dreams of a desperate woman, she mused. But the next day, just as the sun peeked through the clouds, she conceived a child who shall be named after the early morning sun.

# CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

Christiana Agboni  
Nigeria

Some people do all they can to trample on my significance if you must know, my influence cuts across all lives and spheres. I come in different ways; I shout, whisper, judge and even push. I remember shouting at Alami, to change location when her fiancé left her standing at the altar. Today, she's happy with Enejo. I work on my own terms and conditions.

Ugbede is about to throw himself into the Lagos lagoon, he is tired of being jobless. They will fish him out of course.

People will gather to berate me, saying, I am not being fair to him. They do not know it is for the greater good. Soon, he will run a counselling centre to help

those like him. The same people will marvel at my impact.

I hope they give me credit then; many think I don't deserve credit.

Some people claim to be ignorant of my existence, when I'm blatantly obvious. It's funny, the way some try to delay me. They can try, but I remain an unrelenting game changer.

I laugh at your antics. Puny humans.

Some call me callous. Some call me fickle. Others call me amazing. I agree with all that and

more. I do not act in a vacuum; I only work when you decide to get busy. I'm a subtle poker player. I reveal my hands when it's time.

Some are trying to avert my hands; it will end in futility.

By my sleight of hand, you are where you are right now, doing whatever it is you're doing or not doing. I am not a disease or an anomaly that some have and others don't.

My name is fate. And I am closer than you think.



# Nocturnal Gift

Ibanda Mary Frances  
Uganda

There it was again, a brief rustling, a soft stirring in the grass that only ears accustomed to the subtlest nocturnal sounds could pick up. She lay still. It could not be them. The game warden had said the gorillas seldom ventured down the mountain close to the human settlement. Besides, they were

not night shifters by nature. For three days now the animals had been elusive and she was beginning to regret this whole trip. On her knees, she crept up to the tent wall. Her trembling hand

painstakingly drew the zipper back, creating a tiny peephole. By the glow of the full moon, she would be able to see whatever was lurking out there so close to

the camp.

There, at the edge of the clearing, majestic and enormous, a silverback stood like a bronze statue. He was staring at her tent as if he was aware of her wakefulness. His black eyes held a bottomless depth that she knew better than to meet while his

Transfixed by the magnetic pull of curiosity, woman and beast waited. Her years of chronic sleeplessness must have been priming her for this pause in time, when nature defied norms to offer her a sight the group had pursued in vain for three days. The moment stretched on. Then, silently, he

turned away, and beast and forest merged into one. Her thoughts switched to her friends insulated by their dreams and sleeping bags, oblivious to this magical encounter. They refused to believe her when she called them out of their tents shortly after, until they inspected where he had stood. The ground was still warm.



presence hung on the silence like a held back cough. Was he an inadvertent sentinel of the dark like her?

# A SUTRA ABOUT FATE

Juwon Adeola  
Nigeria

---



We arrived with destiny lined in our palms—  
stars wrapped in flesh & blood

wings of dreams ready for flight,  
ready to unfurl colours locked within us

but our feathers are prey to razors &  
expectations are a burden to fly with.

We're meant to be great  
but our dreams are ferried on paper boats.

Stranded on the island of despair,  
where do we go from here—  
do we sail backwards to straighten crooked fates?

# DIET OF UNCERTAINTY

Deep Martins  
Nigeria

---

So much talk in my sister's physics textbook,  
but never one study on how much horsepower  
it takes to turn the hands of time.

In my literature classwork, I'm dull enough to  
write a clock's tick-tock an example of onomatopoeia  
for the footfalls of uncertainty -----

A guest no one knows how close it is, & for what  
it is coming [And the door is always ajar,  
because we have straw for bolts]

I've planted my hands on the plough  
long enough for my bones to grow into steel;  
to wield muscles strong enough to steer  
the rudder of life in one great turn into a fairer course.  
Each muscle grown is mocked by the featherweight oar  
I am given against a tempest that burps  
in my face the scent of my swallowed kindred.

At a puppeteer's show, I imagine my little brother,  
in '97, pulled by strings into the jaws of silence.  
Trying to snithe any wire tied to my feet,  
but it is the air I am beating;  
the strings pulling me into movements of dance  
where I can only leave footprints behind as I tread  
whilst hoping they're not eaten by the wind.

# FATE IS A NEW NAME HERE

**Olajuwon Alhaytham Abdullah Adedokun**  
Nigeria

---

your sister has whole cities burning in her stomach,  
Beirut! she has seen coloured flames swallowing you alive,  
now, she sits in the kitchen, tucked in a corner  
writing about how much the smell of hot water boils her  
nostrils.

your brother once carved your name on trees,  
he watched your blood water the dried leaves,  
now he kneels under the shades, munching God's name,  
begging to be ridden of your memories

Mama, the echoes of your name is still heard here,  
Lebanon is burning, your little daughter's pleas,  
in the the search for your face, a fifth direction was born,  
Not east, not west, not south nor north,  
deep in graves, where dead bodies meet.

Father.

your face is a skinned mango, the seed slashed in half,  
juicing our hopes with the fireworks that lighted your skin,  
someone somewhere will learn to mutter "fate" in place of  
your name,  
and your heavy footsteps will be remembered by the scent  
of burns.

# LET ME BE ME

William Khalipwina Mpina  
Malawi

---

They are a moon  
starring the August night  
They are a star  
twinkling in beauty & fame  
and I am alone  
stuck in the mud  
I would rather be me  
shunned, smelling of smoke  
always at home  
like a flower pot  
and be watered  
by second-hand  
love and dirt  
let me be me  
Black as night  
and free like  
a column of black ants  
sauntering toward  
a loaf of bread  
whispering love  
let me be me,  
a smile always  
taming tears  
or a frown  
mocking a snake  
slithering around  
the pot of hell  
let me be me  
and be happy  
powerful beyond measure



# LUCKY MEN

**Temani Nkalolang**  
Botswana

---

Fate smiled when they met,  
They complement each other  
Above all, they complete father.

Call it coincidence but I believe  
Fate smiled when they met,  
Hard as it is to perceive-

Father's two wives are the key  
To his and our joy. So you see  
Fate smiled when they met.

# MOI RAI

Trisha  
Uganda

---



When a child is born  
His destiny is threaded and decided  
The road he will take determined  
By the dangers of nyx  
Or so the story goes  
Clothos pins the thread of life  
Lachesis measures his length  
Atropos with her shears will cut it

Whether he be a pauper or a noble  
He might become handsome  
Strong and dandy  
Better still, he might be heir to a powerful throne  
He could be a thief belonging to the streets  
Does it really matter when his life is predetermined  
At the end of it all, when the fates decide  
Even Zeus has no say.

# REJECTION LETTER

**Adedayo Adedamola**  
Nigeria

---

residues from the editor's non-committal desk  
escort a vapid poem back into the garbage-inbox of my  
Gmail:

you have a beautiful piece here  
but it doesn't meet our expected standard for publication.  
thank you.

& another jettisoned fate depletes fastidious ego  
as my muse mourns a setback in which three-quartered  
scoop of furious writings find reasons to doubt themselves  
before braving the limelight of publications.

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GENRE: SHORT STORY

TITLE: REDEMPTION

WRITER: OHANYERE OGOADA, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: FUNMI RICHARDS, NIGERIA

**R**edemption is a short story with themes across guilt, suicide as a vehicular expression of issues with mental health, surviving loss and false altruism. It is written in a first-person narrative and interestingly in such a way that the sex/gender of the character is unknown until the character is willing to be identified.

The writer skillfully transitions through the story using foreshadowing and flashback, both of which are embodied and expressed in the form of symbolism, imagery and paradoxes. The writer uses 'black' to symbolise nothingness, that is the oblique afterlife moment where your fate is yet to be decided but you are not really alive. Also, the 'vision/revelation' is represented as that moment where resolution comes and reason for a future is given; hairpin represents a

The imagery on the other hand, is quite tangible such that you start to feel the scenes are not only figments of the imagination of the writer but moments in time of an actual human. All of which could imply that these scenes have been relived repeatedly, both that it is familiar and tangible.

Though the story touches across multiple themes, the one that seems understated but follows through the entire story is altruism or in the real sense, false altruism. From the onset, we see results of the character's blame-game with herself causing her to attempt suicide repeatedly, we also see how this 'altruism' makes her spend resources on religious intercessions she doesn't believe in and know to be false in a bid to 'comfort' her adopted mother.

Furthermore, we see how this 'altruism' in actual fact is baseless because she really didn't cause the death of her parents as she had thought. Finally, we see how she eventually accepts her adopted mother and refuels her altar of altruism with a new allegiance which could very well be thwarted again if she were to lose her adopted mother too.

In conclusion, the story is a call for awareness of possible or potential causes of depression – situational depression in this case as it is brought on by the loss of her parents. It also exposes the interdependency between people and the desire to please others and own burdens that are not ours to carry. And finally, it reminds us how powerful our minds can be when it has a purpose.

GENRE: COLUMNS

TITLE: RECONCILING RECONCILIATION IN AFRICA

WRITER: LEO MUZIVORERA, ZIMBABWE

REVIEWER: NAMSE KHOTSO UDOSEN, NIGERIA

Leo strikes a strong chord with this piece. Peace and reconciliation has been a thorny issue for many African societies. I am particularly interested because the issues raised in this essay can be related to my home country, Nigeria. Many years ago campus gangsters, popularly called 'cultists' were pardoned after a public show of renouncing cultism. Their past crimes were washed away; then we had militant blowing up oil facilities, kidnapping, raping and maiming citizens. A bogus amnesty deal wiped all that away. They were sent abroad for studies and paid monthly allowances. Recently, members of the dreaded Boko Haram sect, were rehabilitated and reconciled back to the societies they once terrorised. All this in a bid for reconciliation.

In this essay, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission along with Rwanda's Gacaca Community Courts are x-rayed. As I read the article, my mind wandered to Nigeria's Human Rights Violation Investigation Commission, popularly called Oputa Panel (it was headed by Justice Oputa). The panel was set up by the leadership of the 4th Republic to heal Nigerians of decades of military brutality. The result at the end was similar to what Leo presented in his essay.

He points out that reconciliation goes hand in hand with many other factors and generates many difficult questions. One of such questions is whether reconciliation is trading justice for truth "as was the case in South Africa?"

He notes that the trading of truth for justice is one of the low points of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He points to the calls for economic justice as a pointer that truth-telling is not enough. Unfortunately, Nigeria's truth commission suffered the same fate. As Leo states "very little follow-up work was done by the government and the policies left many South Africans feeling cheated, ditto Nigerians."

The article points to the opposite direction Rwanda took. Perpetrators of genocide crimes were tracked and punished. He describes the community courts where justice was swift on those found guilty of the crimes. That was the only way the wounds of the victims could be assuaged a bit. There are wounds that are never completely healed. This method also has been questioned by neutral observers. They question the objectivity and fairness of those trials done in the Gacaca courts.

The column concludes nicely with some words for leaders with conflict in their domains: "Reconciliation does not begin or end with commissions or trials. It requires change and transformation at the system level. This would be evident when victims and perpetrators are willing to work together to erase past hurts."

This is an apt and timely piece for our troubled times in Africa. I recommend further studies into reconciliation using a combination of the truth commissions and community courts to dispense justice as a tool for reconciliation.

GENRE: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

TITLE: LET'S TEACH FOR CHANGE

WRITER: IMMACULATE AJIAMBO, KENYA

REVIEWER: ANTHONY NWAGBAOSO ONYEADOR, NIGERIA

The story is about Madge and how she became a taunt owing to her body size which was the primary objective of the story. The story began in a setting a dark, pitch black dining room. Her mother at first, was scanning which of her daughters was wailing before retracing her to the room. She found Madge's head buried between her thighs. Then a conversation ensued as Mother sought for a solution to repair Madge's broken confidence. After a tight motherly hug, Madge recounts how she became a mockery of her size at different occasions. Finally, Mother came up with a solution to teach about Anorexia which became a second objective: Anorexia as a teaching object of change.

What is Anorexia?

This is an eating disorder characterized by low weight, food restriction etc. Mother requests her to use this disorder in a teachable way so as to impact change on the person and correct an ill done to her. So, Madge will eventually learn how to use anorexia as a tool of joke in reply. So she can reply the person is 'A figure one', 'Kpanla', or 'Athinstock'.

What lessons does the Author map out for us?

First, the story presents a two-fold scenario: the reaction displayed by Madge. Her character was in shatters because of her size and age as well as adolescents who are trapped by how to react effectively to this and the person who made the statement. A better approach to deal with such a situation and the reason why such comments, mockery or taunt was made, it varies across situations but shouldn't be read out of context.

This, Mother studied before giving Madge a great reply and thanks to Mother, she can return to school to reassert her confidence and reply well to her friends, teachers and other pupils.

The writer did great justice to role-play Madge's story as a tool for using teaching as an epitome of change. The story's settings, mood, plot and diction which became the third objective of concern were neatly interwoven.

GENRE: POETRY

TITLE: DACHAU

WRITER: CHARLES DUNCAN, MALAWI

REVIEWER: TEMANI NKALOLANG, BOTSWANA

Something has to go wrong (disorder, discord, division) for there to be a need for reconciliation. Thus the prefix 're' meaning 'back/again' and 'conciliate' meaning 'bring together' suggests things:

- the status quo (calm or harmony)
- disturbance of the status quo
- the need to restore the status quo

The poem 'Dachau' as it tackles spousal betrayal brings to light the aforementioned three things and thus stands as a locus classical.

The first line of the poem starts on a note of realisation as it presents both the persona's previous emotional calmness (status quo) and then shows sore emotions that soar high with bitterness in the subsequent lines.

The diction employed throws the reader right in the middle of a concentration camp where the persona's raw emotions are let loose – anger, bitterness, vengeance, murder, usage – creating an emotional thriller. A heart betrayed is a heart capable of killing.

Skillfully weaving symbol and imagery, the poem not only marries the persona's fire of vengeance to the worst kinds of genocide to ever plague humanity but exalts them far above the Holocaust and Kigali genocide (S3, L3). Only when the reader reaches stanza 2, line 5 does she realise emotions got the better of her, it's not real, phew! But are they just lines in a poem? Look at the world around, the destruction, vengeance gives birth to; the statistics are alarming, proker families, abandoned children, passion killings and we are still counting.

The poem draws a line between the persona's vengeance and the Dachau killers, citing provocation (S3, L1 and L5). Does this mean provocation justifies vengeance? Definitely not! As the persona introspects, she chooses forgiveness over vengeance (S3, L3–L8). The realisation that God forgave even the worst kind of sinners is a turning point and leads to the restoration of the status quo (S2, L3 and L4).

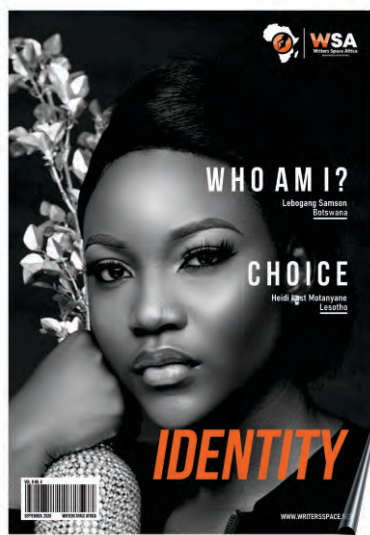
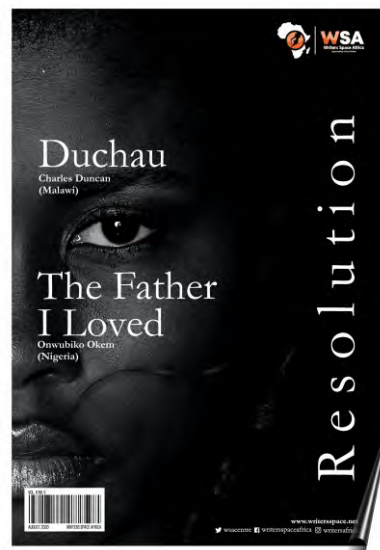
Thus, the poem which started on a bitter tone caused by spousal betrayal ends in a harmonious chord of reconciliation and leaves the reader in a pleasant mood of accomplishment like one who just solved a puzzle.





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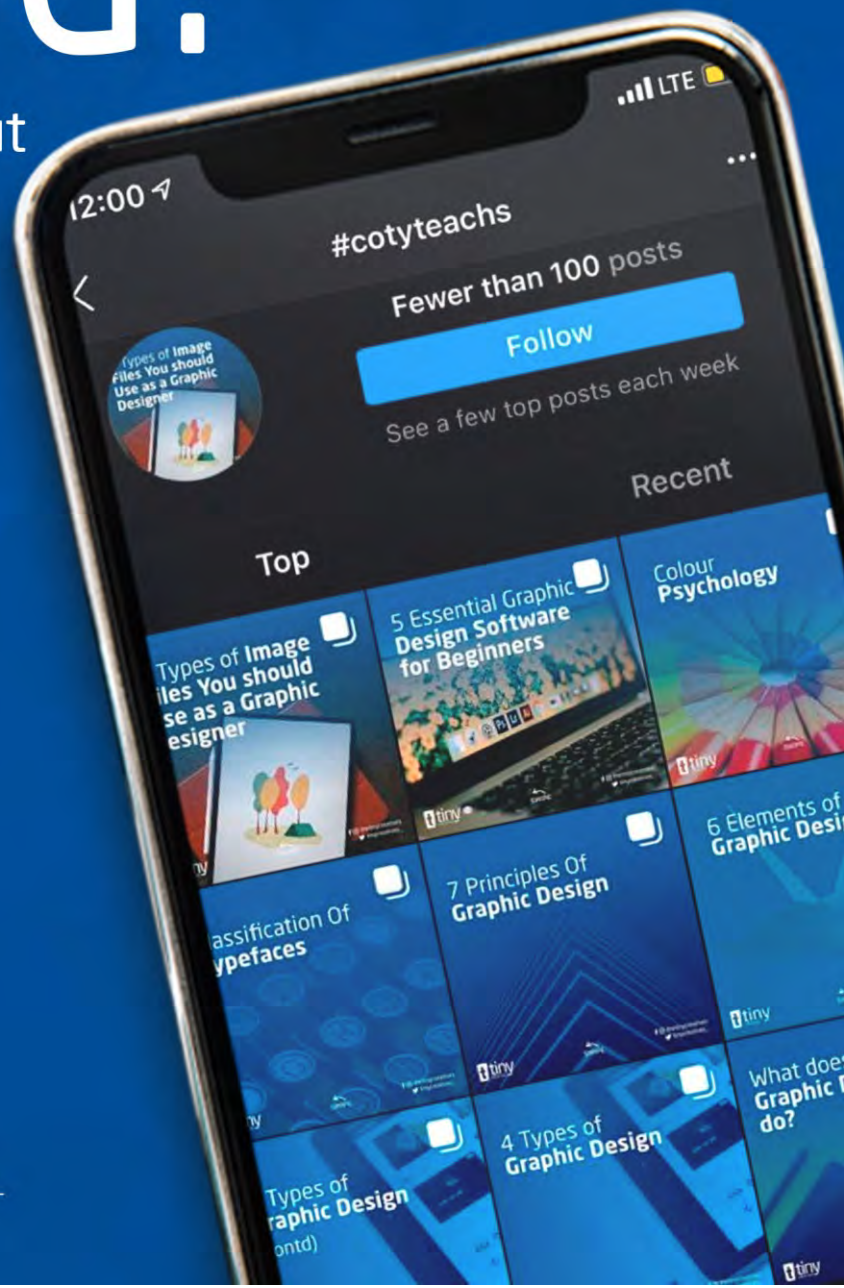
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# OLD SOJAS NEVER DIE

Olasubom Olumofin  
Nigeria

# THE OBSERVER

Leo Muzivoreva  
Zimbabwe

# DEATH

VOL. 11 NO. 8



NOVEMBER, 2020

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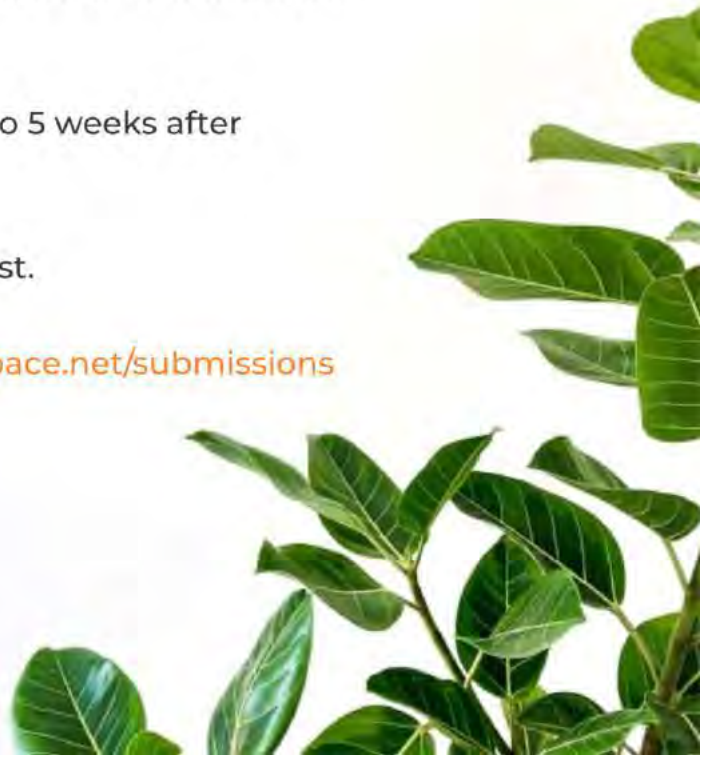
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# EDITOR'S NOTE

---

Just how much dying do we do before we truly die? Biologically, we are dying with every breath we take. We all know this, but only in the peripheral. In the immediate, a lot of us see death as that full stop; if you follow language and the rules of punctuation closely, then despite the fact that the symbol is an end, it leaves certain things open to interpretation. For instance, is it the end of a sentence, ushering another sentence? Is it the end of a chapter? Is it the end of a book? These are the same questions we ask about life.

The balance of life as it is right now, makes that we cannot exist without death and in death we can find life again— it only depends on how you look at it.

Letters from a Stoic, the ancient Seneca said "And on the other hand, if death comes near with its summons, even though it be untimely in its arrival, though it cut one off in one's prime, a man has had a taste of all that the longest life can give. Such a man has in great measure come to understand the universe. He knows that honourable things do not depend on time for their growth, but any life must seem short to those who measure its length by pleasures which are empty and for that reason unbounded."

The writers in this edition of WSA try to measure death in words and in perception. These works by brilliant writers across Africa will either challenge or reinforce your perception of death. After reading, I hope you come away with something new.

Always remember Ubuntu.

Warm regards,

Nabilah.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Editor's Note	4
Editorial Crew	5
Table of Contents	6
Short Story	7-12
Columns	14-18
Children Literature	20-22
Flash Fiction	24-27
Poetry	29-33
Reviews	34-39



# OLD SOJAS NEVER DIE

Olasubomi Olumofin  
Nigeria



The ghost of the past rose like a spectre from the asphalt – a slow, creaky bus rumbling past the tarred road. The afternoon was hot and breathless; the sun gazing down harshly from its perch in the sky cared little for the comfort of the bodies crawling listlessly over the earth. The few pensile clouds that scudded through the sky held no relief, no promise of rain in their barren breasts. A few vehicles plied the road; the men who rode Okada had long fled the vengeance of the sky and reclined on benches under trees and houses.

Out of that burning pit of the afternoon, the bus slowly rambled past. Its green coat was long faded and peeled; its glass cracked in the front. One of the windows at the side was broken, and in its place a dirty stretch of nylon fluttered faintly; in all, it was a picture of age and decay – another ghost of the irresolute flow of time, denizen from a time

when the browndustyearth knew no covering. As if on cue, memories of that not-so-distant past began to run through his mind.

The road was not tarred then. It was still a stretch of brash, undulating earth, filled with grooves and potholes, slick and slippery when it rained and dusty when it did not. He was a schoolboy. Every morning, he began a pilgrimage that took him to the far end of the city where the schooled a voyage past the very heart of the town; the smooth purr of taxis on the main road, the bustling market, a pattern-less mix of modern and old houses, the towering buildings – few and far between – that were beginning to crop up more than a short distance where the road took a dip before it rose again and levelled out, the sharp turning, then his school. The journey back home was more interesting. He walked with other classmates, tired from the drudgery of learning in airless

classrooms and the terror of flogging, taking his time to soak up the sounds and sights of the city's expiring breath. The journey back was a shared luxury; the market was still bubbly at that time of the day, and never in the six years she spent at the school did the novelty ever wear off. Their slow, loud drift took them past stores filled with wares, market women calling to passers-by, boys a little older than them that carried goods – electrical odds and ends – on wheelbarrows, Igbo boys that hung rows of pirated movies on wood racks – they kept discs of pornography tightly bound in black nylon and could tell the furtive, restless gaze of the ones who consumed them – and the thousand odours, the thousand dramas that daily assailed the marketplace.

The daily odyssey slowly reached its terminus between the newspaper stand where they read sports news and sometimes



watched men in rumpled shirts argue loudly about politics, and the post office. Many of his companions preferred to board the blue and yellow taxis at the newspaper stand, but his own journey took him past that, straight to the post office where a line of ugly rickety buses that plied the road to his home waited for passengers. The buses were old, nondescript and wore different colours. In an earlier age, this array of colours might have been beautiful but the rusty hand of decay had touched one and all of them, and all they had left was the muted grace of age that blends all colours into ordinariness.

The men who rode these buses were like their contraptions; a mix of hues, shapes and ages; their dresses were either loudly outlandish or

that he had come to identify with their trade:

“Okeogba...Okeogba...Okeogba. Okeogba- One! Okeogba- One! Aunty - Okeogba! Bros - Okeogba...”

They joked loudly, bickered, cursed each other in jest - sometimes virulently and flirted with the women/girls that sold snacks by the road. They wore different clothes, drove different vehicles but were all faces of the same mask. Each man had his private demon to exorcise wore his laughter on his faces and kept mute as he saw fit, but this truth defined them all - they were all caught in the sleepy somnolence of the city. The city held everyone under an unyielding hypnosis; it was so unrelenting in its ordinariness that even that became a form of magic.

mutely plain. They kept mute, hands folded on the cheek; or spoke loudly in the baritone

On some afternoons when the bus filled up slowly, none of the drivers could be heard telling stories. He was dark, plump without being fat, and wore a ridiculous face-cap thrust above his face. He had served in the army once - they called him Old Soja - and had tales of the battlefront to recount to eager listeners:

“When we were taken to, I tell you, war is a bad thing. A bad thing. Eh! If you see the way people die, eh, you will pray that none of your children put on the uniform of a soldier. Eh? It was every man for himself... every man for himself. If you're shot, you're gone. No second chance for the dead. Ah? Is that why I keep disturbing this Sisi? Don't you know soldiers are womanizers? Once a soldier, always...”

This bus was green and old like the other vehicles, coughing up fumes that stung the eyes of the home-goers. As it rambled into the street and began its journey over the untarred terrain, Old Soja could be heard in jest, telling a story or joking with a bemused passenger. The bus always stopped to cough up passengers, roughing its way gradually to the last bus-stop.

The boy dropped at one of the stops, eager for whatever meal awaited him at home, while the bus rode into the horizon raising a cloud of dust like a funeral wreath; Old Soja's expansive laughter lingering even after the rattle of the bus was beginning to fade.

Soon, the buses stopped coming altogether, and this before the road was even tarred. Business simply became unlucrative; people preferred the smooth glide of the taxis to the rattling run of old buses. He never knew where they went to, but knew they would gravitate to another park and continue their flirting and joking. It was only after the road was tarred that he saw Old Soja's bus again, rattling past the street – a ghost on the asphalt.

Will he ever die? That was the question on his mind when he saw that familiar thrust of the cap on the head, the face holding still as if ready to break into that gut-wrenching laughter, the belly swollen with laughter waiting to tear free from his stocky frame; will Old Soja ever die? Surely, he must be the very last of his kind; a generation of veterans who have never left the death-river battle field, for whom every rise of the

sun is another dawn on blood-soaked plains of the past. For his kind, memory is the only trusted buoy in the changing waters of the present; they reach a cautious foot out and test the waters eagerly for halcyon shores in an ocean of storms but they learn the world's never so benevolent quickly; they

draw back and cling onto the familiar face of the past. Will Old Soja ever die?

He met Old Soja again on a hazy harmattan day. A commotion in the clogged arteries of the king's market had reduced the traffic to bodies and vehicles on the crowded pathway to a complete standstill. He was on foot, so he could push his way through the thick of bodies till he broke through to the source of the delay.

At one glance, he recognized the veteran's story told at the heart of the tumult. A shiny car that scattered the glare of light into the hundred eyes that had gathered to watch the spectacle had – in the cramped pathway of the market – hit the old veteran. A push on the accelerator of the vehicle had induced a sudden spurt of speed that hit the walking man and pushed him back a foot – he was enraged. The young man was not careful enough with his

words, and seemed to insinuate that the enraged man had been in the way. The onlookers/mediators tried to calm the semi-comic-looking man, who looked like a figure from the dusty wardrobe of the past, down.

“Calm down, it was a mistake” onlookers frustrated by the standstill appealed to him. The other actor in this mild drama had long seen the wisdom in laying claim to all the blame and by this time also joined the appeal to Old Soja.

“Who do you think you are? Young seeroad? S'oya wereni? Are you mad? You think because I am not in my uniform, you can just trample me anyhow? Bloody civilian!” he exploded.

“Okay!!! So he is an old soja!” a voice quipped.

“This one don mado,” a woman chipped in, “why dem no come carry am away Egojudie!”

“Oldsojas? They never die!” a voice rang out in reply.

Soon, the car crept off, driving a wedge into the mill of bodies in its path. Old Soja went the way of the falling sun, a world of stories in the bulge of his belly. Will Old Soja ever die?

# TULA NYONGORO- THE BIRTH OF DIRTY



**Akinyi Onyango**  
Kenya

“Uwiii Mayoo Bii unee! Come and see! Wololo mayoo! Awuornyathiwa Mamayoo!” Awiti K’Opondo, the unofficial village crier screams. Chief Ochieng’ is woken by his wife Domitila Akoth. She sits shaking and pressing her head to the wall. Ochieng’ looks at her hazily as he takes a moment to get his bearings right. He hears what sounds like Awiti’s voice and more neighbours yelling. Hastily throwing on his clothes, he rushes outside, flinging his gate open just in time to hear his son’s name escape Awiti’s lips. He sees the raging fire in Otieno’s compound and instantly knows she should never have gone into the old widow’s house.

The crowd is divided. Half of the group runs toward the Opondo family home where Awiti is screaming. They know by now what the wailing means— Awuor, Opondo’s fourth wife, has just died. She had diligently taken

care of her co-wife Ajwang until she died just the previous week. Shortly after, she had complained of headaches and sore throat, then she had a running stomach and started to throw up multiple times



a day. Unfortunately, she had to take care of all the children since two of her co-wives had died the previous month, along with three children and her husband. It was a crisis in the Opondo family and Awuor could not afford to take time off to go to hospital. So she went to the local health centre and bought some over-the-counter antimalarial medication. Nobody had the time to persuade her to see a doctor because she died on the fifth day after the onset of her symptoms.

The other half of the crowd follows the Suna, the self-appointed village disciplinary committee, to Otieno’s house. They are a group of rowdy youth wielding pangas— machetes— and torches shouting something about this being Otieno’s fortieth day. Rumour had it that Otieno had been seen visiting Awuor only two days before her symptoms started, and the boys knew exactly what this meant. Otieno had done it again. Upon breaking

Otieno sits on the floor at the centre of the St. Joseph the Worker K' Ondu Catholic Church. He looks around at the carvings of Jesus and Mary around the church, though it's dark so all he sees is their silhouettes. He was awake at midnight, sketching out what would be his next tattoo when he heard the noise. For a moment, he had considered investigating the commotion he had a penchan for drama- when the crowd got nearer and he made out that they were chanting his name. He had been an outcast in K' Ondu village his whole life, so he wasn't surprised that he had a target on his back. He wasn't surprised either that the village had pinned all the mysterious deaths on him. He was an odd bird with bizarre inclinations. Well... the bizarre to them, not to him. He understood himself. He understood that he was chosen. But they didn't, so he fled before they could find and lynch him. Otieno had never known his mother. When he was younger, he begged his father, Chief Ochieng' Tayaya to tell him more about her, but the administrator kept mum on the subject. Even his grandmother Mama Rosa, who had raised him and loved him more than anybody else in K' Ondu village, refused to tell him more about his origins. The villagers whispered Auma Malando once told Otieno that Ochieng' Tayaya had sent Otieno's mother away for being a witch, but his grandmother would give no comment.

His name is Otieno Ochieng' but everybody just calls him Otieno Tula. When he was eleven years old, he started staying out late into the night. His grandmother had jokingly named him tula nyongoro- owl - meaning to chastise him, but he soon took to it. One time his stepmother had got drunk and told him he was the devil's child because he was conceived in a witch's house. His father had vaguely told him about the old widow's house and the escapade she had in there when he was younger, though Otieno had always sensed that Ochieng' was holding something back. So that day when his step mother said it, he knew it was true; that his father had a torrid affair when he was younger and conceived him in the hut of the woman with bad eyes. Added to his new nickname Otieno took that as a sign that he was begotten of the other world; that he himself was Death. In the vein of a dramatic teenager, Otieno Tula went out and bought himself a long black cloak and dagger to sell the bit. He'd since shed the dramatic cloak, but he still wore dark makeup and collected skeletons for his 'shrine'.

In the past few months, nine people had died in K' Ondu. It had started when Otieno returned from a brief trip and was seen arguing with Opondo's youngest daughter. She fell ill two days later and died within two weeks. Her best friend had followed, then the best friend's mother and five members of Opondo's family including Opondo himself, leading up to Awuor's death. The village took it to mean Tula had cursed the Opondos, presumably because the girl rejected him. Tula took it to mean he had finally come into his own as Death. His Master had instructed him, and he had obeyed. He had diligently cut, bit and burned himself and spent all his time in isolation and now his time was here. No more temporary highs from the pain; the real thing had arrived. If any of the deceased had gone to hospital, they would have known they had Ebola. They might have been asked if they had travelled overseas recently,

to which they would have answered no, but remembered being in touch with Otieno who had just returned from The Congo. Their families may have been warned against touching the body fluids of the patients to curb the spread. But they didn't go to hospital, so they thought Otieno had bewitched them.



Now Otieno Tula, or Death, sits in church awaiting his fate. The irony of hiding out in church is not lost on him, but the irony of Death awaiting what will surely be his own demise eludes him. As he shudders to the distant sound of an angry mob, he wonders how he got here. He wonders why the Master chose him, and why his powers just now started to take effect. A tiny part of him was partly relieved, though, because he felt that he would finally meet with his Master and have his questions answered. Sadly, Otieno too would have solved all his problems with a simple hospital visit. A doctor might have diagnosed him with schizophrenia and depression, which would have explained his conversations with "the Master" and why he coped by injuring himself. They may also have explained that he had contracted

Ebola in The Congo and although he was asymptomatic he was highly contagious and should have sought medical attention before interacting with Opondo's daughter and helping them take care of their invalids.

Ochieng Tayah has been rooted to the spot, worried to near death about his son. His thoughts run wild with regrets of ever entering the old widow's house. If he had been wiser in his youth, he wouldn't have made such terrible choices and effectually handed his first son to the devil's claws. He is right to have regrets, though not in the way he thinks. His mistake was not his teenage indiscretions, for his son wasn't truly cursed. His mistake was neglecting Otieno to the point of the boy's mental illness going

unnoticed. He watches helplessly as the villagers pray for his son's blood; the villagers who, in a while, will have taken his innocent son's life. The villagers who, in a few months will realise that the deaths did not end with Otieno's. They who will eventually seek medical attention and realise that the deaths could have been prevented by proper health care practices, who will realise that they murdered a troubled young man for nothing. But as the Ethiopian proverb goes, regret, like a tail, comes at the end. For now, Otieno waits, Ochieng waits, and the villagers chant.

## **Announcing Sahifa, a new platform for research, journalism, art and literature, with a strong focus on Eastern African stories.**

Sahifa, a new platform for research, journalism, art and literature, has been launched.

Sahifa is a Swahili word for blank page. The founders believe in the spirit and the possibilities of the blank page for new thought. Named after a 1930s-newsletter published and distributed in Mombasa, the term Sahifa signifies the claims to originality, and hence, universality, of its agenda. Sahifa presents itself as a see-saw, a sharp tool that aims to see the present through eyes that saw the past. It aims to go back and forth in time, commenting on the zeitgeists of the now, but uniting them with the ideas and beliefs that defined specific periods of the past. It is through such labouring that the platform hopes to speculate on the future.

Sahifa seeks to mobilize multiple genres of intellectual practice and storytelling – fiction, illustration, poetry, music, dialogue, essays, film – so as to capture the epistemic complexity and diversity of Africa's lived experiences. The mission is Afro-centric and eclectic. Not rejecting the European canon, but decommissioning it as the dominant model for knowledge production and storytelling about Africa. At Sahifa, Eurocentric epistemic traditions will converse with African ones, but Africa will always be at the centre of the conversation and of the imagination.

Stay tuned for more updates, and for Sahifa's current CALL FOR STORIES that will be published as part of its inaugural issue, 'Futures and Dreams.'

Follow Sahifa now on Twitter: @sahifa\_journal



# LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

Ugbede Ataboh  
Nigeria

The general understanding of death is the end of life of an organism or person. For me, death is a pathway to eternity or the beginning of a divine existence because all things must come to an end in the physical realm only to be continued in the afterlife.

Growing up, my Dad never exposed us to the emotional,

activity, we did indoors. My Dad attended all wake keepings and burial ceremonies alone; we never had conversations about them or even talked about his late parents or siblings. I guess it was his own way of shielding us from one of the gory details of life. My siblings and I let him have his way because we thought he knew it all, but little did we know that we needed to be part of these

uncertainty, pain, loneliness and loss that accompanied the demise of a loved one. Indeed, there are some friends in life that stand as pillars or support systems... Ifeoma Okpelue was that kind of friend to me; even more so because I have never been one to have so many friends. The friends I made along the way, I lost to impatience and lack of wisdom. Ifeoma was a special kind of friend because she never dealt back the nonchalant card I usually dealt her... she always reached out but when I ghosted, she always made peace whenever I was ready to trash our friendship and damn all the consequences; She always reassured me with the promises of God whenever I felt like giving up. In truth, I needed her way more than she needed me... thank God she understood this hidden truth and decided to stick around till she drew her last breath.



psychological and physical effects of losing a friend or loved one. The truth is that He never allowed us cultivate relationships with family members and friends. Only the need for education linked us to the outside world... every other

“insignificant” gory details... we needed to see; we needed to feel; we needed to mourn; we needed to understand.

Early this year, I finally understood the feeling of





We met at Queens College (high school) and literally went through our teenage and adult years together. We studied and helped each other through exams; we chased boys and had our hearts broken together; and we struggled through our different career paths together. I lost her to Asthma in February this year, and since then, I have learnt to take life easy and not stress over anything I live for each day and be thankful to God for the precious gift of life; Love freely and expect nothing back; Look after myself and not drown in my work and career goals; take bold steps and damn social, religious and cultural stereotypes; trust God and no one else. I remember the day she transitioned to the afterlife after tussling with asthma since her childhood. A message about her demise popped up on my cell phone and I remember the first feeling of

relief accompanied by shame to comfort me because everyone and saw me .  
 & uncertainty, then loss and grief. could call was either too busy or You looked past my indifference  
 out of town. I grieved alone; I wept and saw me.

Relief, because she was finally alone; I mourned alone... I finally  
 free from the physical and understood. As I embraced myself Many times I went Ghost but you  
 financial burdens that in a tight ball right on that same s e a r c h e d m e o u t .  
 accompanied her endless spot she lay, I felt lost because Many times I fell, but you fell just  
 surgeries and procedures; that was the only way I felt I could so we could rise together.  
 Shame because I should have connect with her. I could no Many times I gave up but you  
 felt relieved as a result of losing longer see her, feel her or talk e n c o u r a g e d m e .  
 my dear friend; Uncertainty, her. I felt terrible because I had Many times I turned my back on  
 because I really could not the opportunity to see her in you, but held on from behind.  
 mentally come to terms with her January when I travelled to Lagos  
 departure; Loss and Grief, on an official assignment but I I wish I could talk with you one  
 because I had lost one of the didn't because I was too "busy" l a s t t i m e .  
 human pillars of my life to with work... I wept when I I wish I could tell you how much I  
 another realm. pondered on how shallow I was. b v e y o u .

For three days, I could not sleep colleague in an exclusive club on I wish I could lie beside you and  
 on my bed... I slept right in the the island but I could make out talk aimlessly till midnight.  
 middle of the Persian rug in my time to head out to the mainland I wish I had seen you last week  
 bedroom because that was the to see my dear childhood friend; when I was in Lagos... how did I get  
 exact spot she lay down to sleep after all, we both had many more so carried away with work?  
 when she came visiting from opportunities to see each other. I Oh! How I miss you... you never  
 Lagos last year. She was obese at wassow wrong! judged me for being Me.  
 the time because of the Alas! You are with the angels now.  
 medications she was on... she was Her older brother was kind Everything will turn to dust  
 dying and I didn't even notice. I enough to save me a space in her except your precious heart of  
 noticed she was abnormally fat obituary booklet and I poured but G o l d .  
 but I didn't think it was anything my heart... Farewell my beloved! k p 4 real!!!

serious. She slept on my Persian Farewell My Beloved  
 rug because she felt she was way Death is a revered escort to the  
 too fat to share my bed with Others looked at me but you saw afterlife and he alerts no one of  
 me... now wish she shared it with m e his sudden arrival. Please, try to  
 me regardless. You looked past my rough exterior make each day count and cherish  
 a n d s a w m e . every memory.. it just might be  
 Oh! How I wept alone with no one. You looked past my callous words the last.

# THE OBSERVER

Leo Muzivoreva  
Zimbabwe

**I** OF DEATH, GRIEF AND RECOVERY was 11 years old and still in primary school when my dad died suddenly and without warning. Death ruptured the normalcy of my family – which included my mother and two brothers and two sisters – and tossed us roughly and unexpectedly into the arms of a fatherless grief.

My mum tried her best, but she, too, was overcome with grief. In the gaping space between my father's death and my mother's grief, there was a void to fill, a profound loneliness yet life had to continue. My brothers and sisters needed love, consolation and possibly counselling. Since I was the youngest of the kids, suddenly I had become "a burden"

to my mum and my siblings – a nasty reality check presented itself.

I need to tell you that, in the face of significant loss, we don't "recover from grief."

Yes, I'm using the royal "we" because you and I are probably all a part of this club.

I also need to tell you that not recovering from grief does not doom you to a life of despair. Let me reassure you, there are millions of people out there, right now, living normal and purposeful lives while also experiencing ongoing grief.

All the things you have heard about getting over grief, going back to normal and moving on – they are misrepresentations of what it means to love someone who has died. I am sorry, I know us human-people appreciate things like closure and resolution, but this is not how grief goes.



This is not to say that “recovery” does not have a place in grief – it is simply what we are recovering from that needs to be redefined. To “recover” means to return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength; and as many would attest, when someone very significant dies, we never return to a pre-loss “normal.” The loss, the person who died, our grief – they all get integrated into our lives and they profoundly change how we live and experience the world.

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What will, hopefully, return to a general baseline is the level of intense emotion, stress, and distress that a person experiences in the weeks and months following their loss. So perhaps we recover from the intense distress of grief, but we do not recover from the grief itself.

Now you could say that I'm getting caught up in semantics, but sometimes semantics matter. Especially, when trying to describe an experience that, for so many, is unfamiliar and frightening. Grief is one of those experiences you can never fully understand until you actually experience it and, until that time, all a person has to go on is what they have observed and what they have been told.

The words we use to label and describe grief matter and, in

many ways, these words have been getting us into trouble for decades. In the context of grief, words like denial, detachment, unresolved, recovery, and acceptance (to name a few) could be interpreted many different ways and some of these interpretations offer false impressions and false promises. Interestingly, when many of these words were first used by grief theorists, their intent was to help describe grief. I have no doubt that in the context in which they were working, these words and their operational definitions were useful and effective. It is when these descriptions reach our broader society without explanation or nuance, or when they are misapplied by those who position themselves as experts that they get terribly awry. So going back to the beginning, we do not recover from grief after the loss of someone significant. Grief is born when someone significant dies – and as long as that person remains significant – grief will remain.



## SHORTLIST – 2020 AFRICAN WRITERS AWARDS (AWA) AND THE WAKINI KURIA AWARD

On behalf of Writers Space Africa (WSA), Writers Space Africa – Zambia (WSA-Z), and the African Writers Development Trust (AWDT), I present to you the shortlist for both the 2020 African Writers Awards (AWA) and the Wakini Kuria Award for Children's Literature. The winners will be announced on the 3rd and final day of the African Writers Conference on the 7th of November, 2020 in Lusaka. This will be streamed live on our social media handles for those unable to physically attend.

Once again, special thanks to the panel of judges; Sabah Carrim (Mauritius), Henry Joe Sakala (Zambia), Nahida Esmail (Tanzania), Benny Wanjohi (Kenya), and Namse Udosen (Nigeria) for the brilliant work. The shortlist is in no particular order.

### Creative Non-Fiction (\$100)

1. Each Little Win – Oladejo Oluyemisi – Nigeria
2. No Role Models – Angoma-Mzini Thulani – South Africa
3. Requiem for Africa's Creatively Inept – Mpofo Nathaniel – Zimbabwe
4. The Intelligent Thief – Nwabueze Vincent – Nigeria
5. The Task of an African Narrator – Okombo Dismas – Kenya

### Drama (\$100)

1. Jare – Lawrence Abasiama – Nigeria
2. Lost Destiny – Ukaorji Ogbonna – Nigeria
3. True Spots – Ojoro Irene Melissa – Kenya
4. Who Knows Amanda? – Asoloko Gloria Akayi – Nigeria
5. Odessey of The Kankafo – Adinoyi Abdulbasit – Nigeria

### Poetry (\$100)

1. African Beauty (Haiku) – Musyoka Susan – Kenya
2. Her Hair, Her Braids (Blank Verse) – Semir-Nyuiy Terry Kimah – Cameroon
3. Ode to The Blackbird (Haiku) – Duru Nneka Joyce – Nigeria
4. Old and Gold (Pantoum) – Gaygay James – Liberia
5. Who I Am (Pantoum) – Ogedengbe Tolulope Impact – Nigeria

### Wakini Kuria Award for Children's Literature (1st place \$100, 2nd place \$75, and 3rd place \$50)

1. Hessy and The Lost Tooth – Halieo Motanyane – Lesotho
2. Scared Little Boy – Madeha Ezekial Malecela – Tanzania
3. Sophie What Do You Say? Blessing Aliyu Tarfa – Nigeria
4. The Magic Book – Oketunde Judith Oluwatomi – Nigeria
5. The Two Sisters – Leonard Maero W. – Kenya

Best wishes to the shortlisted writers.

Anthony Onugba  
Chief Judge,  
2020 African Writers Awards

# DEATH

Hellen Owuor  
Kenya



Nana sat at the window sadly, as she looked at the kids who were playing in the street below. They all looked very happy; all she could think of was how much she missed her friend Cate. Cate was a nice girl and had been Nana's friend ever since they had met in kindergarten, years back. She was now no more. She had been ailing for quite some time and just last week, she "went to be with the Lord," that was all Nana was told.

After Cate's passing on, Nana was very detached from everyone and everything. She had many

questions as to why she would never see her best friend again, or why they would never see each other again. She was given permission to take a week off school to help deal with her loss. Her parents did all they could to help her cope. They decided that it was best to take her to her grandmother for some time, where she would be distracted.

The next day, they all set out for Nana's grandma's place. Grandma was so happy to see them and welcomed them warmly. Nana was always delighted to see her grandma because there, she was always treated like a queen, all her

whims attended to. After her parents left, the same sad face came to play. Grandma tried to cheer her to the best of her ability but it was all in vain. For several days now, Nana remained the same, her sadness never ending. One day after lunch, they sat together as they spoke.

"My dear, why are you still sad, don't you like being here?"

"No, grandma, it is not that. I just still miss my friends so much,"

"Oh, in that case my child, worry not," grandma said and smiled.

"Why not?"

"Because your friend will always be with you wherever you go, just like your shadow,"

"How do you know that grandma?" She asked getting interested.

"I know because my best friend left me too, your grandfather and he is always with me. He comes to me in a dream often and if not, at night as I look upon a starry night, I can spot his star,"

"So, grandma does it mean that

when people die they become stars?"

"Yes, my dear child, they do. That way. They will always guide us,"

After this conversation with her grandmother, Nana's attitude changed tremendously. She believed that wherever she went, Cate was always there with her, guiding her, just like the stars that guided the wise men to baby

Jesus on the night he was born. A week later, her parents came to take her home and were impressed with her improvement; in fact, she was the one who told them how Cate became a star in the sky. On most nights when the stars were out, she would sit by her window looking up and naming stars. She already had one named Cate and the other her grandfather,



# PETER AND MARY'S TRAGEDY

Isabella Ainomugisha  
Uganda

One day, Mary and Peter wanted sweets. They were very hungry. They asked their mother for sweets, but all the shops were closed because it was dark. So, their mother got her recipe book and looked for how to make sweets; the children wanted chocolate-flavoured sweets which were not in her recipe book.

She called a friend on the phone and asked for chocolate sweets recipe. Her friend told her the recipe and she went to find the ingredients in the wild forest. The main ingredient was the sweetest flower in the forest; it was in the middle of the forest.

A long while later, their mother had not returned. Mary slept off while Peter stayed up all night, waiting for his mother to return. In the forest, their mother heard a howling. She got very scared and wanted to go back, but her children were hungry. She had to



find them something to eat. Before she could find the ingredients, a very big wolf came to eat her. Just as it approached, she had gone to look for chocolate many big animals in the wild forest also came running over.

Peter was still wondering where their mother was. He thought she could be in trouble since it was dark, but he couldn't go into the forest at dark. In the morning, Peter and Mary were still very worried about their mother when

their father returned from his night's hunt. He wondered where their mother was. They told him she had gone to look for chocolate sweets ingredients in the wild forest.

Their father got so scared. Just as he got out of the house to go to the wild forest, they saw on TV, campers announcing a dead body they had found in the wild forest. It was their mother's body.





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# REST 2.0

Esther Musembi  
Kenya



I knew I was dead from the way he looked at me through the over-sanitized looking glass. Dressed in white bulky attire and thick goggles like a man going to the moon, he stomped around and barked orders to his similarly dressed colleagues. In his eyes, I was a pesky little thing that had blown up the world, caused untold havoc from

country to country, I deserved to die. He took the green solution proffered by an unseen hand - his unblinking eyes never leaving my unshapely shape - and put generous drops of the stuff on me. It burned. It hurt so bad I felt my body folding in on itself. I wasn't going to make it. His eyes still watching, I folded in painfully and waited for my demise. My rest.

Because I was just going to rest for a while. Gain my strength and come back stronger. They would not see it coming. I'll come back much much stronger and I will start with him.

Coronavirus was such a palatable name anyway. For when I come back they will be forced to give me a hideous scary name like I deserve. Death would be my name.

# EVERYONE'S FOE

---

Justina Oyedeji  
Nigeria

**H**e laughed loud and long as  
they made their resolutions  
for the year.

"I am getting that award this year."

"I will finish my book next month."

"I'm coming tops of my class this  
semester."

He would see how that would be  
possible.

So he visited each of them, and took  
them on a journey of no return!

# BE STILL AND LIVE

Hannah Tarindwa  
Namibia

For long I indulged them; apologizing for being a burden: an orphan. I wanted to make them proud. It did not mean anything to them and it doesn't mean anything to me, anymore...

Why the hell did I go through that?

The grim reapers' silence lingered as if she -yes she- had the answers and yet did not, possibly could not share them with me.

I took in a deep breath and so did she. Weirderly I thought, "what did we just breathe? Surely it cannot be oxygen, if I am somewhere between death and life."

"No, it is not oxygen," she spoke and her voice sounded like a combination of a choir speaking at once with different voices. It was frightening and interesting all at once. I wanted to hear her again but I was also afraid to. The bringer of death should not speak

to her victims should she? I was awash with questions now that I was a ball of energy in this spirit world with nothing to lose. I was not happy or miserable. Was just curious.

Shouldn't death bring some sort of clarity? Surely this was not the resting in peace which I expected. What was going on?

We moved yet were still, all at once.

"Be still, go live" the sound came again. I understood finally that the stillness being spoken of was not my being which was not in my body, but my thoughts and questions were being commanded to be calm.

I hushed my thoughts and suddenly was back in my body. Was it a dream? Had I died?

Someone screamed as I opened my eyes.



# HOME

**Ethel Maqeda**  
Zimbabwe

There's nothing like walking through a cemetery on a drizzly Sheffield morning. Here amongst the grey crumbling gravestones, the moss-laden gargoyles, the weather-beaten angels and the thick clump of nettles, you realise that grandma's ochre mud-hut with orangey-yellow chevrons hugging its rough brown belly where you were born is no longer home. Neither is the township where your parent's bungalow sat on the edge of the wasteland that was the white people's golf course, where you grew up either.



Numbersix, The Rembrandton Fifth Avenue, the first place you lived alone as an adult and bought your first piece of furniture was never home anyway. The city was too big, too frenetic and too prone to erupt and reject its own.

Lost amongst the epitaphs of the city's greats from



a bygone era, you realise that home is here, in this city on seven hills, in the stirrings of an understanding of the thing called

British humour, so cutting and one-sided that should it offend then, 'you have a chip on your shoulder'. This is home, where your answer to 'when are you fucking off home, wherever that is?' is, 'next Tuesday,' always. Here, amongst the nettles, the hollies and the wildflowers you

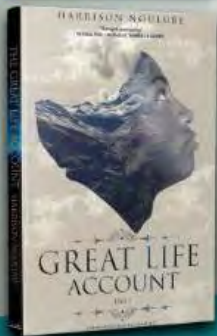
finally accept that you can stop agonising over which friend to ask to send your body back across the Atlantic. You can even see



your epitaph: She tarries here, her discarnate ancestral spirit forever wanders and searches.

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# DEATH WAS HERE

**Martins Deep**  
Nigeria



screeches of wheels scurrying feet  
towards nowhere cuss words  
accompanied by bullets.

our bowl of millet spilled  
& fathers melt war like it wore  
the husk of a he-goat  
said he, "lead the way home now"  
"where?" I cry, torn  
not knowing a roof as I stare  
skies on cold nights.

i knew only how to cry for a lms  
never they owe at the splattering of  
blood on the ground

i choke someone fell behind  
i don't feel the hand of father in mine  
i couldn't turn back

looming smoke siren bellowing  
death was here

burning bodies light up  
a night that doesn't keep out feet  
from groping.

# FILTHY LUCRE

**Tlhobogang Larona**  
Botswana

Trigger pulled  
Triggered trepidation  
Is it me you fooled?  
He wants his ration

Triggered trepidation  
Bullet released  
He wants his ration  
All you relished

Bullet released  
I'm soaked in your blood  
All you relished  
Caused my tears to flood

Filthy lucre he craves  
Is it me you fooled?  
Soon accepted by graves  
Trigger pulled.

# DEATH IS SLEEP

**Trisha  
Uganda**

Death is a mystery  
The returning of man to the elements  
A deep slumber, quiet rest  
The equalizer of all mankind

The returning of man to the elements  
Albeit the unfulfilled dreams and goals  
The equalizer of all mankind  
Rich or poor, thief or king

Albeit the unfulfilled dreams and goals  
When death comes knocking you must heed  
Rich or poor, thief or king  
It's a call you can not ignore

When death comes knocking you must heed  
A deep slumber, quiet rest  
It's a call you can not ignore  
Death is a mystery.

# HE TOOK THE ONE I WED

**Femi Daramola  
Nigeria**



If death be a man, I would challenge him to a brawl,  
Shoulder to shoulder, until he is weak and left to crawl,  
He should be scared, lest he be dethroned and torn to  
shred  
I am livid for he has stolen and trod on the one I wed

With his harsh hands he has made my home a sorrow  
My jewel, he has thrown to the wind, with no hope for  
tomorrow  
Now, she sleeps beneath the cold grass, a place of no  
class  
Lonely, under the rumbling storm, her fragile body en-  
masse.

If tears be a pledge to bring back the one I love,  
The world will flood and the sky will hide above,  
For life is cruel, full of ills and thorns, only the bad can  
strive.  
O dark-little-reaper! You've come to take my soul out  
alive?

You're a clunker – you knew you'd lose the fight,  
Your cold hands bite the days of man, before the scary  
scars of nights,  
With thy love-hate smile, thou shred my bed!  
Take me up beyond the throng of stars, for I'd be glad to  
see the one I wed!



# DEATH

**Peace Ogbemor**  
Nigeria

Dirge tunes, wailings,  
Another one gone, strength failing.  
What's the essence of life?  
To die?  
Why, I ask, is it existing just to cry and try?

Dusk and Dawn,  
Rise and Fall,  
We will tell tales of the ones no longer  
here.

They are gone, and we wonder what  
happens here,  
Where is There?  
A place we don't know,  
When we close our eyes, we fear that that  
could be the last.

Beads of sweat break across my face,  
Look in the sky above,  
The star they say is the dead abode.  
Purple knees,  
Struggling deeds, just to breathe  
unknown.  
Cast the body beneath,  
Call to yonder.

We only know they are watching over us,  
No one knows who watches them.  
Death can be peace,  
Death can be grief.

# HEART- BEAT

**Jacob Masenga**  
Zambia



Lub-dub, Lub-dub!  
Time on earth begins with a heartbeat  
Feeble infants, our hearts cry out  
We are like hired men, slaves longing  
for  
The evening shadows  
Our days swifter than a weaver's  
shuttle  
And they end as they began:  
Lub-dub, Lub-dub!



# THE PROCESSION IN BLACK

**Rindap Innocent**  
Nigeria

---

Come see the procession in black  
Singing as they walk  
Unswaying as they talk  
A procession all in black.

A monotone of grieving voices  
A coterie of teary faces  
A potpourri of dirges  
Spewing out of grieving hearts.

The squeaking gate  
On a windy afternoon  
Piercing through eerie serenity  
Fluttering wings; scampering afar.

The tall, failing and decomposing  
grasses  
The hodgepodge of scattered epitaphs  
The array of etched eulogies  
Of days, months, years...gone afar.

# POOR VENOM

**Agatha Racheal Akullu**  
Uganda

---

Oh death, poor venom!  
How comes you?  
In brief, or in calm?

By my troth, I enjoin!  
When you come;  
Take me not in brief  
Like rushing wind that plucks a leaf  
And drops on land,  
Or like lightening that strikes one  
And in thunder heard,  
Yet in a jot!

When you come, I marry!  
Accost me in calm.  
When under the Odugu tree i warrant.  
With goose pen in hand  
That when you take me, poor venom,  
I die not, and be forgotten hereafter.  
Nay, my carcass in the grave,  
Yet my writings anew,  
So in generations I may breed,  
And in my quietus,  
Write like no man ever did.

# YOU WILL KNOW IT WHEN IT COMES FOR THEM

Halima Adam  
Tanzaia

---

It is well known and famous  
It is unknown and mysterious  
It is everywhere and anywhere  
You have probably seen it somewhere  
Or that you thought you did

It visits often but talked about less  
It is feared and yet no way to avoid it  
It is the legend and the trend

It takes people from the known to the  
unknown  
From the seen to the unseen  
From joys and happiness to sorrows  
and sadness  
It is sometimes believed to be the giver  
of peace

It makes us question everything  
The worthiness of it all  
The necessity of it all  
Should we quit or keep pushing?

Life and experience might make it seem  
well known to you  
But it is until it gets to one of them  
The ones you term dear to your heart  
And takes them with itself  
That is when you will know it  
That is when you will be able to feel its  
presence  
Because it has finally come for them

## GENRE: SHORT STORY

TITLE: IN THE EYE OF SILENCE

WRITER: OBINNA GABRIELLA, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: YOLANDA KUEI P. MACUEI, SOUTH SUDAN

■ ■ In the Eye of silence! As the title entails, it reveals a series of events that occur in the day to day life, where something set us up especially when we try to be silent about them, yet they actually hurt us deeply. Silence is not equal to humility. That is, being quiet doesn't mean being humble. Therefore, the writer vividly demonstrates the power of silence as a dangerous weapon in constituting one's feelings and actions; then fate or destiny determine it all.

The writer has obviously struck a chord with the audience. The story is sumptuously narrated in such a way that the readers visualize it and have their minds engulfed in cogitation, like they are experiencing it at that particular moment.

Fate or destiny is the major theme. Twisted as it is, a result of silence because it is the predetermined outcome of every situation. "Whatever fate is, I'm sure she is a sadist; twisted like branches of yam tendrils around a cassava stalk in an unattended farm" this statement indicates difficulties and consequences of dealing with the unpleasantries silently.

In this case, the writer uses techniques such as simile and metaphors: "with voices raised loud enough to wake the dead," to express her story and draw the readers into deep understanding of the message it conveys.

In addition, the writer refers to Fate as a 'She' to begin the narrative through an old woman, Nne who lived alone behind her father's house in Enugu as an example of the reality of fate or destiny. Kenn and Muna are subjected to as orphans of what was meant to be. "Maybe we are fated to be alone and have no home to stay out at sea without an anchor to have nothing but each other and learn the virtues of long-suffering."

The story is told in the first person point of view; in a historical flashback of a six-year-old Kenn and his sister - Muna who lived through trauma at a very young age in silence as a result of violence and an independence war outbreak, thus revealing the theme of war, 1967. "...too young to understand and too old to leave the memories behind. It relates to African states during the times of struggle for liberation when many young people were fated never to overcome their fears, such as rape and domestic violence, hence culminate into their suffering in the backstage. It's mainly based on a newly independent state, Biafra in Nigeria whose independence initially excited the masses.

Rape and domestic violence as other themes are twisted in another theme of death due to incite of silence. When everyone accumulates all the burdens inside oneself, the result is always harmful to oneself and others.

Whatever is meant to happen will always do but it is choosing to see and stay mute, not worse than violence. This tells us to command and let the silent demor die by fire..."

In a nutshell, the story reminds us of the past experience; it also urges us to be bold in the eyes of our fears and break the silence. We should be the masters of our own fate; however, twisted it might be, one should try to do whatever one can do and leave the rest to fate.

This piece of work portrays most of the African countries during the pre and post-independence era where natives were frequently in war with soldiers; children became orphans; soldiers and refugees were subjected to so much pain in vain. Yet, there is virtually nothing they can do about it than to accept to act or live in silence to survive.

The writer has captivated the audience by using phrases that are appealing to all the senses. That is, the use of the African setting that most of us are familiar with. The story ends leaving audience in suspense (in a state of desiring to read more).

In conclusion, we rest what we can't manage in the guidance of fate and polish what we can with our own hands. "Yes we can" Barack Obama. Because the African identity is fated/destined to always identify their own, even in the eye of silence. African rise from and in silence.

GENRE: COLUMN

TITLE: LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

WRITER: UGBEDE ATABOR, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: NAMSE UDOSEN, NIGERIA

**F**ate: The ultimate agency that predetermines the course of events. An event or course of events that will inevitably happen in the future. Destiny: A predetermined state, condition, or ordained by the divine or human will.

Oxford Dictionary (2020)

The article opens with a bit of vague and contradictory postulation: "I do not believe in fate, but I believe in destiny." Most dictionaries consulted revealed that 'fate' and 'destiny' are synonyms.

In a journey assumed to be by fate, the person who is the crux of the story falls in love as a lesson. The narrative of the love story is that of an older woman who falls in love with a man ten years younger. She confesses to savouring the sweet romance for two long weeks. The relationship is laced with quality conversations, movie watching, and walks without intimacy (physical presence). She claims to be deep into the man before she pulled back by the strings of social and cultural conformity.

The writer shares a captivating story of loving and a relationship that knocks off her previous conception of romantic relationships. She however is press-ganged (by personal reflection) to reconsider based on what she thinks society expects of her. She lets her fears and social conditioning get a better of her. All is not lost as this provides her with an epiphany of sorts. She discovers that purity and love can be found in romance. She believes that it was her destiny to have loved "Monamour" but the rest is left to fate. This puts the discerning reader into a conceptual quagmire.

The article is written in a laid-back but direct style. The writer deploys common everyday slang and local lingo that make it relatable.

I have concerns about the two-week romance being a yardstick to determine how romantic relationships can last without physical intimacy (I may be wrong).

In the end, this piece gives a perspective that lovers of all ages can glean some guidance from.



GENRE: CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

TITLE: KUBO AND THE BAOBAB TREE

WRITER: BERNARD EWHOMAZINO GLORY, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: FUNMI RICHARDS, NIGERIA

**K**UBO AND THE BAOBAB TREE? The first question you would want to ask is 'was it Kubo's fate to be swallowed by the Baobab Tree? Or was it to be a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time?

One of the things, life teaches us about fate is that it is usually predestined. Sometimes, it does matter what we do, what we say or our inactions. *Quesera, sera*. So, predestination is often associated with fate. And in this story, the author uses foreshadowing as a narrative witness to construct an imagery of an encounter Kubo might have with the Baobab tree if he goes to the stream that evening and all of these occurs in his dream.

However, it's all a dream and conscious fears reflect or manifest in our subconscious, one can argue Kubo has always been afraid of going to the stream whenever his mother asks him to do so in the evening and that might be why he had such a dream just before his mum woke him up to go to the stream. Also, the author never makes an allusion to Kubo's dreams always coming true, so his dream could be an instance where a child's imaginative fears slip up and cement themselves into his subconscious so that they're no longer just childish fantasies but real-life experiences.

It would have been great to see what happens to Kubo later on, would his mother insist he go to the stream? Would he go and encounter the scary men and the Baobab tree? Or would he not encounter them and overcome the fear of going to the stream late in the evening and start to count such dreams as mere fantasies?

As children, we dream up fantasies and expect them to come true and play their part in our realities, sometimes fate lends a hand to these fantasies and they come to pass. Other times, it is only a figment of our imagination and nothing to do with fate but everything to do with fear or just bodily functions like peeing or bedwetting.

All in all, an imaginative and exciting story that would be sure to entertain young children if the story is developed into a series or a collection of Kubo's adventures.

GENRE: ARTICLE

TITLE: ARE OUR CHOICES MEANINGFUL?

WRITER: OLUWADAMILOLA YUSUF, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: NYATI COMFORT, ZIMBABWE

Choice is the motherhouse of fate or it could be the other way round. The bottom line is that it always puts us in a dilemma not only to choose but lead a life of meaning and we are obliged to make a choice in order to fulfil whatever we are destined towards. This destiny as presented in the article can come in two ways; either shed or unshed but life purpose. Although every human prefers to associate with the latter to unshed but life purpose.

In this article, the writer unreservedly addresses one of the questions that baffle people in every condition of their lives more especially when confined with a crossroad of choices. Thus, choices that hold our future and choices that act as custodians of our destiny. By the very fact of being accorded a rhetoric title, it simply pledges to question the concept of choice in the life of an earthly citizen. This could suggest the writer's mission which can only be fulfilled after gathering possible answers to the question: Are our Choices meaningful?

This usher the reader to the further invocation of an Aristotelean teaching of human reason. The faculty which enables man to be a perpetual decision maker. To some degree it contradicts the Hausa belief system of the people of Northern Nigeria who believe in the theory of predestination. Meanwhile for Aristotle the more an individual makes a choice he creates his own fate, while for the Hausa people fate finds its way to a man even if he does nothing to search for it because it is intrinsically endowed in him. Therefore this illustrates three paradigms in regard to the understanding of fate. The writer proceeds to introduce her audience to the third paradigm, another African philosophical doctrine of the vital force postulated by Placid Temple in his book *Bantu Philosophy*. The major theme of the book was to emphasize that every human being – an African in this context – has a vital force that is fully in charge to animate his/her well being and ultimately this force determine one's fate.

The conclusion reveals a good amount of braininess in the writer's mind when she rightly states that a man's destiny is right in his hands. Which implies that every choice lies in the guardianship of an individual and the consequence of that choice is what brings meaning out of the choice. With the aforementioned analysis it still remains an exceptional piece of work which has been enriched with adequate research, good dictation and well edited. It is by no chance that it has been accredited with a crown of editor's choice. For it draws one into the depth of the horizon of decision making as the common denominator of fate.

GENRE: FLASH FICTION

TITLE: A TWIST IN FATE

WRITER: MARYCYNTHIA OKAFOR, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: MAJORY MOONO SIMUYUNI, ZAMBIA

**A** twist in fate is a story of a barren woman Ezimma who has been attempting to conceive for several years but to no avail. It is believed that she traded her fertility for beauty. In a dream she has a night, she pleads with the gods for the ability to conceive and the three fates agree to alter her fate, except it is not without cost. The child she is to have she will be with but only for a while. She sighs her relief upon waking because she's just escaped that fate. By a stroke of luck, she conceives that morning and is to name her daughter after the Sun god.

Okafor's text is rich for the fact that it can be appreciated in more than one way. It is as mythological as it is cultural, as psychological as it could be literal. In this review, we critique her piece from the mythological point of view and the psychoanalytical approach. In mythology, at the centre of life are deities. In this piece of fiction, we see Ezimma sacrificing her fertility to them and returning to them to plead for the twist of her fate. Humans are at the mercy of these supreme beings and the gods decide their fate. The question here though is; was Ezimma dreaming? Psychoanalytically, dreams are a reflection of our reality. The subconscious reveals so much more than what we could see in what we call real life for it is not censored, just suppressed. This dream could be said to be a reality of our protagonist. She is barren because she indeed sold her potency!

As soon as she wakes up from the dream, the narrator tells us that she conceives. This comes to prove that the dream may not have been a dream after all. Why do events from the dream continue into her wake unbroken? We are not told of coitus for her conception but she does conceive. Is the child a child of the gods? Probably that's why she's not just to be named after the Sun god but is also to belong to the deities, a daughter from her mother.

The story was artistically weaved giving the reader a challenge to read between the lines to decipher the meaning. Flash fiction that leaves a reader analyzing is effective fiction and in that department, Okafor succeeded.

However, the title of the story lacks in creativity. A Twist in Fate is a tired title, not just in literary circles but in the movie industry too. For such a brilliant piece of art, a poetical title would have done more justice.

When all is said, however, A Twist of Fate is a masterpiece that brings out important aspects of covenants. While our fate is something we all should create on our own, Ezimma entrusted her fate to the gods in exchange for beauty. Her life is never the same afterwards as we see her misery continuing even into the next generation (that of her daughter). We are perhaps better off creating our fate than entrusting it to supreme beings.



GENRE: POETRY

TITLE: A SUTRA ABOUT FATE

WRITER: JUWON ADEOLA, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: OMADANG YOWASI, UGANDA

**H**aving listened to stories of a fortune teller, one can't read this poem and doesn't doubt those stories from the "wisemen." The poem as it reflects in the title suggests the general rules or truths about the unavoidable tip or apex of a life journey.

It's written in couplets of free verse of four stanzas and a tercet, making eleven (11) lines. Short as it is, the poem is full of mysteries and revelations about the human body and its significance in determining the life of a person. Thank to the fortune tellers who are able to read and interpret the markings on lines in our palms! This is the person's first sutra which reveals one's eventual journey. The person believes we (humans) are born with our fate pre-determined in our palms and fate enclosed in our bodies.

However, a question arises: are we all destined to our respective fates when we shall all die? According to the poem, the answer is yes. We are driven by dreams in order to achieve whatever lies beyond our immediate reach but do we all achieve what we chase? No.

There are distractions along the way, which in this case is FATE. It either allows us to achieve or spoils our destiny when still on the tracks.

The poem is stylistically divided into two parts by a Volta (turning point). From stanza three onwards, detect the change from the obvious to the poet's use of "but."

As we fix our wings of fly and chase our dreams, our "feathers" are prey to "razors."

These feathers on us are the driving forces or spirits of free will that propel us into hard work in order to achieve whatever we want in life and the "razors" are fate itself for sudden distractions like death, mental impairment and many negative thoughts towards once a brilliant dream.

The poem maintains (we) don't achieve our greatness because (we) don't nurture our dreams. By the time (we) realize we're on the verge of failing, it is at this point we feel we should put forth the things right. Human nature is beautifully portrayed here. Lateness and dreaming of the past wasted opportunities is part of us. Let's exploit opportunities before it's late for fate doesn't wait.

The poet vividly and beautifully employs imagery and symbolism to depict man's continuous drama and fight with fate. He ends with a rhetorical question as to whether we shall go back in time to streamline our wasted chances. The tone is persuasive, informative and compliant.

The poem has all the necessary reasons for being the editor's choice.



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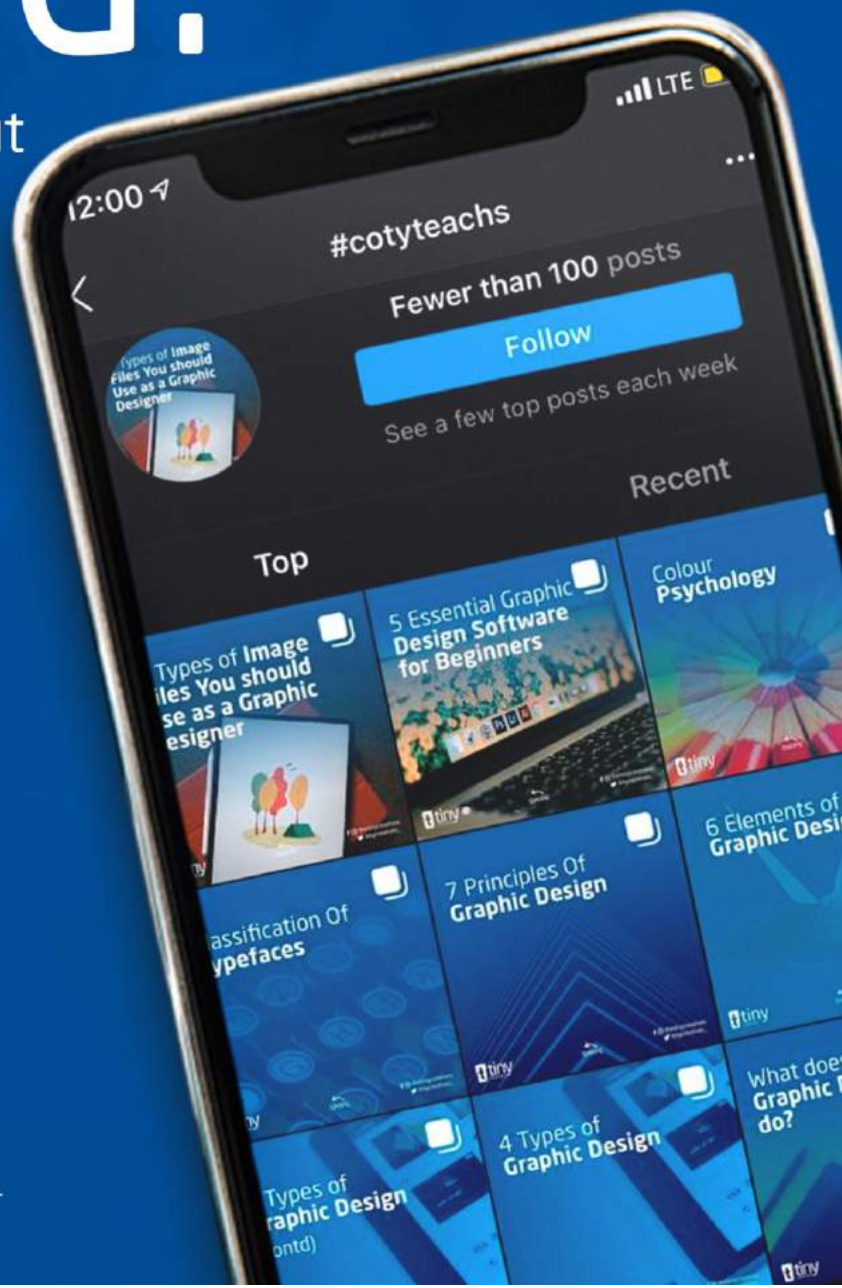
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# AFTERlife

**The  
Other Side**

Trisha  
Uganda

**Heaven**

Agboni Christiana  
Nigeria

**Bridging  
Panorama**

Simon Ng'uni  
Zambia

VOL. 4 NO. 12



DECEMBER, 2020

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A circular porthole view of a boat's wake on the ocean. The water is dark blue with white foam from the wake. The porthole frame is visible around the edge.

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS THEME: FREEDOM

Writers Space Africa, a monthly literary online magazine dedicated to giving literary enthusiasts a platform for their work, welcomes submissions for her February 2021 Edition in the following categories:

- Short Story
- Flash Fiction
- Poetry
- Essays
- Children's Literature

The Submission windows is open from 1st of December to 14th December.

Response times is typically within 4 to 5 weeks after submission window closes.

We look forward to receiving your best.

To submit, please visit [www.writersspace.net/submissions](http://www.writersspace.net/submissions)

# EDITOR'S NOTE

A person is born every other day with every other breath they take. Life is the most beautiful of things; yet in certain contexts, it is the cheapest of things. There are certain elements that make life worth every moment of being; like how the human ability to Love and Sacrifice breaks the bounds of expectation and reality; or how Failure and Solitude will always be ingredients that form the base for the breakthrough of potential and success. All of life is a lesson in Transition and overcoming Fear; a lesson in Reconciliation and the discovery of Self – we are nothing without our Identity.

Despite this burst of being, of existence, like a faithful friend Fate will meet us all; we will part when we meet with Death; and for us for whom life means all things, we will find purpose in every moment of Rebirth and (for those of us who do) hold out our belief in an Afterlife.

As deliberate writers, we bend the rules. For us, time and life are a constant and we forever live even when we are gone. All of life is resilience; all living is resilience and as such, we will always be a resilient people for whom a chance at another moment of being will always be a chance at living a life worthwhile.

Always remember,  
Ubuntu.

Nabilah Usman  
Chief Editor

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# Table Of Contents

Editor's Note	4
Editorial Crew	5
Table of Contents	6
Short Story	7-10
Article	13-16
Poetry	17-21
Reviews	22-28

# Heaven

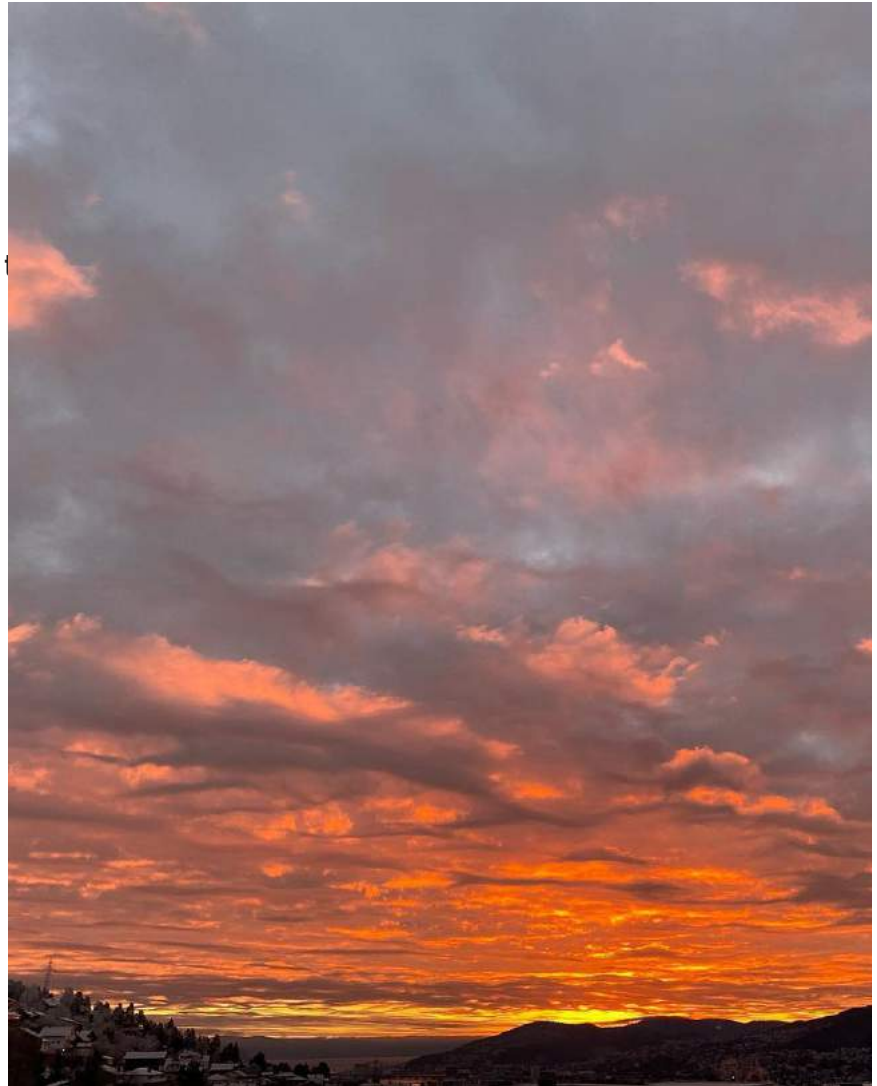
Agboni Christiana  
Nigeria

I look at the rail thin woman lying on the narrow hospital bed. I do not want to look, but I do, again and again. My mother has literally become a shadow of herself. She smiles, and I start to cry. I want to lay a hand over her mouth, so I won't see the smile. Despite the haggardness of her face, her smile is still potent.

"Uyomi don't cry, come here," she whispers, and I draw closer to her.

"It's okay to be sad for a while, but think of where I am going. Where will be waiting to see you again, after you've lived for a long time, of course." She chuckles slightly, and her body is racked by dry coughs immediately. I dash toward the mini hospital fridge wedged between the bed and door to give her water. She sips slowly, then she sighs and lies back down.

Mother has been telling me stories of God and eternity since



could walk. She says eternity is life after life. I tell her I do not understand why there should be life after life; we haven't finished living the one we have on earth.

"It is to be with God. God wants all who believe in Him to spend

eternity with Him in heaven. Away from this wicked world." She says, in answer to my question.

She talks about mansions, in different categories, crowns that shine as brightly as stars and streets paved with gold.

This fascinated me; I walked about dreaming about wearing crowns, being addressed as princesses.

Uyomi.

She would always go on, and on about how we will not suffer lack, or want in heaven. Suffering will cease. No pain, no tears, and no death. I cannot wrap my mind around the fact that we will not lack anything in heaven. The more mother talked about heaven, the more questions I had to ask.

"Uyomi, the ways of God are not the ways of man. Be careful, lest you be tempted to go astray."

mother delivers this gentle rebuke with a smile. When we are told in church to imitate Christ, I think of mother. Her smile, her demeanor. If she were born during Jesus' time on earth, I have no doubt that she would have been among the women who ministered to Him. A combination of Mary and Martha. I think mother's name, Margaret, is a good fit for her.

In Sunday school, our teacher Mr. Oche Samson tells us about heaven. He talks like he has been there, his passion is contagious. He tells us about the different angels; Michael for war, Gabriel for peace and the rest of them. He even knows the exact number of gates you have to pass through before you reach the throne of God.

"And my dear children, we're going to sing in heaven. How beautiful! He proclaims as sweat trails down his face.

"And what else?" I ask.

"What do you mean, what else. Don't you like singing?" He asks with steel in his voice. I decide not to pursue it further with him.

"So, who wants to go to heaven?" He asks.

"We all raise our hands.

"Then, you must give your life to Christ. Romans 6:23 says, for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." He reads from the Bible. We all stand and make the confession. We are bound.

Later, we discuss amongst ourselves what we like about heaven.

"To eat all I want. There is hardly food at home," Olamide, a short, plump girl says.

"He is not God. Mamma says God has all the answers, I tell them with self-importance.

moaned. He is lazy. His mother says so.

"To escape this pain in my leg. To not suffer or feel pain ever again? I do not mind going to heaven today," Ifunanya says. She was involved in an accident when she was a baby and had broken her leg. It had healed badly. She walks with crutches now.

"What about you, Uyo?" Idoko asks me.

"Me?" I feign ignorance and clear my throat. They nod and draw close to me as I bend my head slightly.

"I want to ask God some questions," I say.

They open their eyes in shock.

"God! Do you know who He is?" Olamide asks.

"He's God, silly." Idoko interjects.

"I want to ask Him why there's only singing in heaven. I don't want to get bored. I tell them.

"You should have asked teacher Oche." Ifunanya says.

"I do not think we will sing all the time. Besides seeing Jesus alone is enough for me. What more do I want?" Ele, a quiet girl, says. We do not say anything again. I still have my reservations about heaven.

As I sit by Mama's bedside in the hospital, I think about heaven. I do not have the reservations I had when I was a child in Sunday school years ago. I do not think of asking God any questions. Mama's absolute faith has made me a believer. That, no matter what, heaven is a place to be. I see her cheerfulness through the terrible pains she endures, and it gives me comfort. Her faith is a warm blanket.

"Just imagine! I will see your father again." Mama says suddenly. I look at the wistful smile on her face, and my heart feels all over the place. I try to picture my father. He died when I was five. His picture rests on our living room wall at home. A brown skinned man with piercing dark eyes, I look like him. He was Mama's second love. God is her first. "And all your grandparents," Mama continues. I take her dry, translucent hand in mine. Mama, before her sickness, was an ebony beauty. Her skin glittered and her voice was like a bell.

"I can't wait to tell them about you. You, a law student, and an adult too." She smiles. I want to tell her that I do not feel like much of an adult, that I feel nine instead of my nineteen years. But I cannot form the words. I sit holding her hand, trying to prolong the moment. I know I will cherish it forever.

I believe in God and heaven. I see them reflected in Mama's life. She loves life, a vibrant personality. Mama is a butterfly with the prettiest of colours. There is no way her leaving this earth will be the end of her life. She is too precious, her energy too beautiful, to be blackened out forever.



I see heaven in her smile, warm and golden. I see God in her speech; how she is quick to offer a kind word, a helping hand, to tell others about Christ. Mama is the poster child for the saying that, you cannot offer what you do not have.

close her eyes and begins to snore quietly. I know the journey has started. Five years of lung cancer and pain, and tears, while mama turned unrecognizable before my eyes. Five years of mama never giving up hope, even when pain turned

young again, before cancer aged her prematurely. Then I remember her telling me once, that there will be no age in heaven. I want that for mama. I know I will not see her eyes open again. Not in this world. Mama is finally going to meet the



"God that is calling me home will take care of you. You do not need to worry one bit. You do not need to think about the why, remember that His ways are not..."

"Our ways." We complete it together. We're crying and smiling now.

"Keep an eye on my mansion and crown mama. I tell her. She nods with all seriousness. Then she here eyes to slits and her mouth to a bloodied mess as she bit on it. She knew from the first day she would not survive it. Yet, she never wavered in her abiding devotion to God, she took it all with good grace. Mama's faith is like a spring. Refreshing and continuous.

As she snores, I watch her face, she looks so peaceful; almost

God she has loved all her life. To the home where she had always longed for. Two feelings merge inside of me. I am sad and happy at the same time. I finally know how something can be bittersweet. I sit by my mother's bed and watch as she transitions into the afterlife.

## WAKINI KURIA PRIZE FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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**MADEHA MALECELA**  
(Tanzania) 1st Place

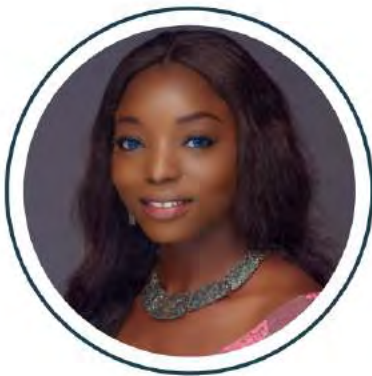


**BLESSING TARFA**  
(Nigeria) 2nd Place



**HALIEO MOTANYANE**  
(Lesotho) 3rd Place

# AFRICAN WRITERS AWARDS



**GLORIA AKAYI ASOKOLO**  
*Drama (Nigeria)*



**OLUYEMISI OLADEJO**  
*Creative Non-Fiction (Nigeria)*



**DURU NNEKA JOYCE**  
*Poetry (Nigeria)*

# Telling Our Stories Ourselves: The African Identity

Namwanja Margaret Chikwabi  
Zambia

The 3<sup>rd</sup> African Writers Conference took place in Lusaka, Zambia from 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2020- the year in which the continent had to adjust to the global Covid-19 pandemic. Following health guidelines only fifty people were physically allowed to occupy the library at the French Cultural Centre where the event was held, from the 400 who had registered online to be there. The entire conference was streamed on Facebook Live, starting with the opening evening session on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November. Twenty countries tuned in. The theme of the Conference was 'The African Identity', and so, this Writers Mingle (online-only) session was about just that: defining the African identity and its relationship with contemporary arts, especially writing. Seventy participants took part in this Zoom session that went on for two

hours and six minutes- because noon wanted to end!

Moderating proceedings was Anthony Onugba founder of Writers Space Africa and Executive Director of the African Writers Development Trust, who travelled to Zambia from Nigeria for the conference.

On what African identity is, what emerged were i) our physical characteristics: kinky hair, melanin, from the darkest blue to the palest white; ii) stereotype imposed on us which end up being part of African identity, such as images of starving babies with flies across their mouths, corruption, HIV/AIDS, etc.; iii) having a love for the continent, being engrossed in her problems and solutions; iv) self-love: understanding where you come from and how you see yourself before anyone else sees

you; iv) how you show the world who you are and how they see you from what you portray.

With regards to African identity and contemporary arts, it was noted that contemporary arts must be about showing how society is in the present moment. In other words, contemporary art should speak to and bring attention to the realities of our communities as they are. However, there is a bemoaning of artists now going for things that will give them fame and monetary success quickly. For example, using 'choice words', in their written work, that appeal to the Western world; writing stories that cater to commercial success and glorify the Western idea of what Africa is. We write about, and define ourselves as, Africans based on how someone else sees us, instead of us dictating how the world sees us.



The clarion call is to write our stories not to impress others, but to be true to ourselves. The call is also to not put limitations on ourselves as writers, but to expand our imagination and our vision of the world.

The morning session on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November began with Ms. Marita Banda, poet, author, co-founder of Network for Society Transformation (SOTRANE) and founding Chairperson of Writers Space Africa (Zambia) welcoming the speakers, panelists and attendees to the Conference. Special welcoming remarks were given by the representative from the National Arts Council Ms. Mwiche Chikungu. Ruth Simujayangombe of the Zambia Reprographic Rights Society (ZARRSO) and the Director of Alliance Française Nail Muniglia also gave their remarks which centred on the importance of freedom of speech in the hearts, the role of public curiosity in the success of events such as the AWC, importance of networking and bringing value to the writing and publishing industry, and urging writers to write authentically about African culture.

Following this was the first session of the day titled 'An Emerging African Identity'. The panelists were young Zambian writers including Ms. Fiske Serah Nyirongo, who contributed an article to Twaweza a collection of twenty-four non-fiction African

stories published this year by the African Writers Development Trust and is available for free download. Moderated by journalist and radio personality Mr. Jacob Kabwe, some of the issues tackled were how emerging writers describe African identity, how world events have changed African identity and how much control we have had in forging the identity we have as Africans. The discussion brought out identity as being complex and dependent on who defines it.

There's the Euro-centric view of Africa based on prejudice, slavery and colonialism, with Africans being in the periphery of any and all narratives. There's the Afro-centric view, which is about centering Africa and Africans in narratives, and there's the Africanist view, which is unique in its own space and is about bringing balance to how we see ourselves. Christianity, Islam and

colonialism were identified as the greatest influences on Africans and Africa. The fear is also that in fifty years' time, our languages will be lost to English and we may be fighting for space in majority-white countries.

The afternoon session was on 'The Media Perspective'. Mrs. Victoria Chitungu, historian, author, previous Director of Lusaka National Museum and current curator of Choma Museum spoke about the value and priority that we place on ourselves as Africans in media spaces. For instance, in Zambia's national television broadcaster, ZNBC, there is an hour of news in English. In contrast, the news in Zambia's seven main local languages is allotted five minutes each, and is presented in succession. An hour in English of information being given to the public and only five minutes of that same information in Lozi, Nyanja, Luvale, Tonga, Bemba, Kaonde, Chewa. Publisher, onomastician, cultural heritage expert, founder and series editor of the Encyclopedia of African Names Mr. Chanda Penda spoke about private media being more about politics than arts. There is a neglect in favour of sensational

headlines that are relations between now, yesterday John T. Njobvu, renowned actor, political scandalous in nature; and tomorrow The writers should be economists, civic activists and poets, things that are seen as not be boxed into 'this is the as well as Mr. Chanda Penda. commercially more viable than beginning and this is the end'. Mrs. Omokhodion-Kalulu Banda emphasised the importance of the arts, especially books and writers.

Mrs. Chitungu who spoke using the rich information of our after Mr Moyo, posited that European heritage in museum and national

On the last day of the centrism informs academic archives to mine new stories conference, the first session's discourse when it comes to about ourselves and our identity. title was 'The African Identity - An writing. The centres of power and Mr. Njobvu urged the attendees to Academic Discourse' Intangible European academic institutions. embrace traditional addresses and Cultural Heritage Expert (UNESCO As a result, this creates a bias African names. Mr. Penda Certified), poet, lecturer and because the measuring tape for reminded the audience to take up founder of Kalulu Kreativez Mr. quality and accepted (and the fight for a positive African Gankhanani M Moyo submitted acceptable) work is not here in identity and not look to the West that all cultural spaces are Africa and it is not African. The or Europe to tell our stories, in interlinked and borrow from each question is then put: how do we academia in general. other; therefore, there is no such talk of an African identity in thing as cultural purity. Headed that political identity and measuring stick is not African? vote of thanks by Mr. Anthony boundaries are a false sense of How do we change the narrative? Onugba, as well as the identity for the African. For The authorities referenced and the announcement of the winners of the 2020 African Writers Awards. instance, the Chewa ceremony, consulted in African academic For Creative Non-fiction Oladejo Kulamba in Zambia always has work more often than not are not For Oluyemi from Nigeria won for people coming from Mozambique Africans. In pre-colonial times, Each Little One. Poetry was won and Malawi to take part in it. Africans were grouped into clans, by Duru Nneka Joyce, Nigeria for not tribes. Clans cut across Odeto the Blackbird (Haiku) The cultural groupings in terms of Drama Award went to Asoloko what is important to know is that language but with the arrival of Gloria Akayi, Nigeria, for Who identity is fluid, it is not static. One the Europeans Africans became Knows Amanda? This year the writes because someone else has categorised under 'tribes.'

For the African writer, cultural groupings in terms of what is important to know is that language but with the arrival of identity is fluid, it is not static. One the Europeans Africans became writes because someone else has categorised under 'tribes.'

written; this means we have to be aware of our cultural space to be able to write from within them. wrap things up followed. This Therole of the writer is to explore complexities, to question our reality, our space and inter-

A panel discussion to included Mrs. Natasha Omokhodion-Kalulu Banda, author of No Be From Hia, Mr. To cap it all off was the vote of thanks by Mr. Anthony Onugba, as well as the announcement of the winners of the 2020 African Writers Awards. For Creative Non-fiction Oladejo Oluyemi from Nigeria won for Each Little One. Poetry was won by Duru Nneka Joyce, Nigeria for Odeto the Blackbird (Haiku) The Drama Award went to Asoloko Gloria Akayi, Nigeria, for Who Knows Amanda? This year the Wakini Prize for Children's Literature was expanded to include three winners First Prize went to Madeha Ezekiel Malecela from Tanzania for Scared Little Boy.

ThesecondwenttoBlessingAliyu for children's Literature in 2019. the narratives that are put out there about Africa and about Africans. In the words of President Obama, "we are the change we've been waiting for."

Tarfa from Nigeria for Sophie, Attending the conference too was What Do You Say? The third prize Andrea Matambo, who won the 2019 African Writers Awards for Lesotho for Hessy and the Lost Poetry.

Tooth. Halieo, who is also a passionate filmmaker, travelled to Zambia, especially for the 3<sup>rd</sup> African Writers Conference in Lusaka was a conference. On hand to present vibrant, exhilarating and visibly shocked Halieo the award profound event. The onus is on the was Marjorie Moono African writer to grapple with Simuyuni, winner of the maiden uncomfortable truths, take the edition of the Wakini Kuria Prize baton and be the change agent in



Namwanja Margaret Chikwabi is a Travel Consultant turned freelance Book Editor. She runs Rosebud Editing & Proofreading Company. The company offers editing and proofreading services for books, magazines, academic papers, articles, etc. She co-founded and was Editor in Chief of Arise Zambia Magazine. This is Zambia's first ever youth-dedicated magazine published by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 2015. She is currently the Assistant Chief Editor of Writers Space Africa (WSA) Magazine.

# Bridging Panorama

Simon Ng'uni  
Zambia

one day, "tomorrow never comes"

as formerly vague. loops of ambiguity voyage  
time

In celestial eminence,  
with clarity — this knowledge of good. and evil,  
has no place to run.

when all things have played out as they should,  
this is the final frontier  
— the last unmapped country left to discover

here forthwith,  
wrongs have been righted  
— fruit from rightful tree will be disemboweled  
and savoured —  
rightly.

everything restored, back to its rightful place.  
no need for things  
that slither and crawl  
the underbrush. or moons dying  
from sadness. nor absent suns  
from overwhelming grief.

then, the veil of eternity laps across time —  
fulfilling the space upon which it hovers.

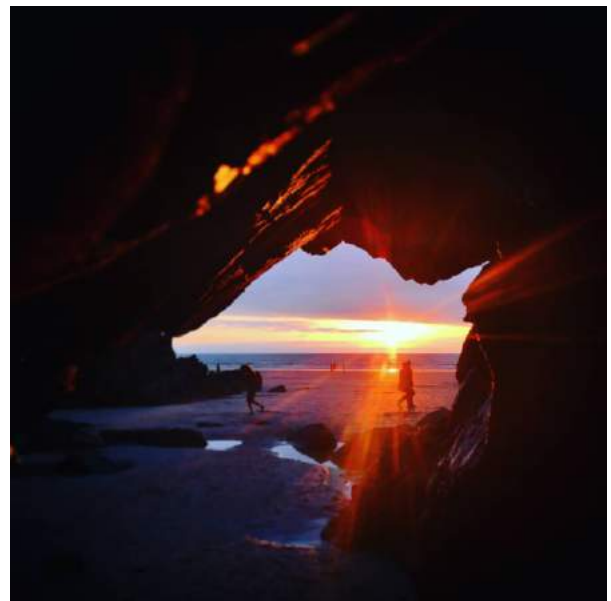
here forthwith,

when I am done making music from the silence  
& unanswered questions remain

each day is a sunrise  
with a new meaning to all of history.

inexhaustible.  
then a thousand  
then more

there is still a future outside of time  
a between. knowledge and understanding  
which only unbreaking suns can reveal



# How Grandma Sees Afterlife From Balcony

Isaiqhy Adepoju  
Nigeria

Yesterday on the balcony, I asked grandma  
Where she would go if she falls flat from here;

She said among the mercury cloud where  
Her cars will be covered with vapors:

Where grandfather cannot reach with his rod.

I would have told her the clouds are for angels  
And not a broken sack with a serrated cut on  
thighs  
And knees and the corners unknown, where  
blood clots;

And not for arched backs flushing blood  
With their broken tooth down these sewers.

Perhaps afterlife is for those who did  
Are weary and blood-coated with terror-  
My grandma said she's received too much blows  
to count;

Too much insult to name, and too much torn  
wrappers down the quiet streets.

Perhaps afterlife is for burnt grandmothers  
Trapped under a fallen log - burnt to ashes.

Afterlife is a safe harbor for children  
Standing over their limbs parents;

For wives tired on ambulance's screeching tires;  
For husbands stumbling over bottles of booze;

For Boko-haram victims running like handle of  
pincers-

Their graves forming the Maidugumi map.

Perhaps afterlife is a gift wrapped with terror.



# The Other Side

Trisha  
Uganda

Across the River Styx  
Far within the deep bowels of earth  
The journey to eternity begins  
Entering the sunless palace of Hades  
Relinquishing all my past pains  
Longing for the peacefulness of Elysium  
I saved my pennies for Charon the Boatman  
Forward to a new beginning  
Everlasting quiet rest.



# If you Ask Me About Afterlife

Shuaibat Muhammad-Raji  
Nigeria

If you ask me about afterlife,  
I'll tell you tales retold from generation to  
generation.

A tale modified by your actions.

A tale of life after death.

If you ask me about afterlife  
I'll tell you it's a place of dread and  
helplessness,  
and hopelessness is a chant you hear  
everyday.  
it's filled with nightmares with no beloved to  
cradle you back to sleep,  
telling you everything will be fine when you  
open your eyes.

If you ask me about afterlife  
I'll tell you it's a place of raging infernos where  
homosapiens will serve as it's kindlers;  
where mama's hug won't be existent.  
and Papa will be busy accounting for the dime  
he swindled,  
and Imtiyaaz, your best friend will be sweating  
from seeing his worldly records.

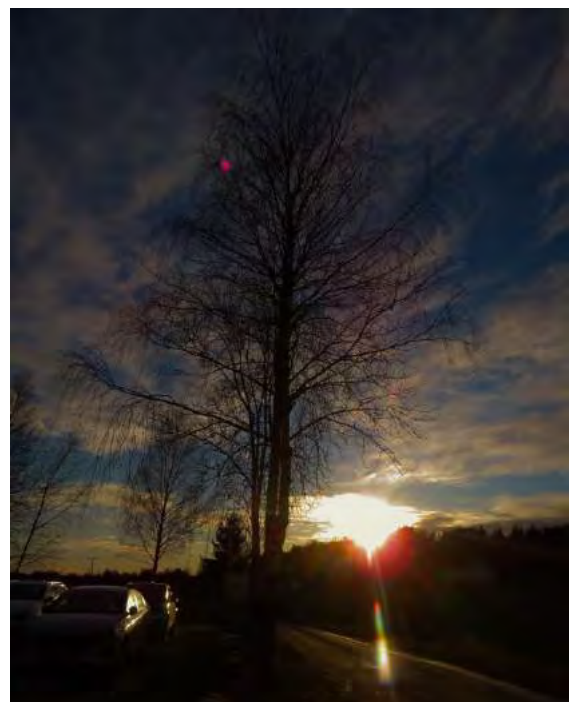
If you ask me about afterlife,  
I'll tell you it's a place filled with beauties,  
untainted beauties created perfectly by the  
greatest creator.

A place where there shall be no sadness and  
tears but happiness.

A place beyond the description of man.

So, if you are asked about afterlife,  
tell them it's a two way lane to the final abode;  
A lane of eternal dread or eternal peace,  
and nothing else will matter except that which  
you've done.

Where even an atom of good and bad will be  
adjudged by the greatest of all judges.  
Tell them it's the final abode where the truth  
shall unfold and prevail.



# Lagbaja

Akinmayowa Shobo  
Nigeria

Chief Lagbaja,  
Our illustrious son is alive

So alive, he is  
To his beautiful Oyinbo wife, sons and dog  
Yet he died,

That fateful day, our votes did indeed count.

So dead, he did die  
The moment he rose to the hallowed chambers.

Nothing else would matter  
He was long gone  
Never to be bothered  
By our heaping litanies.

At his feet, our rarest stones  
He erects the tallest hanging gardens  
Across the sun, we hear  
Amidst the slums, dumb and scums  
He has come to create.

Today he walks among his creation  
Completely numb and dead.





GENRE: SHORT STORY

TITLE: OLD SOJAS NEVER DIE

WRITER: OLASUBOMI OLUMOFIN, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: OLANDA KUEI P. MACUEI, SOUTH SUDAN

“Baba, when I grow up, I will become a Soja like you because Soja can never die.” Boldly I claimed the stand of my future dream and my forever lifetime Soja of Soja as her old father embraced me in his arms with pride. As a reader among other readers, I recalled the piece of advice at my father's funeral in connection to the African settings of this story.

“Macuei was and is a great teacher, a soldier who fought and served the entire nation, not just us. Paul is not dead, he has you and your little brother to relive him on. It doesn't matter whether you're a girl, you can do anything, look after your mother; she is already dead and alive. Your father's death will deeply pain the entire nation with regret; the every day you decide to depart ways with his righteous paths as you turn left. From now, his work is done here and he has been called by whom brought him here to rest or continue his beautiful life after here.” (RIP BABA).

One couldn't emotionally hesitate towards such a unique and styled piece of creative writing thus uncontrollably permitting my recent and childhood memories to strongly flash in mind due to this anonymous deadly threat, upon the dedication and confrontation of death as the major theme that has been conveyed through the phrase as the title of the story: “Old Sojas Never Die.”

Perception of being alive and dead independently varies but at a general view, people often believe the concept of death as a one-way traffic of no return or divergent on the same path, that's the end of the beginning but without the beginning, there is no end, vice versa. Hence, the relative phrase states that, “every finishing line is the beginning of a new race.” Does this statement denature the nature of our thoughtful nature of death?

Therefore, the author has entangled the main theme of death with other valuable themes such as life and war: thus, heroically represented and revived the historical memories of the brave African soldiers who fought and died during the pre-colonial and post-colonial era, in defense of their motherland and always live on for generations. The power and weaknesses of the African soldiers before and now is portrayed the same in the eyes of death but what always makes them stand out tall above even in the mouth of death is their bold declaration that Old Sojas Never Die. “Once a soldier, always...”

Furthermore, the person has skillfully applied perfect diction, flashbacks, symbolism and imagery to vividly paint HD memory pictures in the mind of a reader through descriptive narrative in comparison of the present, past and the future beyond. The tale entails the details of a seasonal journey (wet and dry) of life variable at one point of the time to another; thus reflecting on the definite trust process of life changes from birth, infancy, growth, death and rebirth that's why Old Sojas Never Die. “Ego just die! Old Soja? They never die.”

Not only is death defined as a natural factor of life and a compulsory human race of no competition but also a crucial part of life that is viewed negatively due to its nature of human perception that sadly appears faded, ugly, destructive and very old to be associated with ordinary. But according to the writer, death can positively be part of our daily lives and the dead can be revived, restructured back to its initial lively state by recovering the positive memories of the past and reliving them freshly in mind because the attitude of the mind set towards death is the most dangerous effect more than death itself. “What didn't kill me could only make me stronger. Emmanuel! Some people decide to die mentally before death attacks them physically.”

the African society ancestrally believes that "the dead are not dead" because while one was still alive, they must have had their identity in form of children, wives and property among other possessions that represent them for the legacy to always live on. If at all death occurs without any accountable remains, one is highly honored through ritual and animal sacrifice to start a wealthy life from the other side after death; marry wives, name and rename children after them in order to remain alive.

Conclusively, every living thing dies and will always die; be it humans, animals, plants. Everything that's subjected to life has a time frame to go down the same road. So let's happily embrace death and believe it as the recycling cycle of life. The invisible power to conquer and relive death is to believe that, the soul and the spirit can never be seen or touched after the body is laid to rest. The ironical of "Old Soja's never die" leaves rhetorical questions of faith and hope in mind. From its end question: "Will old Soja ever die?"

"Are the African soldiers that died, completely dead after making their motherland stand or still alive?"

"Don't you think there is a possibility of a soulful and spiritual life after death?"

"Do you think one can still be alive over a dead body?"

"How dead and alive do you think mama Africa is; yesterday, today and after?"



## GENRE COLUMN

TITLE: LIFE AS WE KNOW IT

COLUMNIST: UGBEDE ATABOH, NIGERIA

REVIEWER: PAUL WAMBUA, KENYA

“Life as we know it” offers a perspective on death, pain, loss and grief. Contextually and with deliberate subtlety, it addresses itself using what is otherwise so ominous to talk about. It presents a reality fragment that we humans tend to overlook. Through the story of Ifeoma's death and their relationship, we get to understand the intricacies of death, grief and pain.

In a broad sense, it refers to death both figuratively and literally. Death is the cessation of life and all associated processes, the end of an organism's existence as an entity independent from its environment and its return to an inert, non-living state. We observe dead relationships, dead reality, dead parenting among other instances lacking life.

When someone dies, instinctively, we mourn the departed before giving them a befitting send-off. How we cope with the death of our beloveds is directly informed by our environment. Ugbede observes through a personal experience, the trauma of losing a loved one and how it's influenced by the fact that their upbringing shielded them from pain and grief. There is exploration of how our own ineptitude in fostering good relationships with our friends only to regret and acknowledge their centrality in our lives when they are no more. Criticism is meted out on our social relations and responsibility to our peers. These are childhood friends and generally, people we know, whose experiences are more or less the same yet due to one being on an official assignment, despite the proximity, will not see their friend instead goes drinking with buddies. Later, they regret this decision. Our human contact should matter at all times and we should dive like it matters and fosters warm relations.

Important thing to note is that we ought to live life as we know it. We should not hold back even under what circumstances. Through the rhetoric, presumably scribbled in Ifeoma's obituary, the person seems lamenting by opening that they ought to have visited their friend despite their schedule. The point is that we should live in the now, acknowledging the peculiarities of our lives as well as that of those close to us.

The column begins by stating a fact of life. It is a simple but universal observation of death. It is an explanation, both objective and subjective. The subjective statements inclined to the person who uses it as an illustration with far-reaching consequences and most importantly, symbolic significance.

The person again is, or at least thought dead to pain and grief. This is exacerbated by their upbringing and especially their climate around their father. The father attempts through all ways possible to dissociate the child from the experience of death and its consequent drama. We can deduce that it is human to feel and we should not shield ourselves from pain and feelings. Generally, suppression of emotions returns to haunt us which does little or no help.

Life as we know it is challenging but our humanity should always rise above all. Appealing to what's human in us is of paramount importance in order to give life to humanity. Please try to make each day count and cherish every memory; it just might be the last.



## GENRE CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

## TITLE DEATH

WRITER HELLEN OWUOR, KENYA

REVIEWER RETROSE LESAOANA, LESOTHO

The hardest questions to answer are those about death because death is so hard for any of us to understand. Every death leaves a gaping hole and a pile of questions, especially for kids. Where did they go? Can they still think? If we talk to them, can they hear us? "And why should we ever see her best friend again, or why they would ever see each other again?"

Death is illustrated as black dormant trees as seen in the in black and grey skies background. The main character, Nana, is sad because her friend Cate "went to be with the Lord." "Her parents did all they could to help her cope. They decided that it was best to take her to her grandmother for some time, where she would be distracted."

Looking at the grandma's behavior, it fulfills the reality of black people where a mother plays a dominant role literally every time. "Nana was always delighted to see her grandma because here, she was always treated like a queen..." as portrayed by the author.

The story is creatively written with a simple choice of words that children can easily understand and connect with. The flow of the relationship hierarchy in the story is well represented.

However, I feel the writer could have done better with the title. It appears too direct and draw for children. It also appears to go contrary to the subtle representation of death in the story, especially when the writer said Nana's friend "went to be with the Lord." I think "Cate" would have passed as a better title.

Nonetheless, it's a beautiful story that's worth reading over and over.



GENRE FLASH FICTION

TITLE EVERYONE'S FOE

COLUMNIST: JUSTINA OYEDEJI, NIGERIA

REVIEWER BILDAD MAKORI, KENYA

In life, we have goals and expectations that we hope to achieve. Thus, we set for ourselves targets and deadlines by which we hope to have accomplished them. However, one sad but realistic thing is that it is never guaranteed that all which we plan will be accomplished. All thanks to everyone's foe, death.

This is what Justina Oyedeji's flash fiction, *Everyone's Foe*, is about: that while making plans and setting the goals and resolutions, most of us - if not all of us - become oblivious to the fact that there is death and that it can happen at any time, any place, and at any moment. And in the end, when this foe comes and visits us who have made resolutions, what happens next is that we are taken on a journey of no return. We die and that becomes the end of us, the end of our resolutions.

Although it appears to be short, the lesson which we get from this story is of great importance, something that we always need to have in mind because it is never guaranteed that all which we plan will be accomplished.

I would like to give credit and highlight the structure and style which Justina used to write this flash fiction. It is just amazing. Right from the title, to the introduction to the perspective she used to tell the story using different points of view, the ending... Everything in the story falls in place well. Kudos Justina!

## GENRE POETRY

## TITLE DEATH

WRITER PEACE OGBOR, NIGERIA

REVIEWER JOSEPH ODURO, GHANA

The poem 'Death' is both a narrative and speculative analysis of death in two perspectives; the first being one that examines death from a living person's point of view; looking at the possibility that we live only to die. When the person says 'another one gone,' it presents the idea that whereas uncomfortable death has become routine, each passing minute we lose another. Why then do we live?

The second perspective one on to which more attention has been put is the afterlife. Speculative analysis. The overriding and resounding question is, what lies beyond the curtain of time, what happens in that other world? It is the answer to this question that the rhetorical question in the poem seeks to find. 'Where is there?' he asks. These questions also come in specifically to bring to our attention that while we live in uncertainty we die, retire and still head into uncertainty.

It is important to note the adverse use of the technique of imagery in this piece. It is used to give the uncertainty presented in the poem a body, a face, an image we might draw in our minds and understand. From auditory images of dirges that portray agony to beads of sweat purple knees that build a tense mood to the stars that we speculate are the homes of our ancestors and our own destination, the writer is drawing our attention to how death is absurd peace even after we die isn't guaranteed.

Given that the theme being discussed attracts negative feelings and could easily instill fear, it is important to appreciate the rhyme scheme that enhances musicality and sustains the reader's interest. Sight out "wailing and failing"; "knees and deeds"; "where and there" It's very important to keep the reader hooked given the absurdity in the poem.

If we assume that the dead watch over us, then who watches over them? Do we then die to watch over the living? The conclusion is that in either perspective, uncertainty is a common factor. Death might be peace but it might also be grief.



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